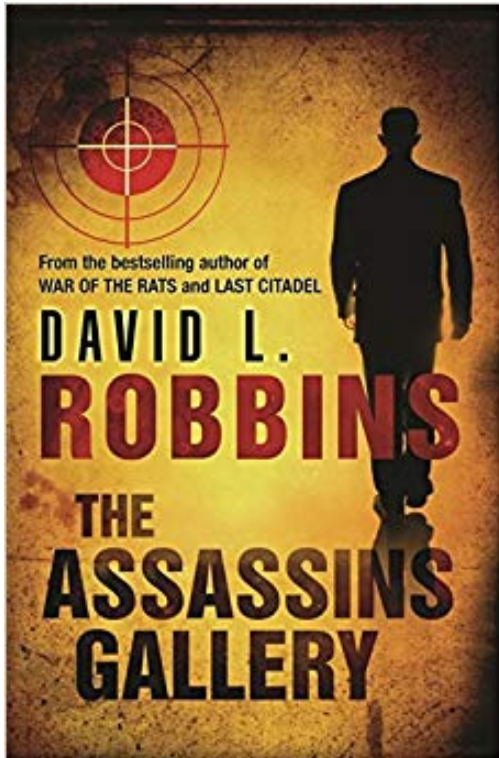


The Assassins Gallery *by* David L. Robbins



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Reviews of the [The Assassins Gallery](#) *by* David L. Robbins

Kulalbine

I first became aware of David Robbins when I read *War of the Rats*, which I found to be a truly good and well researched book. I have read others by him and am usually impressed. This book, however, is a tick or two below his best.

The main character is Mikhal Lammek, a guy from Poland who lives in the UK. He is a person who leads a double life, teaching college classes and also training commandos who will infiltrate behind enemy lines to fight Germans during WWII. He is a published expert on assassins and is writing a book called 'The Assassins Gallery', which happens to also be the title of Robbins' book. Because of his wealth of knowledge (but strangely an apparent lack of experience despite his wartime occupation), he is selected by an American Secret Service agent to help solve a mystery. It turns out that a woman has turned up on the northeast coast of America and is on a mission to assassinate FDR. The bulk of the book is told from two perspectives: that of Lammek as he interacts with the Secret Service and the assassin in an attempt to thwart her efforts, and that of the assassin herself as she connives and murders her way through Washington in order to get close to the president.

Lammek is a strange character. At the beginning of the book he is portrayed as a tough guy who teaches commandos how to survive, evade, and kill Germans in occupied countries. He is a wellspring of knowledge about assassins from history, and is familiar with their origins, their techniques, and their tools. He is also very insightful and is able to deduce his subject's motives and actions from paltry clues. However, as the book progresses, it turns out he does not have the "right stuff" and flubs his assignment in various ways. He is also a person who is not pleased with the [nonexistent] Allied efforts to prevent Hitler from conquering Poland. I imagine Robbins, in an effort to bring some history to his readers, causes Lammek to bellyache constantly about his disappointment in and possible hatred of FDR, and one wonders if this discontentment leads to his failure at critical times.

Lammek regularly visits the question of whether an individual (a leader, an assassin, or any individual who performs a great or heinous task) influences history, or if history itself somehow chooses its own path and, as if conscious, pursues that course by using available individuals to do its bidding. I suppose that's a question that historians think about.

The assassin is quite improbable and a little hard to swallow. She hails from a country in the Middle East and was raised to be an assassin in the original sense of the word. Despite her dedication to secrecy, she is somehow employed by (not saying who) to kill Roosevelt. Her Middle Eastern complexion magically allows her to blend into various Washington social groups - at times she passes as a white woman and is free to move about town with impunity; most of the time she poses as a black woman working as a servant to white families which ultimately enables her to find her way into the presence of the president. In another of the author's history lessons, the assassin, in her black servant guise, is used as a vehicle to demonstrate the plight of the black woman in an era when racism was the norm. The effect is mostly authentic but comes off as a little in-your-face "preachy".

FDR died near the end of the war. This book provides an alternative to the commonly believed explanation of how. Although the book is well written and easy to read, the premise sounds a little ridiculous: a person from an ancient sect gets hired by a presumed ally, lands in America, passes herself off as both black and white, waltzes into the president's house amidst an inconceivable lapse in security procedures, attempts to kill the guy, then disappears from the area and avoids getting shot by her pursuer. It's a little much. And the hero apparently fails to do his duty as well. The book as I said is well written and moves at a good pace (though there really is no edge of the seat suspense), and appears to be quite well researched, but as an explanation to how FDR really dies, it is kind of disappointing. Read it if you want to learn a little about history, but understand that this book isn't completely in touch with reality.

Bele

The Assassins Gallery is a thriller, a genre some trace to Homer. Thrillers keep up the suspense like a roller coaster. They are very popular and there is a glut of them on the market whose sole goal is to simply entertain. There's no character development. They are all plot and action. This novel is not one of them although Robbins does adhere to the genre.

The plot involves an assassin sent to kill President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1945. Her name is Judith, a Persian member of a Shiite Muslim cult of assassins going back to the middle ages. Her pursuers are a Czech American history professor, Mikhal Lammeck and Dag Nabbit, a Secret Service special agent. Judith swims ashore from a submarine on New Year's Eve in Newburyport, Massachusetts. A Nor'easter is brewing, and two civil defense volunteers are murdered as well as the husband of one of these volunteers. The local police believe it's a case of murder-suicide. A husband kills his wife, her lover, and then himself. Dag Nabbit smells a rat when a 12th century knife is found. The special agent is a former British SOE operative trained by professor Lammeck. This professor of history teaches history by day while training SOE operatives by night. Judith kills and then travels to Washington, posing as an Afro American from New Orleans. She easily passes as black or white murdering to conceal her presence with efficiency and sangfroid. Does she succeed?

That is the question, the hook, to keep you turning pages. "Killing me serves no purpose, " she said. "It'll stop you from ever doing this again." "...Stopping me doesn't stop me." History itself is a character having its own needs and capability to set its own direction. Even the most powerful are its existential pawns.

The Assassins Gallery is a classical thriller you will enjoy and ponder. Its strongest feature is the dialog. Although chapter one seems a bit ordinary, the prose and dialog get better and better with each succeeding chapter. The author treats you to all the classic elements of a thriller. But you also get a wonderful history lesson, and an exposure to WWII Afro American culture. So, if all you want is entertainment, you'll get it here. However, Robbins realizes you have a mind and skillfully addresses it. Read this novel and enjoy it. It's far more than just a fast paced beach read.

Punind

Yet another "Homerun" book by our Hometown master-author (Richmond VA)!! I have read the Betrayal Game and now the Assassins Gallery, back to back, and found them both to be OUTSTANDING. His Professor Lammeck character is perfect as a well-placed "observer" and expert on the history of assassinations from ancient times to "now". David Robbins skill in inserting Professor Lammeck dead in the middle of historical assassination attempts (or suspected ones as this is fiction and fascinating conjecture) is truly brilliant. I did remark to my daughter that Professor Lammeck seems to "appear" in historical events much like Forrest Gump did except Lammeck is keenly aware of what is going on and unwinds the most complicated of threads. I learned more "history" about Cuba and Fidel Castro in this book than has ever been known to me before..and was thoroughly entertained from paragraph to paragraph...never once was I "ahead" of the author or did I see any obvious conclusions until he gave them to me. The cou-de-gras (spelling apologized for if wrong) is the eventual identity of the person who was assigned to assassinate Castro. I hope that is a hint at his next book.

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