

**POLYGON**  
**FICTION**  
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*Polygon*

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# DARKLAND TALES

## A New Series from Polygon

### THE SERIES

In Darkland Tales, the best modern Scottish authors offer dramatic retellings of stories from the nation's history, myth and legend. This series will reclaim Scottish history for a modern audience, with some of Scotland's greatest contemporary novelists and storytellers taking on the challenge of producing Scottish history 2.0 – a redux of landmark moments from the past, viewed through a modern lens and alive to modern sensibilities. These books will be sharp, provocative and darkly comic, mining that seem of sedition and psychological drama that has always featured in the best of Scottish literature.

The central series idea is of traditional history mashed up with edgy modern Scottish writing - these books are punky, anarchic and deliberately 'in your face'. Each book will be novella length (c20-30,000 words) will have an individual identity, yet at the same time, the series concept will strengthen their collective appeal – that they are part of a series is a key selling point and reason for their existence. We will be working with significant names in Scottish publishing. The first three books in the series will be authored by Denise Mina, Jenni Fagan and Alan Warner.

### Denise Mina – Rizzio (May 2021)

One of Scottish history's bloodiest murders . . . told by one of Scotland's most provocative modern crime writers

From the multi-award winning Denise Mina comes a radical new take on one of the darkest episodes in Scottish history. On the evening of 9th March 1566, David Rizzio, the private secretary of Mary Queen of Scots, was brutally murdered. Dragged from the bed chamber of the heavily pregnant Queen Mary, Rizzio was stabbed 56 times by an 80-strong party of assassins. This breathtakingly tense novella dramatises the events that led up to that night, telling an infamous story as it has never been told before. The Murder of Rizzio is a dark psychological thriller; a tale of sex, seduction, secrets and lies that looks at history through a modern lens, and explores the lengths that men - and women - will go to for love and power.

### Jenni Fagan – Title TBC

Three women, separated by time, but joined in persecution...

Multi-award-winning, former Granta Best Young British Novelist Jenni Fagan tells a story spanning more than three-hundred years of three women persecuted for witchcraft. From a girl caught up in the sixteenth century witch trials in North Berwick – where over a hundred women were accused of summoning up a storm to destroy the ship carrying the future Scottish Queen across the sea from Denmark – to the last woman legally executed for using her powers in 1727, and the last woman convicted of witchcraft in Britain in 1944, this will be a journey into a culture of fear and superstition, exploring the lingering connections between womanhood and the occult. Tracing the thoughts and experiences of these three women – and the links between them – it offers a powerful and gripping journey into a space where myth, religion and reality combine with deadly consequences. Devils, ghouls, ectoplasm, psychic powers and a sunken Second World War battleship combine in a haunting tale by one of Scotland's most exciting and innovative writers.

### Alan Warner – 'The Man Who Would Not Be King'

A battle lost. A daring escape. A long walk into obscurity. The ultimate failure....

In the aftermath of the disastrous Battle of Culloden, a lonely figure takes flight through the mountainous landscapes of the north-west Highlands of Scotland. His name is Charles Edward Stuart: better known today as Bonnie Prince Charlie. He had come to the country to take the throne. Now he is leaving in exile and abject defeat. In prose that is by turns poetic, comic, macabre, haunting and humane, multi-award-winning author Alan Warner traces the last journey through Scotland of a man who history will come to define for his failure. Experiencing the existential crisis to end all existential crises, we will follow the scrambled thoughts and reflections of 'The Man Who Would Not Be King' as he hides and flees from government forces among the glens and the heather. Like a Scottish version of King Lear on the heath, this is an examination of doomed hope and expectation, following the traumatic and darkly humorous misadventures of a man collapsing beneath the weight of history.



