



MYSTERIES and THRILLERS

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À la recherche d’Alice/In Search of Alice
Sophie Bassignac
(Éditions Denoël, 208 pages, 2009)

Translation sample available

In Search of Alice is a delight that confirms—if not more—all the good one already could have been thinking about Sophie Bassignac.

—*Livres Hebdo*

A charmingly Parisian love story between a quirky tour guide and a police inspector in which bad behavior turns out to be wonderfully good.

Alice is a mother of two and a tour guide at the Louvre. She is also the recipient of an anonymous letter claiming that her husband has a mistress—a famous photojournalist. Alice’s response to the letter, as to many other things, is more than slightly unusual. After reading it, Alice goes to the photographer’s home, speaks to her, and determines that the letter is telling the truth. After inadvertently making a chaotic mess of the house, she ties the photographer to the bathroom faucet . . . and leaves. Then, seized by sudden remorse, mainly out of consideration for the woman’s gorgeous breasts, she returns to untie her. The photographer immediately calls the police. It was a baffling revenge at best, and now Alice sits in the waiting room of a Paris police station. And then the plot thickens . . .

Inspector Picasso recognizes Alice from the past, as a best friend of his wife’s. But that was years ago, and besides, his wife has all but left him. . . The more Picasso listens to Alice—and looks at her—the more deeply he is taken with her. He will have plenty of opportunities to be around her, as he must find out who sent the letter and whether Alice is being followed. Picasso himself follows her to the Loire Valley for her mother’s funeral, looking for clues in what he thinks is a simple investigation, finding instead a taste of fleeting, but true, happiness.

Sophie Bassignac is the author of a celebrated first novel, *Les aquariums lumineux*, which was sold in six countries (Italy: Einaudi; Spain: Grijalbo Mondadori; Poland: Amber; Russia: Atticus; South Korea: Mellon; China: Phoenix). *À la recherche d’Alice* is her second novel.

Enquête sur la disparition d'Émilie Brunet/The Disappearance of Emilie Brunet
Antoine Bello
(Éditions Gallimard, 252 pages, 2010)

*****Short-listed for the Prix Renaudot and the Prix de Flore*****

*****One of Chronicart's top ten books of 2010*****

*****Translation sample available*****

In The Disappearance of Emilie Brunet, critically acclaimed author Antoine Bello has written a tribute to Agatha Christie that is a classic, hardboiled detective novel reminiscent of the psychological thriller movie Memento.

Achille Dunot retired from his career as a police inspector after an accident left him with partial amnesia and short-term memory loss. One of his ex-colleagues, unaware of his condition, asks for help in a new case involving Emilie Brunet, an heiress who did not return home from a hike with her lover. Her husband, Claude Brunet, a famous neuroscientist—and philanderer—is the prime suspect in the case. Brunet, however, is in the hospital, having been beaten by the police officer on duty the night he reported his wife's disappearance.

Intrigued by Brunet's personality, Dunot decides to take the case when he hears that Brunet has lost all of his memory of the day his wife went missing. To work around his own memory problems, Dunot decides to write the steps of his investigation each evening and reread them the next morning. When Dunot and Brunet first meet, Brunet tacitly admits that he committed the perfect crime, and dares Dunot to prove his guilt. For a hard-core fan of Agatha Christie like Dunot, this is the perfect opportunity to test the investigatory methods of the queen of crime. But in this case, the detective is not only the hero, but also the reader and the author of this highly original and delightfully unexpected detective novel. Hercule Poirot might have found his match!

The Disappearance of Emilie Brunet is both a whodunit and a literary critique of Agatha Christie's detective novels. A marvelous read for lovers of English-style mysteries.

Antoine Bello is a French-American author born in Boston, Massachusetts, and currently living in New York City. Bello has won numerous prestigious literary prizes, including the Prix France Culture/Télérama in 2009 for *Les éclaireurs*, and the Prix Novembre for his first novel, *Éloge de la pièce manquante*, released in English by Harcourt in 2003 as *The Missing Piece*.

Groenland/Greenland

Bernard Besson

(Éditions Odile Jacob, 416 pages, 2011)

Translation sample available

With an apocalyptic roar, Greenland's Lauge Koch Kyst region broke off from the mainland and was drifting into Baffin Bay. A gigantic crevasse, hundreds of meters deep, had ripped through the center of the island continent and left a trench covering dozens of kilometers. An invisible axe had sundered the ice cap in two.

—from *Greenland*

A fast-paced thriller about the geopolitics of climate change by a man eminently positioned to write it: the Honorary General Controller of the French National police, former Senior Chief of Staff at the French equivalent of the FBI, an expert in economic and business intelligence, and a prize-winning author of crime fiction.

