



**Issue 10**  
**Misfortunes, Mayhem & Bloody Murders**



# Misfortunes, Mayhem & Bloody Murders

Season 2 Episode 10, October 22, 2025



## Colophon

Two Chairs in Print is published by David Grigg and Perry Middlemiss. It is based on transcripts of our regular podcast Two Chairs Talking.

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## Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the members of the Wurundjeri Willum Clan and the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which this publication is produced in Mill Park and Hawthorn, Victoria, and we pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

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# Transcript Episode 10

## Introduction

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**David:**

Hello and welcome to episode 10 of the second season of our podcast Two Chairs Talking. My name is David Grigg and I'm usually joined by my co-host Perry Middlemiss. But he's currently travelling around South America, wining and dining, and having what seems to be a fabulous time. Am I jealous? Well, just a bit.

But in Perry's absence, I'm very fortunate to be joined here today by friend of the podcast, Dr. Lucy Sussex, who has kindly agreed to talk with us today about several interesting topics. So Lucy, how are you?

**Lucy:**

I'm fine on this hot Melbourne day, the first one of the season.

**David:**

Yeah. Yes, it's going to be a hot summer, I imagine. Anyway, it's all good for my solar panels, so I can't complain.

**Lucy:**

Okay, good.

**David:**

Lots of nice power going into my battery.

## About Lucy Sussex

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**David:**

Okay, well I thought I should start with a bit of a background on Lucy. I mean many of our listeners will know Lucy. She's been on our podcast several times before. But I just thought others might not know her and it's good to have a bit of a background on people. So I'm sure she'll correct me if I make any mistakes. I've authorised her to correct me if I make any mistakes.

So Lucy is a science fiction and fantasy writer with several novels and many short stories to her name for which she has won several awards. She is also a book reviewer and a distinguished academic with a PhD from the University of Wales. She is currently a Fellow at La Trobe University in Melbourne.

In addition to her fiction, she's published several works of non-fiction. And Perry and I spoke with Lucy several years ago about her book *Blockbuster*, which is about the phenomenal global success of Fergus Hume's 1886 novel *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab*. And just this year she's published with co-



Lucy Sussex.  
Photo Darren James (courtesy of Text Publishing)

author Megan Brown a biography of the Victorian-era crime writer Mary Fortune and her son George, her criminal son George.

So I thought we might begin by asking her about what first drew her attention to Mary Fortune.

## Outrageous Fortunes

### Lucy:

Oh, this goes back yonks because I was then a librarian and the market was a bit tight, so I got a job as a research assistant with Professor Stephen Knight, at Melbourne University. And Stephen was a medievalist, which is partly why I got the job, but he was also working on a history of Australian crime fiction. So he gave me some very interesting work.

I was to go to either the Baillieu Library or the State Library of Victoria and read Australian crime books, to tell if they were any good, or whether they were really bad but interesting. And in the course of this, he said to me, “There’s supposed to be an early woman crime writer called Mrs. Fortune. Nobody seems to know whether that’s who she is or whether that’s a pseudonym or not. Can you look into it?”

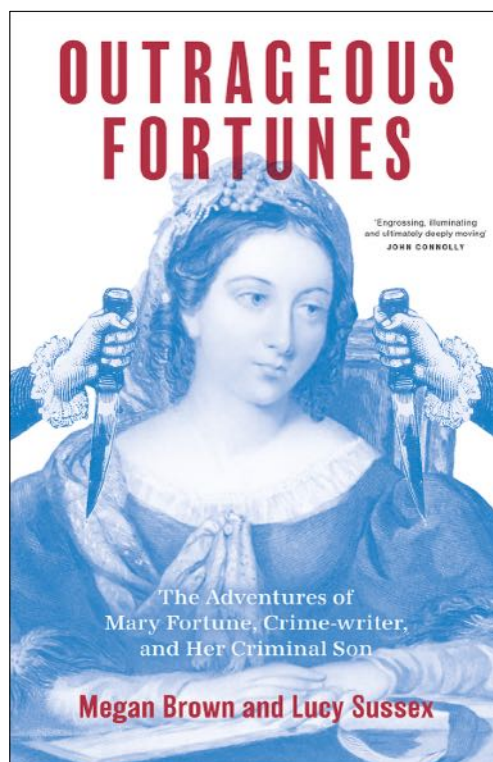
So I did and I discovered that she’d written for a popular fiction periodical, *The Australian Journal*, which lasted from the 1860s to the early 1960s—which is almost unprecedented for an Australian periodical, because they tended to go down the gurgler quickly. She wrote a crime series called “The Detectives Album” under the pseudonym W. W. Nothing was known about her. I started by going into the Baillieu and ordering issues of the *Australian Journal*. I said “The earliest you’ve got”, and from that I discovered that she had also been writing journalism, quite autobiographical too.

