



Body Politic

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"Gorky Park" meets "Brave New World" in this award-winning debut novel of a serial killer lost in a supposedly perfect society overtaken by the Enlightenment.

Body Politic Details

Date : Published 1998 by New English Library (first published July 3rd 1997)

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Author : Paul Johnston

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Genre : Mystery, Crime, Fiction, Science Fiction, Cultural, Scotland, Dystopia, Thriller, Mystery Thriller

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From Reader Review Body Politic for online ebook

Chrissy says

There's no summaries up here yet, so:

This book is kind of like *1984* meets *Law and Order: SVU*. It's set in a future where the world has become corrupt and unruly, except for one city, set apart, where the "Enlightenment" has allowed for peace and order. And then a string of gruesome murders threatens to disrupt the enlightenment, so Citizen Dalrymple is enlisted to find the murderer.

Ricardo Vasconcelos says

Surprisingly good book!

I never saw it coming!

The title of the book almost scared me off because I was thinking it was a book with political content instead of an fiction story!

This is a detective story which happens in the year 2020.

The reality created by the author reminds me a little the reality created by George Orwell in his *1984* fiction!

If you like these kind of stories or detective stories you will probably enjoy this book as well.

I read this in 4 days, which I believe it's a personal record for me!

I couldn't simply stop ... as I wanted to know what happened in the next chapter ... and in the following ... and so on...

Jack Deighton says

The first publication of this novel was in 1997 when the date in which it is set, 2020, was a considerable time away. That makes it read a bit oddly in 2016.

Edinburgh - like many other parts of the UK - is independent, home to a never-ending tourist drawing festival, from which the city derives most of its income. It is run by the Enlightenment Council of City Guardians, which comes across as a sort of muted cross between a local Council, the Committee of Public Safety and a Kirk Session. The city's citizens lead a circumscribed existence, unruly beards are obligatory, television, private cars and crime are banned, as is blues music - a problem for former city guardian Quintilian Dalrymple who at the novel's start is asked by Katharine Kirkwood to find her missing brother. Before long however, a body is discovered whose murder bears remarkable similarities to those of the Ear, Nose and Throat Man from several years before. Dalrymple, as the expert on the previous crimes (and instrumental in their ceasing,) is roped back in to the Enlightenment's police force (called guardians) to investigate. What follows is the usual tale of corruption, red-herringry and interconnectedness; though carried off with great skill. The crime element is pretty standard fare (as far as my reading of the genre goes) the bureaucratic hassles associated with the policeman's/policewoman's lot lent an air of strangeness by the unusual background. Various villains are unmasked, the murderer not whom you might expect. Kirkwood's

brother's disappearance is peripheral to that aspect of the plot and only really exists to provide Dalrymple with a love interest.

Despite its (altered) future setting this cannot really be considered Science Fiction. In form and content it is more of a crime novel than anything else, there is no speculation involved. Quite why it appeared on the Herald's list of best Scottish Fiction Books, I'm not sure. I can only think that the Enlightenment might be supposed to be a peculiarly Scottish conception. It has Calvinistic undertones but the things it tolerates - encourages even - have traditionally been frowned upon at best and more usually excoriated.

Somewhat prophetically there is the line, "The USA had reverted to the self-obsession that's a hallmark of their history."

Olivermagnus says

This book takes place in 2020 Edinburgh, Scotland. After years of rioting and chaos, during which time the United Kingdom was dissolved into dozens of city-states, Edinburgh achieves stability thanks to the Council of City Guardians and their vision of a new Age of Enlightenment. There have been no murders in the city for five years until now, when the body of an auxiliary is found dead and mutilated. The signs are there that an old serial killer known as the Ear, Nose, Throat (ENT) Man is back.

Quintillian Dalrymple is a disgraced Guardsman. Years ago, unable to capture the ENT Man, he was demoted to the Parks Auxiliary. Quint knows that these murders can't be tied to the ENT Man, because he's the only one who really knows what happened to him years ago. When a second murder takes place, Quint is asked by the Guardian Council to investigate the murders.

This is an interesting book. The Edinburgh here is an austere city, where almost everything we know is banned: music, television, private cars, and computers. Even first names are banned. People are referred to as "Citizen" and the Auxiliary is called by their barracks name and number, i.e., Heriot 07. This is the first book written by this author, and the first of currently six books in the dystopian crime series. Body Politic also won Johnston the John Creasey Award for best first crime novel. I felt like the characters were a little flat but the incredible Edinburgh of the future was very realistic. I would definitely consider giving this author another chance in the second book of the series, Bone Yard.

Beth says

It's the year of 2020, an Edinburgh of a dystopian future, where the City is run as a republic, ruled over by a group of Guardians that are riddled with corruption, though supposedly incorruptible.

Quint is a disgraced, former "cop" who is called back into service when it appears that a former serial killer is back in operation in a crime-free city.

The future is dreary. Freedom is no more. Relationships are basically discouraged.

Thought it was going well until there was a bit of an information dump to give back story to the arrival of the city state and the "Enlightenment".