# RIZZIO

## Darkland Tales

### Denise Mina

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**ISBN** 9781846975677

**Publication** 06 May 2021

**Category** FICTION

**BIC** FF

**Price** £9.99

**Format** 198 x 129 mm Hardback

**Extent** 144 pp

**Rights** World All Languages

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### KEY SELLING POINTS

- The first in a series working with the best Scottish authors to recast stories drawn from Scottish history, myth and legend
- Denise Mina's most recent novel, *Conviction*, was selected as a Reese Witherspoon Book Club Pick
- The story of Rizzio's murder is well-known, yet largely unrepresented in dramatic - and particularly contemporary - writing. This is an edgy, provocative and thrilling classic in the making

### DESCRIPTION

From the multi-award winning Denise Mina comes a radical new take on one of the darkest episodes in Scottish history. On the evening of 9th March 1566, David Rizzio, the private secretary of Mary Queen of Scots, was brutally murdered. Dragged from the bed chamber of the heavily pregnant Queen Mary, Rizzio was stabbed 56 times by an 80-strong party of assassins. This breathtakingly tense novella dramatises the events that led up to that night, telling an infamous story as it has never been told before. The Murder of Rizzio is a dark psychological thriller; a tale of sex, seduction, secrets and lies that looks at history through a modern lens, and explores the lengths that men - and women - will go to for love and power.

**'The cream of the crop, an author who pushes the crime novel in new and exciting directions' - Ian Rankin**

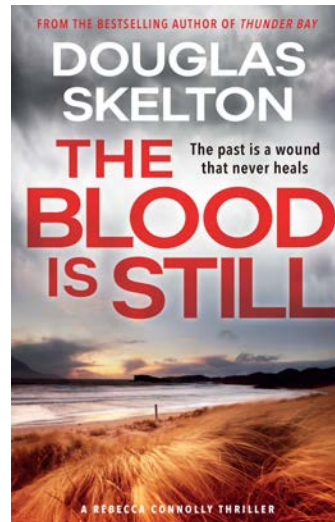
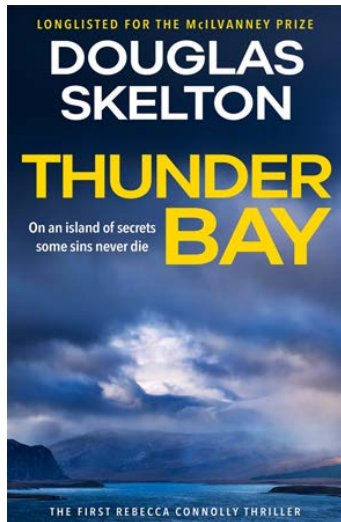
**'May be Britain's finest living crime novelist' - Daily Telegraph**

### AUTHOR

**Denise Mina** is a Scottish crime writer and playwright, born in East Kilbride in 1966. She is the author of the Garnethill trilogy, the Alex Morrow series and another three novels featuring the character Patricia "Paddy" Meehan, a Glasgow journalist.

# THE REBECCA CONNOLLY THRILLERS

## Douglas Skelton



### KEY SELLING POINTS

- A series of exciting and atmospheric crime novels set in Scotland
- Douglas Skelton is an experienced true crime writer with real investigative experience
- *Thunder Bay* and *The Blood is Still* have been sold to Skyhorse in the US and *Thunder Bay* sold to Gyldendal
- in Denmark
- Book 3, *Death is Her Shadow* coming in Spring 2021
- Rights held: **World All Languages**

### THUNDER BAY

When reporter Rebecca Connolly is told of Roddie Drummond's return to the island of Stoirm she senses a story. Fifteen years before he was charged with the murder of his lover, Mhairi. When he was found Not Proven, Roddie left the island and no one, apart from his sister, knew where he was or what he was doing. Now he has returned for his mother's funeral – and it will spark an explosion of hatred, bitterness and violence.

### THE BLOOD IS STILL

When the body of a man in eighteenth-century Highland dress is discovered on the site of the Battle of Culloden, journalist Rebecca Connolly takes up the story for the Chronicle. Meanwhile, a film being made about the '45 Rebellion has enraged the right-wing group Spirit of the Gael which is connected to a shadowy group called Black Dawn linked to death threats and fake anthrax deliveries to Downing Street and Holyrood.

### DEATH IS HER SHADOW

In 1752, Seamus a'Ghlynnne, James of the Glen, was executed for the murder of government man Colin Campbell. He was almost certainly innocent. When banners are placed at his gravesite claiming that his namesake, James Stewart, is innocent of murder, reporter Rebecca Connolly smells a story. Set against the stunning backdrop of the Scottish Highlands, *Death is Her Shadow* is a tale of injustice and mystery, and the echo of the past in the present.

### AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

**Douglas Skelton** was born in Glasgow. He has been a bank clerk, tax officer, taxi driver (for two days), wine waiter (for two hours), journalist and investigator. He has written eleven true crime and Scottish criminal history books but now concentrates on fiction. His novel *Open Wounds* (2016) was longlisted for the McIlvanney Award. Douglas has investigated real-life crime for Glasgow solicitors and was involved in a long-running campaign to right the famous Ice-Cream Wars miscarriage of justice.

# INTRODUCING MORGAN CRY AND A NEW CRIME SERIES SET IN SPAIN



## KEY SELLING POINTS

- Perfect summer reads for crime fans - thrillers set on Spain's Costa Blanca with a colourful cast of double-crossing characters
- Set in Spain, the most popular location for holidaying Brits, yet one rarely featured in UK crime. A fresh, sun-drenched landscape that readers can relate to, but one that is surprising and sinister
- Features a female protagonist who's smart and switched-on, yet swimming seriously out of her depth
- Morgan Cry is the pseudonym for Gordon Brown, who helped found Bloody Scotland and T in the Park. He is an experienced speaker and will be promoting with events and social media
- *Thirty-One Bones* sold to Skyhorse in the US
- Rights held: **World All Languages**

**DENISE MINA – “A complex and immersive thrill-ride through a wild expat Costa del Crime community”**

**LIN ANDERSON – “*Thirty-One Bones* is fast, furious and infinitely entertaining.”**

## THE SERIES

*Thirty-One Bones* and *Six Wounds* (and planned future books in the series) are set in the fictional town of El Descaro on Spain's Costa Blanca. The essence of the books can be summed up as 'criminal fun in the sun'. They centre on three elements: Daniella Coulstoun, a tight-knit set of dysfunctional expats and a detective in the Guardia Civil.

Daniella is a thirty-six-year-old insurance claims assistant from the UK who is thrown into an alien world of criminals and life's failures when her estranged mother dies and leaves her an expat bar. Far from a life of cocktails and sun-bathing, Daniella finds herself dealing with the fallout of her mother's dodgy and complex life in Spain. In the process, as each book unfolds, she finds herself fighting against becoming the one thing that she never wanted to become – her mother. But the group of expats saw Daniella's mother as their leader, and to keep them under control Daniella increasingly has to resort to fighting fire with fire.

With a suspicious police officer watching her every move and her mother's sudden death under investigation, Daniella finds it hard, day after day, to keep her head above water as everyone around her seems to be constantly trying to push her head under. But Daniella is savvy, a quick learner, and although she doesn't want to cross the line to the darker side of life – she will when she has to.

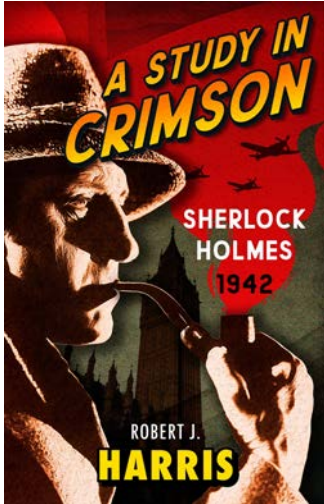
## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Here, Gordon Brown is writing as **Morgan Cry**. Gordon has written six crime thrillers to date, along with a number of short stories. He also helped found Bloody Scotland, Scotland's International Crime Writing Festival, is a DJ on local radio ([www.pulseonair.co.uk](http://www.pulseonair.co.uk)) and runs a strategic planning consultancy.



# SHERLOCK HOLMES 1942

Robert J. Harris



## KEY SELLING POINTS

- Sherlock Holmes returns in a brand new adventure, by the author of the bestselling *Thirty-One Kings*
- A tribute to the classic Universal Pictures Sherlock Holmes film series starring Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce, which updated Holmes and Watson to wartime London
- *Thirty One-Kings* - by Robert J Harris was sold to Pegasus US, sold over 4,000 hardbacks in the UK and was a Waterstones Book of the Month
- Sherlock Holmes is a perennially popular character, and recent reinventions have been incredibly successful - *The House of Silk* sold almost 300,000 copies and Robert Downey Jr will return as the character for a third movie in 2021
- Rights available: **World All Languages**

## A STUDY IN CRIMSON

London, 1942. A killer going by the name of 'Crimson Jack' is stalking the wartime streets of London, murdering women on the exact dates of the infamous Jack the Ripper killings of 1888. Has the Ripper somehow returned from the grave? Is the self-styled *Crimson Jack* a descendant of the original Jack or merely a madman obsessed with those notorious killings?

