



## The philosophical crime writer: 'You must have empathy, even for the worst criminals'

Former mafia prosecutor Gianrico Carofiglio writes books to show the real Italy, not the one populated by the strutting spiv-suited mafiosi of the movies

*Susan Chenery*

Sat 24 Aug 2019 23.00 BST

**T**here was a time when it wouldn't be safe to be sitting at a table with Gianrico Carofiglio. A time when he would not be out in the open like this. A time when, for five years, he travelled by armoured car, escorted by many heavily armed bodyguards. When his every move was planned with military precision.

There's not a lot of personal freedom when you are an anti-mafia judge. In some ways Carofiglio was as caged as the men he was putting into prison. There were plots against him, one involving a bazooka. There was the haunting precedent of the murders of Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino - two judges who had fought the Sicilian mafia and were killed when their cars were blown up in 1992.

He carried a gun for so long that when he decided to stop some years ago he kept forgetting it wasn't there: "I was always reaching for it ... it was such a long time that I was carrying that gun." It was only recently that he surprised himself by sitting in a restaurant with his back to the entrance. "It was at that moment that I knew, OK, it's over, I don't feel unsafe any more."

Carofiglio has put hundreds of mafioso into prison, first as a judge, then becoming a prosecutor: “I feel more like a cop in my soul.” He was appointed an adviser of the anti-mafia committee in the Italian parliament in 2007 and then served as a senator for the leftist Democratic party from 2008 to 2012, three of those years in opposition to Berlusconi (“That was the funniest period,” he says, “because we could exercise our creativity in opposition.”)

Since 2002 he has been writing crime novels, at first in his spare time, starring a recurring main character, a widely-read, jazz-loving philosophical prosecutor who thinks deeply about good and evil (he has retired this character now). In total he has sold more than 4m copies. He had wanted to write since he was a child, but didn’t until he was in his 40s: “I was so scared of trying I thought I had better really try and understand this problem.” It took nine months to write *Involuntary Witness*; he had already lived the material. “And then I had my answer, it sold over a million copies all over the world.”

He’s a full-time writer now, and anyone watching him work, says Carofiglio, would think he was “crazy. I can sit writing for maybe six or seven minutes and then I have to stand up and do something and sit again for five minutes, I pour some coffee, I do some exercises, I check emails and then write again. It is very tiring by the end of the day I have done what I had to do.”

Born in Bari, southern Italy, in 1961, he still practises martial arts and karate which he learned with kids from “the most dangerous parts of the city”, some of whom he would later arrest, “a very strange unpleasant feeling, of course”.

Still, he doesn’t believe the poverty in the south the alleged lack of any other choice, is an excuse for the criminal activity.

“It is not totally about poverty,” he says. “Often, not always, criminality is a choice. The social issue is important but it is not the only thing to understand of why a boy becomes a criminal. Many of the ones that became a real problem came from good working families.”

He does agree that the mafia grew out of the chronic lawlessness, from a time before unification, “a lack of state authority. The south had been ruled for a long, long time by different foreign countries. That means that the population didn’t learn the attitude or respect for legal power because they didn’t feel they belonged to the state or its rules. If they had a problem they didn’t go to a legal tribunal. They went to the boss.”

Few people have more insight into the mafia mentality, the inner workings of Italy’s organised crime, than someone whose job as a prosecutor was to interrogate men (rarely women) who had been arrested. To be good at this, says Carofiglio, you have to have empathy. “You must be able to use this even with the worst criminals, to see the world through their eyes. This is not sympathy; they are two different words. The worst cops and prosecutors are the ones who have a tendency towards moral judgment because that is very dangerous. It can interfere with your work and obscure your vision.”

He has learned “some things about how a normal person becomes a criminal, then something more than a criminal. I was very raw when I started but I found out the world is much more complicated than the separation between good and evil. Many of these guys are like us. You find good ones and really bad ones and some bad ones who are nice people. You find good criminals who are people who did bad things because they needed a job, but didn’t enjoy it.”



Gianrico Carofiglio at the Byron writers festival this month.  
Photograph: Kurt Petersen/The Guardian

Then there are the ones who “like this kind of life, the money, the power. When we talk about mafia crimes we talk about rational crimes. They are done for commercial and technical reasons, for disturbing a business.”

At the Byron writers festival he was talking about his book, *The Cold Summer*, a barely fictionalised account of events in 1992, when it was all-out war. “I don’t like to call it a war because the correct frame should be we are the public and they are criminals; we are not fighting you, we are catching you. The very idea of a fight includes an idea of legitimisation. But at that time they were so powerful it was a war.”

He was a young prosecutor then, in 1992, in Puglia. Using transcripts of people he had interviewed throughout his career, central to the story is a “justice co-operator” who is snitching for protection from a boss he has betrayed. And Carofiglio has laid it all out, as it happened, as it was. The crude savagery, paranoid cocaine-snorting bosses, the thuggery, the using fear to gain power. Blood was running through the picturesque white-washed Puglian villages. Where the sea is the deepest blue and the farms centuries old, there was endless, endless killing.

At the same time as the judges were bombed in Palermo, the Puglian gangs were rising, having organised in prison for self-defence against harassment by the Neapolitan Camorra: “When they finished their time and came out in the 90s we had a huge problem.” Petty criminals had now become the sort of people who enslaved prostitutes and sold their babies - a syndicate he busted.

He wrote this book because he wanted people to know the “truth about what happened in my country”. He is infuriated by the glamorising, the mythologising, of a strutting, spiv-suited mafia in films, television, books.

“It is wrong to create mafia guys as heroes,” he says. “The idea of an almighty mafia that is invincible and can do whatever they want is false. The Sopranos, the Godfather, this is not real life. They look like very smart people. This is simply not true. People think they are untouchable. This is not true. They are perfectly touchable and in fact we have touched them very hard. It is just sexier from a media point of view to think of poor cops and prosecutors trying to catch them and not succeeding.”

The truth is that “the real world is without glamour and is just full of shit and blood. You don’t find nobility; you don’t find honour.”

## Meaning to Chaos

By Glenn Harper



OCTOBER 20, 2018

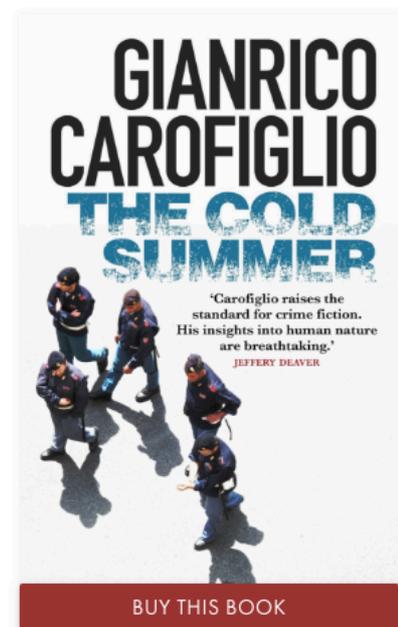
DO WE NEED ANOTHER mafia story? There are plenty of them, in fiction, film, and TV, portraying mafia families in the United States and Italy, and in other countries infected by organized crime. But Gianrico Carofiglio offers an unusually detailed and fascinating portrait, far beyond the clichés of crime families and godfathers, in his new *The Cold Summer*, along with a contrasting portrait of how the criminal organization and the police define and control reality.

Pietro Fenoglio has his rituals, particularly surrounding coffee (whether prepared at home or consumed in a bar) but also in the conduct of his job as a marshal of the Carabinieri in the southern Italian city of Bari, which overlooks the Adriatic Sea. In Carofiglio's novel — the second in a new series featuring Fenoglio, but the first to be translated into English courtesy of Howard Curtis — the marshal's rituals stand in stark contrast with the rituals of the mafia organizations of Puglia (the region of which Bari is the capital) and the realities of a mafia war and a kidnapping. The interplay of the police and criminal rites and of the abyss against which they protect reveals much about the inner workings of Italian criminal organizations, about recent Italian history, and about rituals in a much broader, philosophical sense, particularly seen in Fenoglio's struggles to maintain order in his professional and even his personal life: his wife has recently left him, seeking time to rethink their relationship.

### The Cold Summer

By Gianrico Carofiglio

Published 09.04.2018  
Bitter Lemon Press  
276 Pages



• AROUND THE WORLD

• NOIR

RECOMMENDED

The events of the novel, set in 1992, are bracketed by two interrogations and by two events that marked for Italians a turning point in their nation's history: the murders of the two most prominent anti-mafia judges, Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino. Carofiglio himself has been an anti-mafia prosecutor, as well as the author of an acclaimed series of crime novels featuring lawyer Guido Guerrieri, in addition to several stand-alone novels (the series and two of the stand-alones have also been published in English). The national shock of the two prominent murders serves to ground Carofiglio's story, about a local crime organization and actual events that occurred in Bari in the '90s, in the context of the larger, better-known mafias of Sicily, Naples, and Calabria.