Bernard Besson's latest thriller starts with the breakup of the Arctic ice cap. The world is riveted by the news. Europe and the East Coast of the United States brace for the tsunami that the rupture of the northern lands will cause.

In the nearby sea, a ship belonging to the French geological research firm Terre Noire is in serious trouble. The crew and scientists are being taken off the ship, but the evacuation is jeopardized by the murder of an important scientist. The why of the murder seems to involve the exploration that Terre Noire was conducting; the who seems to implicate a rival scientific and economic development corporation, the Canadian-based Northland Group. There was a killer on board, and on land another one is roaming the icy peaks with a mission to attack other scientific explorers. What are the connections? And what is the meaning of the catastrophic events that are occurring? Is it economic warfare?

Two former French intelligence officers, John Spencer Larivière and his karate-trained, steamy Eurasian partner, Victoire, attempt to unravel the mysteries and stop the killings with the help of their bisexual computer-genius sidekick, Luc. They discover that in the glacial silence of the great north a merciless war is being waged—a war for control of the natural resources that will power the future of humanity.

***Bernard Besson** is the Contrôleur général honoraire de la police nationale and an expert in economic and political intelligence. He is the author of a number of prize-winning thrillers, including Chien rouge (Editions du Seuil, 2008, winner of the Prix IEC de l'intelligence économique), Main basse sur l'Occident (Odile Jacob, 2010), and of several works of nonfiction, including De l'intelligence des risques à mission de protection (with Jean-Claude Possin, IFIE, 2008) and Introduction à l'intelligence économique (Chlorofeuilles, 1994).*

Mais le fleuve tuera l'homme blanc/And the River Will Kill the White Man
Patrick Besson
(Librairie Arthème Fayard, 496 pages, 2009)

Translation sample available

By one of France's most esteemed authors, Mais le fleuve tuera l'homme blanc is an intricately plotted political thriller that depicts the Congo-Brazzaville of today and the Rwandan genocide.

An executive at an oil company, Christophe Parmentier recognizes a retired spy, Blandine de Kergalec, in the plane taking him to Brazzaville. A fan of anything spy related, he decides to follow her on his arrival. De Kergalec is in the Congolese capital for an ultimate and lucrative mission: organizing the assassination of Jean-Pierre Rwabango, a Hutu priest who actively participated in the genocide.

During his one-week stay, Christophe will meet a large cast of characters, including Tessy, a young Congolese woman who was raped 13 times during the 1994 events; Pouchkine, a mulatto and father of Tessy's younger son, Elena; Pouchkine's mother, a Russian who has been living and doing business in the Republic of Congo for 20 years; Bernard Lemaire, her business partner and lover; Joshua of the Tutsi secret services; Angèle and Charles, siblings of Jean-Pierre Rwabango; and Tendresse, the gorgeous Tutsi girl who escaped from the genocide. At different levels, all become involved in this act of revenge.

With a narrative interspersing flashbacks and giving a voice to each of his characters, Besson creates a fascinating portrait of a Sub-Saharan Africa where each considers the other as an endless source of legends, mysteries, and occult powers.

Mais le fleuve tuera l'homme blanc takes elements from the spy novel, the psychological thriller, the love story, and the adventure tale, even as it clarifies one of the darkest chapters of African history.

Patrick Besson published his first book at 17 and has since published a total of 40 books, including *Dara*, which was the winner of the *Prix de l'Académie Française* in 1985, and *Les Braban*, winner of the *Prix Renaudot* in 1995. He is also a journalist for leading French newspapers *Le Figaro*, *L'Humanité*, and *VSD*.

Comme des larmes sous la pluie/Like Tears in the Rain
Véronique Biefnot
(Éditions Héloïse d'Ormesson, 336 pages, 2011)

Translation sample available

Ambitious and well-written, Véronique Biefnot's first novel, *Comme des larmes sous la pluie*, is a beautiful story that deserves to be told.

—*Le Soir*

With this ambivalent but romantic love story, [the author] mixes realism and fantasy, proving that self-renewal is always possible. Emotions guaranteed!

—*Page des Libraires*

Like Tears in the Rain, a confident debut novel by Véronique Biefnot, is part love story, part thriller, and completely engrossing. The intriguing story, which unfolds in Brussels, echoes the infamous kidnappings of Jaycee Dugard and Austrian schoolgirl Natascha Kampusch.

Naëlle is a beautiful, quiet, and mysterious young woman working in a fabric store in Brussels. Her work brings her into contact with Celine, an interior decorator, who befriends her and helps her broaden her life.