From that, and [from] a somewhat unreliable memoir of her life on the goldfields she wrote later, it was possible to cross-reference and check against official records. The starting point was literally nothing except a name, a partial name, and then a lucky guess led to a marriage record: she was Mary Helena Fortune, born in Belfast. She married a policeman called Percy Rollo Brett, so that’s how she knew about crime: she was writing first-person police procedurals, unprecedented for a woman at that time. And this Percy Rollo Brett turned out to be by a later marriage the great-grandfather of historian Judith Brett.

That was the start, but it took a long time to get enough information for a book. And in the meantime, Megan Brown did a PhD on Mary Fortune. We met and I said, “Why don’t we combine forces?”

### David:

Yes.



**Lucy:**

Because apart from anything else, there were something like five hundred crime stories to read, which takes some time. Two eyes, two critical viewpoints helps. And during the writing we discovered a new pseudonym and ninety more stories in the *Herald*.

Her son George was a career criminal and were they mutually influential? Oh yes, they were. He was one reason for her being pseudonymous. Apart from her committing bigamy when she married Percy Brett (which was terribly common in the Australian colonies because divorce was hard to get). George Fortune seems to have been illegitimate, father unknown. And he had an extensive career in crime.

You and I have been to the top of Victoria Street in Richmond and [gone to] Vietnamese restaurants. We pass a coffee shop on the way. Well, in 1885 it was the branch of a bank. George Fortune robbed it along with a gang of other criminals. That was the most famous bank robbery in colonial Melbourne. It stayed in public memory because for years most of the people involved with it kept on getting into trouble, like George.

One was hanged in New South Wales. Another was in a shootout, which killed a policeman. He returned to Victoria, killed another policeman, and then was shot dead.

**David:**

Crikey, sounds as if it was well deserved.

**Lucy:**

George Fortune wasn't a violent crim, unlike these others, but he had a terrible tendency to get into bad company.

By piecing this all together, there was enough material for a book. We also looked at her literary influence. After the book came out I discovered that she was pirated in America, appearing sometimes with a false name attached, and sometimes with the setting changed from Australia to America, as was not unusual.

**David:**

Okay, goodness me.

**Lucy:**

So yeah, it's one of these research subjects you can't really let go of.

**David:**

Yes, it sounds like a very deep well that you can keep on going into.

**Lucy:**

Rabbit holes.

**David:**

I guess that's a better term. And I'm right in thinking, aren't I, that that you were able to identify that some of the works that were published under a pseudonym were actually by Mary Fortune by use of computer analysis of the writing?

**Lucy:**

Yeah, that's true. My brother Roland's a linguist. I put it to him that there was an issue with some early stories which were published completely anonymously, but were consistent with Fortune's style.

And he said, “Oh, allow me to introduce you to Professor John Burroughs at the University of Newcastle” [founder of the Centre for Literary and Linguistic Computing]. John was an early adopter of computer-based comparison of texts, and he would break it down to the level of grammar. Men and women in the 19th century, they wrote differently because women tended not to have as much education, like Jane Austen. Men tended to go—unless they were autodidacts—they would go to grammar schools and have formal rules of prosody beaten into them, literally. So they wrote in a quantifiably different way. John Burroughs took a brother and sister, Henry and Sarah Fielding, who collaborated in the eighteenth century—and could identify who wrote what parts of their text. That is what he did with Fortune at the University of Newcastle. It’s been used recently to identify the different work by Daisy Bates and Ernestine Hill on *The Passing of the Aborigines* (1938) by the biographer Eleanor Hogan [in *Into the Loneliness*, 2021]. This is really interesting stuff.

**David:**

Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

**Lucy:**

And so I was very glad that we were able to do this because it just opened the texts up.

**David:**

Even though it added even more stories for you to read, I guess.

**Lucy:**

Well, there wasn’t too many at this point. The interesting thing was by the time that Megan and I had read through Fortune’s entire oeuvre, as we thought, at least three times, we got very familiar with her style. When we came across what read like a new pseudonym, we could tell without needing the computer, because her voice is so distinctive. We can spot her.

**David:**

It’s all in your brain. Yeah, *you* are the analyst. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Lucy:**

AI versus humans, well, a draw in this case.

**David:**

Indeed.

Well, I can thoroughly recommend the book. It’s a really, really interesting read, which I’ve got a copy here. It’s really quite engrossing to read her story, which has many, many ups and downs, as do the fortunes of her son. And I love the title, *Outrageous Fortunes*, it’s fabulous. Fabulous title.

The other thing we should mention, of course, is that you also published a collection of her stories, which I must confess I haven’t read it yet, but I’ve got it on the shelf and I’m waiting to read it. So I’m looking forward to that.

**Lucy:**

*Nothing But Murders and Bloodshed and Hanging*, which is a quote from her work. It’s published by Steve Connell, who runs Verse Chorus Press. He has a line in vintage crime reprints. There’s a market there, even for stuff that’s quite out of the way.

Steve started with the writer June Wright, whom I interviewed for Stephen Knight. So he reissued June Wright and I did several introductions for him. We

agreed that when Megan and I finished the biography he'd see about publishing a collection of [Fortune's] short stories.