The novel begins with a desperate young man's attempt to rob a cafe-bar, introducing us to the social milieu of Bari and to the marshal, who happens to be in the bar at the time and intervenes to protect the bar's cashier. The encounter reveals Fenoglio's empathy, even with criminals, and his ethical standards. Though tempted to simply let the would-be thief off, he charges him in accordance with the law:

Fenoglio had a strong desire to let him go. He would have liked to tell the carabinieri at the wheel: stop and give me the keys to the handcuffs. Free the boy [...] and throw him out of the car. He had never liked arresting people, and he found the very idea of prison quite disturbing. But that's not something you broadcast when you're a marshal in the Carabinieri.

Afterward, his superior officer, newly assigned to Bari, asks Fenoglio for a summary of the surprising mafia war which has started up in the region. No one can understand why there has been a sudden violent dispute within the organization headed by Nicola Grimaldi, also known as "Blondie" or "Three Cylinders" (everyone in the crime organization has at least one nickname). Vito Lopez, Grimaldi's top lieutenant, has disappeared, along with his family, and everyone assumes that Lopez is dead. A further violent encounter between members of the gang is described in evocative terms:

[T]hirty-two cartridges [...] had been fired almost simultaneously [...] like a hard-edged mass of lethal metal. A web in which you couldn't help but become entangled. The question wasn't who had fired the shot that had reached its target; the question was who had participated in weaving that web.

**The Wee Gunmen of Glasgow: On Crime as Industry in Malcolm Mackay's Tartan Noir**

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By Kim Fay

**The Axis Around Which Everything Turns**

By Zach Pontz

**The Bleak World of Italian Noir**

By Glenn Harper

The war reaches a culmination with the news that Grimaldi's son has been kidnapped, an event that surprises everyone. Who would dare kidnap the child of a mafia boss?

The investigation of the kidnapping is complicated by the tradition of *omertà*, or silence, that pervades the mafia and everyone affected by the criminal enterprise. No one, least of all Grimaldi or his wife, will admit that kidnapping has even happened, much less that a ransom has been demanded. But everyone assumes that Lopez, if still alive, is behind the crime.

When Lopez suddenly appears and offers to turn himself in to the Carabinieri, through an acquaintance on the force, he becomes the subject of an interview that takes up most of the central third of the novel. The interview is fascinating in several ways. First, Lopez is an interesting character, called "The Butcher" not for the murders he has certainly committed, but for his middle-class background, unusual for a mafioso (his father owned an established butcher shop). Lopez's testimony also reveals the inner structure of the local mafia, which is based on the larger and older organizations in Naples (the Camorra) and especially Calabria (the 'Ndrangheta). The organization has strict rituals, reminiscent of Masonic orders, with complex levels of initiation and hierarchy, laid out by the witness in considerable detail. The quasi-religious quality of the order can be seen in this passage:

[F]or the proper conduct of an affiliation or a promotion, a baptized place is necessary. When I say "baptized" I mean it must be a place expressly and stably equipped for affiliations in a ceremony of baptism, or else a different place but one that has first to be subjected to a kind of purification.

The rituals seem to prop up the alternate reality that the mafia requires for its stability and power. Just as Fenoglio needs his rituals of culture and law to struggle against chaos, Grimaldi's organization (and the other more established mafias) need a ritually enforced "province of meaning" to maintain their grasp on the daily lives of their own members and the civilians they control and terrorize.

The description of the mafia hierarchy and the violation of norms seen in the kidnapping cause Fenoglio to consider the ordering, normative process in the criminal enterprise and his own profession: "Investigations, too, are an attempt to construct order, to find a meaning. The risk, though, is that the need to be rational makes us lose sight of the most common characteristic of many crimes: their lack of meaning, their dizzying, inscrutable banality." The marshal also frequently remarks on the strict hierarchy within the Carabinieri, dictating the language used among the officers and lower ranks and even where they sit in an automobile. He remarks to the prosecutor that "[m]any of your colleagues, and almost all my superiors, love the rituals which ensure that other people acknowledge their authority."

The language of the interview is also revealing. We see not the literal testimony of the accused, but the text as transformed into a legalism: "[H]is words were then transformed into the somewhat surreal language of a legal transcript." The language of the Mafioso has been transformed almost ritually into the language of the police and the courts, in preparation for a trial rather than in discovery of a truth. Fenoglio resorts to an essay by Italo Calvino to explain to a colleague the artificiality and fragility of the relationship of language and reality or truth (his philosophical musings are frequent, and, according to the narrator, "digression into philosophical speculation was the most obvious sign of his frustration as a detective").

One outcome of the translation of the verbal testimony into the typed statement is that the story is more comprehensible than it would be in the local dialect of the region and the slang of the mafia, but Carofiglio is also insisting on the importance of the order implicit in the shift in language: an order that he sees as vital to the sometimes tenuous maintenance of civilized, humane intercourse in Italy (and beyond).

The alternative to a humane order is demonstrated in the discovery of the kidnapped boy at the bottom of a well, following an anonymous tip. The death offers an insight into what lies beneath our carefully constructed, ritually reinforced reality: "[E]very semblance of meaning in the world collapses like the proverbial house of cards. The death of a child opens wide an abyss of pain and madness so deep you can't see the bottom." The death also mirrors in part a cause of the rift in Fenoglio's own marriage: he has discovered that he is unable to have children, a fact his wife finds difficult to accept.

The interrogation of Lopez is just winding up when Fenoglio and the others involved in the case receive the news that Falcone has been murdered in Sicily. The impact of that event on the police and the country are emphasized in a melancholy conversation that Fenoglio has with prosecutor Gemma D'Angelo (also involved in the interrogation of Lopez) after the announcement of the death.

The novel shifts from the interrogation to the investigation of the kidnapping, a crime with which Lopez denies any involvement, though it is his fear of reprisals from the boy's father, his own boss, that motivated his seeking police protection. Through a series of meetings with uncooperative witnesses and reluctant informants, Fenoglio moves slowly toward some understanding of what has happened, but it is finally an insight from one of the officers under his command that provides the clue that opens the case. What is revealed shakes the whole structure of both the criminal and the law enforcement organizations and strains Fenoglio's ethical standard and ritualized decency.

The conclusion of the novel is marked by the end of the investigation but also by the car bombing that killed Borsellino in Palermo, an event that provokes a shift in Fenoglio's personal life as well. The complex structure of Carofiglio's narrative, with multiple structural and social parallels at the local and national level, contrasting criminal and civil worlds, and personal events in the lives of the characters, serves to reinforce the emphasis of the novel on the crucial role of structure in human life. But it is ultimately the ethical and sometimes contemplative Fenoglio who holds the whole novel together. His humanity holds out hope for some respite from the violence and corruption that lie behind all the story's events. As he himself says of his role, what he does (and who he is) "gives meaning to chaos."