In desperation Scotland Yard turn to Sherlock Holmes, the world's greatest detective. Surely he is the one man who can sift fact from legend and track down Crimson Jack before he completes his tally of death. As Holmes and the faithful Watson tread the blacked out streets of London, death waits just around the corner.

## THE DEVIL'S BLAZE

London, 1943. Across the city prominent figures in science and the military are bursting into flames. Convinced that the Germans have deployed a new terror weapon, a desperate government turns to the one man who can track down the source of this dreadful menace: Sherlock Holmes.

The quest for a solution drives Holmes into an uneasy alliance with the country's most brilliant scientific genius, Professor James Moriarty. Only Holmes knows that, behind his façade of respectability, Moriarty is the mastermind behind a vast criminal empire. As they pursue the trail of incendiary murders, Holmes is quite sure that the professor is playing a double game and that there lies ahead a duel to the death which they cannot both survive.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

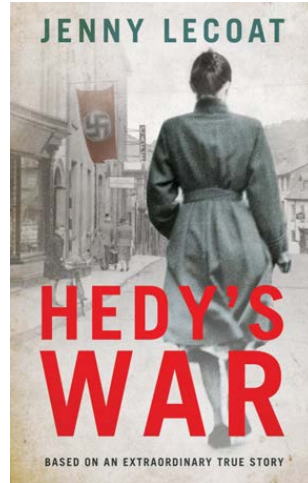
**Robert J. Harris** was born in Dundee and studied at the University of St Andrews where he graduated with a first class honours degree in Latin. He is the designer of the bestselling fantasy board game *Talisman* and has written numerous books including *Leonardo and the Death Machine*, *Will Shakespeare and the Pirate's Fire*, and more recently *The Artie Conan Doyle Mysteries*, a series featuring the youthful adventures of the creator of Sherlock Holmes. His first Richard Hannay novel, *The Thirty-One Kings*, was acclaimed by critics and readers alike and was listed by *The Scotsman* as one of the fifty best books of 2017. He lives in St Andrews with his wife Debby.





# HEDY'S WAR

Jenny Lecoat



## KEY SELLING POINTS

- Based on an extraordinary true story, Jenny Lecoat's debut novel is a tense, emotional story of forbidden love, subterfuge and survival against the odds
- Based on the true story of Hedy Bercu, a young Jewish girl who, having fled to Jersey to escape the Anschluss, finds herself trapped on Jersey during the German Occupation
- Author has worked with Jenni Murray, Graham Norton and Vanessa Feltz, among others, and strong support from Channel Islands and UK-wide press and media anticipated
- Rights already sold to Allen & Unwin Australia, El Ateneo Argentina, Calmeiro Portugal, Keter Books Israel and to Harper Collins US in a six-figure auction

## DESCRIPTION

In June 1940, the Channel Islands becomes the only part of Great Britain to be occupied by Hitler's forces. Hedy Bercu, a young Jewish girl from Vienna who fled to Jersey two years earlier to escape the Anschluss, finds herself once more entrapped by the Nazis, this time with no escape.

*Hedy's War* follows her struggle to survive the Occupation and avoid deportation to the camps. Despite her racial status, Hedy finds work with the German authorities and embarks on acts of resistance. Most remarkable of all, she falls in love with a German lieutenant – a relationship on which her life soon comes to depend.

**'A riveting story of survival against all odds, told by a masterful storyteller who also happens to be a fresh new voice in the genre. I ... recommend it highly, not just to fans of historical fiction, but to lovers of good books everywhere' - Karen Robards**

**'A vividly evoked story of love surviving, even triumphing, over oppression' - Sunday Times**

**'This gripping tale of forbidden love and survival will leave you breathless' - Sunday Post**

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Born in Jersey, Channel Islands, **Jenny Lecoat's** parents were raised under German Occupation, and both families were involved in resistance activity. Lecoat moved to England aged 18, where, following a drama degree, she spent a decade on the alternative comedy circuit as a feminist stand-up. She was nominated for a prestigious Perrier Award in 1986. She also wrote for newspapers and women's magazines (*Cosmopolitan*, *Observer*) and presented TV and radio shows, before focusing on screen writing from sitcom (*Birds of a Feather*, *Sometime Never*) to sketch shows (*The Catherine Tate Show*.) A love of history and factual stories and a return to her island roots brought about her feature film *Another Mother's Son* (2017), which starred Jenny Seagrove and John Hannah, and attracted major coverage.