And then we all had the great fun of finding lots of graphic Victorian illustrations which were relevant to the stories. And if you have a look at the book, they're so good, gory and evocative... Visuals are good fun, choosing a cover and doing the rest. So that was the companion volume, and then we had the problem of getting two publishers to talk to each other, which is not always the case.

**David:**

No, no, indeed. That's terrific.

Well, as I say I'm remiss in not having read the short stories yet, but I will get to that.

## Visit to Scotland

**David:**

Now Lucy, the other thing I wanted to talk to you about is that you're just back from an overseas trip to the United Kingdom. And so tell us what you were doing there. You went to an academic conference, is that right?

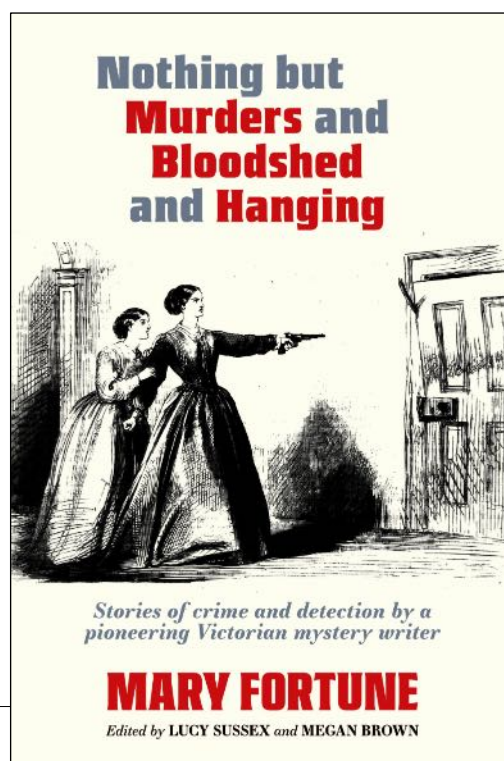
## Undercover Agents Conference

**Lucy:**

I went to a conference at St Andrews University, which is probably known to many people as where the Prince of Wales met his wife. when they were students there. I think it's one of the oldest universities in the UK [founded 1413]. It's an extraordinary site because where I was staying, which was on the shore, you could walk [and] just within a very short distance, there was a ruined castle. And you went a bit further, and there was the ruined cathedral, a monastic foundation. Everywhere you go in Scotland, there's ruins. There's an acute sense of history.

But this conference at this historic university was was on women and crime in the Nineteenth Century,<sup>1</sup> and it was drawing together quite a lot of people. There was Claire Whitehead, who is a professor of languages at St Andrews, and she's interested in looking at women in Russia, Imperial Russia who were contemporaries of Dostoevsky, and who haven't been translated and or not completely translated. And this was an absolute revelation, I'd never heard of them before.

I'd been asked to do a keynote, because they'd read *Outrageous Fortunes*. Despite the fact we hadn't managed to sell the anthology internationally [publishers liked it, but it was "too Australian" unquote]. It is available digitally [with *Nothing But Murders* print-on-demand in Australia, UK and the US]. So I said, Okay, yes, I've done Zoom before and I can do this.



<sup>1</sup> The formal title was Undercover Agents: Women, Crime, and Detection in the Global Nineteenth Century.

And they said, "Well, we may be able to get you there in person. Let us check the budget." I thought, wow, I don't believe this. And it did happen, so I spent something like an insane amount of time on aeroplanes. At Dubai [in transit] I got a text message on my iPhone from them saying, hello, how's your trip going? And then I eventually get to Edinburgh Airport and I hop on a bus, and an hour and a half later I'm in St Andrews, with, of course, jet lag, but you've got to do your stuff.

**David:**

Absolutely.

**Lucy:**

There were three key keynote speakers. One was Sara Lodge, who's written a very interesting book about the histories of female detectives, looking at female top private detectives or women assisting the police in nineteenth century Britain [*The Mysterious Case of the Victorian Female Detective*, 2024].

And Clare Clarke, from Trinity College in Dublin, but sadly, she'd managed to catch COVID, so she wasn't there. But I gave my keynote speech and it was very well received. Then I thought it would be useful to hang around in Scotland, because if you're going all that way, you might as well take a look at the place. I'd done a brief tour in 2019 after the Dublin [SF] Worldcon. I'd really wanted to see Scara Brae in Orkney. So there I was, hopping on a train to Aberdeen and then on a ferry to Orkney, which is Neolithic Central.

## Bloody Scotland

**Lucy:**

This was to fill in time before the second conference, which is much more [commercial] conference, in the sense it wasn't academic: Bloody Scotland, which is held annually in Stirling, a relatively short train distance from Glasgow. And this has been going on for twelve years and it's a bit like a science fiction convention. But it's [geographically] more concentrated, so you've got Tartan Noir, which is Scottish writers, but you're also getting the Scandinavian writers 'cause it's not that far away.