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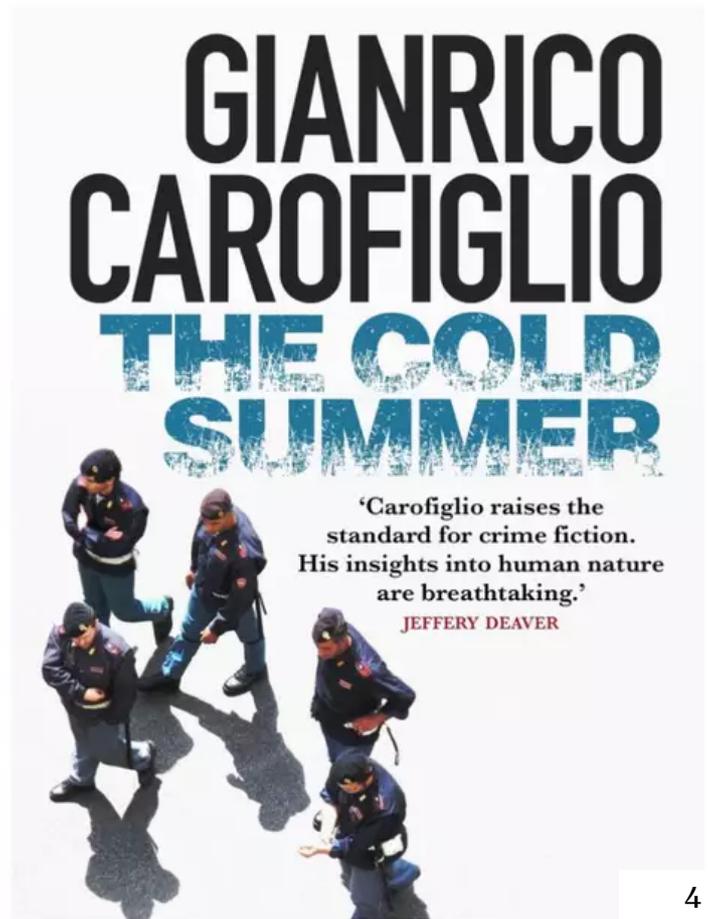
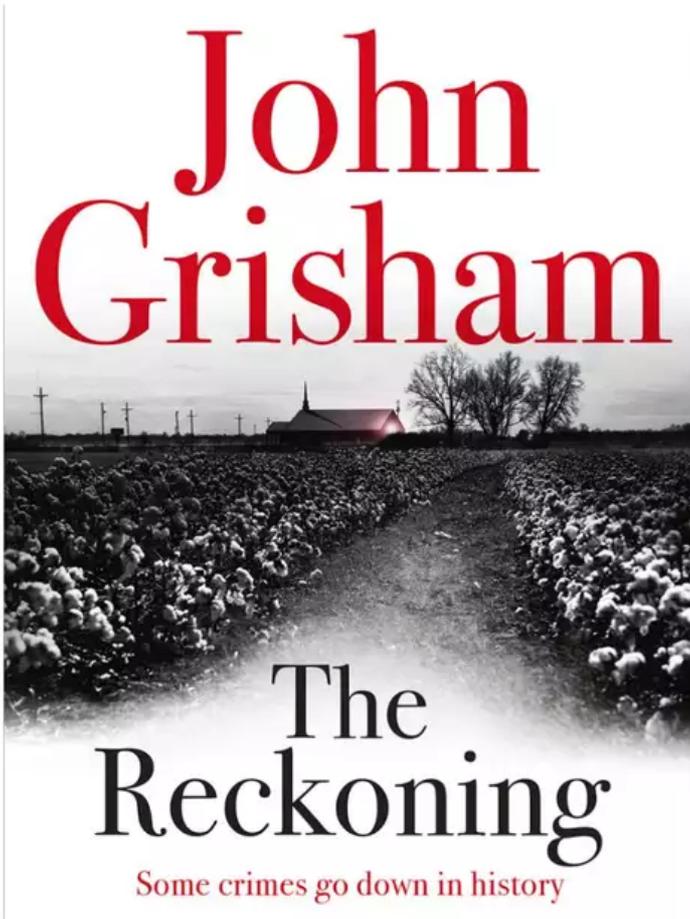
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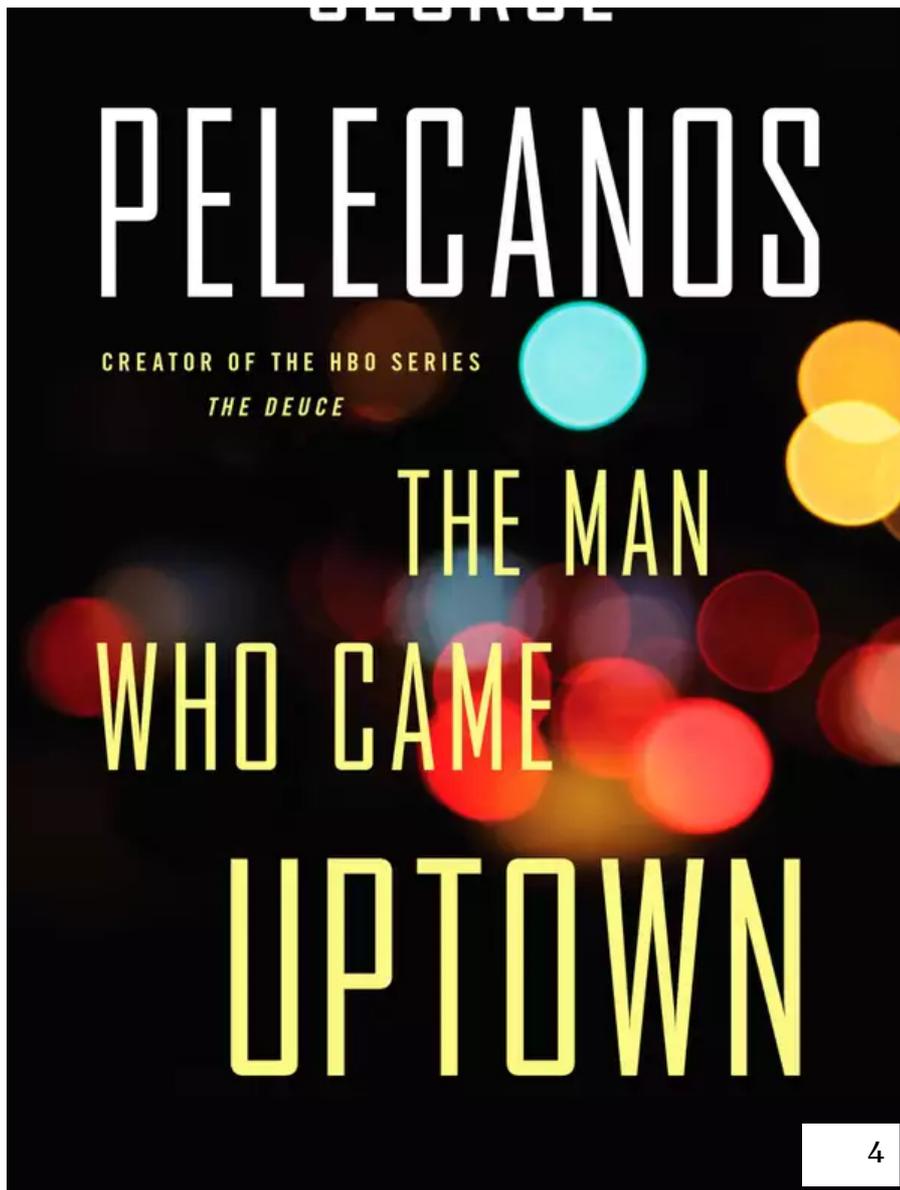
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## The Man Who Came Uptown by George Pelecanos





(Orion, £20), [buy it here](#).

Armed robber Michael Hudson is released from jail — or, in con-speak, goes uptown — earlier than expected thanks to Phil Ornazian, an Armenian lawyer.

The street Hudson's mother lives on in Washington DC has been gentrified while he's been inside. This chimes with his desire for a fresh start. A prison librarian has turned him on to the joy of reading but before he can fill the bookshelf in his bedroom with Elmore Leonards, Ornazian asks for a favour in return. He needs him to drive a getaway car.

Pelecanos, best known as a screenwriter on such series as *The Wire* and *The Deuce*, is first and foremost a novelist. If you haven't read any of his work, this is an excellent place to start.

**The Cold Summer by Gianrico Carofiglio**

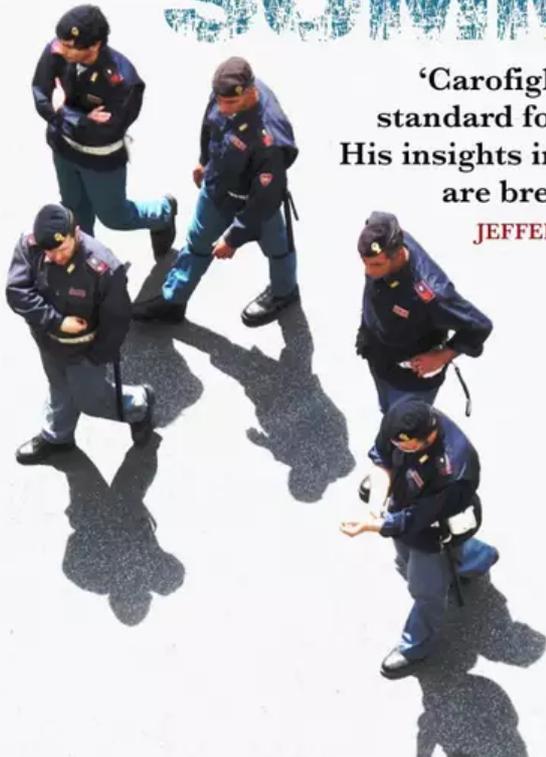
**GIANDICO**

# CAROFIGLIO

## THE COLD SUMMER

'Carofiglio raises the  
standard for crime fiction.  
His insights into human nature  
are breathtaking.'

JEFFERY DEAVER



4

*(Bitter Lemon, £8.99), [buy it here](#).*

Those who have read Carofiglio's outstanding quintet featuring lawyer Guido Guerrieri will be familiar with "the incomprehensible violence of life". The Cold Summer, the first in a new series of Italian jobs, introduces us to Pietro Fenoglio, a Carabinieri marshal in the Adriatic port of Bari.