# BITTERHALL

A Novel

Helen McClory

**ISBN** 9781846975493

**Publication** 03 March 2022

**Category** FICTION

**BIC** F, FA

**Price** £8.99

**Format** 198 x 129 mm Paperback

**Extent** 352 pp

**Rights** World English Language

## KEY SELLING POINTS

- Helen McClory's *Goldblum Variation* has received wide-spread publicity and, in 2019, was bought by Penguin in the US
- *Bitterhall* is a tale of desire, madness, the subjectivity of human experience and the reality-constructing effects of books; it was heavily influenced by Iris Murdoch, AS Byatt's *Possession*, and Kurosawa's *Rashomon*.
- Ali Smith, writing in the *Observer*, chose *On the Edges of Vision* as one of her books of 2018, saying, 'Her edgy stories transmit the strangeness of realities in a way that's comforting precisely because so unsettling. She's a writer completely unafraid.'
- Margaret Atwood described her writing as 'Shiny dark liquorice mind candy: nothing quite like them'.

## DESCRIPTION

*Bitterhall* is a story of obsession told between three unreliable narrators. In a darkening season in a northern city, Daniel, Órla and Tom narrate the intersections of their lives, from future-world 3D printing technology to the history of the book, to a stolen nineteenth-century diary written by a dashing gentleman who may not be entirely dead. An interwar-themed Hallowe'en party leads to a series of entanglements, variously a longed-for sexual encounter clouded by madness, a betrayal, and a reality-destroying moment of possession.

*Bitterhall* reveals the ways in which our subjectivity tampers with the notion of an objective reality, and delves into how we represent – and understand – our muddled, haunted selves.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

**Helen McClory** is the author of two story collections, *On the Edges of Vision* (Queen's Ferry Press), a winner of the Saltire First Book of the Year award, and *Mayhem & Death* (404 Ink), as well as a novel, *Flesh of the Peach* (Freight, 2017). *The Goldblum Variations* – a collection of experimental micro-fictions – was published by 404 Ink, and Penguin in 2019. Her short stories have been listed for distinction in *The Best of British Fantasy* (2018), *The Best of British and Irish Flash Fictions* (2018/19), and nominated for the Pushcart prize. Helen is a part-time lecturer at the University of Glasgow and co-founder of writing retreat Write Toscana.



# OF STONE AND SKY

Merryn Glover

**ISBN** 9781846975653

**Publication** 06 May 2021

**Category** Fiction

**BIC** F, FA

**eBook** 9781788853767

**Price** £8.99

**Format** 198 x 129 mm Paperback

**Extent** 352 pp

**Rights** World All Languages

## KEY SELLING POINTS

- *Of Stone and Sky* will appeal to readers who enjoy multi-layered, multi-generational stories that move around in time, such as Kate Atkinson's *Behind the Scenes at the Museum* and Graham Swift's *Waterland*
- Merryn Glover deftly deals with the notion of bond: between people, their land and way of life in this epic novel that will grab readers' attention from the very first page
- A deeply engaging novel from a very talented author, this book is one that will stay with you long after reading
- As well as beautifully written and a powerful tale, this novel also addresses some controversial issues including land reform, environmental protection and social justice

## DESCRIPTION

After Highland shepherd Colvin Munro disappears, a mysterious trail of his possessions is found in the Cairngorm mountains. Writing the eulogy for his memorial years later, his founding-sister Mo seeks to discover why he vanished. Younger brother Sorley is also haunted by his absence and driven to reveal the forces that led to Colvin's disappearance. Is their brother alive or dead?

Set on a farming estate in the upper reaches of the River Spey, *Of Stone and Sky* follows several generations of a shepherding family in a paean to the bonds between people, their land and way of life. It is a profound mystery, a passionate poem, a political manifesto, shot through with wisdom and humour.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

**Merryn Glover** was born in a former Rana palace in Kathmandu and grew up in Nepal, India and Pakistan. Her first major work was a stage play, *The Long Way Home*, which was broadcast on Radio Scotland. She has written three further radio plays for Radio 4 and Radio Scotland. Merryn's first novel, *A House Called Askival* (2014), was published by Freight. In 2019, she was appointed the first Writer in Residence for the Cairngorms National Park.