Also getting writers from Iceland who are part of the whole Scandi Noir thing.

**David:**

Yes, there's some very good writers there.

**Lucy:**

But you're also getting some of the people from Europe and a few Americans. And I think I was the only Antipodean there, but there have been people visiting [in the past].

I also went to Perth and stayed with Farah Mendlesohn, who's well known, and her husband Edward James, they're science fiction critics.



But Farah's also a science fiction convention organiser. So she's done several major cons, like World Cons, but she's also doing a con in Perth where she lives—not the Australian Perth—called PictCon, which is later this year.

**David:**

No, no, the Perth in Scotland, yeah. Okay.

**Lucy:**

So I was staying with them. One of the conditions of me going to Bloody Scotland was a deal involving Sisters in Crime Australia, of which I've been a member for many years. They said, Oh, can you be a roving reporter and write reports of what's there? So I got in contact with the organisers. And they said, yes, you can have a press pass, but we'd like you to do some preparatory interviews. You can have somebody famous and you can have have a newbie—in so many words.

I've read a few crime writers from [Scotland] like Ian Rankin. Most of us have read Rankin, most of us have read Val McDermot. But I noticed Denise Mina was in the program, but that she'd also written a book called *Rizzio*. And if you know anything about Scottish history, he was the secretary of Mary, Queen of Scots. And at Edinburgh Castle she was having a dinner party, and a bunch of Scottish lords broke in and murdered Rizzio. with the connivance of her husband, Lord Darnley, and actually held her hostage.

Denise Mina had been asked by a Scottish publisher to do *Rizzio* and of course she put her mind to it. A crime writer knows what you pick out from a story, an existing narrative, and how to make it move like a train, or in this case galloping horses. And it was a terrific read. So I then read another couple of books of hers and liked her stuff immensely. So I said, "Can I have her?"

Now I was looking through the program looking for a newbie. And I thought, let's go for somebody who who's only got one book [less reading!].

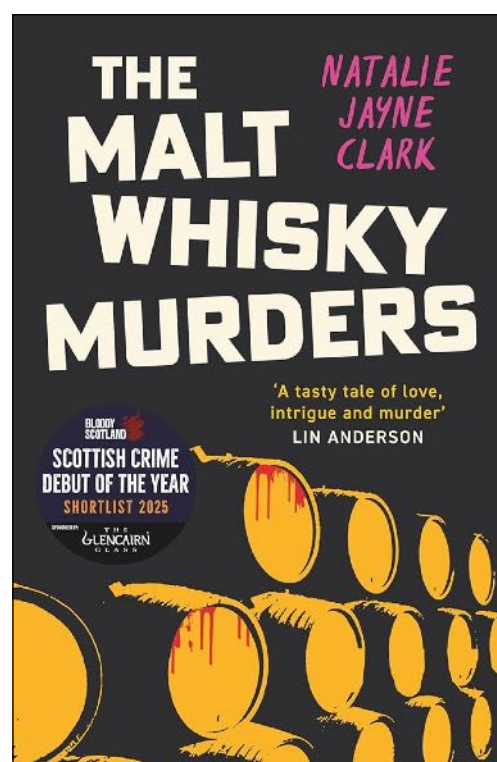
And I spotted a young woman called Natalie Jayne Clark, who'd written a book called *The Malt Whisky Murders*. And I thought, okay, this would go down well with Perry.

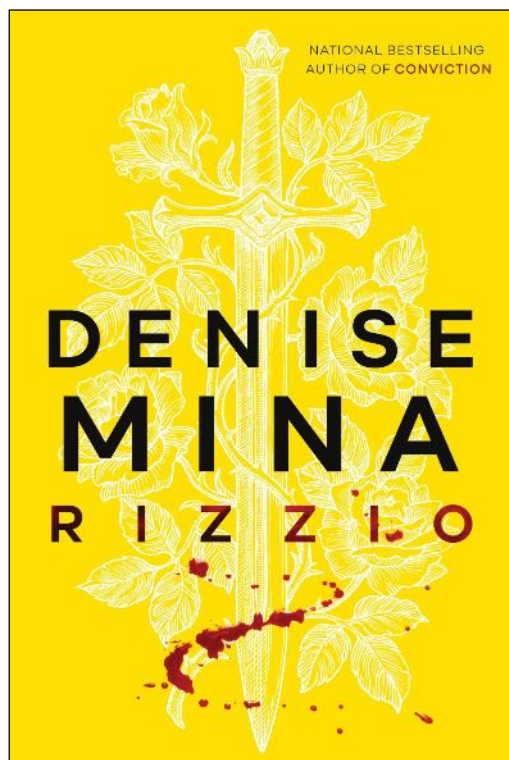
**David:**

Yeah, that's a great title.