A 10-year-old boy is kidnapped and, thanks to an anonymous tip-off, is soon found dead at the bottom of a well. His father, who just happens to be a big shot in Puglian organised crime, promises to eat the heart of the man responsible.

He suspects Vito Lopez, one of his disaffected deputies, who has gone Awol with a consignment of cocaine. When Lopez hears this he seeks refuge with the boys in blue by becoming a supergrass.

### The Reckoning by John Grisham

The Number 1 Bestseller



**All This I Will Give to You**

**Dolores Redondo, trans. from the Spanish by Michael Meigs.** AmazonCrossing, \$24.95 (576p) ISBN 978-1-5039-0254-1

When popular Madrid-based author Manuel Ortigosa, the hero of this powerful mystery from Spanish author Redondo (*The Invisible Guardian*), finds out that his spouse, Álvaro Muñiz de Dávila, has been killed in a traffic accident in Galicia, he travels to northwestern Spain to get answers. But he soon realizes that the man he loved for 15 years harbored more than a few secrets: first and foremost, that he was a wealthy marquis who was the head of one of Spain's most distinguished families. After meeting with Álvaro's tight-lipped family members, Manuel reconsiders his husband's alleged accidental death. With the help of a recently retired police detective and one of Álvaro's childhood friends, Manuel begins examining the family's guarded history—and uncovers unspeakable darkness. With the beautiful Galician countryside as backdrop, Redondo weaves an impressively intricate story line filled with more than a few bombshell plot twists. This door stopper of a novel will leave readers utterly satisfied. *Agent: Anna Soler-Pont, Pontas Agency (Spain).* (Sept.)

**Murder in the Oval Library**

**C.M. Gleason.** Kensington, \$26 (304p) ISBN 978-1-4967-1021-5

Set in April 1861, Gleason's lackluster sequel to 2017's *Murder in the Lincoln White House* finds the residents of Washington, D.C., bracing for what everyone fears will be a successful assault by Confederate troops on a city sorely in need of military reinforcements. As presidential aide Adam Speed Quinn works with Kansas senator Jim Lane to buttress the White House's meager defenses, the president's vulnerability to attack is shockingly underscored when someone slits the throat of Johnny Thorne, a member of the Kansas Freedom Guard assigned to protect Lincoln, in the residence's library. Adam investigates, assisted again by intrepid reporter Sophie Gates. Their sleuthing is bolstered by an obvious clue, and despite the setup's inherent drama, suspense is at a minimum. Gleason succeeds in capturing the tensions of the nation's capital in the

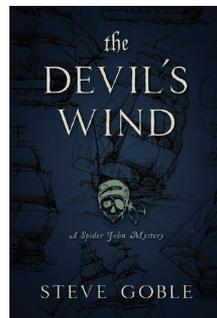
aftermath of the firing on Fort Sumter, but those interested in Civil War-era mysteries would be better served by Owen Parry's Abel Jones series. *Agent: Maura Kye-Casella, Don Congdon Assoc. (Sept.)*

★ **The Devil's Wind:**

**A Spider John Mystery**

**Steve Goble.** Seventh Street, \$15.95 trade paper (272p) ISBN 978-1-63388-484-7

Goble's excellent second historical featuring pirate Spider John Rush improves on its predecessor, 2017's *The Bloody Black Flag*. In 1723, Spider John is lying low in Port Royal, Jamaica, hoping to put his pirate career behind him, until someone



recognizes him in a crowd witnessing the hanging of a former shipmate; he barely escapes capture before boarding a merchant vessel bound for Boston, the *Redemption*. That

one of the passengers is Sam Smoke, who previously sailed with Ned Low, a pirate even more vicious than Blackbeard, unsettles John, and he finds himself in more peril after a shooting death in a locked room, a tragedy that necessitates a visit to the ship from members of a Royal Navy frigate escorting the *Redemption*. Though the victim appears to have shot himself, John spots evidence to the contrary and embarks on a search for the killer while trying to remain at liberty. Goble adroitly combines action and deduction. *Agent: Evan Marshall, Evan Marshall Agency.* (Sept.)

**The Cold Summer**

**Gianrico Carofiglio, trans. from the Italian by Howard Curtis.** Bitter Lemon, \$14.95 trade paper (352p) ISBN 978-1-912242-03-0

In the summer of 1992, two real-life anti-Mafia prosecutors and their companions were assassinated in a pair of car bombings by the Sicilian Mafia, as Carofiglio (*The Silence of the Wave*) notes in a brief introduction to this fine police procedural. To the alarm of Marshal Pietro Fenoglio, a Carabinieri officer based in Bari, the Mafia wars have spread that same

year from Sicily to Italy's Puglia region. In particular, Fenoglio investigates the case of Damiano Grimaldi, a son of Nicola Grimaldi, the head of one of the warring factions, who was kidnapped on his way to school. Despite his parents paying a ransom, the boy's body is discovered three days later down a well. Nicola vows revenge on his enemy Vito Lopez, who immediately surrenders to the police. Lopez is debriefed, confessing to a whole range of crimes, including murder, but swears that he didn't take the child. In a number of long but fascinating interrogation scenes, Fenoglio gets closer to the truth. This standalone is sure to win Carofiglio, a former prosecutor who specialized in organized crime, a wider U.S. audience. (Sept.)

**The Guilty Dead:**

**A Monkeewrench Novel**

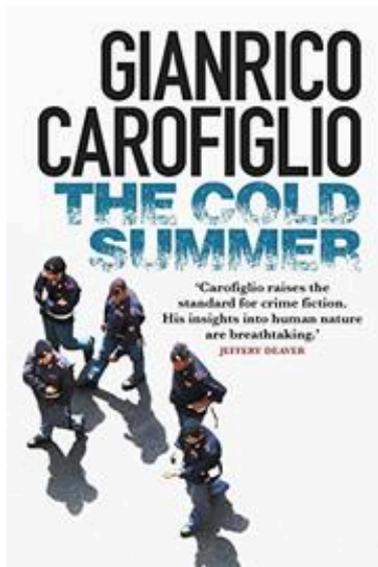
**P.J. Tracy.** Crooked Lane, \$26.99 (336p) ISBN 978-1-68331-858-3

In Tracy's busy ninth Monkeewrench novel (after 2017's *Nothing Stays Buried*), the computer geeks of Grace MacBride's Monkeewrench software company join forces with Minneapolis homicide detectives Leo Magozzi and Gino Rolseth. The death of Minnesota philanthropist Gregory Norwood just one year after the fatal overdose of his addict son, Trey Norwood, looks like a suicide, until Leo and Gino uncover enough oddities to suggest murder. Meanwhile, a new anti-terrorism program developed by Monkeewrench uncovers a terrorist plot to bomb city hall. That a lowlife named Gus Riskin had a hand in Trey's death is revealed in the prologue, but Tracy maintains suspense by carefully concealing the links that connect Riskin to Gregory's death and to the terrorist plot. The book's chief pleasure lies in watching the members of MacBride's oddball crew, including Harley Davidson and Roadrunner, match wits and skills with the wise-cracking detectives. *Agent: Ellen Geiger, Frances Goldin Literary Agency.* (Sept.)

**Hitting the Books**

**Jenn McKinlay.** Berkley Prime Crime, \$25 (304p) ISBN 978-0-451-49267-8

At the start of McKinlay's delightful ninth Library Lover's mystery (after 2017's *Death in the Stacks*), Lindsey Norris,



## THE COLD SUMMER

by Gianrico Carofiglio ; translated by Howard Curtis

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## KIRKUS REVIEW

“The worst part isn’t seeing the bodies...The worst part is breaking the news to the victims’ relatives. Especially if the victims are children.”

In Carofiglio’s (*A Fine Line*, 2016, etc.) latest, it’s up to Pietro Fenoglio, a middle-aged carabinieri with a penchant for philosophy, to investigate the kidnapping and murder of the young son of Nicola Grimaldi, a powerful crime boss, and determine if it’s part of the violence tearing apart Grimaldi’s organization or just a tragic coincidence. A former anti-Mafia prosecutor, Carofiglio sets his tale in Italy’s Apulia region during the cold, rainy spring of 1992 as Grimaldi’s top lieutenants are turning up dead or missing. Their deaths aren’t a surprise to him; he knows all crime families, eventually, turn on each other. But the boy’s death is different; it should have ended with the ransom money and the boy’s return, not his body dumped in an abandoned well. “It’s like a brainteaser,” Fenoglio tells a colleague. “Whichever way you look at it, it doesn’t make sense.” Carofiglio gives an inside view of Grimaldi’s *Società Nostra* thanks to police interviews with a Grimaldi turncoat who wants protection from Grimaldi’s wrath. Occasionally these interviews go on too long, but what makes up for that is Carofiglio’s engaging main character. Fenoglio is a sensitive, polished figure who has managed to keep his idealism intact in a career meant to break it; he is as comfortable philosophizing as he is citing the public safety code. When he recalls a joke about a drunkard searching for his keys under a streetlight rather than in the dark street where he lost them, he realizes his search is failing for the same reason: “We look where it’s light, even though that’s exactly how not to solve the problem.”

