

Liberation Publishing

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Channel Islands imprint, Liberation Publishing, is publishing its first novel, “Black Art” by Vic Tanner Davy, on 1 November 2012. A crime thriller, featuring the world’s first female-to-male transsexual detective, it is about a genealogist’s attempts to uncover the truth surrounding the disappearance of the grandmother of a British actress called Helen Valentine.

The novel is set in the present day, but its protagonist, Arty Shaw, is a genealogist who is asked to research the disappearance of Kay Marett in 1942 so, inevitably, there is an historical element to the story too. Vic has always been interested in the islands’ history. “The Channel Islands’ unique relationship to the British crown has shaped their history. At no point in time was this starker than during the Second World War. The islands’ occupation by German forces meant that islanders had to make choices that no one else in the British Isles had to make. The novel is about one islander’s choice and the repercussions that choice has for generations of her family.”

Written as a hard-boiled, detective novel from the golden age, Vic chose a style that enabled Arty Shaw to express his views in colourful ways. “I love the cynical asides that the hero always makes in noir novels. There is a black humour to it that serves to show the reader he’s really good guy, even though the needle of his moral compass is slightly battered and his view of the world somewhat jaded. If you didn’t have those insights, he could appear to be just a gun-toting, wise-cracking thug. Because Arty is an unusual choice for a hero, I wanted to use that humour to get the reader on his side.”

Arty certainly is an unusual choice for a hero. He is transsexual. Born female, he now lives as a man. Vic believes that Arty may be the world’s first female-to-male detective. “But, this shouldn’t put anyone off! It was important to me to write the novel so that the reader forgets that Arty is trans. He is just a regular guy. His sex-change is no more relevant to the plot than the fact that he drives an old Dodge.” So, why make that choice? “There have been numerous television programmes, newspaper and magazine articles, and so-called documentaries about transsexuals in recent years that have used sensationalist tactics to attract audiences. I find the way that they use language to elicit a particular audience reaction to their subject offensive. The fact that someone has changed sex is still universally headlined in shock-horror terms. Arty is an attempt to introduce a rounded, interesting character to the mainstream who happens to be trans.”

Although the novel deals with some big themes, not least of which is Holocaust denial, Vic says that the novel’s primary purpose is to be enjoyable. “I don’t think reading should be a chore. If you enjoy what you read, it has more impact. “Black Art” deals with some important issues, but I am not setting out to lecture anyone. At the end of the day, it is a work of fiction so writing a good story that engages the reader is the most important thing for me.”