



The Westminster Poisoner

Susanna Gregory

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After the Puritan ban on Christmas festivities, Restoration London is awash with excess between Christmas Eve and Twelfth Night, but the two men found in Westminster Hall had not died from a surfeit of gluttony, but from poison. The Lord Chancellor appoints Chaloner as his investigator into the killings, believing them to be of scant importance to the affairs of state he deals with. But Chaloner reveals a stinking seam of corruption in the Palace of White Hall, where even the Queen is a victim to the greed of courtiers and functionaries. And the pickings are so rich that men are prepared to go to any lengths to save their own skins and their stolen fortunes.

The Westminster Poisoner Details

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From Reader Review The Westminster Poisoner for online ebook

Johanne says

I do like this series of books, good plots and a good level of historical detail. The odious Lady Castlemain turns up in this one along with a lot of disgruntled people who found the restoration wasn't what they'd hoped for. Chaloner has to pick his way through various suspects and misleading details to catch the killer. NB it also pleased me to see that the formerly dutiful Puritan Temperance's brothel is still a success :-)

Elaine says

This is a first class mystery novel. I had no hope of figuring out the killer.

The book is structured around Tom Chaloner and a few supporting characters. However, the cast of minor characters have a big bearing on the story. They are skillfully written. I would love to see a bit more personality from Chaloner. He can sometimes seem a little dry. That said, the introduction of his new girlfriend was a nice development.

I look forward to the next books.

Waverly Fitzgerald says

I'm reading a lot of books about the Restoration (also Dark Angels by Karleen Koen and Restoration by Rose Tremain), as well as Killers of the King, a used book I bought at the great Seattle used book store, Magus, which describes how Charles II hunted down and killed the men who killed his father, Charles I (who is still alive in the book I am writing about the English Civil War).

So it's fun to read this historical mystery. Her main character, Thomas Chaloner, is one of the regicides, who, in real life, fled to the Netherlands, but in her book, he's become a spy for Clarendon, the pompous and opinionated Chief Minister to Charles II. She also uses real courtiers as the suspects in a series of murders committed at White Hall, which Chaloner is investigating for Clarendon. There's a lot of wandering around London, talking to various characters, and some glimpses of the courtiers going through the holiday customs around the winter holidays, including some great pranks pulled by the Lord of Misrule. I had some concerns about if any of the events of this book actually happened. I don't really like that feeling when I'm reading historical novels.

K.B. Hallman says

I had originally been bemoaning the lack of humor in this book. I expected something akin to the banter between Matt and Michael in Gregory's Matthew Bartholomew series. This time the humor smacked me on the last page of the story. Our hero--Thomas Chaloner--is a government spy and an incredibly gullible man. This book isn't so much a whodunit as a who-did-what-to-whom-when-and-why as well as a who-didn't-do-anything-to-anybody. (Think Murder on the Orient Express.) Along the way, we are treated to sword-and-

broom fights; chases through White Hall Palace and over the rooftops of London; escapes by way of a winter swim in the Thames; theft; poisonings; attacks perpetrated by soldiers of fortune; courtiers behaving badly; greedy, corrupt, inept government officials.... Ah, wonderful stuff!

Margaret says

Part of Susanna Gregroy's Thomas Chaloner mystery series set in Restoration London.

Well plotted and well written. Found it hard to feel any rapport with the main character, which is a bit of a draw back with any novel.

Enjoyed it enough that I will read the others if I come across them, but not a enough to deliberately seek out the rest of the series.

Rachel says

As good as the first Thomas Chaloner book I read. Susanna Gregory's books don't seem to be as good as CJ Sansom but they are still a good read. This book has plenty of twists and turns and I hadn't guessed the ending, so that's always a bonus. Looking forward to reading the next one I have from the library.

Karen Brooks says

This is the fourth Thomas Chaloner book I've read featuring the much put upon and impoverished former roundhead spy who now works for the ungrateful (and disloyal – to him) Earl of Clarendon. This time, a poisoner is at work killing the King's clerks in brazen circumstances. When the Earl asks both Chaloner and a new man he's appointed to investigate these crimes and the case of the king's missing Bernini sculpture, setting them against each other, and the Earl's own secretaries Bulteel and Haddon take bets on whether Chaloner or the new man will solve the cases, Thomas understands his job is at stake. But, it's not only his employ that's under threat. As usual, on the mean streets of Restoration London, it's his life as well. With his only friend, his former boss, Thurloe, about to leave the city and his old friend, the former Puritan and now brothel madame, Temperance, fast losing patience with him and a new relationship with one of the queen's ladies to foster, Thomas has his work cut out and many dangers to avoid - never mind worrying about where his next penny will come from.

But as the body count mounts and he's no closer to solving the case, Thomas understands that his priorities and friendships may have to change...

