

Ponzi schemes provide a timely backdrop. On the eve of his 35th birthday, Cantella goes from being a star performer at a premier Wall Street investment firm to a financially wiped-out victim of identity theft. His Job-like troubles are just beginning as the fallout not only rocks his second marriage and his firm but sets him up for a life on the run. Grippando (*Intent to Kill*) keeps the reader guessing why Cantella specifically is targeted and how the vicious and relentless personal attacks relate to the unexplained disappearance (and presumed death) of his first wife on their wedding day seven years earlier. Despite a few plot holes, the dramatic tension remains high with a sadistic hired killer, high-stakes wheeler-dealers, and plenty of cinematic escapes. (Mar.)

Walking to Gatlinburg

Howard Frank Mosher. Crown/Shaye Areheart, \$25 (352p) ISBN 978-0-307-45067-8

A Civil War odyssey in the tradition of Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain* and Robert Olmstead's *Coal Black Horse*, Mosher's latest (after *On Kingdom Mountain*), about a Vermont teenager's harrowing journey south to find his missing-in-action brother, is old-fashioned in the best sense of the word. Seventeen-year-old Morgan Kinneson goes in search of his older brother, Pilgrim, a Union soldier reported MIA at Gettysburg. But first, Morgan accidentally causes the death of a runaway slave he was leading to safety in Canada. In the course of tracking down his missing brother, Morgan is pursued by slave catchers, accompanies an elephant on an Erie Canal showboat, visits the battlefield at Gettysburg, meets an escaped slave who turns out to be the dead slave's granddaughter, and gets wounded during a mountain feud before learning of Pilgrim's fate. Complicating matters is a rune stone the dead slave left to Morgan, which could compromise the security of the Underground Railroad if the slave catchers get their hands on it. The story of Morgan's rite-of-passage through an American arcadia despoiled by war and slavery is an engrossing tale with mass appeal. (Mar.)

★ Dimiter

William Peter Blatty. Forge, \$24.99 (304p) ISBN 978-0-7653-2512-9

Blatty fans looking for straight-up

horror in the vein of *The Exorcist* will be disappointed, but those with broader tastes will find this a beautifully written, haunting tale of vengeance, spiritual searching, loss, and love. In 1973 Albania, Colonel Vlora (aka "the Interrogator"), the head of a team of torturers, questions "the Prisoner," who the reader later learns is Paul Dimiter, "an American clandestine agent referred to in some quarters of the world as 'legendary,' while in others as 'the agent from hell.'" (Rumor has it Dimiter poisoned Ho Chi Minh while the Vietnamese leader was visiting Albania shortly before his death in 1969.) Dimiter escapes to Jerusalem, where he encounters a number of engaging characters, including a doctor of neurology, a sharp-tongued nurse, and a grief-stricken Israeli policeman. The complicated plot confounds until the isolated pieces of the psychological puzzle that's Dimiter match up and fall into place, revealing surprising truths. (Mar.)

Once a Spy

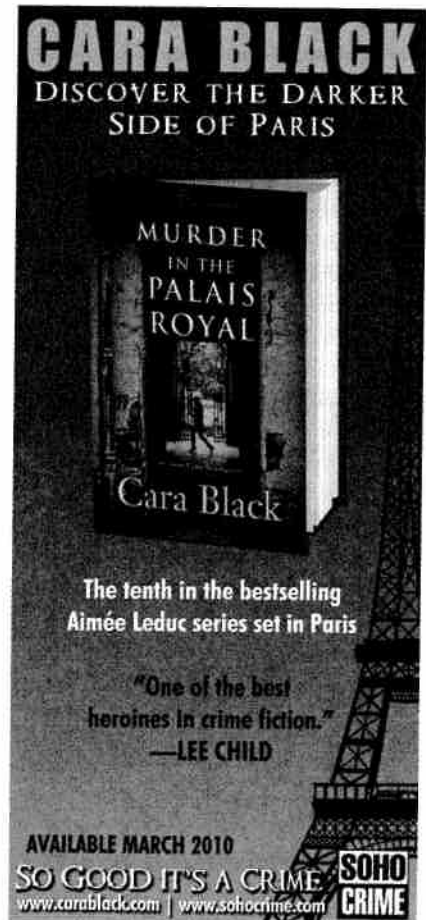
Keith Thomson. Doubleday, \$24.95 (320p) ISBN 978-0-385-53078-1

Huffington Post columnist Thomson's wildly original debut, a darkly satirical thriller, features an unlikely, if endearing, father-son spy duo: retired appliance salesman Drummond Clark, who at age 64 suffers from Alzheimer's disease, and Charlie Clark, a down-on-his-luck gambler who owes \$23,000 to Russian loan sharks. Soon after Charlie rescues Drummond from the Brooklyn streets, where he'd been wandering, the older man's house blows up and the two barely escape with their lives. Clark and son begin an adrenaline-fueled cross-country flight in which they must evade ruthless CIA assassins long enough to understand why they're being targeted. During rare moments of lucidity, Drummond hotwires a car and effortlessly kills multiple assailants, suggesting to Charlie he was once much more than just a washing machine salesman. Poignant themes of love and redemption underpin an action-packed story line that includes exotic locales, high-tech gadgetry, and international intrigue. (Mar.)

