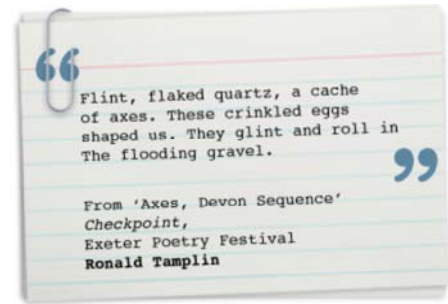


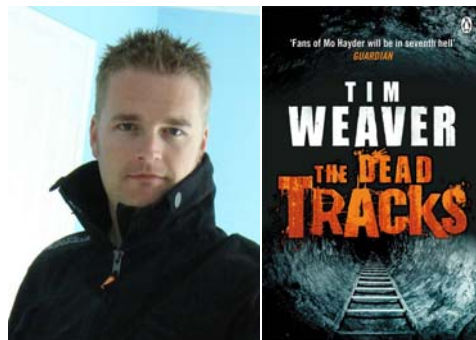


Good Morning! It's Saturday on April 02, 2011.

Literature for everyone in the South West



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Tim Weaver was born in 1977. At eighteen, he left school and started working in magazine journalism, and has since gone on to develop a successful career writing about films, TV, sport, games and technology. He is married with a young daughter, and lives near Bath. *Chasing the Dead* was his first David Raker novel. His latest Raker novel, *The Dead Tracks* has just been launched. Cyprus Well was delighted to catch up with Tim recently to ask a few questions about his writing career and writing in general.

**There's something really special about your choice of a Missing Persons Investigator as your main character. Can you say a bit about the thinking that led to that?**

It was kind of a perfect storm, really. I knew I didn't want to write about cops, or ex-cops, or ex-cops that were private investigators, not because I wasn't interested in that part of the genre, but because there were so many great thrillers already covering that ground. I wanted something that stood out just a little from the crowd, but I also wanted something that resonated with readers. I think we all feel a connection – as parents, as family members and as friends – to people who lose someone dear to them, and as a parent myself, as someone very close to my family, I know it must be even harder when you have no idea where that person went, or whether they're even dead or alive. So there was an immediate emotional angle to it, which I liked, and which also tied in well to the main character, David Raker, who – at the start of the first book, *Chasing the Dead* – loses his wife to breast cancer. She wasn't missing in the traditional sense, but she was suddenly missing from his life, and that allowed me to play on the parallels between the families who came to him and his own situation. Finally, I guess there was a more basic reason for doing it: the mystery. There's a kind of guilty fascination to missing persons because, in this age of social networking, of email, of 24-hour TV, it seems amazing that someone can still vanish into thin air, never to be seen again. I mean, how exactly does a person vanish without trace? That's what interested me.

**On your website, I read that you have dreamed about writing books since you were a kid. What is it about being an author that has such a strong pull for you?**

I just love creating worlds, and always have done. There's something so exciting about sitting down at the start of each book and planning it out: the story, the characters, the twists and revelations, the places you'll bring to life. I'm sure most people, even if they have no compulsion to write anything, can imagine that excitement. How many times have we been sitting in front of the TV, or sitting in bed reading a novel, got to the end and thought, "It was good – but it would have been better if..." I think it's in our nature to be creative, even if we're not putting it down on paper.

**You're a fan of John Connolly, who to my mind mixes horror aspects with crime aspects, and Stephen King, 80s horror movies. Do you see a strong connection between the crime/thriller genres and horror? Increasingly, they are hard to tell apart!**

South West  
 What's On Calendar

### Literature Clips

Our patron, Helen Dunmore  
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[Helen Dunmore](#) from [Neil Astley](#)

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I agree! That's a great question, actually, because you're absolutely right: sometimes they are hard to tell apart. I think, to a large extent, it depends on where your horror lies. I'm definitely a fan of John Connolly, although I have to say I prefer his earlier novels to his later ones. Books like *Every Dead Thing* and *Dark Hollow* were what made me want to write thrillers in the first place. They were incredible. I loved the way he explored characters (especially through his amazing villains!) who were right out there on the periphery of what we knew to be human, without ever fully taking the step across the dividing line; and because those early books were grounded in reality, they were that much creepier. But, even though most authors aren't as overt in their use of the supernatural, and of the staples of the horror genre, I think it's inevitable that there will be some cross-over. Just take a look at the news: it's a pretty upsetting, pretty disturbing world, full of people capable of barely-believable things.

