



The Discourtesy of Death

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An anonymous letter sent to Larkwood's Prior accuses Peter Henderson, an academic celebrity renowned for daring ideas, of a grotesque murder: the calculated killing of Jenny, his disabled partner, believed by everyone to have died peacefully two years previously from a sudden attack of cancer.

But for this letter there is no evidence, no suspect and no crime. Time has moved on. Lives have been rebuilt. Grief and loss are tempered by a comforting thought: a paralysed woman, once an acclaimed dancer, had died quickly and painlessly, spared a drawn out illness; a life marked by agonising misfortune had come to a merciful end.

But now Anselm has been told the truth behind the soothing lie. He must move cautiously to expose the killer and the killing. He must think of young Timothy, Jenny and Peter's son. A boy who is still learning to live without his mother.

And so Anselm begins his most delicate investigation yet, unaware that Jenny's adoring father is also thinking of Timothy's future; that this urbane former army officer is haunted by the memory of torture and shoot-to-kill operations in Northern Ireland; that he remains capable of anything, if he thinks it's for the best; that he has set out to execute Peter Henderson.

Death, dying and killing, however, were never so complicated.

The Discourtesy of Death Details

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From Reader Review The Discourtesy of Death for online ebook

Phil Lawless says

This book starts as a rather simple mystery, but quickly devolves into a question of who committed a murder and why. The story's orientation keeps changing all the way up to the end, at which we have to face a lot of the ambiguities of our lives, which embody the very mysteries of our own lives. Well worth reading.

Shauna says

Did not finish. I would have been interested in exploring the moral dilemmas posed in the book but I failed to engage with any of the characters. Having enjoyed two of the previous titles in the series, this one was a huge disappointment.

E says

This is part of a relatively new series featuring Father Anselm, a former barrister who becomes a monk and then later is asked for help solving morally and philosophically difficult cases. I would say that description applies to the case in this book. The "whodunit" aspect of the murder(?) is not particularly difficult to figure out. The rub comes in the moral questions surrounding said action. Here is where I should point out that the author himself is a former monk. He raises the issues well, in a way that "makes you think," as the high "school" "guidance" "counselors" like to say (boy that was a cynical sentence). Brodrick has written five other books in this series. Will I read them? Is there really any doubt?

James says

Embossed on the cover of the book I read was the words, "a Father Anselm Thriller." Father Anselm was indeed the protagonist, though *thriller* was a term loosely applied. This book dragged a little. It barely held my interest for the first two thirds, and I barely kept going. By the end, I was hooked, but it took me to almost the very end. Maybe the last 80 pages before the book kind of fell in line for me.

Granted this is #5 in a series of books I never read, Father Anselm is a criminal lawyer turned monk, who is also a sort of amateur detective. The author of series, William Brodrick, was a monk, turned lawyer, turned mystery writer. The concept sounds interesting, though the particulars of Anselm's life as a monk are there, though there is not the faith wrangling of a Father Brown or the theological depth of Susan Howatch's *Starbridge* series. One of the characters in this novel likes Karl Barth, and Father Anselm's entire reflection on Barth is that he is too complicated for him and that the guy who likes it, has Barth's attention to detail. *Sigh*.

On the Spoiler side, this book wrestles with the complexities of assisted suicide and the ways people make their peace with dying (and how this affects the living).

Monica says

This is an excruciatingly drawn out, painfully nuanced look at the intersections of the legal and moral issues surrounding assisted suicide and mercy killing with occasional moments of crime fiction thrown in. With a political assassination (incomplete, but with dire consequences) in the sidelines as a further embellishment of the moral questions. Much of the time the book is more polemic than plot.

Anselm is called to investigate the truth behind the death of Jenny Goodwin, a young mother – a dancer, paralyzed, and with terminal cancer. The death report cites her cancer, but she had expressed a wish for assisted death. Her family – partner, parents, aunt, uncle, and son are all questioning what happened, devastated, and estranged from each other. The father of her son, an opinionated academic whom the whole family dislikes, is about to be released from prison (an unrelated charge) and Anselm is concerned that someone might kill him, thinking he killed Jenny. It is a reality based fear.