Celine and her husband are also friends with Simon Bersic, a successful writer and a single father. Simon lost his wife over a decade before, but until he meets Naëlle he has not yet been able to love again. Their growing love turns both of their lives around. Life seems quite wonderful . . . until the lovers become entangled in a sordid kidnapping that shakes Belgium and seems likely to pull them apart. Simon, however, finds the courage to confront an unbearable situation in order to save Naëlle and their love.

Like Tears in the Rain is a tale of loss, survival, and love. It is also an intense thriller whose forward movement is punctuated by the voice of a child, whose story unfolds as a sequence of narratives woven from the tales of others. The chemistry between the players creates a gem of a novel that will haunt readers long after the story's end.

Véronique Biefnot is a comedian, a painter, and a director who lives in Brussels. Like Tears in the Rain is her first novel.

Mathématiques Congolaises/Mathematics in the Congo

In Koli Jean Bofane

(Éditions Actes Sud, 317 pages, 2008)

***** Winner of the Grand Prix Littéraire de l'Afrique Noire 2009*****

*****Translation sample available*****

When Celio is orphaned, he discovers in his father's belongings an old math textbook. He delves in, teaching himself and turning to the book as some would to the bible, trusting that it will help him find a way out of the slums of Kinshasa in the war-ravaged Democratic Republic of the Congo. It turns out that he has a genius for math, and soon people come to him as they would to a fortune-teller, seeking a mathematical formula to solve their life's problems. His prowess is eventually discovered by Tshilombo, a high-ranking government official, who offers him a job at the Bureau of Information and Planning. The official hopes that Celio's mathematical formulas will uncover a way to improve the unpopular government's ratings.

In short order, Celio receives a luxurious new apartment and newfound prestige. However, the human costs of this comfortable existence become clear to him when he discovers that he is working for the same people who are responsible for the disappearance and death of his friends. When Celio is called on to use his talent to orchestrate a fake coup d'état that not only will ruin the opposition but will also deceive his countrymen, he draws the line. This time Celio will use his math skills to outsmart the government, rather than be blindly bought.

A literary political thriller, *Mathématiques Congolaises* offers a vivid portrait of the struggle for justice in contemporary Congo.

In Koli Jean Bofane was born in 1954 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. His previous books include Pourquoi le lion n'est plus le roi des animaux (Gallimard Jeunesse, 1996), among others.

Si la cour du mouton est sale, ce n'est pas au porc de le dire/If the Sheep's Pen Is Dirty, It's Not for the Pig to Say

Florent Couao-Zotti

(Le Serpent à Plumes, 202 pages, 2010)

*****Winner of the 2010 Prix Ahmadou Kourouma*****

Cotonou, one of the largest and liveliest cities in Benin, is the scene of drug deals, prostitution, corruption, and murder in this fast-paced detective novel.

A Lebanese businessman named Smain is under investigation for the torture and murder of the former Miss Benin, a prostitute named Saadath. Her mutilated body is found on a Cotonou street by two tough inspectors, Kanakou and Santos Guidid. They are eager to solve her murder, though perhaps not as eager as Samuel Dossou Kakpo, a retired police officer turned private detective.

In the bustling nightlife of the port city, all theories about the murder lead to a suitcase full of cocaine. Money, treachery, and violence abound as Couao-Zotti weaves an occasionally humorous but primarily hard-boiled story of murder and mayhem. In the tangled resolution, will the dead woman's friends get their revenge? What happens to the suitcase? And will Smain, the prime suspect, remain untouchable?

Florent Couao-Zotti is a major new voice of Francophone literature. After teaching French in Benin for several years, he became a journalist and was the editor-in-chief of several newspapers. He has published one play, several novels, and compilations of short stories, including Poulet-bicyclette et Cie (Gallimard, 2008). Si la cour du mouton est sale, ce n'est pas au porc de le dire is his first mystery.

Satan Lake
J&G Dryansky
(Éditions Actes Sud, 304 pages, 2010)

*****Foreign rights to previous novel sold in 11 countries*****
*****Original manuscript in English*****

J&G Dryansky's latest novel has that seductive combination rarely found in fiction these days—powerful suspense, emotional depth, and real entertainment. Which, once you start reading, makes *Satan Lake* diabolically difficult to put down.

—Alan Furst

A dark and clever coming-of-age novel about two teenagers, a series of high crimes, and punishment, Satan Lake skillfully combines horror, hope, and even humor to tell a story that brings to mind The Virgin Suicides and American Beauty.