For me, the most stomach-churning thriller of recent years – and actually a book I struggled to finish, not because it wasn't good, but because it was so hard to take – was Mo Hayder's *The Treatment*. Even if you're not a parent, I'm not sure anyone should breeze through a book about paedophilia, and I struggled every step of the way with that one. That's definitely my own personal horror – I can read anything, stomach pretty much anything, but not when kids are involved. Everyone is different, though. You could look at *American Psycho* as horror. You could look at *The Road* as horror. You could look at JM Coetzee's *Disgrace* as horror. It's very subjective.

**Could you say a bit about your regular writing practices – do you have a set number of words a day for example, a favoured time of day for example?**

My favoured time of the day is the evening – but only because I work as a journalist during the day! I try not to write at weekends if possible, because I worry my family might forget what I look like, but I always work Monday to Friday, every evening, from about 7pm to 11.30pm. I try not to set too many goals for myself. It's already a challenge having to confine my writing to week day evenings only, so I tend to just sit down and write, and then keep going until it's time for bed. I'd give anything for more time, not just because it's hard to finish up, go to sleep, and then not return to it for 24 hours, but because – when things aren't going so well, when you really need to keep at it – it feels like the worst thing you could possibly do is leave a manuscript alone. But I love writing, and am incredibly grateful for the opportunities I've been given, so I suck up the stresses and strains because, ultimately, it's all worth it. One absolute necessity for me, though: total and utter silence. Any noise distracts me, so I even make my wife watch TV with headphones on in the evenings!

**How do you plot your novels? Do you know every step of the story before you begin, for example, or do some elements work their way to the surface as you write?**

I had two very different experiences for *Chasing the Dead* and *The Dead Tracks*. For *Chasing*, I had no real plan – and it was a total disaster! You end up drifting down dead ends, going places you don't need to, and nothing ties up. For *The Dead Tracks*, it was the complete opposite: I had a 20-page synopsis detailing every character, where the plot went, major events, beginning, end and everything in between and it was a much, much easier write. Plotting is incredibly important, which was why *Chasing the Dead* took about ten years to get published – and *The Dead Tracks* was written in six months. For some authors, a 20-page plan isn't much of a plan at all, but for me it works perfectly: it's enough to keep me in check, to show me where I'm meant to be headed, but it's loose enough to let me take detours along the way. So, yes, I'm definitely one of those writers that likes to work elements in on the way.

In *The Dead Tracks*, for example, I got to the end of the book – what was, effectively, the end of my plan for it – and realised it wasn't finished. It didn't feel finished, the characters didn't feel finished, the story felt like it had more to give. So I wrote a brand new ending. And I think, of all the scenes in *The Dead Tracks*, it's one of my favourites.

**Do you have any advice for any of our readers who want to set off on a writing career?**

Don't get disheartened! Unless you're very, very fortunate, the road to being published will be a long one, full of disappointment and frustration – but if you stick at it, if you keep going, and if what you're writing is good enough, someone, somewhere will sit up and take notice.

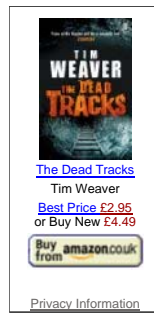
**At Cyprus Well we ask everyone for their thoughts on the digital revolution underway in the book world. What are your thoughts on Kindles, iPads and the eBook situation in general?**

I have a real affection for physical books; the feel of them, the smell of them, the history, the heritage, the emotional attachment. There's the simple practicality of them too – you can take a book onto a beach and it doesn't matter if you get sand in it, or your daughter wanders off with it and drops it in the sea – so Kindles and eBook readers will always come second place to a real book, and browsing a real bookshop, for me. I say that as someone who is very interested in technology, who works with and writes about new technology every day, so it's not that I view them with any kind of suspicion, more that – personally – I just like the traditional book format. It means more to me. I'm the type of person who likes to rearrange his bookshelves on a regular basis, who gets excited when he finds a faded, sun-bleached copy of a novel I'd forgotten I had in the loft, and – as good as the Kindle is (and it's very good) – it just can't compete with those things, and it can't elicit the same kinds of reaction from me. I think it's inevitable that the future is in electronic media – we're already seeing it with Amazon, where they're selling more Kindle copies than physical ones – and it's inevitable we'll all be a part of that some day. But Kindle and iPad will never replace the simple paperback; not totally. Paperbacks are a little slice of history, a reminder of where you were,

and what you were doing, at a certain point in your life. They're what I grew up reading, what I still read, and what I hope my daughter will read too.

Thanks Tim!

[www.timweaverbooks.com](http://www.timweaverbooks.com)



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