Solving this case, Carofiglio shows us, requires a leap into the darkness.



Friday, 14 September 2018

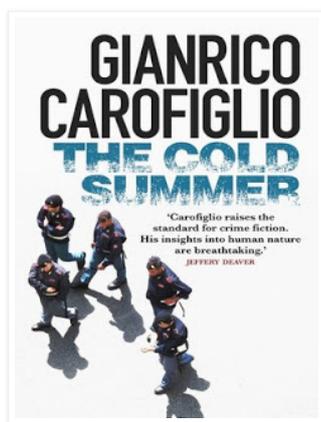
## BOOK REVIEW: THE COLD SUMMER, by Gianrico Carofiglio

### THE COLD SUMMER

by Gianrico Carofiglio

Bitter Lemon Press, £8.99 , Sept 13th 2018

Reviewer: Michael Jecks



This is not the first book I have read by Gianrico Carofiglio. Some years ago I picked up another of his novels, intrigued by the promise of a story deeply informed by the writer's experiences.

Why? Because Gianrico Carofiglio is no ordinary crime writer. He is a man who spent most of his working life as a prosecutor specializing in organised crime. In 2007 he was appointed as advisor to the Italian government's anti-Mafia committee, and the following year he became a Senator.

So not a run-of-the-mill writer, then. And when you read his books, you can feel the depth of his knowledge, but also the deep humanity of the writer.

This story takes the reader back to the 1990s when there was a spate of chilling attacks on the justice system in Italy. Giovanni Falcone, his wife and several police officers were murdered by a massive bomb; a couple of months later, Paolo Borsellino and five more police were killed when a car bomb was set off as they passed. Falcone and Borsellino were enthusiastic anti-Mafia prosecutors, and posed a significant threat to the Sicilian families. The public outcry at these two atrocities was immediate - and the crackdown in their aftermath effective. Those responsible were identified, arrested, prosecuted, and convicted.

However, the Mafia violence was not unique to Sicily. There were gang wars between other Mafia gangs up and down Italy. This book takes the reader to Apulia, where the fighting was as brutal as anywhere.

I began reading this book immediately after reading a very different story indeed, and I read the first page with a real sense of gratitude. Whereas the previous book had been more of a character study set in a vaguely criminal environment, there were many aspect that I could simply not come to terms with. Within three pages of THE COLD SUMMER I felt I had been wrapped in a comfort blanket. This was a crime book written by a man who knew his subject and how to plot a story. I knew who the main character was, I was fully convinced by the way he was depicted, and I was very content with his behaviour. It's an excellent beginning to a crime story - I recommend it.

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To summarise: Pietro Fenoglio is a local officer in the Carabinieri. He has recently been left by his wife, and is trying to come to terms with his new status as a single man, while hoping she will return to him. But there is a brutal turf war being fought in the area around Bari, and he is soon thrown into the midst of the fighting as a Mafia boss's son is kidnapped.

The thought of an ordinary criminal risking his life by kidnapping a Mafiosi's son is hard to accept. This must be a symptom of the gang war. Surely only a suicidal gangster would try to take on one of the most senior Mafiosi in the area? Rumours abound, and Fenoglio begins to have an idea who is responsible.

But then the man suspected of the kidnapping surrenders himself. The boy is found dead, but the suspect denies killing him. The police are forced into an investigation in which those investigating are forced to look at their own attitudes and behaviours. In a morally confusing world, the police have to look at their own motives, their own actions.

The story is split into three "Acts". The first is the setup of the story, the kidnap, the search for the killer; second comes a part in which we are brought into the interrogation of the suspect, with the interview transcripts interspersed with the continuing story; finally the story returns to a straightforward linear path, hurtling towards the resolution.

This is not like a Michael Connelly, or Harlan Coben. There are not the sudden imaginative twists and turns that you expect from an American master; however, this story is convincing at a much deeper level. It feels less like a story constructed by an author, and more like an autobiographical narration, a man speaking of his memories of a time in the recent past, speaking about his own experiences of such investigations, and who has had to confront his own demons in the battle against organised crime. Carofiglio doesn't resort to devious plot twists to establish his characters and storyline - he doesn't need to. His knowledge of his subject is deep enough to imbue his writing with conviction.

I would highly recommend this book.

Posted by [Mike Stotter](#) at [10:19](#)



Labels: [Bitter Lemon Press](#), [Crime Fiction](#), [Gianrico Carofiglio](#), [Italy](#), [Michael Jecks](#), [SHOTS book review](#), [Sicily](#), [the Mafia](#)

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## The Cold Summer by Gianrico Carofiglio

Review published on September 13, 2018.

*The Cold Summer* is an elegant and stylish literary thriller that reflects on Italy's recent past. It's tougher than Carofiglio's other novels, there's a deal more action and a chilling tone that reflects the dark nature of the story, it's about the mafia and the kidnapping of a child – at times it's a shocking read. Although *The Cold Summer* cannot be described as a psychological novel, Carofiglio manages to open a window on the characters inner world: victims, perpetrators and detectives alike. So this is much more than the who? It's also the why? Carofiglio was a prosecutor/judge at the time of the events that inspired this novel and his intimate knowledge enriches this story. As most people here would recognise Apulia for it's beauty and tourist appeal this reimagining of the darker side of the region will be an eye opener. *The Cold Summer* is a compassionate novel that lays bare the underbelly of Apulia and through this story of a small group of individuals dedicated to fighting the mafia we gain a real insight into the times.

*The Cold Summer* is set in 1992, an unusually cold spell has hit the south. In a short preface Carofiglio points out that that is not why this particular year still haunts his memory. He reminds us that this is the year that anti-mafia judges Falcone and Borsellino were murdered. Two of Italy's top investigators were blown up, several police officers killed along side them. The public outrage was so great that the perpetrators were tracked down and arrested, it was the beginning of the Corleonesi family's decline. One tragic feature of those murders is that the mafia were so embedded in the Italian state that both men must have shared political debates, or even laughed and dined with the same politicians who conspired in their murder. The two crimes bookend and overhang this novel but this is the bloody story of the Apulia mafia war.

Marshal Fenoglio of the Apulia Carabinieri is an honest cop. His colleagues are suspicious of him, he's a taciturn character, an opera lover with a philosophical soul. Fenoglio witnesses the internecline conflict within the Società Nostra ranks but it's not something that the force or the police and the judges have addressed yet. The Società Nostra is run by Nicola Grimaldi, known as Blondie, it's a new local mafia formed in prison a decade earlier. The marshal is a good man, when he witnesses a robbery and arrests the culprit he tries to help him, although as stickler for the law he won't let him go without facing a judge. Things are about to change, the new commander of The Criminal Investigation Unit, Captain Valente, comes to trust Fenoglio's expertise. It all began with the murder of Gaetano D'Agostino known as Shorty, shot dead in the Libertà district. The dispute is internal, several others are murdered, injured or simply disappear. Most significantly Vito Lopez has disappeared, he is the man everyone thinks is behind the trouble. Fenoglio is seeking permission to bug mafia premises when events overtake them. Marshal Fornato of the Santa Spirito Division heard a rumour that Grimaldi's child, Damiano, has been kidnapped. Grimaldi and wife won't talk but the Carabinieri figure that a ransom was paid, 200M Lira (£1.8M), but the child was not returned. The man suspected of this heinous crime is, of course, Vito Lopez. Lopez is smart, he knows this will end in his death, so he hands himself in. Lopez is granted immunity in return for a full confession; the murders he has committed and names of his accomplices in a catalogue of crimes. He blames the war on Grimaldi's paranoia. Crucially he says he had nothing to do with the boy's kidnapping. Unravelling the mystery becomes an obsession for marshal Fenoglio, the prosecutor and the small team that won't rest until they have answers.

*The Cold Summer* is a portrayal of the mafia and the internal strife that sparks the war but it is also a portrait of dedicated police and law officers determined to find the cold blooded kidnapers of an innocent child and to bring down the mafia. The novel uses passages of interrogation and interview as a way of progressing the story, this is a familiar aspect of Carofiglio's novels that distinguishes him from many contemporary writers, it creates an intimate and psychologically revealing depth to the tale. It's emotionally intelligent, full of insight into the working of the mafia and the police/law. The hunt for the kidnapers is as exciting as any really good police procedural, it's gripping and chilling. As the solution appears to elude the team's investigation and time is of the essence the excitement and trepidation rises. There is a twist in the tale of the kidnapping that is a real kicker. As with the life the outcome of the novel is bitter sweet.