Things couldn't be worse for Angie and Ross, two 14-year-old friends. Angie's parents are recently divorced, and though her father has custody of her, he forces her to spend the summer with her mother because he is too "busy" in Manhattan having an affair with his 18-year-old intern. Her mother has moved back to her hometown in upstate New York and is also too "busy" with her newfound sexual freedom to care much about her daughter. Angie takes a summer job at her Uncle Vinnie's pizzeria. Come the end of her workday, Angie seldom has a home to return to; her mother needs the house for "parties" and often locks Angie out.

Her only friend is Ross, who works with her at the pizzeria. He is the son of the town's police chief—and has problems of his own. Ross's mother has a terminal illness and only a short while to live, and his father Will is on a hunt for a killer who repeatedly manages to sneak up on people during the sex act. When the local librarian is shot during an S&M session, the town manager sends for help the police chief doesn't want—and that's only the beginning. . . .

Twenty-five years later, Angie tells how she fell in love with Ross and about their unforgettable journey to *Satan Lake*. The story of the murder investigation is told in a parallel narrative that includes Will's mentally ill brother Charles, Thurston, a local murder suspect, and a town that keeps its nasty secrets carefully hidden.

Gerry Dryansky is the senior European correspondent of Condé Nast Traveler, and Joanne Dryansky is a screenwriter. Both are native New Yorkers who moved to Paris in the mid-1980s. This husband-and-wife team wrote Fatima's Good Fortune, which was published to critical acclaim in 2003 by Miramax in the United States and Hutchinson in the United Kingdom. Gerry has published two other novels, Other People (Saturday Review Press/E.P. Dutton, 1973) and The Heirs (Putnam, 1978).

Babel Minute Zero
Guy-Philippe Goldstein
(Éditions Denoël, 638 pages, 2007)

*****Translation sample available*****
*****Rights sold in Greece, Israel, and Romania*****

The one book you need to read this year!

-The Huffington Post

An extraordinary political thriller!

-Le Monde

A brilliant first suspense novel by a young French author living in the United States.

The unexplained murder of a Chinese journalist in broad daylight during a pro-democracy riot has China on the brink of civil war. The secretary general of the Communist party calls for martial law, escalating the violence and opening the door to a power grab by elegant and progressive Prime Minister Hu Ronglian. Ronglian suggests accusing Taiwan of plotting the journalist's death, at once justifying military action and drawing a mystified United States into negotiations. Meanwhile, beautiful CIA operative Julia Tod-Smith has been assigned the task of uncovering the secret behind a mysterious and suspicious Siberian Web domain. To begin with, she must find out more about a certain elderly German man whose name, Alberich, has just turned up at a hospital in Berlin.

A diplomatic puzzle reminiscent of the works of Robert Littell, putting into play the rivalry between China and the United States in a high-stakes, high-tech world.

Guy-Philippe Goldstein is thirty-two years old and works in New York as a consultant. He is a graduate of France's prestigious HEC and has an MBA from Northwestern University. Babel Minute Zero is his first novel.

Tu ne jugeras point/Judge Not
Armel Job
(Éditions Robert Laffont, 285 pages, 2009)

Small-town French life is skillfully brought to life by Armel Job in Judge Not. In this newest novel, Job weaves an intricate and suspenseful tale of the investigation of a kidnapping that probes the sometimes fine line between truth and falsehood.

Denise Desantis left her youngest son, David, alone in his stroller on the sidewalk as she ran inside a shop for a quick errand. When she returned, just a moment later, he was missing. The investigation of the kidnapping shocks the small town's tight-knit community, especially when it

becomes clear—to the horror of the Desantis family—that Denise is the primary suspect. The lives of Denise and her husband are scrutinized by the investigator, Judge Conrad, a cold-hearted and insensitive man. The judge first forces Denise into a painful disclosure of every step of the day of the disappearance and then pries deep into the Desantis family’s life. When he interviews witnesses, they produce contradictory stories regarding the day of David’s kidnapping, and Conrad becomes more certain of Denise’s guilt. His relentless hunt eventually exposes some shocking lies Denise has told, some dark secrets she has hidden—but has he come closer to the truth? Conrad’s witch hunt of an investigation into David’s kidnapping finally forces Denise’s hidden history to surface . . . but it also brings to light the town’s secrets.

*Since publishing his first novel in 1995, **Armel Job** has written nine books and won notable prizes in France and Belgium, including the Prix du jury Giono in 2005 for *Les Fausses Innocences* and the Prix de la Personnalité Richelieu in 2007. Job, a teacher of classical literature and director of a high school in Belgium, writes novels that focus on daily life yet explore the unspoken and the unexpected in society and politics.*

Le jeu du pendu/Hangman

Aline Kiner

(Éditions Liana Levi, 238 pages, 2011)

*****Translation sample available*****

A small village in the Lorraine seems peaceful and, unless one has a long memory, an unlikely setting for violence. But there are bodies here . . . bodies of young girls. As the police investigate, they find that the town that seems so innocent is full of old wounds—of war, of simmering hatreds, and, underneath it all, of the mines. Could the rifts in the landscape and the population be deep enough to hide murder?