The plot meanders around the issues for 400 pages, which is about 150 pages too many. The sidelines from the past – like the IRA related, almost murder by Jenny's father, and the misfortunes of Anselm's musician partner's parents - which keep popping up, confuse things more than they illuminate, and interrupt the flow of the plot, such as it is.

Brodrick is a talented writer of descriptive passages and Anselm, Mitch and some of the monks are interesting and appealing characters, but the plot is too convoluted by half and the book drags in too many places.

Peter Anderson says

I think William Brodrick has a wonderful grasp of written English - I wish I could write like that!

That said, I found this book rather disappointing. In fact this and the previous book in the Anselm series have not lived up to the standards of the first three in the series. My three star rating is for the writing style, the prose, rather than the plot.

I won't be a "spoiler" so I won't go into the plot in any great detail; to do so would give away most of its details, so thin is it. It suffices to say that it is a rather simple plot that gets Anselm involved in a less than satisfactory or convincing way. I love the character of the Prior (in fact I like all the monastic characters who live at Larkwood) but I can't imagine a "real" prior giving one of his monks carte blanche approval to investigate any and all crimes that seem to impact on the poor and down-trodden of society (my paraphrasing, I'm too lazy to go back into the book and quote the exact words).

So we are off to a bad start. From there we bounce around between Michael's past in Northern Ireland (you will have to read the book to find out who Michael is) and present day happenings in minute detail of the other characters in this book.

Unfortunately, I also found the ending rather unsatisfactory. The plot of this story is clearly about finding

who "murdered" the poor Jenny and that is fine for a crime novel. As I continued to read I was led this way and that, each turn making me realise who was responsible only for the next chapter (or three) to reveal yet another scenario. Again, that's what you expect. Then when you get close to the end the "final" revelation is (I use the word again) unsatisfactory and not very believable. It seems to be against the character of the character concerned (:-(pun intended I'm afraid).

I guess that if there is a volume 6 in the Ansalem series I will give it a go, mainly because I have put all this effort into the five volumes so far. I hope that the author can get Ansalem back on track to something like the original three novels.

Peter Carey's Amnesia is the next book up on my to-read list, I can't wait.

Regards,
Peter

Mary Ellen says

Father Anselm's investigation of the possible murder of a young woman, paralyzed and dying of cancer, involves past personal and national histories as well as multiple murders suspects with varying degrees of probability. I love the way Brodrick weaves so many stories, each of which contribute to the main plot and subplots, all of which provides clues to the identify of the murderer. I wonder about the significance of the title of this book--Is it the lasting impact of Jennifer's death upon her family and friends, preventing them from fully living and forgiving each other?

Kathy Dolan says

I found the subject matter of this story incredibly uncomfortable, and so stayed away from finishing for some time. But this doesn't lessen the incredible power and thought put into this story - it increases it. Not many authors could handle such sensitive issues with such an insight. Beautifully written.

Kimberly Ann says

From Goodreads: "An anonymous letter sent to Larkwood's Prior accuses Peter Henderson, an academic celebrity renowned for daring ideas, of a grotesque murder: the calculated killing of Jenny, his disabled partner, believed by everyone to have died peacefully two years previously from a sudden attack of cancer.

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The book was confusing... jumping from the now to the past to the recent past and back & around again....

Some parts were clear, however, most others were convoluted....

Whom was whom, who died, when, where, why.... made no sense to me.

It would have been fine to stay with who killed Jenny and forget all about her father's past w/ the NRA....

Just like a hallucination and as difficult to follow.

Scott says

An insightful, provocative narrative, wrapped in the comforting cocoon of fiction, on life and the values laced on that most precious of commodities

Eileen says

Great mystery with believable characters. Excellent portrayal of ethical dilemmas within the story.

MRS D C GILES says

When you finish one of Broderick's books you haven't just read a detective story, you have been asked to think about ethical problems. They are thought provoking, and this stays with you long after you finish the book.

Shiela Rozich says

This is more a read about philosophy, psychology and morality than murder or suspense. The book examines in a very sympathetic way motives beyond, beyond motives.

Carey Combe says

I found this; convoluted, pretentious, boring...

Any Length says

A rather complex book. It took me a while to get into and I found it a bit slow moving.

In the end I felt a bit like "one more complication or truth finding session and I'll walk".

It was just a bit long for my liking. But I made peace with it in the end as it all sorted itself out neatly.
