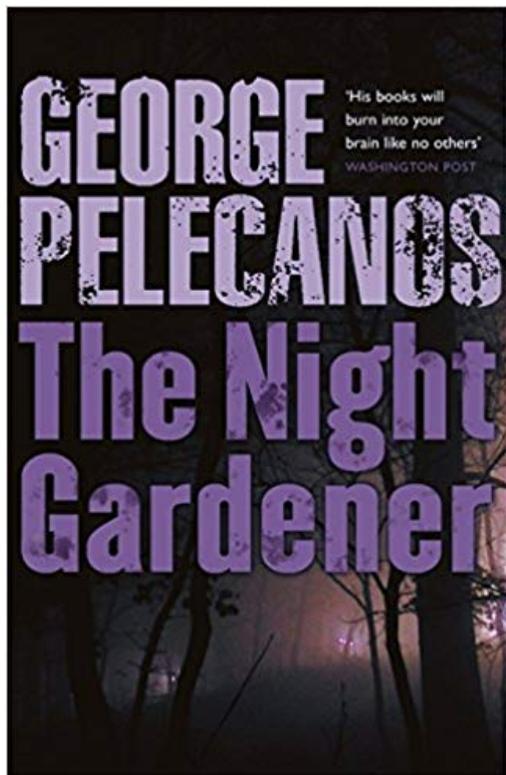


The Night Gardener by George P. Pelecanos



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Reviews of the *The Night Gardener* by George P. Pelecanos

Bodwyn

I enjoy good genre fiction as much as the next person, but this book from George Pelecanos defies genre and really description. It is just a truly fantastic book.

This is my first Pelecanos book, but I've admired his writing on shows such as the Wire and works by contemporaries such as Richard Price and Dennis Lehane. This difficult to read novel puts him at the top of that list of masters however.

The story is not complicated. In 1985, a serial killer drops three bodies in DC, all of them teenagers with Palindrome names. He is called both the Night Gardener for where he dumps his bodies and the Palindrome Killer for his choice of victims.

Fast Forward 20 years and the homicide cop working the case is retired, widowed and recovering from a stroke. Two beat cops on the scene have taken different paths. One has been drummed out of the apartment and leads a lonely existence as a limo driver. The other has worked his way up to be homicide. They are all brought together when a teen named Asa is found dead in another garden.

The story deftly weaves many different plots. Between the police, the retired police and an assortment of gangsters that wind up relating to the main story. Pelecanos is excellent at the police procedural, but his true mastery comes with the dynamics of the characters. Homicide detective Gus Ramone and his family that is dealing with the death of the teen, who his son knew. Asa's father, a man both heartbroken and monstrous. Doc Holiday, the limo driving ex cop who floats uselessly through life until trying to find out who the Night Gardener is.

The book isn't happy and all the ends aren't neatly tied for the reader. Some are and some aren't, much like life itself. That is what sets this book apart from so many others in the genre. It shows life, not a cartoon version of it, just life in all its glory and misery. I give it my highest recommendation.

Nidora

I've read three Pelecanos novels, and I always have the very strong sensation that I'm reading a book written by somebody trained in journalism. I don't know if Pelecanos is or was a journalist, but to me his writing is very newspaper-like. That is, it's full of descriptions that aren't really necessary: perhaps they work in a feature article, but I think there are way too many of them for a novel. In a novel, I don't need to and don't want to get the who-what-when-where-why on every page. In a mystery or police procedural I want a compelling story line and I want it, not the descriptions, to dominate the book. In the end, it's the descriptions and atmosphere that dominate this novel and weigh it down. I remember the descriptions and atmosphere way more than I remember the story line.

Varshav

I purchased this book when it was available on Kindle for \$1 and it proved to be well worth the price. I had never read Pelecanos before so I wasn't sure what to expect. He weaves many characters into this book in a style more akin to Charles Dickens than crime mystery writers. There were a few times when the violence and details became more than I am accustomed to but I stuck with it and was glad of that. The detective Gus Ramone and the ex-cop Doc Holiday are the driving characters. I actually came to like Holiday more than Ramone as the book progressed because he seemed more alive and less stiff than Ramone. I suspect that I will pick up another Pelecanos book sometime soon because this one made me think and care about the characters and, based on some of the reviews, it isn't even one of his best books.

INwhite

First I want to say that I have not read any of his other books, so I didn't have anything to compare it to. Also, I did purchase it because of the price. That being said...

I do see some of the issues that other people said they didn't like. There are an awful lot of characters to keep up with. There's the good cop/bad cop/ex-cop/, the many criminals, etc....It wasn't really anything new and original, you've probably heard it all before.

I do disagree with those who said that there was no plot. If anything, there are 2-3 plots going on at the same time, and perhaps he tried to shove in too many stories into one book.

I know I will sound like a fuddy duddy, and I know it's one of those "gritty police dramas", but I did get tired of the bad language after awhile. I really do not think that all the "f" words add to the greatness of the book, no matter how they might talk in the real world. I also found it funny that they kept asking for "Slice"...started to wonder if he got a payoff from the Cola company for each time he mentioned it's name, lol.

For those who said that the Palindrome issue was never solved, it was in the last chapter, along with whodunit.

Despite a few things (like those mentioned above) being a little distracting to me, I still enjoyed it enough to finish the book, and still wanted to know whodunit at the end, which I think is important. If by the middle of the book you are not sure you can finish it, and no longer care whodunit, that's a bad sign. I do think he put in a lot more time in all the beginnings to the stories though, and then kinda rushed the ending.

I do not know if I will purchase any of his other books, but would be willing to purchase any of them that are offered at a discount.

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