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# #RivetingReviews: Max Easterman reviews

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# DAMNATION

## by Peter Beck

DEC 29, 2018 • [NO COMMENTS](#)

‘In the past, right-wing extremists used to rob banks; these days they speculate and manipulate stock market prices. It’s more profitable.’

When Peter Beck originally wrote *Damnation* – in 2013 – he was a newcomer on the thriller scene and, to a point, this shows: Tom Winter is a bank security chief, but otherwise something of a sprig off the James Bond genome, a man trained to use violence, who does so with gusto, and who’s also capable of superhuman feats. Hanging off the runner of a helicopter while being shot at by a very nasty thug (but then they all are, aren’t they?) is just one of the many exploits that come his way, along with the regulation dishy female sidekick: they’re thrown together by circumstance, of course, not choice. The sex thankfully takes place off the page and leads to regret rather than a rosy sunset – Winter is at least more interested in love than pure libido.

Here the similarities end. This is an original, very Swiss, white-knuckle ride of a story, as high-powered as the bankers and investors who pepper its pages; the core of the plot is the worldwide race to invest in infrastructure, in this case electricity, for Egypt’s burgeoning economy. Nuclear power, Arab oil money, organised cybercrime and outright terrorism make for an explosive mix – literally (and a major problem for the reader trying to find time for that restorative cuppa). Unputdownable!



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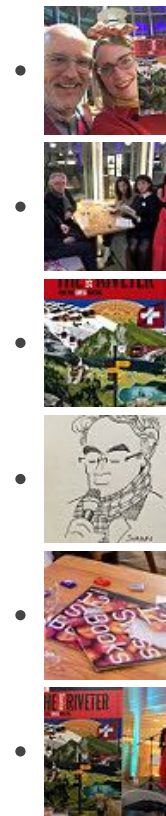
Bankers don't like anything that disturbs their image of stability, of a secure pair of hands, with just the right amount of added hypocrisy:

*'Although he found it distasteful, he operated according to the principle of "what I don't know can't hurt me". Also known as "discretion".*

That image, that discretion, comes under increasing pressure as Winter pursues his suspicion that the death in a helicopter crash of one of the bank's best clients, Muhammed Al-Bader, along with Winter's beautiful deputy, Anne, who's also the object of his (undeclared) affections, isn't as accidental as it seems. Enter Fatima, equally beautiful (are there no plain, even overweight ladies in banking and investment?), fluent in English and Arabic, but not German, which makes her and Winter a perfect fit as both heroes and hunters. But it soon becomes clear that there are other hunters out there and out to get *them*.

*... The woman smiled: "Mr Kaddour ... would be delighted if you would accept his dinner invitation ... he will pick you up from the Shepheard at 8:30pm." Winter smiled ... and wondered who'd announced his arrival. He hadn't told anyone which hotel he was staying in. Clearly he was being followed.'*

He is followed and attacked, several times over, as the action moves from the Bernese Oberland to Cairo to the Hardangerfjord and to Boston. At every turn, the story grips and keeps you guessing: who, or what, is under attack, and why? Not so long ago, I might have hinted at the improbability of the dénouement; but, after what happened in Salisbury – a mere half-hour from where I live – I reckon 'incredible' has lost its 'in': staid, financially strong and stable Swiss



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banking may claim to be, but there is – according to Peter Beck – pure evil lurking there. And Beck, an economics and business school graduate, clearly knows all about it.

*Damnation* is the first outing for Tom Winter. The second German title – *Korrosion* – awaits Jamie Bulloch’s (I hope) superb translation skills. Meanwhile, the tyro Peter Beck is now hailed as ‘Europe’s answer to John Grisham’. Film rights, please?

*Reviewed by Max Easterman*

## DAMNATION

Written by **Peter Beck**

Translated by **Jamie Bulloch**

Published by **Pointblank** (2018)



Max

Easterman

*Max Easterman is a journalist – he spent 25 years as a senior broadcaster with the BBC – university lecturer, translator, media trainer with ‘Sounds Right’, jazz musician and writer.*

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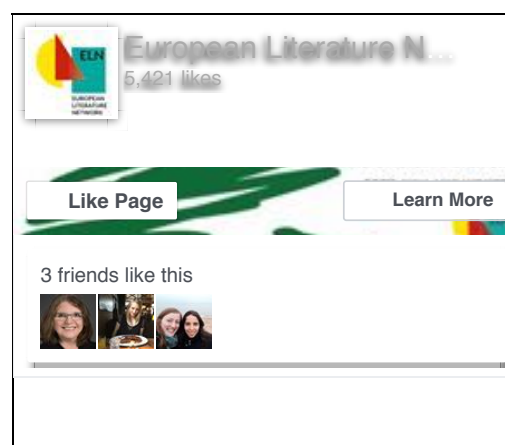
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