

Journalist, André Teixeira, Brazil.

1. When and how did Literature enter your life? What inspired you to become a writer? Is there a voracious reader behind every writer?

It is hard to imagine any writer who is NOT a passionate reader. *Lego ergo sum!* We both read all the time. Indeed, we hardly do anything else! Daniela watches films on television; I watch football. The rest of the time, we are reading. Of course, we do read the sort of books that we write – crime novels by our professional 'rivals,' let's say – but we read lots of other things, too. Daniela reads widely on philosophy, essays, history. I read history, biography, and so on. We both get through a couple of novels a week.

2. What kind of a writer is Michael Gregorio?

Michael Gregorio is, essentially, a mystery writer. That is, he creates a character, puts him/her into a tense and critical situation, and leaves the reader dangling about what the final outcome will be. Michael Gregorio is also a crime writer; he is trying to unravel and explain the sort of “technical procedures” that a young magistrate might have been tempted to employ in the Napoleonic period. We have invented charlatans, necromancers, diviners, women who interpret the “meaning” of bird bones, as well as “scientists” who draw or reconstruct dead faces and reassemble bodies from the available forensic material. Of course, we can't reveal the details which feature in our new book, *Days of Atonement*, but they are prominently there! We have been described as “Grimm-like,” and “grotesque” by the novelist, Andrew Taylor, but we never ever go beyond the boundaries of what is possible. Our hero, Hanno Stiffeniis, uses nothing more than the science and the technology which might have been available to a magistrate in the first decade of the 1800s.

3. What is the story behind the story? How was the character of Hanno Stiffeniis created?

How did it happen? That is a big question! We had a promising idea for a novel, but we were both working full-time. So, we used to work on the story every weekend over tea and biscuits, trying to develop the character and plot until it all came into focus. And the story centred around a young Prussian magistrate named Hanno Stiffeniis. Now, where did *he* come from? This is the great mystery of all writing. One day, while the tea was cooling, he just stepped out of the shadows and sat down, and there were three of us in the kitchen!

Hanno, like all intelligent people, is a perplexed man of his time. He is a student of philosophy with a dark soul. He is fascinated by Kant and by Kantian logic, but he feels all sorts of human impulses which are clearly irrational. He lives in a period of turmoil – Napoleon and the French Revolution had recently overturned the world – and he is trying to make sense of the confusion. He 'grows' in each novel, becoming more convinced of his role in life, which is to fight the chaos which crime unleashes on the society in which he lives.

4. How are *Critique of Criminal Reason* and *Days of Atonement* related?

The most important factor in a series of related novels is that the central character, as well as the secondary characters, must continually develop. *Days of Atonement* follows *Critique of Criminal Reason*, and our third novel *A Visible Darkness* (which will be published in 2008) carries the story one step further. The independent Prussia that we described in *Critique* was invaded by France in 1806, after the military disaster of Jena. In *Atonement*, which takes place in 1807, Prussia is an occupied country. This is the evolving world in which magistrate Hanno Stiffeniis lives and works. In *A Visible Darkness*, Prussia has been occupied for over two years, and every aspect of Prussian society has changed for the worse. We are fascinated by the historical period, by the emergence of what we would now call 'modern' ideas, by the dramatic consequences of the Napoleonic invasion of other European countries, and by the Prussian reaction to such a huge disgrace. Each book in the

series examines the work of Magistrate Stiffeniis within the context of an oppressive foreign presence, and an increasingly violent nationalism and patriotism which marks the rebirth of Prussia as a modern independent nation, a country which will, of course, dramatically shape the history of Europe in the twentieth century.

5. How does being a philosophy teacher fit in with the job of a writer?

Philosophy plays an important part, but not a large part, in our books. It provides an intellectual background against which violent crimes are played out. It also provides strategies and ways of thinking which are fundamental in helping us to resolve the crimes, and in allowing Hanno to solve the mystery. At the same time, Enlightened thinking provides a code of ethics and responsibilities against which Hanno Stiffeniis measures himself, and others.

6. What epigraph marks your life?

"Two things fill my mind with awe: the starry heavens above my head, the moral law within me" - Immanuel Kant (Konigsberg, 1724 - 1804).
Could we choose any other?