December 2004: Police Commander Simon Dreemer is posted from Paris to the Regional Criminal Investigations Unit—the SRPJ—in Metz. He has hardly settled in before the body of a seventeen-year-old girl is found in a crevasse in a neighboring village. The corpse has been intricately bound with rope. The following day, a curious pile of twigs is discovered in the local cemetery at the foot of a statue of Dieu Piteux, an image common in the Lorraine, which depicts the body of the crucified Christ bound with ropes. And then another girl dies.

Working with Lieutenant Jeanne Modover, a native of the area, Dreemer learns of the dark side of this apparently tranquil region. Working together, Dreemer and Modover delve into the minds and memories of the men and women who were there when everything began to go wrong. Everything in the area, not just the old iron mines, goes deep beyond the surface. The first girl’s body was found, for example, in the same spot where, in 1944, members of the Resistance hung a man they suspected of being a collaborator.

Aline Kiner’s suspenseful and rich narrative re-creates the stifling atmosphere of a small village determined to keep its secrets but unable to keep them buried; a small village that suffers from

the ghosts of war and ghosts of the mines. *The Hangman* displays solid and imaginative plotting of a crime nested in social and historical reality and introduces two attractive investigators.

Aline Kiner works for the magazine *Sciences et Avenir*. She has previously written *La Cathédrale*, published by *Presses de la Renaissance* in 2004. The daughter of a miner, she grew up in the Moselle region of France, in a village similar to the one in *The Hangman*, her first crime fiction.

Garden of Love

Marcus Malte

(Éditions Zulma, 317 pages, 2007)

*****Translation sample available*****

One day, Alexander Astrid, an alcoholic cop, devastated by the death of his wife and two sons, receives a thick anonymous manuscript entitled “Garden of Love” in the mail.

The story rings a bell. It is his own life he is reading about, dissected by a connoisseur whom Astrid recognizes rapidly as Ariel Dayms, principal suspect in a series of unsolved crimes. A real Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Dayms is Matthieu by day, Ariel by night. He seeks the woman who will evoke the dead sister he wasn't able to save, and he is ready to kill to fulfill this fantasy.

Astrid, distressed by the manuscript, attempts to interrogate Dayms but finds him dead, by suicide, in his house. Persuaded that the document is an ultimate act of revenge, he runs it by the only person left who could help him: his sister-in-law, Marie.

This gripping and Machiavellian yet lyrical novel begins like a traditional *roman noir*, sucking the reader into a kaleidoscope of characters and their destinies. Three women, three men. Who is who? Who did what? Where does fiction begin, and where does it end?

Marcus Malte, born in 1967, lives in France and is the author of fifteen books, including novels, short stories, and children's books.

Complots mathématiques à Princeton/The Princeton Conspiracy

Claudine Monteil

(Éditions Odile Jacob, 288 pages, 2010)

*****Full English translation available*****

Parisian political scientist Charlotte Cavagnac is ravishing, romantic, and relentless in this, the first in a series of transcontinental thrillers in which intelligence between the two continents plays an important part.

Princeton, Charlotte thought, would be a calm place to finish her book on economic warfare. It was convenient that her father, Jean-Claude Cavagnac, a world-famous mathematician and winner of the Fields Medal, was teaching in Princeton at the Institute for Advanced Studies. But upon Charlotte's arrival, Cavagnac disappears. His body is found in Lake Carnegie. Is it a suicide? Murder? What for? Could it be jealous colleagues? A jilted student? Or was he working for a superpower and on the verge of discovering a strategic formula?

The CIA, FBI, and French secret service are roiled. What if the killing was an act of revenge implicating France and the United States? From the Elysée Palace to the White House all eyes are on the investigation. The French ambassador arrives from Washington D.C. Could Charlotte and her father be French spies?

The FBI investigation is led by Michael Taylor. Charlotte, devastated but supported by her childhood friends—the “Cape Cod clan”—answers Taylor's questions but soon starts asking questions of her own. She talks to her father's former lover, Elizabeth, and uncovers some odd and confusing things: There is a note referring to a casino in Atlantic City taped to the inside of the cat-litter tray; two bartenders with no apparent relation to each other wear the same blue watches. There are also Cavagnac's former students who are now CEOs on Wall Street. Had Cavagnac made a discovery that would give their companies a competitive advantage?