The Società Nostra is a reimagining of the Sacra Corona Unita founded by Ragoli and his men in prison in 1981. This portrait eschews the glamour, it's a dirty world with no honour or decency. However, the story also highlights the men and women who genuinely, and at some risk, fight this disease afflicting Italian society. This new series by Carofiglio is a cause for celebration, it will be interesting to see where Fenoglio goes from here.

If you like *The Cold Summer* you will want to read Carofiglio's popular series featuring defence advocate Guido Guerrieri: *Involuntary Witness*, *A Walk in the Dark*, *Reasonable Doubts*, *Temporary Perfections*, and *A Fine Line* are all published in the UK.

Howard Curtis superb translation retains the emotional force and the insight of the original.

Paul Burke 5/4

The Cold Summer by Gianrico Carofiglio  
Bitter Lemon Press [9781912242030](https://www.bitterlemonpress.com/) pbk Sep 2018

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## Author meets Reviewer: Gianrico Carofiglio meets Paul Burke

Article published on September 13, 2018.

Gianrico Carofiglio's latest novel introduces Maresciallo (Marshal) Pietro Fenoglio of the Apulia Carabinieri. It's the story of the kidnapping of a young boy amidst a mafia war that wreaked havoc across the region in 1992. This was a dark time for Italy, the novel is bookended by the murders of two top anti-mafia judges, Falcone and Borsellino. Carofiglio was an anti-mafia prosecutor in Apulia at the time, he later a senator in the Italian parliament. He is now pursuing a lifelong passion with his writing. *The Cold Summer* is [reviewed today on BookNoir](#).

**Paul Burke: How well do you think the mafia is portrayed in novels and films and on TV? There has been a tendency for entertainment to glamorise its criminal activities. Of course, writers like Leonardo Sciascia, and many since, have aimed for a more realistic view.**

Gianrico Carofiglio: The picture of the mafia that we find in novels and films is often unrealistic. And yes, it's true, there's a tendency to give criminals an aura of glamour, almost turning them into heroes. I wrote *The Cold Summer* for many reasons. One of these reasons was the desire to contradict that distorted, unrealistic and sometimes morally questionable way of talking about the mafia.

**PB: As a prosecutor at the heart of the fight against organised crime, how ingrained in society do you think this distorted view of the mafia is? If at all. I am thinking of the belief that they are men of honour, are part of a family, have wealth etc.**

GC: There are a lot of myths about that. In the past, in some parts of Italy, there was a twisted sense of shared values between part of the population and the members of the mafia organisations. Today things have changed almost everywhere, and fortunately that idea of the mafioso as a man of honour has been completely de-glamorised. That's not to say, of course, that there's no longer a problem of a mafia culture in some regions. The problem can be dealt with through arrests and confiscations but also, and perhaps above all, through education, through civic awareness.

**PB: The Sacra Corona Unita, Apulia mafia, was structured with ranks, initiation rights and rules (which of course they broke). Is this an attempt to mimic legal organisations, creating an illusion of normality and self-justification?**

GC: I'd say it is. The mafia organisations, with their systems of rules and ranks, have a tendency to replicate legal organisations. This gives a sense of pseudo-legitimacy and strengthens the bonds between the members and the organisation.

**PB: Comparisons are made between your work and John Grisham. Personally, I don't see this, it's because your novels deal in characters/situations in the legal world. Would you say your work has more in common with writers who explore the psychological nature of crime, it's about understanding people?**

GC: I agree with your opinion. Grisham is great at constructing plots, but isn't too interested in the psychology of the characters, which for me is the most important subject. What I'm most interested in doing is exploring the borderline between good and evil. A borderline, it's worth pointing out, which is inside all of us.

**PB: I have heard that you like to write very freely, no planning and plotting beyond establishing a conflict and an idea of the outcome. Is that true of *The Cold Summer* and can you explain a little about why this freedom is important to your writing process please?**

GC: That's not quite true. I mean, there isn't that total freedom. When I start a novel, I know who the main characters are, I know the starting point – the conflict, let's say – and I know how the story will end. That's the most important thing for me, I need it to avoid narrative inconsistencies, to avoid leaving loose ends. Having said that, it's true that I like to write without an outline, without a rigid plan. That allows me to discover new ideas along the way, it enriches the story and above all the characters.

**PB: Your characters often demonstrate a love of books and the arts, theatre, philosophy and opera for example, is this a way of getting something of yourself into your novels?**

GC: Partly. But more generally it's a way of saying who the characters are without having to go into boring descriptions.

**PB: The novel is bookended by the murders of anti-mafia judges Falcone and Borsellino, a very dark time for Italy. Why did you chose this frame for your novel?**

GC: The novel is inspired by events that actually happened in 1992. I'm not just referring to the murders of Falcone, Borsellino and their bodyguards, which are in the background. In 1992 I was a young prosecutor investigating the mafia, in not very easy circumstances. Many of the things that occur in the book come directly from those investigations and from the people involved in them. The very title of the book comes directly from the code name – "Cold Summer" – of an anti-mafia operation of the time.

**PB: *The Cold Summer* is based on real events that you personally had a role in as a prosecutor, it's now a couple of decades since then. Was it hard returning to that time and place and relating this fiction inspired by those mafia wars?**

GC: No. I waited several years to write this story because I wanted to put a distance between the facts and the fiction. At a certain point, I simply realised that the moment had come.

**PB: *The Cold Summer* is dark and at times bitter sweet, but it's about a police/judicial operation that is very successful. Was it your intention to show that the law does significantly impact the mafia? Making many arrests and solving crimes.**

GC: Precisely. A lot of nonsense is talked about organised crime in Italy and its supposed invincibility. In my country the mafias have been fought with great determination, in many cases they've been defeated, in others very much cut down to size. Cosa Nostra controlled Sicily at the beginning of the 90s. Today, its power is hugely reduced and almost all the bosses are in prison. The mafias in Apulia have been almost completely defeated. In other regions, Calabria for example, the situation is still serious, but a lot of progress has been made. In Italy in 1991 there were almost two thousand murders, in 2017 fewer than 350. Organised crime can be fought and defeated, and we've demonstrated that.

**PB: Fenoglio is a policeman, whereas Guerrieri, in previous novels, was a defence lawyer. How did that different perspective within the law impact on telling the story?**

GC: Not very much, I think. They are different characters in many ways, but both believe that systematic doubt is a basic work tool as well as a sound, moral way of dealing with life.

**PB: Lopez is an interesting character, his background means he could have made different choices in life, he's straightforward, rational, logical and articulate but not loyal. This is not what some of the police expect. Do people make assumptions about the kind of person in the mafia?**

GC: Yes, but reality is much more complicated than all our speculation.

**PB: You use the interrogations and interviews to progress the story, it's intimate and psychologically revealing. Do you think that people have a need to confess?**

GC: Very often, yes. That's a truth that's important for any good investigator to understand.

**PB: Grimaldi's Società Nostra is shaken by internal dispute, this enables the police to exploit the developing rift. They are the cause of their own destruction, is it like a Greek tragedy?**

GC: I'd never thought of it in those terms, but it strikes me as a very apt comparison.

**PB: When Lopez is arrested the prosecutor and the police offer him a deal before they know whether he kidnapped the boy, Damiano. Is this compromise a reality for law enforcement?**

GC: I wouldn't call it compromise. The law allows advantages to those who cooperate. The criminal who confesses all his crimes, reports everything he knows about other people and makes it possible to recover the money he has accumulated by illegal means is protected, has a right to a reduced sentence and is helped to build a new life with his family. These people have been and are vital to defeating organised crime. Without them, we would never have achieved the results I spoke about earlier.

**PB: I know that Fenoglio will be coming back for a second novel, which is great news. Will he continue to be part of a fictional reflection of the real history of Apulia bringing us forward in time or a character in a purely fictional tale?**

GC: Actually there is a short novel featuring Fenoglio that came out before *The Cold Summer*. It's called *A Changeable Truth* and it's more of a classic crime story, based on the idea that in an investigation there is often nothing more misleading than what's obvious, as Conan Doyle said. I may well write another story featuring Fenoglio in the future, but right now I don't have any specific ideas.

**PB: The mafia is changing in some of Italy's cities; gang members are younger, have less boundaries, behave more brutally and there are new challenges (synthetic drugs, krokodil, immigration, the rise of fascism etc). Is law enforcement equipped to deal with the modern situation?**

GC: When it comes to these problems of serious youth crime, I wouldn't talk about a mafia. This is more of matter of street gangs, which are very dangerous but have no long-term game plan. The law enforcement agencies are perfectly capable of dealing with this phenomenon, and investigating it is much less difficult than investigating real mafia groups.