Gregory has such a rich and detailed understanding of the period, of the complexities of the political, social and sexual machinations of the court, it's sometimes hard to keep up as a cast of hundreds appear and disappear and the plot thickens until it almost congeals. Only, it doesn't. Immersing the reader in the murky settings and even murkier plans of those who seek power at all costs, Gregory's novels are a great way to rediscover history and cleave to a marvellous but also very human and flawed character, Thomas Chaloner. Once again, I found part of the novel a bit slow and occasionally had to stop and remind myself who is who, but never did I lose my respect and appreciation for Gregory's lovely writing and ability to recreate history and weave historical fact (detailed facts too and people) with fiction. It's not surprising, considering Susanna Gregory is the pseudonym of Elizabeth Cruwys a Cambridge academic. She was also once a coroner's

officer, so her eye for detail and for being able to relate it in an authentic way is outstanding. I do think this series is getting better and better and cannot wait to read the next instalment.

Brenda Mengeling says

Set in Restoration London, this fourth entry in the Thomas Chaloner mysteries did little to endear me to the series. The setting and ambiance are great; here it is Yuletide a few years into the reign of Charles II. The problem with this book and with the series in general is that Chaloner comes across as not very smart. The story almost reads as though Susanna Gregory made Chaloner dumb just so she could stretch a pretty simple mystery into a whole novel. Gregory also writes the fantastic medieval series featuring Cambridge physician Matthew Bartholomew, which are complex, involved, and smart. The disparity between the two series perplexes me. I really want to like these. Damn.

Margareth8537 says

Audiobook read by Gordon Griffin

Further adventures of a spy - Challoner -at the time of the Restoration. Challoner had worked for Cromwell's spymaster, Thurloe, and now works for King Charles' chancellor.

A number of clerks have been killed and he is charged with finding the murderer and with finding a stolen Bernini statue of the old King.

Simon Mcleish says

This review was first published in my blog [here](#).

This is the fourth of the Thomas Chaloner series, historical mysteries set just after the restoration of the monarchy in Britain following the Civil War and Cromwell's rule. In *The Westminster Poisoner*, Chaloner investigates a series of murders of government officials, despite interference from his employer, who starts out by telling him who the murderer should be.

As is now standard in this series, Chaloner spends much of the investigation as an outsider to the corrupt world of Restoration London; this provides an interesting perspective, but can become a bit wearing. *The Westminster Poisoner* is quite lengthy, for a crime novel, and it sometimes feels as though it's spending too much time wallowing in the depravity instead of getting on with the mystery. The depiction of Restoration London is one of the things which first interested me in the series, but I am feeling that by the fourth book it's becoming a little too much always the same.

Still, the characterisation is good, and the mystery is interesting and difficult to solve, and the historical background is meticulously researched. The ending is very good indeed. Generally, I felt that the positive aspects of *The Westminster Poisoner* outweighed the negative, though it is not as good as earlier books in the series where the background was fresher

Lexie Conyngham says

I don't think I've read one of hers before but it was very good – fine setting, lively characters, and a very interesting note at the back placing it all in its historical context.

Claire says

I very much enjoyed this Restoration-set murder mystery, which, like all of Gregory's thrillers, features real, recorded historical characters and events, reworked into a fictional fabric to great effect. It is Christmas time, three years into the restoration of the monarchy, and all London is celebrating the season with great gusto. All London, that is, except for Thomas Chaloner, the secretive ex-Parliamentarian soldier (now spy for the effusive and slightly paranoid Lord Chancellor, the Earl of Clarendon), who has been tasked to discover the culprit behind the brazen theft of a priceless sculpture from King Charles II's collection. But then a series of dead bodies start turning up around the Palace of Westminster, and Chaloner's job is suddenly made a whole lot more difficult... This is a proper page-turner of a read, with a lovely sense of time, place, and characterisation throughout, and comes complete with some very neat (and very clever) little red herrings strewn throughout the plot to make the reader really think. This is easily the best of the Chaloner novels so far.

Lc16 says

As always with the Chaloner series I felt that I was in 17th century London - albeit a sometimes strange and surreal one. Her plots are labyrinth with so many twists and turns. I love that minor characters are as interesting as the main ones. One of the few series that always make me laugh out loud a couple of times. It shouldn't have surprised me but as we see everything through Chaloner's eyes the end scenes completely pulled the rug from under me. I wish that Chaloner didn't seem quite so friendless but I realise this goes with the territory and is a contrast to the Barthlowmew series. Gregory's books are still an automatic purchase.

Vivienne says

Another in this superb series set in Restoration London. Here Thomas' employer, The Lord Chancellor, hires another spy, Colonel Turner, and pits him and Thomas against one another stating that whoever solves the crime would secure his position. So poor Thomas' livelihood is once more threatened.

I have become familiar with Gregory's style and so was able to read this novel more quickly than the earlier ones in the series. Her research is impeccable and again she populates the story with many real life minor clerks and courtiers. Even the suspicious deaths/murders correspond to actual deaths in 1663/64 even if embellished some. In all a wonderful reading experience as well as an intriguing historical whodunit.

Martin Fautley says

Intelligent, probably well-researched (felt right, which is about all I am qualified to say!) and captured the contrasts of Restoration London nicely.

Good characterisation, and plot was believable, concerning poisonings of clerk-type chappies in and around Westminster. Nice side-plot of missing bust too.
