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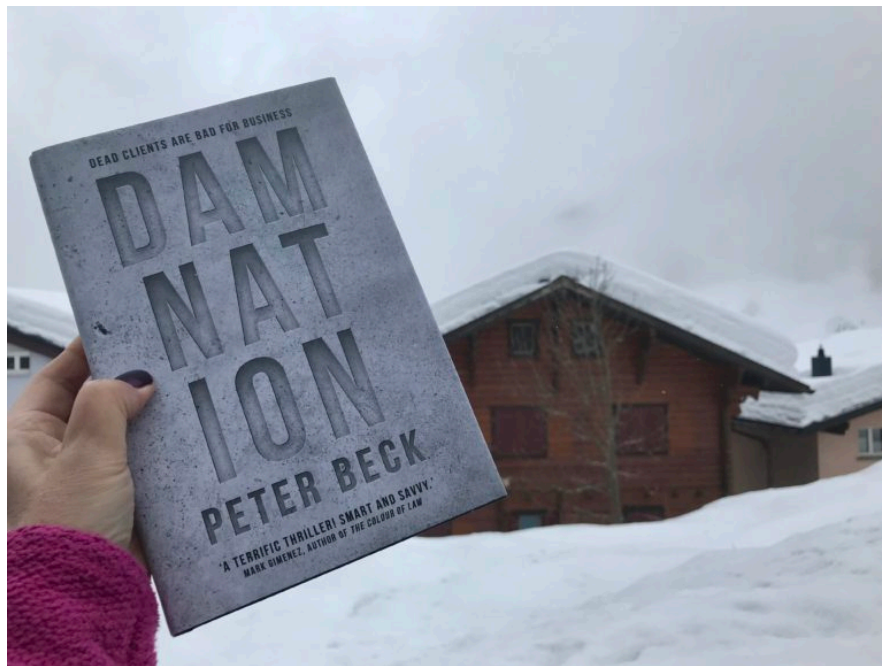
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## A thriller set in the Swiss Alps (plus a piece by the translator...)

12th March 2018

[Damnation](#) by Peter Beck – a thriller set in the Swiss Alps (translated by Jamie Bulloch).

[Damnation](#) is a brilliant thriller, everything a page turner should be... It is firmly set in Switzerland with side excursions to Egypt, Norway, and New England. Tom Winter is head of security at a discrete Swiss private bank. He is embarking on a non-work relationship with Anne, his assistant. She is, though, killed in a helicopter crash in the Swiss Alps along with the pilot and major Saudi investor, Muhammed Al-Bader. Al-Bader is related to the Saudi Royal family and a very important client for the bank. Tom should have met him at Zurich Airport for the helicopter transfer, but sent Anne in his place. He is overcome by both guilt and grief. Both emotions are accentuated when it turns out that the helicopter crash is far from accidental...



Tom sets out to find the truth behind the crash – both for his personal satisfaction, and to protect the bank he works for. He flies to Egypt to meet Kaddour, the head of Orafin – a company raising money to build a nuclear power plant in Egypt... a project in which Al-Bader intended to invest. Kaddour is blown up, and Winter teams up with Fatima Hakim, Kaddour's assistant, to investigate – and to see if the helicopter 'accident' is connected to Kaddour's death. He is thrown together with Fatima. They head for an under the radar investment conference in Norway, and on to New England where they meet with Professor Farmer, the chief executive of Pyramid Investment Partners – a partnership seeking Arab money to invest in global infrastructure projects. Al-Bader had apparently been working with him as well as the bank.

Tom and Fatima return to Switzerland where most of the action in *Damnation* happens. The bank's annual conference is taking place in Interlaken and up on the Jungfrauoch. The bank's CEO, Von Tobler, is in fine form entertaining both senior staff and important clients. Winter has already been 'warned off' his investigations by being thrown into a gorge by a mystery assailant – only to be saved by a bungee rope, by being shot at on a golf course, and by being shot at again when traversing the Trift Glacier suspension bridge with Fatima – but it is around the conference that *Damnation* moves to its frightening finale. Murders most foul, betrayals most devastating. And bravery quite exceptional. Swiss banking, as we know it, can carry on...