**Lucy:**

I interviewed her and she was a very good speaker, via Zoom. And the weird thing was that I discovered that she was living near Farah and Edward, and she knew them from the dog park. Farah and Edward have a basset called Phryne after Phryne Fisher. So Natalie visited, we had a good chat and her book's a ripper. So if you want to know anything about... even if you're not a fan of crime fiction, if you're interested in the whole process of the malt whisky industry, she knows a lot about it. She's a connoisseur. And so at the end of the interview, I asked her to recommend some drops, and she did. And then I had to get Julian to translate the spelling. She wasn't on the program at the Edinburgh Writers' Festival, but





she was the fourth bestseller because with a title like that...

And so I interviewed Denise Mina [via Zoom again] in her kitchen and with her poor husband... I could see his arm reaching to get things out of the fridge because this was early in the morning. And she was a really, really interesting interviewee. Both these interviews [which David helped transcribe] are on the Sisters in Crime website.<sup>2</sup> I also went to Glasgow and met up with Lisa Tuttle, a science fiction writer who just happens to live in Western Scotland and had reasons to be visiting Glasgow.

**David:**

Okay, right.

**Lucy:**

So we we hung out together and it was the first time we'd been able to have an extended conversation, which was great.

I met all sorts of interesting kindred spirits.

And, you know, I was still jet lagged and also had a broken toe, which didn't help.

**David:**

Oh no, yes.

**Lucy:**

Then I got to Bloody Scotland which had the advantage of being really compact. There's the train station with a regular train service. There's also a bus service. It was a short walk to the major venue, which was a pub, a hotel called the Golden Lion. And also a short walk to all their other venues, the Albert Hall, which is the major one. and an Episcopalian church hall. [The other thing about Stirling] is that it has a major tourist attraction in Stirling Castle, which is which is one of the few Scottish castles which has been besieged but never defeated, so it's still pretty much intact.

**David:**

Of course, yes. A formidable fortress.

**Lucy:**

And then you can go down the road and to the Church of the Holy Rude where James the First of England and Sixth of Scotland got crowned at about age thirteen [months], which meant that they passed a crown over his head.

And then you go down down the hill again and there is Bloody Scotland.

The first item I went to was by Catriona Havard, who's an Open University professor, a psychologist. She was talking about the ways that humans and machines make mistakes in facial recognition. Given that AI is based on human knowledge, our shortcomings are therefore reflected onto the AI and [cause] miscarriages of justice. And one of these areas is race. If people are not familiar

<sup>2</sup> Denise Mina interview [here](#) and Natalie Jayne Clark interview [here](#).

with the facial characteristics of [another] race because they don't often interact, they can literally can't tell people apart.

But she was also pointing out miscarriages of justice in which the police try to influence somebody in a lineup, by having the guilty party as the only person wearing a hat, so they're distinctive. Which is in fact who the police *think* is the guilty party.

This of course, goes right back to Mary Fortune and George Fortune because they were doing this sort of thing in the nineteenth century. And in *Outrageous Fortunes*, Megan, researched a Tasmanian case in which George Fortune may or may not have committed a burglary, but the police tried sure as hell to influence the line-up. They showed images of him to the witnesses prior to the lineup where he was wearing a wet coat. which was wet. The burglary happened during a rainstorm, and so the [police] had gone to the house of the other person they arrested and found the coat. "Here George, wear this", and that resulted in a conviction.

So that was the sort of stuff you got at Bloody Scotland, all high quality over three days. There were scads of crime writers there from all denominations. They had three tiers of programming. So you could go and see a wide variety of panels, from forensics to a panel on remote places.

I had the bad luck in that their program is generally finalised way in advance. So by the time I had the funding from St Andrews there was no time to put me on the program, which was a crying shame.

**David:**

That's a pity, yeah, yeah.

**Lucy:**

But I certainly could go and see what was happening and catch up. I just took pot luck a lot of the times going. The next panel I went to was on journalists who become crime writers, and Mary Fortune was also a journalist. This panel included Charlotte Philby, who with that surname might sound familiar, and yes, she really was Kim Philby's niece.

**David:**

Wow.

**Lucy:**

And so she's got a journalist turned private investigator. So I stood up and asked a question at the end of the panel. I asked Charlotte Philby, "What can you say to aspiring journalists who want to write crime, what not to do?" And in her cut-glass Oxbridge accent she said, "Expect to get paid more!" [Laughs]

**David:**

[Laughs]

**Lucy:**

Oh dear, so yes, that was very interesting.

That same afternoon there was a panel with Scandi Noir writers, chaired by Craig Sisterson, who's a New Zealand reviewer and crime aficionado who started off the Ngaio Marsh Awards for New Zealand crime. The amount of New Zealand crime writing has increased exponentially, partly due to Craig. I heard someone call across the road, "Hello, Lucy!" and it's Craig with his interviewees. I say

“Hello” but while I’m a really great fan of Scandi Noir I don’t happen to have read any of these writers.

But at the same time there’s a programme on climate change and crime fiction. And that I regret not going to.

**David:**

I really can’t see the connection, but there you go.