And what about Charlotte's godfather, a prestigious American mathematician, who is also an undercover agent for the CIA known to several U.S. presidents? Did he betray his best friend for the sake of his country and for military purposes? What about Cavagnac's contributions to NASA's work on military satellites?

Charlotte shares her findings with Michael Taylor, and they begin a tight collaboration that goes beyond the professional. As they delve deeper into the mystery, Charlotte learns that little is what it seems.

From the quiet tree-lined streets of Princeton to the high-security offices of Washington, D.C., from Wall Street to Houston and the casinos of Atlantic City, Charlotte discovers worlds united by greed, desire, and revenge, and plots that threaten not only the upper echelons of academia but also the diplomatic relations between two countries.

Claudine Monteil is a French historian with a background in diplomacy. A previous book, The Beauvoir Sisters, was published in the United States by The Seal Press in 2004. She divides her time between the United States and France.

Qui a tué l'ayatollah Kanuni?/Who Killed the Ayatollah Kanuni?
Näiri Nahapétian
(Éditions Liana Levi, 278 pages, 2009)

*****Spanish rights sold to Alianza Editorial*****

*A debut novel and first of a series, **Qui a tué l'ayatollah Kanuni?** takes us behind the scenes of political and religious Iran.*

Narek Djamshid was just a child during the Islamic Revolution, when he and his father fled the country. In 2005, just a few weeks away from the Iranian presidential election and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's surprise victory, Narek returns to discover his lost roots and begin a career as a journalist. One evening, he escorts Leila Tabihi, a friend of his late mother and a celebrated "Islamic feminist" as well as a candidate for the presidency, to meet the Ayatollah Kanuni, a high-placed judge also known as the Butcher of Mashad. When they arrive at his office, they discover that he has been murdered, his lifeless body lying on the floor, and they don't have a chance to say a word in their defense before they are arrested and sent to the infamous Evin prison.

Thanks to Leila's connections, and in exchange for her promise to withdraw her candidacy, they are let go. Once outside, they both try to discover who killed the Ayatollah Kanuni, each following their own leads. Tracing evidence all the way back to the foundations of the Islamic republic, their investigations reveal the secret activities of a religious foundation and its connections to Iran's oil industry. Narek will also discover the circumstances of his own mother's death in the aftermath of the 1979 revolution.

*Näiri Nahapétian was born in Iran in 1970, grew up in Paris, and returned to her country as a correspondent for French newspapers. **Qui a tué l'ayatollah Kanuni?** is her first novel.*

Saturne/Saturn
Serge Quadruppani
(Editions du Masque, 262 pages, 2010)

La disparition soudaine des ouvrières/The Sudden Disappearance of the Worker Bees
Serge Quadruppani
(Editions du Masque, 219 pages, 2011)

"To understand the success of Italian Noir in France, one must first look at Quadruppani: He is the French voice for Camilleri, Carlotto, Evangelisti. And it is only now that his books have been translated into Italian and that we can appreciate the great literary value of his work, and his role as a bridge between these two worlds."

—*La Repubblica*

Quadruppani's noir mystery series—already celebrated in France—features Police Inspector Simona Tavianello. She is known for her anti-Mafia work, and for her compelling combination of sharp humor and fierce practicality—both necessary in the convoluted world of today's Italian justice system.

Saturne/Saturn

*****Winner of The Reader's Award, Quais du Polar–20 Minutes*****

*****Short-listed for the Prix du Polar Européen*****

*****Rights sold in Italy and Greece*****

The reader is carried away by the force of the narration and the numerous twists and turns in this novel to be devoured in one gulp.

—*Le Canard Enchaîné*

Saturn is a sure success.

—*Le Monde*

Many of the bold-faced names of Rome are gathered at Saturnia, an exclusive thermal spa. Hoping to find peace and relaxation on a sunny afternoon is an upscale family, an adulterous couple followed by a private detective, and a lesbian couple. A man suddenly opens fire, killing three people and wounding several others before making his escape.

Simona Tavianello, a famous anti-Mafia prosecutor, takes charge of the investigation. She is not, however, the only one interested in solving the murders. The victims' relatives gather around the private detective Cédric Rottheimer and create a victims' support group they call "Truth and Justice for Saturnia." Also interested in finding some basic truths is the killer who, to escape being blackmailed, needs to discover who really hired him.

The three murders are soon followed by others. Simona finds that, as usual in Italy, nothing is straightforward. The search for the underlying motive for the murders becomes chaotic: Complex interests are at play, and each individual turns out to be a pawn in a larger game of chess. There's a very large sum of money involved—money that has been acquired in a most dubious manner—and the Mafia, screen companies, and even the government all want a share.

