

You are what you do

Crime novelist a prodigious talent

Suspended Sentences

by Jim Napier

Shakespeare said that some people are born great, while others have greatness thrust upon them; to which it might be added: yet others seize life by the horns and achieve a measure of greatness by their own skill and determination.

This week's author is an example of taking the latter path. She has drawn on her impressive talents to carve out an enviable career as a successful novelist, and at last count has authored over seventy novels spanning such diverse genres as contemporary fiction, historical fiction, horror/fantasy, crime fiction, romantic comedy, and short stories. When I first met her close to ten years ago at a birthday celebration at her home I confess I knew nothing of her work; it was a happy discovery, and I have not looked back.

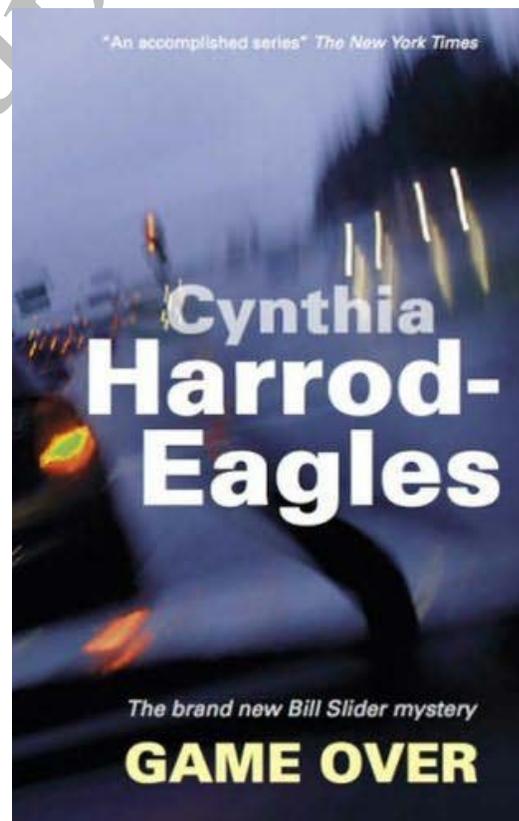
Cynthia Harrod-Eagles

Cynthia Harrod-Eagles was born in Shepherd's Bush in London. She was educated at Burlington School, a girls' charity school founded in 1699, and studied English, history and philosophy at the University of Edinburgh and at University College London. In 1972 while at university she wrote her first novel, *The Waiting Game*, which won the British Young Writers' Award.

After graduating from university Cynthia held a variety of jobs in the commercial world, beginning as the sales manager

for the Coca-Cola Company in Edinburgh, and ending up as a pensions officer for the BBC in London, all the while writing during her evenings and weekends.

The publication of her *Morland Dynasty* series of historical novels enabled Cynthia to become a full-time writer in 1979. The series was originally intended to comprise twelve volumes, but proved so popular that it has now been extended to thirty four.



In 1993 Cynthia won the Romance Novel of the Year Award with *Emily*, the third volume of her Kirov Saga, a trilogy set in nineteenth-century Russia. Not least, she also writes the internationally-acclaimed crime series, the Bill Slider mysteries.

Cynthia and her husband Tony have three children, and live in Middlesex. In addition to having penned no less than seventy-one novels to date—almost two per year for the past thirty six years—Cynthia's passions are music (she plays in several amateur orchestras), horses, wine, architecture, and the English countryside. She is, then, a person of no small accomplishment.

Game Over
(Severn House, 2008)

Shepherd's Bush West London: divorced with two children, DI Bill Slider is finally putting his life back together. His rocky marriage of fourteen years now ended, he and his new partner Joanna await the birth of their first child and their impending marriage: it's anyone's guess which will occur first. But their hopes and plans, indeed, their very lives, will be put at risk by an escaped villain out to settle an old score.

Events begin straightforwardly enough, at least if you're a homicide detective. A middle-aged man has been murdered. An ex-journalist, Ed Stonax, had dropped out of sight following a three-way sex scandal involving a young reporter and another man. He claimed it was a set-up, but then everyone does, don't they?

Now Stonax is dead, killed by a blow to his head in his London flat. His daughter Emily Stonax, also a journalist, flies in from New York, hoping to make sense of her father's death. Compli-

cating matters, she enters into a relationship with Slider's friend and colleague, Jim Atherton. To say the least, Slider is concerned.

It is not long before they learn that a file folder is missing from the victim's flat. When Slider suffers a near miss by a motorcycle, he wonders whether it is his old nemesis or somehow connected to the investigation. And checking further into the sex scandal, it seems that Stonax was targeted because he knew something dangerous to others.

Before the dust settles, more murders will surface, and not only Slider's life, but Joanna's as well, will be put at risk. Bill Slider must decide whether it is due to his old enemy, his current investigation, or both.

***Crackling dialogue in
a nuanced tale***

Bill Slider is one of my favourite characters in crime fiction. No superhero, he grapples with the challenges of his job and the frustrations of a complex personal life. Cynthia Harrod-Eagles is a master of her craft, building a cogent plot around a nuanced protagonist, and creating crackling dialogue that Kirkus Reviews has called "some of the best cop talk this side of the Atlantic." Not above a bit of humour as well, she peppers her book with chapter titles perpetrating truly awful—that is to say, delightful—puns.

Game Over is the eleventh entry in the Bill Slider series, previous novels consisting of *Orchestrated Death* (1991), *Death Watch* (1992), *Necrochip* (1993), *Dead End* (1994), *Blood Lines* (1996), *Killing Time* (1996), *Shallow Grave* (1998), *Blood Sinister* (1999), *Gone Tomorrow* (2001), and *Dear Departed* (2004). Do yourself a favour

and read them all.

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