**PB: How do you think Brexit will impact on Italy, in light of the current Italian government, are you optimistic for the future? (Salvini and the anti-European sentiment).**

GC: I confess I still hope there'll be second thoughts, maybe another referendum, and the UK won't have to leave Europe. In general, I'm optimistic about the future: history moves in a progressive direction, although sometimes we take a step backwards and don't realise it.

**PB: What are you reading at the moment? Is there a book you would recommend to readers?**

GC: I've just finished reading *The Secret History* by Donna Tartt, which I thought was a truly remarkable novel. Right now I'm reading a non-fiction book called *Factfulness*: a book that provides rational, and often surprising, arguments for an intelligently and critically optimistic vision of the future of mankind.

*Our thanks to both Gianrico and Paul for this excellent Q&A.*

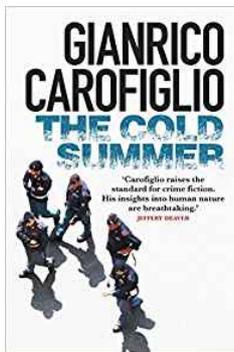
The Cold Summer by Gianrico Carofiglio  
Bitter Lemon Press [9781912242030](https://www.bitterlemonpress.com/) pbk Sep 2018

Gianrico will be in Britain for public appearances in Bath and London later this month:

## The Cold Summer by Gianrico Carofiglio (translated by Howard Curtis)

*Contributor: Russell James*

Sep 7, 2018



Who better to tell you how the Mafia works than the man who in real life was an Italian prosecutor and advisor to the government's anti-Mafia Committee? His latest tale is set during the upsurge in Mafia violence in 1992 during which two of the most prominent anti-Mafia prosecutors in Sicily and those accompanying them were murdered by the mob. Here we

learn of the gang wars going on at that time in Apulia. Forget the hype. Carofiglio's Mafia is not a supranational highly organised criminal network of unholy families but a ragbag of violent street gangs, each defending its turf and squabbling – albeit murderously – with its neighbours.

What will happen when the son of one such gang leader is kidnapped and murdered? It's down to Carabinieri officer Pietro Fenoglio (Carofiglio's new series hero) to stop the mayhem. This at times meditative book teaches us much about gangland's childish rituals and Italian police procedure but still racks up some tension before its realistic conclusion. It's a book for adult readers, about gangsters who are little more than viscously bad boys.

[Gianrico Carofiglio will be appearing at Waterstones Bath on September 19th](#)

[The Cold Summer by Gianrico Carofiglio \(translated by Howard Curtis\)](#)  
Bitter Lemon paperback, £8.99, 978-1-912242-03-0

## REACTION

# Interview: Gianrico Carofiglio on the Mafia, Italy's rotten state and writing

BY ROBERT FOX |  [ROBFOX45](#) / 5 OCTOBER 2018



Pier Marco Tacca/Getty Images

‘The Cold Summer’ is the latest bestseller from Italy’s most celebrated anti-Mafia judge, politician, and essayist Gianrico Carofiglio. Although the summer of 1992 was indeed *molto fredda* across Sicily and Southern Italy, it was moreover a cold summer because of the murder

of Carofiglio's colleagues and friends in Sicily, Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, and his new book is dedicated to them. Falcone and his wife were killed by a huge bomb under the motorway close to Palermo's airport. Borsellino and his escort were hit as he visited his elderly mother in a downtown apartment.

In strange coincidence, at about the same time, Cold Summer became the code name for one of the most successful anti-Mafia operations in Puglia, the southern heel of Italy – the latest *dolce vita* destination for Italophilic Brits abandoning Tuscany and Chiantishire for sunnier climes and richer wines.

Carofiglio's new novel dramatizes the true story of Operation Cold Summer – only a few names and locations are changed, the author tells me, but much of the action is as it really was. In his canon of novels set in southern Italy, now more extensive than the chronicles of Sherlock Holmes, it is his most documentary and realistic to date.

The story turns on a kidnap and murder which allowed investigators to turn a prominent clan leader informant. He led one of the new Mafia groups in Puglia, *Societa Nostra*, and his new super grass status was the first major coup for the police in the region. The rhythms of the interrogation, which last over several months, are fascinating as the cornered mafioso reveals all the different gangs and locations – and these names are not fictionalized.

In the 1980s the gangs in Puglia were feeling the heat of the *Camorra* of Naples and *Cosa Nostra* of Sicily – which had become dominant in narco crime across the Mediterranean since the breaking of the French Connection of the Marseilles and Corsican gangs in the early 1970s. "Learning from the *Camorristi* prisoners they met in jail, the *Pugliesi* decided to build their own equally robust structure, based on strict codes of honour, and silence, enforced by extreme violence," Carofiglio told me.

Although the *Pugliesi* were late on the scene, they adopted ancient mafia rituals that made new recruits 'sworn men' – the pricking of fingers, mixing of blood, and oaths taken on the burning image of a saint. It was an odd rite of passage. Carofiglio: "We found the instructions for this in the effects of one of the Mafiosi we detained – even the handwriting seemed very childish."

Meeting Gianrico Carofiglio is like encountering one of the good guys from the Inspector Montalbano series. He is charming, urbane, full of dry understatement and the sense of

assured nonchalance summed up by the untranslatable epithet '*dinsinvoltura*.' Though his conversation is peppered with literary allusions, Scott Fitzgerald, George Orwell, Italo Calvino, Bertrand Russell, and his beloved Sherlock Holmes – to name but a few – he is full of light and good humour.

In London, during his promotion of the English publication of 'Cold Summer,' we chatted across a huge range of subjects – Mafia and Puglia, the magistracy, the police, the chaos of politics in Italy, including his bruising five years as a member of the Senate in Rome, and great colleagues and rivals. It was as if we were in his favourite haunt, the Café Bohème in downtown Bari, the hang-out of many of his friends, and inspirational haunt for many of his characters.

Born in Bari in 1961, Gianrico was drawn to the law – especially the investigating magistracy. He would come to work alongside investigating detectives, either from the state police, the *Polizia*, or *Carabinieri*. When he decided not to run for the Senate for a second term, he returned to the magistracy. His novels which first appeared in 2002 with 'Involuntary Witness' have now become best sellers across Europe. "I had to decide to write full time – after all I couldn't tell the tax man my second job was 'judge'."

The hero of his first stories is Guido Guerrieri, a down at heel, divorced, defence lawyer. A sometime essayist and commentator, he likes jazz, world music and opera – and books. "Yes, he is an alter ego of sorts. But he works for the defence in trials, which always fascinates me as I have always been in the public prosecuting office. But I have had to rest Guerrieri as a character. He was far too successful with the girls, and I was becoming jealous."

The protagonist of 'Cold Summer' is a *Carabinieri* detective, Maresciallo Pietro Fenoglio. I said it seemed almost counter-intuitive to cast such a figure as a super sleuth – given the rather stolid, military profile of the *Bene Merita*, the Corps of *Carabinieri*. "Not at all, some of the bravest men I have come across have been *Carabinieri*, and some of the most ingenious."

Fenoglio is firmly of the political centre-left, and wears his culture lightly. He is often to be found reflecting on the thoughts of George Orwell, Calvino and Bertrand Russell. And the quotes and nostrums of Sherlock Holmes, who has a cult following among so many Italian *literati* such as Carofiglio and Umberto Eco.

Again, the inspiration is from real events: “During Cold Summer, we were investigating the background to a number of *Mafiosi* we had on remand. One day I went to the prison and was met by a *Carabinieri*, who gave me a list of books, articles and references about the community and society in our case. He is one of the most intelligent investigators I have ever met – he was just an *agente*, a private, not a sergeant or NCO.”

Fenoglio first appears in a novella ‘*Una Mutevole Verita*’ (a mutable truth), commissioned for the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Corps. “The Commandant General asked four writers for a story about a different period in *Carabinieri* history – one of the others was Andrea Camilleri (creator of Inspector Montalbano).” One wonders if the Commissioner of the London Met would show such flair and imagination.

Carofiglio is sanguine about the power of the Mafia he has spent so long fighting in law and in literature, both as a former judge and current commentator. “The Mafia certainly haven’t won, but they’ve changed. The old organisations of Sicily and Puglia, who created a blood bath in their wars of the 70s and 80s are in retreat. Many of the big bosses are in jail, those headed by Andrea Montana and Toto Riina.”

Italy now has one of the lowest murder rates in Europe, he says. In 1991 to 92, the year the *Corleonesi* murdered Borsellino and Falcone, there were more than 2,000 organised crime murders. Last year Italy reported 320 major homicides.