Audible book was narrated well.

On the whole, not quite 3 stars. Was glad to finally get to the end.

Cheryl says

This book is one in a series set in Edinburgh, Scotland in the 2020's after the world economy has collapsed into scattered city-states due to wars and drugs. Edinburgh is tightly run by the Guardians with the support of auxiliaries, who are referred to by their numbers rather than their names. The Guardians proclaim the city crime-free, but then hire Quint (Quintilian) Dalrymple to solve the crimes that occur. Quint is supported by a great group of friends and acquaintances who are interesting and well fleshed out. The series is amusing and entertaining. This, the first book, introduces us to Quint who is brought in to solve the murder of a woman auxiliary. The murder resembles a cold case. We meet Davie, Quint's side kick.

David Brown says

A re-read from some time back - in preparation for his new books in this series set in a post independence Scotland where the country has broken down further and Edinburgh is ruled by a set of hypocritical and morally bankrupt guardians. An interesting central character, a reasonably complex whodunnit and a set up for future volumes. All a bit familiar once I'd got started but will read in series to prepare for the new stuff

Jaksen says

At some point made no sense to me, even in the world the writer creates. Lost interest, no rating.

Karl says

This first in a projected series of detective novels features Edinburgh's Quintilian Dalrymple, who quit the Public Order Directorate to work as a parks laborer and sometime private eye which takes place in the year 2020.

Dalrymple is summoned to clear up the mystery of who murdered guardswoman Knox 96, a.k.a. Sarah Spence, before it affects the tourist trade. In the bleak, near-future Edinburgh televisions, private cars, unsanctioned books and music have been banned and most crime has been eliminated. and this is the first murder in five years .

Dalrymple is reluctant to take on the case as he has a private client he is working for to locate a missing person . However as thing move along he will cover a sex-slaves racket, medical-research corruption, and an insane serial killer.

The book won Britain's Creasy Award for best first novel.

Miχ?λης says

Pretty interesting crime novel with some political satire and science fiction thrown in. It's mystery is well built and the pace is great. There are various subplots that converge and diverge successfully, likeable characters and interesting twists/red herrings.

My main complaint is the way the protagonist sometimes goes out to follow some leads that make too little sense.

Overall, an interesting sort-of-sci-fi crime thriller I would recommend.

Tracy Corral says

Imagine a world with no private telephones, cars or computers, where children are given up by their families to be raised by the state. This is the dystopian world of *Body Politic* by Paul Johnston, a world in which the aftermath of chaos brought on by drug wars and senseless violence is a calm "Enlightenment."

The first in a series of stories about Quintilian Dalrymple, a down-and-out former auxiliary for the Edinburgh police. Dalrymple is saddled with cleaning up an investigation into a series of gruesome murders committed by a man he could swear is dead. As a former auxiliary with the police who has been demoted to the Parks Department clean-up crew, Dalrymple never stopped investigating. He frequently takes on private clients who hire him to find loved ones, although in post-Enlightenment Scotland, it is never a good thing to step out of line, the reason he was demoted to trash pickup. A board of Guardians runs the country and makes the decisions for the population: Who they will be associated with, what they will do with their lives, what they wear and what music is appropriate.

In between musing about American Blues artists such as John Lee Hooker and B.B. King (music banned in 2020 Edinburgh after the "Enlightenment") and his investigation, Dalrymple takes on a client who hires him to look into the disappearance of her brother. This storyline converges with the main investigation in an unexpected way that to me, made sense.

I would have liked a little more Blues chat; Johnston didn't develop that theme enough so that I really felt Quintilian knows the blues; it was more like he dropped a few names of the Blues greats and then moved on.

As an aside, I finished *The Body Politic* the weekend of the attacks on Paris, France by members of ISIS. I was struck by one of the descriptions in the story, as Dalrymple observes the crockery in a kitchen, he thinks, it "...would have been worth a small fortune in that country [France] before the Moslem fundamentalists reduced it to a collection of bankrupt city-states." It's a throwaway line written in the late 1990s, but does resonate today.

good1102 says

Good Volk

Sera says

Fantastic dystopic novel - one of the best of the genre! Quint Dalrymple is an awesome hero & his Edinburgh is realistic & fully formed - possibly 1 of my all time faves!! Others in this series all rock - fun clever & infinitely re-readable (also a scary potential Brave New World!)

Snail in Danger (Sid) Nicolaides says

[You know how you have to earn your happy ending? He didn't, and he didn't get one. I think this was handled well. (hide spoiler)]

Kathy Dolan says

Not my usual choice of crime novel. I currently need to have an audio book on the go, but the library choice for downloading is limited and in a way this is good because I have to go a little outside my comfort zone. This is set in an alternative Edinburgh in 2020 (and does remind me a little of a Rebus novel) and is a convincing and compelling world. The writing is more violent and explicit than I can normally stomach, but by the time I'd discovered this I was too far in to give up. I probably wouldn't try a second book simply but for a change this was enjoyable.