With humor and pragmatism, Quadruppani realistically portrays the state of the Italian justice system today, a system caught between the interests of a corrupt government, unscrupulous financial institutions, and, of course, the Mafia.

La disparition soudaine des ouvrières/The Sudden Disappearance of the Worker Bees

In this second volume of the Simona Tavianello series, Serge Quadruppani concentrates on a less discussed side of contemporary Italy: the rise of militant environmentalists. Naturally the tale is complicated by political corruption and unsolved murders.

On vacation with her husband in an idyllic Italian valley, Police Inspector Simona Tavianello stops at the local beekeeper's shop to buy some honey, but instead she finds a body lying in the entrance. Tavianello tries to avoid involvement—she is, after all, off-duty. But when she realizes that the murder weapon is her own gun, what can she do but take charge?

The victim was an engineer at the controversial agri-food research center for Sacropiano, a biotechnology company that has been accused of developing pesticides that are making the bees in the region disappear. At the same time Simona found the body, the local beekeepers were nearby organizing a militant sit-in to protest the company's practices. And on the floor near the corpse was a tract entitled, "The Bee Revolution." Simona Tavianello's investigation gets her caught between the radical environmentalists and the powerful industrialists who are allied with the police. That would be complication enough, but she also needs to deal with the wounded ego of Cacabonda, the local *carabinieri*, who is the one officially in charge of the investigation.

With her sharp humor and spot-on observations of current events in Italy, Tavianello not only solves the murder, but also discovers the intriguing reason behind the disappearance of the bees.

Serge Quadrupani is a renowned author of militant crime novels and a translator from Italian (authors Camilleri, Evangelisti, De Cataldo, Carlotto, Fois, and more). He is a regular contributor to Le Monde diplomatique and is director of the Italian collection at Editions Métailié.

L'envers du monde/The World In Reverse

Thomas Reverdy

(Éditions du Seuil, 264 pages, 2010)

New York is the real hero in this gripping novel that boldly approaches the 9/11 tragedy.

New York City, August 2003. Two years after 9/11. The body of a newly murdered man is discovered at the Ground Zero site. No ID is found, but the corpse is identified as that of an Arab man working on the site, a devout Muslim who prayed during his breaks.

In charge of the investigation is FBI Captain O'Malley. His inquiries take him to downtown Manhattan and the tough neighborhoods of Coney Island as he questions witnesses and suspects. He talks with Candice, the Brooklyn-born, red-haired waitress; Pete, the overweight and racist ex-cop turned Ground Zero tour guide; and Simon, the French writer and guest teacher at NYU.

The prime suspect is Pete, who in the prior week got drunk in the bar where Candice works, and had a fight with the murder victim. Could he have killed him, thinking him to be a terrorist? And why won't Candice, who was there during the fight, fully cooperate with the police?

All the central characters have a link with the World Trade Center attacks. Candice lost her beloved husband, Gregg, who worked in one of the towers; Pete was working nearby and tried,

to no avail, to provide real help; Simon is studying the impossible grief of the family and friends of those who died that terrible day. History is very much a part of the mystery, but the living city is the most important part of the story.

L'Envers du monde combines elements of suspense and tragedy with honesty, tenderness, and awe.

Thomas Reverdy was born in 1974. He is the author of *La Montée des eaux* (2003), *Le Ciel pour mémoire* (2005), and *Les Derniers feux* (2008, *Valéry-Larbaud Prize* recipient), all published by *Le Seuil*.

Le Testament syriaque/The Syriac Testament

Barouk Salamé

(Éditions Payot et Rivages, 522 pages, 2009)

*****Rights sold in Italy, Brazil, and Spain*****

*****Translation sample available*****

Le Testament syriaque is an explosive thriller—and a cry against religious ignorance—that involves an ancient sacred manuscript, the world and underworld of collectors, Islamic militants, and, of course, a beautiful secret agent.

Paul Mesure, a journalist, has just returned to Paris from Timbuktu, where he found, by chance, an ancient Syriac—old Aramaic—manuscript. Broke, he expects to resell it easily, but he has not factored in the bizarre behavior of the wealthy amateur collectors of such relics. He finds out that they form a worldwide subculture that keeps track of coveted items, especially when there's money to be made.

As soon as word about the Syriac Testament gets out, bodies begin to pile up, including those of Paul's best friends and neighbors. He knows that there are people—even seemingly civilized people—who will kill to get the manuscript. But why are secret agents from different countries, including Algerian Islamic militants, trying to track him down? He cannot decipher the Syriac Testament but assumes that it must contain something that gives it more than simple commercial value. Could it be Mohammed's testament, an early version of the Koran, or even a lost gospel?