Groups like *Sacra Corona Unita* – United Holy Crown – have been exaggerated by international media, he muses. “Their ground was the south of Puglia round Lecce, and they were forced to flee to the Balkans.” Equally the Albanian gangs never had the grip they have in Northern Europe. “They didn’t understand the culture and didn’t make the necessary deals with local bosses.”

The tough clans of Puglia, like the *Societa Foggiana*, and the *Rosa*, around which the new novel is based, fought hard and dirty throughout the eighties and nineties. “Take the town Cerignola, between Bari and Foggia, a horrible little town of about 60,000. In one year alone they had more than 40 Mafia murders.”

The Mafia groups have changed, with mergers and takeovers across the international scene. The most powerful traditional Mafia is now the ‘*ndrangheta* of Calabria, “powerful, secretive, tight family units and very, very violent.”

Perhaps more bruising even than his time as a prosecutor was his five year term in politics as a Senator for the leftist Democratic Party in Rome. Politics in Italy are a wreck after the last elections, he says. “The Democratic party has been destroyed.”

“By the narcissism of (former Prime Minister) Matteo Renzi ?” I ask.

“Yes, like Tony Blair. This government, an alliance of the right wing League and leftist 5 Star Movement, doesn’t function – it can’t because the 5 Star Movement isn’t a proper party. It is a collection factions fighting each other all the time. Their mayor of Rome, Virginia Raggi, will be lucky to escape a prison sentence.”

The sense of civic gloom does not extend to his beloved Bari. The city of his birth is a major character in his novels, like Stockholm in the best Swedish *noir* and Los Angeles to Raymond Chandler’s Philip Marlow stories. But unlike Chandler’s LA, Carofiglio’s Bari is no villain. It is always a source of light in his novels. One of the central features of the stories – a wonderful cocktail of fact and fiction – is the legendary Teatro Petruzzelli, the last major opera house to remain in private hands. In 1991 it was blown up. “They were crazy – it was an insurance job in which they intended to burn down only a wing. They put packets of explosive inside tins of petrol, to avoid detection. But they overdid it, and blew the whole thing up. But we got them, and we managed to put the leaders of the whole scam in jail.”

After 18 years, it reopened. But running costs are enormous. Two years ago, Carofiglio took his turn as president of the trustees.

“You must join me next season,” he says with a broad grin. “Yes, Bari is a fine place. The city really works, quite unlike when I was a boy.”

His articulate optimism and *disinvoltura* are infectious. He sums up his past achievements as investigator and story teller with his favourite Sherlock Holmes aphorism: “Nothing is more deceptive than an obvious fact.”

Which sounds even better in Italian: *Non c’è piu grande l’inganno che quello piu ovvio.*”

**Crime fiction with Mat Coward**

# Hard cases to crack, from a Galway ruin to the west London underworld

A YOUNG man's apparent suicide in Galway brings back a disturbing memory for Detective Sergeant Cormac Reilly in **The Ruin** by Dervla McTiernan (Sphere, £8.99).

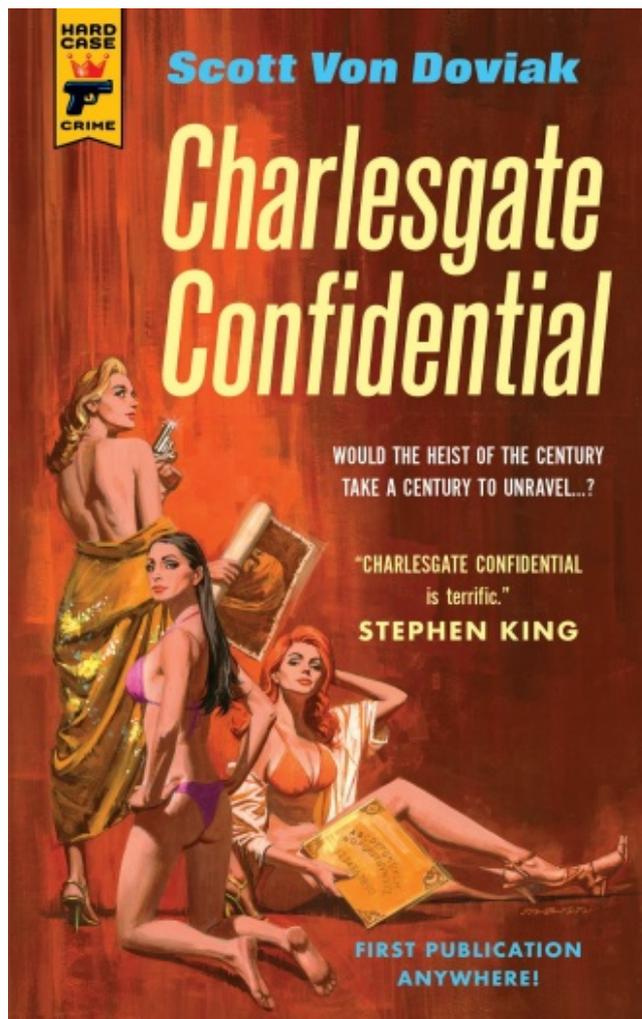


During his first week as a cop two decades earlier, he'd encountered the dead man, then a little boy, on the night his

mother died and his sister disappeared. Now, the sister's back and a faction in the Garda is determined to arrest her for murder.

Full of twists, and mixing elements of police procedural with an amateur sleuth conspiracy story, this is a very fine debut.

An eerie, labyrinthine building is at the centre of Scott Von Doviak's **Charlesgate Confidential**(Hard Case Crime, £16.99).

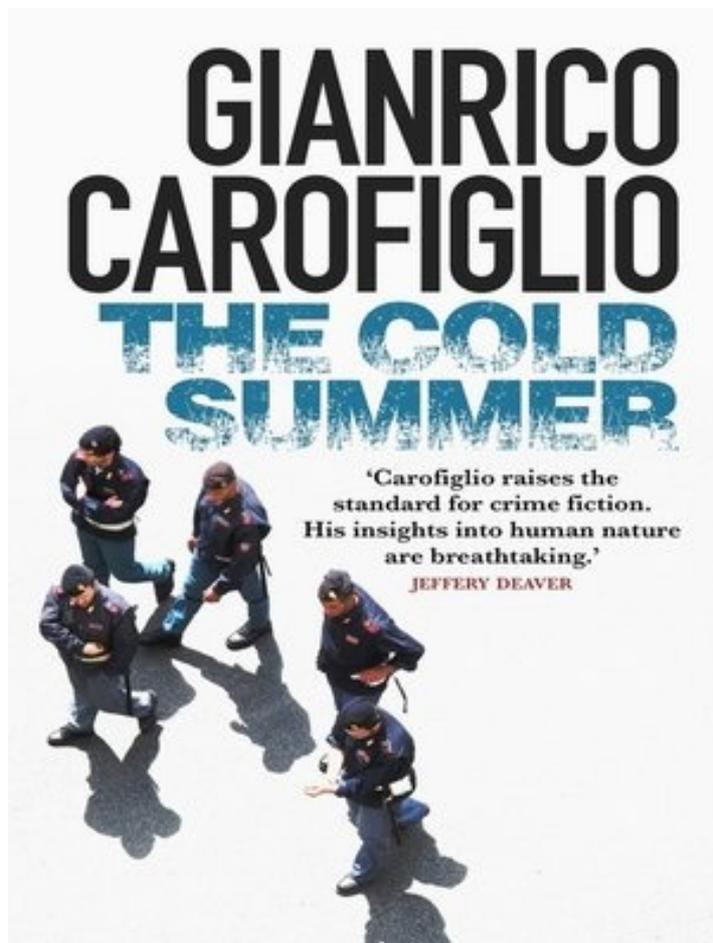


The Charlesgate in Boston, Massachusetts, started as a luxury hotel in the 1890s. Ruined by the Depression it went through decades of disreputability until it became a dormitory for university students in the 1980s.

It has also, at least in this fictional version of its eventful life, been the scene of several homicides, and one great unsolved mystery — the solution to which would be worth millions.

With chapters moving between warring mobsters in 1946, a student journalist getting in over his head in 1986 and a cop faced with a series of baffling murders in 2014, Von Doviak's first novel, mysterious and playful, is a great entertainment.

**The Cold Summer** by Gianrico Carofiglio (Bitter Lemon, £8.99) takes place in 1992 in Apulia, southern Italy, where a war between mafia factions leaves Marshal Fenoglio and his carabinieri colleagues helpless onlookers.



A breakthrough comes in the most tragic way — an insurgent gangster, no longer safe on the streets following the death of a

local godfather's son, wants to make a deal. But for Fenoglio, delivering justice to the child's killers will always be the priority.

Carofiglio irresistibly combines a tense police investigation with a philosophical examination of what honesty means in a corrupt environment.