The Winter Thief

Jenny White. Norton, \$24.95 (384p) ISBN 978-0-393-07017-0

Set in 1888, White's gripping third thriller to feature Turkish detective Kamil Pasha (after *The Abyssinian Proof*) will appeal to fans of Laura Joh Rowland's Japanese historical series. Like Rowland's hero, Kamil serves as a special investigator for his country's ruler (in his case, the sultan of the Ottoman empire), and he must compete for influence with a ruthless and powerful rival. The discovery of a shipment of illegal arms and an explosion and robbery at the Imperial Ottoman Bank compound the sultan's fears about threats to his rule. The challenges mount for Kamil when Vahid, the vicious head of the secret police, frames him for murder before Kamil can go to the Choruh Valley to find out whether a socialist commune is actually a base for revolutionaries. Vahid plots to gain even more control over the empire by being put in charge of a new intelligence service. While there's no mystery about who com-



[Q&A]

PW TALKS WITH GABRIELLE ZEVIN

Where the Money Went

Credit card debt plagues a modern American family in Gabrielle Zevin's *The Hole We're In* (reviewed at right), a witty, frightening look at how we spend now.

The issues of the Pomeroy family go way beyond owing too much money to too many banks. What exactly is the "hole" they're in?

It's debt, yes, but even more, it's what the debt does to the family—all the holes that are created in their relationships to each other and even to their country and their gods. The hole is

always in the process of transforming itself into something else, and when the characters fill one, they usually end up creating another.

Daughter Patsy joins the army when there's no money left for education. Are you playing with a connection between the economy and the army?

If you put a lot of people in debt—because of record unemployment, the mortgage crisis, etc.—and make it so that student loans are increasingly difficult to come by, what do you think happens? People sign up for the military. And this is true, by the way. Enlistment levels are up. There's an economic draft.

The adult children in the book fight to escape the legacy of their parents. Do you see this as a universal problem?

In America, birth is destiny. There are exceptions to this, but I'm not sure they aren't just the rule-proving kind. Educated adults have educated children. Poor adults have poor children. I am a writer because I lived in

a house where books were valued. On the other hand, I do find that some people—and these people are the rare birds—live in opposition to their parents.

You've written two young adult novels and two books aimed for an older audience. Is your creative process different for each genre?



© JHANS CANOSA

For a long time, I said there was no difference, but that was a lie, born from a futile desire to convince people that writing for youth wasn't something I did when my brain was on vacation. Essentially though, when I am writing for children, I feel a certain responsibility toward them and the kinds of stories I find myself

wanting to tell them likely reflect that. When I'm writing for adults, the characters are old and seem to curse a lot.

Britney Spears's "Oops I Did It Again" is the musical refrain of the book, haunting the characters throughout. What's the theme song of today's national ills?

I'm going with "It Ain't Gonna Save Me" by Jay Reatard. I think a lot of people thought that if we managed to get Obama elected, everything would just get solved; we'd done our parts. But it's not up to him to save us. He's not Jesus, and we need to keep being loud.

—GREG CHANGNON

mitted the crimes, the atmospheric and period detail are first-rate. (Mar.)

★ The Hole We're In

Gabrielle Zevin. Grove/Black Cat, \$14 paper (304p) ISBN 978-0-8021-1923-0

Zevin (YA novel *Memoirs of a Teenage Amnesiac*, etc.) delivers in her blazing second adult novel a *Corrections* for our recessionary times. While Roger Pomeroy spins his middle-aged wheels in graduate school, his wife, George, supports the family mainly via an ever larger number of credit cards opened in her recent college grad son Vinnie's name. Meanwhile, daughter Helen insists on an expensive wedding, and youngest daughter Patsy gets pregnant and is transferred to a religious school out of state. Struggling to stay afloat, Roger and George deplete Patsy's college fund, and Patsy in turn enlists in the army for the tuition benefits. She's sent to Iraq and comes back injured and suffering from PTSD. Roger, in a not-quite-convincing turn, becomes an ultra-conservative Christian pastor, and long-suffering George goes off the deep end. Zevin mixes sharp humor with moments of grace as she gives readers terrific insights into the problems of adult children removing themselves from the influence of parents, and establishes herself as an astute chronicler of the way we spend now. (Mar.)

Spring Break

Kayla Perrin. St. Martin's Griffin, \$14.99 paper (336p) ISBN 978-0-312-54728-8

Set during spring break on the Caribbean island of Artula, Perrin's intriguing if flawed romantic thriller centers on the hunt for college student Ashley Hamilton, who disappears after breaking up with her boyfriend, Ryan Sinclair, and meeting Jason Shear, a New York editor who's researching a story on human trafficking. Jason's sister disappeared on Artula in 1987, and he's learned 19 women have gone missing on the resort island in the last seven years. Jason joins forces with Ashley's friend, Chantelle Higgins, to investigate, while the local authorities remain surprisingly indifferent. After Ashley's family arrives, the stakes rise with the murder of someone with information he wanted to share with Chantelle. *Essence* bestseller Perrin (*We'll Never Tell*) succeeds in building a mood of nail-biting suspense, but toward the end the plot takes



See the review at www.publishersweekly.com/zevin