APRIL 2018 READING

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In which it is revealed that I read nine murder mystery novels this month,
Category: Observations

Over the last month, I've been concentrating on drawing together the threads of my PhD research and I've not had time for much serious reading; so this month's list is mainly about murders!

Christian Book

Knowing Our Times by John Stevens (the National Director of the FIEC) is a short overview of the situation in the UK. The emphasis here is on short; there are seven chapters looking at different areas of social and religious life in the country and none of them are more than a few pages long. This means that the book is easy to read and digest, it also means that you are often left wanting a bit more depth. As an introduction to get your mind thinking about British culture it's not a bad place to start.

Novels

I've recently discovered Faith Martin who writes rather good police procedurals set in Oxford (which must have the highest *per-capita* fictional murder rate in the world). The characters are well drawn and believable and there is enough tension in the relationships between the various police officers in the story to add secondary interest to well plotted murder mysteries. So far, I've read three of the books and I'll no doubt read the rest, soon. The first three, in order, are:Â MURDER ON THE OXFORD CANAL,Â MURDER AT THE UNIVERSITY,Â MURDER OF THE BRIDE. I apologise for the capital letters, I'm not shouting; the Amazon website which produces the links seems to think that upper case is a good idea for these books.

By way of contrast,Â Dead ScaredÂ is set in Cambridge rather than Oxford and doesn't involve murders. A significant number of students commit suicide - or do they? This is the second in a series of books about the same detective and there is a bit of back story that is missing - but otherwise it's a good read.

If you like a bit of Scani-Noir, thenÂ I'm Travelling Alone: (Munch and KrÃ¼ger Book 1), might appeal to you. Personally, I found it a bit tooÂ *noir* for my tastes, but it was certainly a gripping murder mystery. I readÂ The Sleeping and the DeadÂ by Ann Cleaves expecting it to be one of her Vera Stanhope series, but Ms Stanhope doesn't feature at all (though I'm sure it was adapted for TV as one of the Vera episodes). Nevertheless, it was a good read. You can never go wrong with Ann Cleaves, in my view.

If you are going to set a murder mystery in the Lake District, why have a significant part of the action set in London? Despite this evident lack of good sense,Â Murder on the LakeÂ isn't a bad read.Â Made A KillingÂ is set in Glasgow and has a few good twists and turns - worth reading if you can get it cheap.Â The Butchered ManÂ is set in the fictional town of Northminster in 1840. Not a bad read if you like detective fiction with a bit of a twist. Peter Lovesey did the Victorian thing better, though.

Science Fiction

Exodus (The Exodus Trilogy Book 1)Â This is one of those books that Amazon lets you have for free in the hope that you will pay for the rest of the series. It was so memorable that I'd forgotten I'd read it until I saw it on my Kindle home screen and didn't know what it was about till I looked it up. It's a science fiction book.Â Cloak of WarÂ is another science fiction book - I don't think there is any more that can be said about it.

Hopefully, I'll finish a few of the more serious books that are on my desk in the next month and May's report won't just be about murders in various places.