**Lucy:**

Actually there *is* a connection, it’s really interesting. If you’ve got a crime, you can use it to investigate what’s wrong with the society at large. You can start with something minor. And then you follow a path upwards into say police corruption, political corruption. And a good deal of what’s happening in climate change is due to environmental crime, which is the result of corruption on the part of multinationals suppressing evidence as to climate change.

**David:**

Yeah, of course.

**Lucy:**

I can remember George Turner saying to me when he wrote *The Sea and Summer*, which is one of the first and one of the strongest climate—I’m not going to use the word cli-fi—climate fiction. He said “I won’t live to see it, but you will”, and it’s absolutely true. But we’re still trying to alert people. And one of the ways you can, and James Bradley, who was a guest at the recent Conflux Convention, he’s been writing in that mode. The science fiction readership knows all about climate change but increasingly the crime readership does too. It’s a mechanism to use.

**David:**

It sounds good.



Ben Aaronovitch.  
Photo Jindrich Nosek (courtesy of  
Wikipedia)

**Lucy:**

One panel I would have thought would be really sold out, was Murder Most Speculative, about when the weird meets crime fiction. And it was Ben Aaronovitch who started off as a Doctor Who writer. So he’s got the *Rivers of London* series and he’s just taken it to Scotland, and so you meet the river Dee, the Aberdeen River, a rough and tough river.

And he was on with Adam Oyebarji, and Nicholas Binge, neither of whom I’d heard of before. And the trouble is that Ben’s such an engaging storyteller. They had a bit of difficulty getting a word in. Even when the moderator was Zoe Venditozzi, who I’ll get to again in a moment. Adam had written a [cross-genre thriller, *Esperance*] looking at the Atlantic slave trade. And that’s an issue that’s big in Scotland because they are untangling a lot of the links between Scots capitalism and the slave trade, which was coming out of Glasgow. Adam was pretty forceful.

The intersection between crime and spec fic, weird fic is interesting in that they use some of the same techniques. They're dominated by narrative, but they also require the reader to pay attention to work out what's going on [whether it's an alien planet world or a crime slowly being untangled]. Both genres developed in the nineteenth century and surely they're borrowing from each other, but this isn't really acknowledged.

By that stage I was feeling a bit tired and so I didn't go along to the Whisky Knight with Sir Ian Rankin and Natalie Jayne Clark, which was also a whisky tasting. Apart from anything else, in the meantime they'd given out the McIlvanney Awards, named for William McIlvanney, the Godfather of Tartan Noir. He was a literary novelist who wrote three cracking police procedurals which are good by any [standards], out of genre or not. He's got a good claim to being the best Scottish crime writer ever. They had a special Bloody Scotland Whisky for sale [by Fib Whisky], which I regret not bringing back, but we all got free drams.

Rankin, who was the program controller, had organised a walk, a Day of the Dead march through the streets of Stirling with one of the local school pipe and drum bands.

**David:**

Oh yes, I've seen your photos of that.

**Lucy:**

Some of whom had got Day of the Dead makeup, which you can't imagine with a kilt. There were cosplayers as well. My God, that was fun. Craig Sистерson turned up again and he introduced me to Ian Rankin, who's been to Melbourne a few times. We had a brief chat and then photos got taken, with us all clumping together. I don't realise until I see the photos later, online, that I was standing immediately in front of the hottest crime writer out, Mick Herron of *Slow Horses*.

Who's about a foot taller than me, and of course I wasn't looking up. That was most amusing. Unfortunately, I missed his interview because I'd signed up for a true crime walking tour of Sterling, which was utterly engrossing and which, sure enough, ended up with a dram of whisky. There was a lot going on and at the end of the day I was generally too tired to hang around the bar and introduce myself to total strangers. Still I did get to talk to some interesting people.

They had Kate Atkinson speaking.



*Day of the Dead March  
(photo Lucy Sussex)*

**David:**

Oh yeah.

**Lucy:**

I couldn't get into that one, even with the press pass.

**David:**

She's certainly one of my favourite writers.

**Lucy:**

You could until recently access that interview virtually through the Bloody Scotland website because they digitally recorded quite a few sessions.

Probably I think the best panel I saw was called The Witching Hour. And that was at 8.30 to 9.30 at night, and quite well attended. Why it was called The Witching Hour was that Zoe Venditozzi got together with a Scottish [KC] called Claire Mitchell and they started looking at witch trials. This is part of Venditozzi's growing up in Fife, where St Andrews is, and it was a major centre for the witch hunts of Scotland.