The Trift Suspension Bridge Photo: MySwitzerland.com

I read *Damnation* when I was recently in Switzerland, a country I know well. And the book represents quite perfectly the *raison d'être* of TripFiction. An extremely good read with a very firm sense of location. Apart from Interlaken and the Bernese Oberland, Bern and Zurich are strong characters, as is a beautiful restaurant high above Lake Geneva. You can absolutely sense the country you are in. For me, the events that took place on the Trift Glacier suspension bridge were particularly evocative. I do not have a head for heights and my legs turned to jelly just reading Beck's text... I have seen the bridge from afar, and that is quite close enough for me!

[\*Damnation\*](#) is certainly up there with the best thrillers I have read. And luckily it is the first of a trilogy – I really look forward to the next in the series...

**Tony for the TripFiction team**

## **And now over to Jamie Bulloch, for his views on James Bond (!) and the translation of *Damnation* from the original German into English:**

'I grew up a dedicated fan of the James Bond films. I was born three months before *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* received its London premiere, but my first Bond was Roger Moore, who sadly died last year, and *The Spy Who Loved Me* my first 007 film. It is surely one of the best of the entire franchise, but I could be biased. That's because my father had a minor role in the film, as a submariner aboard the vessel captured by Stromberg. He appears in the very first scene, smoking (you were allowed to smoke on board nuclear submarines?) and playing chess, then again in the final battle when he is shot dead by Stromberg's men as Bond leads a force dispatched to recover the submarine.



TF's Tina and Jamie at an event

Fortunately Dad was resurrected in time for *For Your Eyes Only*, in which he played Smithers, Q's assistant. He is seen briefly in the bowels of MI6, wearing a false plaster cast that smashes the head off a dummy. He reprised the role in *Octopussy*, testing out a deadly door knocker, and in another scene giving Bond a lift in a London taxi. Three very fleeting appearances, admittedly, but at least Dad can boast of having been in the same number of Bond films as George Lazenby and Timothy Dalton combined.

I'm pretty sure I would have been a Bond addict even without this personal connection. The thrilling action sequences, the gadgetry, the beautiful girls, the suave charm of our hero, the struggle between good and evil – all of these are pretty standard ingredients of a growing boy's fantasies. And then there were the locations. Bond might be skiing in the morning, back in London for a pre-prandial sherry with M, then whisked away to somewhere exotic in time for an aperitif (vodka martini or a Dom Pérignon '52?) followed by a gourmet dinner (accompanied, perhaps by a Mouton Rothschild '55) and a few hands of *chemin de fer* in the local casino.

I was delighted, therefore, to be asked to translate Peter Beck's [\*Damnation\*](#), which hit the bookshops on 1 March. The novel's protagonist, Tom Winter, might not be British, nor even a spy, but all the elements of a classic 007 storyline are there: a helicopter exploding above the Alps, an international conspiracy, a megalomaniac villain, a psychotic henchman, exotic locations, a breathtaking finale, a dashing hero battling to save the day and a sexy woman on his arm.



An ex-policeman, Tom Winter is head of security of a private Swiss bank and becomes embroiled in the case when his deputy – a woman he’s fallen in love with – comes down in the helicopter along with the pilot and a multi-millionaire sheikh. Winter’s search to uncover the truth behind the crash takes us on a whistle-stop tour of the globe. From the mountains we’re whisked off to Cairo, where our hero meets his new love, Fatima, and dines within view of the pyramids (a nod to *The Spy Who Loved Me*, perhaps?) Our itinerary continues with trips to the Norwegian fjords and New England (with a lobster lunch beside the sea) before Winter and Fatima return to Switzerland, where the thrilling climax takes place.

As readers will see, *Damnation* openly acknowledges its debt to the Bond recipe, but the author has also succeeded in imparting a distinct Swiss flavour to his novel. As in *Montecristo*, by fellow Swiss writer Martin Suter, here the financial–banking system is at stake, and it is hard to imagine another country where a bank’s head of security would assume such a key role. Indeed the rather plodding secret service very much plays second fiddle in this novel. Meanwhile, amongst the set-piece scenes, we’re treated to a mountaintop fondue evening in the company of the bank’s VIP guests – with plenty of schnapps to digest the cheese – a rudely interrupted stroll across a glacier and a tour of a former underground military bunker, now home to a state-of-the-art digital storage system.

Switzerland is thus very much a star player in *Damnation*. Readers who love the thrill and glamour of the Bond books/films, but who are looking for something a little different, will not be disappointed. And this is only the first novel in a trilogy, so there is plenty more to come...

A big thank you to Jamie for this really interesting piece...

You can follow Peter Beck on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and via his [website](#) Do also follow Jamie Bulloch on [Twitter](#).

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