Out of fear, curiosity, and a desire for revenge, Paul and his girlfriend, Sonia, try to investigate on their own, but the police soon become involved. The matter is handed over to police chief Sarfaty, a philosopher-investigator well versed in Middle Eastern culture. The murder investigation takes Sarfaty deep into the origins of Islam, with its hidden enigmas and traditions of encoded texts. He thinks that he understands . . . but what he doesn't know is that a brilliant Pakistani beauty is working behind the scenes, unafraid of leaving a trail of blood as she tries to return the sacred text to its country of origin.

Barouk Salamé is of Franco-Arab descent and is an expert in the philosophy of religion and in hand weapons. *Le Testament syriaque* is his first novel. The series continues with his new novel *Arabian Thriller* (Éditions Payot & Rivages, March 2011).

Fakirs

Antonin Varenne

(Éditions Viviane Hamy, 283 pages, 2009)

*****Translation sample available*****

Fred Varga's publisher [Viviane Hamy] has found a promising young author.

—*Le Figaro*

Set in the dark and hopeless Parisian criminal underworld, Fakirs is a detective novel written with a very fine eye for detail.

Alan Mustgrave, an American veteran of the Gulf and Iraq wars, dies during an S&M show in a Parisian nightclub. His death has been called a simple if ugly accident, perhaps a suicide, but John Nichols, his longtime friend and compatriot, is not convinced. Asked to identify the body, he leaves his tepee in the South of France, bringing undisclosed documents concerning his friend's past. He is greeted in Paris by a vicious attack that only reinforces his suspicions and strengthens his desire to learn the truth.

Despite the clear danger, Nichols begins to investigate and finds a cast of strange and sinister characters: the uptight Frank Hirsh, who was in love with Mustgrave and works at the American embassy; Ariel, the owner of the S&M club who is lesbian and alcoholic; Patie the painter; Bunker, just out of prison, working as a park keeper, and generally accompanied by Mesrine, his dog; and of course the French police. In charge of the case is Guérin, a brilliant but troubled police officer who has just been transferred to the department that handles suicides. He works hard, but each day he gets bogged down with conspiracy theories about some suicides he finds highly suspect. He has an assistant, Lambert, who is both shy and useless.

Antonin Varenne has a master's degree in philosophy. He traveled for years before returning to Paris, where he now dedicates his time to writing. He is the author of two previous novels published by *Toute Latitude*: *Le Fruit de vos entrailles* (2006) and *Le Gâteau Mexicain* (2007).

Les invisibles/The Invisibles

Martin Winckler

(Fleuve Noir, 280 pages, 2011)

Widely acclaimed for The Case of Doctor Sachs, centered on a provincial French physician, Martin Winckler now turns his hand to a remarkable crime novel set in Montreal. The Invisibles takes Dr. Lhombre from France to Canada, where he becomes involved with murder, violence, and a unique view of the province of Quebec and its indigenous tribes.

Doctor Charly Lhombre needs a change from his medical practice in a small French town, so when he is offered a sabbatical position in the Center of Ethical Research at the University of Montreal, he quickly accepts. He arrives at the Center to find a thriving environment generously funded by its wealthy patron, Oscar Lachance. Everyone is delighted to welcome the doctor, and his colleagues are eager to explain to him the work of the Center and the power struggles and romantic entanglements within the team. They cannot, however, explain some strange events that have been happening in a shelter run by the University for Cree Indians living in the city.

Dr. Lhombre's plans for a quiet sabbatical go awry with a string of violent events: three defenseless, homeless Cree are attacked, and someone breaks into Oscar Lachance's apartment and tries to kill him. While Dr. Lhombre looks into the Center's difficult past, he thinks he sees a link between these events and a death that took place three years earlier—the murder of Kathleen Cheechoo, a beautiful Cree doctor and Lachance's life partner. Fortunately, Lhombre finds he has a surprising new friend, Rejane Lalumière, and is given a quick but thorough initiation into the Cree culture. Will that be enough to help Charly find the motive of the murders and stop the perpetrator?

The mystery, fascinating in its own right, is made even more interesting by the vivid portrayal of the Province of Quebec, the City of Montreal, and ethos of the Cree Indians.

***Martin Winckler**, born Marc Zaffran in 1955, is a French family doctor, a writer, a translator, and a cultural critic. His best-selling novel, La Maladie de Sachs, was published in English by Seven Stories Press in 2000 as The Case of Doctor Sachs. In 2009, he received an invitation from the Centre de Recherches en Éthique (Center of Ethical Research) at the University of Montreal to work on a research project on medical training.*