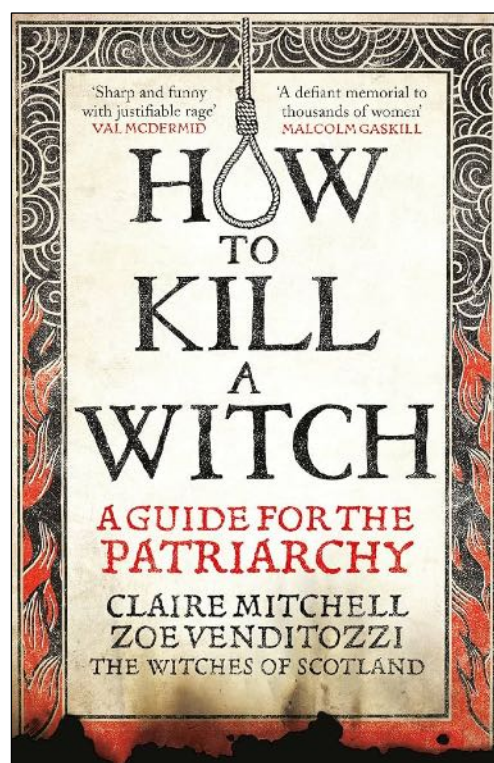
Now you might remember Macbeth and the three witches. There's actually no witches in the original Macbeth [historical story]. Why are they there? It's because Shakespeare was writing in the reign of James I. The King had an interest in witchcraft, possibly due to his most peculiar upbringing, with his mother accused of murdering his father, being dethroned, him being brought up in strict Scots Calvinism with lots of John Knox influence. It's not surprising he was a bit of a misogynist.

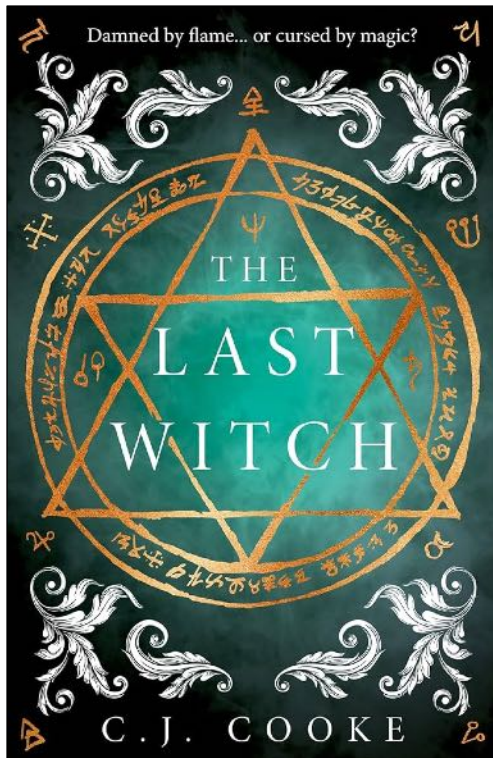
When he went over to Denmark to get his bride Anne, a Danish princess, there was a major storm. They were very nearly shipwrecked. He became convinced that this had been caused by witches, and the consequence of that was he wrote a book on witchcraft called *Daemonologie*. Influenced by the *Malleus Maleficorum*, which was a book on witchcraft from the previous century.

This was a major factor in setting off the witchcraft crazes across Europe. And they tended to be associated with famine, people looking for scapegoats. An awful lot of women and men were unjustly murdered. So Venditozzi got the idea of doing a podcast with Claire Mitchell on the witches of Scotland and examining each case one by one, and determining whether there was a miscarriage of justice, tampering with witnesses, what evidence there was.

Next came a book called *How to Kill a Witch, A Guide for the Patriarchy*. They also worked on getting justice for the witches of Scotland. [Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister, has issued a formal apology]. And this is something that I think will probably happen in England, which also had witch killing.

Scotland has a tendency to issue tartans if they think the cause is just. And so they've got a tartan for Muslim Scots and they had a tartan for the Worldcon in Scotland last year. Now they have a tartan in memory of witchcraft [black ground, with red for blood, grey for ashes]. If you see photos of Zoe Venditozzi, that is what she is generally wearing.





Also on the panel was C. J. Cooke, who's a historian. She'd just written a novel called *The Last Witch*, which is based on a German case. I haven't read it yet. I've got to lay hands on it because it was about a woman who took on a witch finder. [Heinrich Kramer, who wrote the *Malleus Maleficorum*] was coming to Innsbruck to cause havoc and enrich himself, as they usually did. She publicly challenged him. And did not come to a sticky end. No, sorry, fiery end.

The interplay between these three panelists was fascinating. It was probably the most radical thing I heard while I was in in Bloody Scotland because they were looking at what's happening in the US now with regards to the rights of women. So that was definitely the most impassioned panel I saw. And what else? I just kept going to great items. Like Denise Mina in conversation with Richard Armitage.

I also went to Pitch Perfect, the pitching contest. The local library was open to aspiring writers who pitch their novel to a panel which includes

an agent, a Simon and Schuster publisher and a freelance publicist who specialises in crime and thrillers. And so they'd whittled down the entrants to a list of about five who therefore had to perform in front of an audience. Not a large audience, but of course this panel would be scary.

There was somebody who'd written a book about Rescuing Heathcliff, about Heathcliff and rescuing his reputation. And she cosplayed. I thought, well, fair marks for innovation. There was another person who was doing *Broadchurch*, but with a rabbi.

**David:**

OK, all right.

**Lucy:**

And I thought that sounded really interesting.

The actual winner was a historical mystery set in Renaissance Italy.

They all sounded really, really good... Craig Sisterton, who was sitting next to me, commented afterwards that the winner was the one that sounded most like a finished book. I was interested in this contest because Natalie Jayne Clark had won it. She's got a background in performance poetry, so she knows how to present. And within a very short time of that win, she had a literary agent and she had a book deal. Mind you, she'd written the entire book first. And this is, I think, clearly what you had to do. Either that or make it *sound* as if you had, convincingly.

They have similar events at writers' festivals in Australia, but not as closely focused on genre. If you're aware of the young adult writer Bren MacDibble, she's written *How to Bee*, which is one of the best Australian climate change novels, for middle grade readers and above. She sold that at a pitching panel, found herself winning awards in Australia and New Zealand, and she's kept on going.

If you've got enough gumption, pitch events are really something to think seriously about, but the competition is fierce.

The final panel I went to was Scotland the Grave, with Marion Todd, a writer who lives outside St Andrews. She'd actually spoken at the Undercover Agents conference. Her talk was really engaging and she's got nine novels about D. I. Claire Mackay. I'm definitely going to look out for them. But these authors are not always available in Australia. However Natalie Jayne Clark's book is being released here in October. If you know someone who's a whisky buff and likes crime fiction, here is their Christmas present.

**David:**

Yeah, well with a title like that, yeah, that's right.

**Lucy:**

Bloody Scotland was organized like clockwork, with a big staff of volunteers. They had an absolutely top notch program, and I didn't see a weak presentation. If you've got the chance, I would recommend you go there.

**David:**

Well, that sounds like a fabulous trip. You must have been pretty tired by the time you got back, I imagine.

**Lucy:**

It took a while to get over it even though I slept quite well on the way home and had an interesting range of stuff to look at on the [plane], film wise.

**David:**

Okay, good.

**Lucy:**

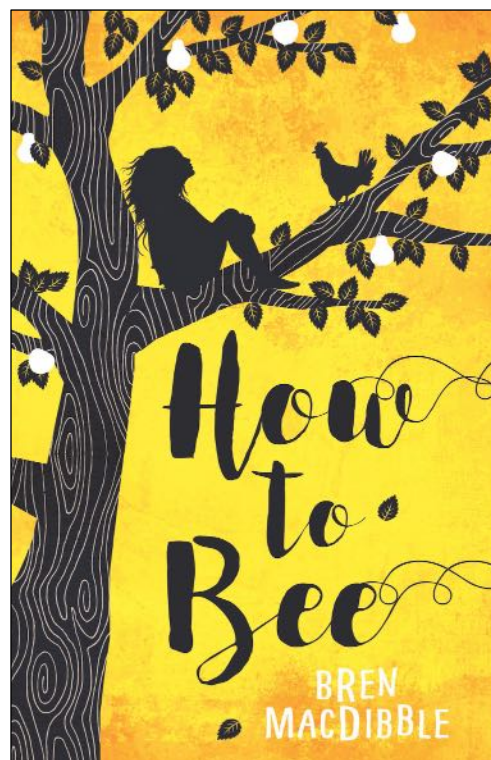
I saw *Master and Commander* again, which really stands up. I mean, the thing is, the seats get smaller, but the amount of entertainment on the screen gets higher. It's just a question of being able to rest [your eyes] to some degree.

**David:**

Yeah, yeah. Do you find that you can read on a plane or is it too heavy?

**Lucy:**

Well, I always take a book with me. I had [some] small crime books, that would fit into a backpack, just to give the eyes a rest from the screen. It's either that or podcasts or you listen to music or radio. I had the last McIlvanney [*The Dark Remains*], which was finished by Ian Rankin, to read on the way over. I actually managed to leave that in the Orkney guesthouse and acquired an Adrian Tchaikovsky hardback [*Bee Speaker*] to read round Scotland, and I regretfully had to leave it in Glasgow. Then I picked up a book at Bloody Scotland [Seishi Yokomizo's *Murder at the Black Cat Cafe*] described as a Japanese answer to Agatha Christie, which it wasn't, but it was still very interesting.



**David:**

All right, well it's been very interesting, Lucy. Thank you very much for your time. Another time perhaps we might get together and talk about some of your best reads during the year.

**Lucy:**

I was starting to do a list, we were asked to list the best books of the twenty-first century.<sup>3</sup> I started doing that. And that's a really interesting exercise because it forces you to think: what makes this book so outstanding? But I'd be happy to do that.

**David:**

Yeah, that sounds great. Terrific. Okay, well, thanks again, and we'll look forward to another time.

**Lucy:**

Thank you, David. Thank you for having me.

**David:**

Terrific. Thank you. Bye.

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<sup>3</sup>On [ABC's Radio National](#).