

The Sheen on the Silk by Anne Perry

About the book...

***New York Times* bestselling novelist Anne Perry, the undisputed Queen of Victorian mysteries and the author of an acclaimed series set during World War I, now broadens her canvas with her first major stand-alone book—an epic historical novel set in thirteenth-century Constantinople, where a woman must live a lie in her quest to uncover the truth.**

Arriving in the ancient Byzantine city in the year 1273, Anna Zarides has only one mission: to prove the innocence of her twin brother, Justinian, who has been exiled to the desert for conspiring to kill Bessarion, a nobleman.

Disguising herself as a eunuch named Anastasius, Anna moves freely about in society, using her skills as a physician to manoeuvre close to the key players involved in her brother's fate. With her medical practice thriving, Anna crosses paths with Zoe Chrysaphes, a devious noblewoman with her own hidden agenda, and Giuliano Dandolo, a ship's captain

conflicted not only by his mixed Venetian-Byzantine heritage but by his growing feelings for Anastasius.

Trying to clear her brother's name, Anna learns more about Justinian's life and reputation—including his peculiar ties to Bessarion's beautiful widow and his possible role in a plot to overthrow the emperor. This leaves Anna with more questions than answers, and time is running out. For an even greater threat lies on the horizon: Another Crusade to capture the Holy Land is brewing, and leaders in Rome and Venice have set their sights on Constantinople for what is sure to be a brutal invasion. Anna's discoveries draw her inextricably closer to the dangers of the emperor's treacherous court—where it seems that no one is exactly who he or she appears to be.

About the Author...

Anne's publishing career began with *The Cater Street Hangman*. Published in 1979, this was the first book in the series to feature the Victorian policeman Thomas

Pitt and his well-born wife Charlotte. This is arguably the longest sustained crime series by a living writer. *Betrayal At Lisson Grove (Treason At Lisson Grove (US))*, the latest in the series, appeared in the New York Times Bestsellers list.

In 1990, Anne started a second series of detective novels with *The Face of a Stranger*. These are set about 35 years before and feature the private detective William Monk and volatile nurse Hester Latterly. The most recent of these (17th in the series) is *Acceptable Loss* (February 2011) which appeared in the New York Times Bestsellers list at number 22!

Anne won an Edgar award in 2000 with her short story "Heroes". The main character in the story features in an ambitious five-book series set during the First World War. The last of these was recently published, in Autumn 2007.

None of her books has ever been out of print, and they have received critical acclaim and huge popular success: over 26 million books are in print world-wide. Her books have appeared on bestseller lists in a number of foreign countries,

where she has also had excellent reviews. The Times selected her as one of the "100 Masters of Crime".

Anne's most recent stand-alone is *The Sheen on the Silk*, set in the exotic and dangerous world of the Byzantine Empire, and is a critical success.

Reviews....

Publishers Weekly

A battle between 13th-century religious factions forms the crux of this interesting departure for mystery novelist Perry (*A Christmas Promise*). Disguised as a eunuch, physician Anna Zarides arrives in Byzantium to learn why her brother has been accused of murdering Besarion Comnenos, a man with significant aristocratic and political ties. As she ministers to the emperor Michael Palaeologus, the Orthodox bishop Constantine, the Medea-like Zoe Chrysaphes as well as Arab, Jewish, Italian, and Greek tradespeople, she learns of the bitter divisions between Orthodoxy (whose followers do not believe in the Holy Spirit) and the Latin rite (whose followers do), as well as a

power struggle among the emperor, the king of Naples and the Two Sicilies, and the pope. As the danger, betrayals, and dead bodies mount, Perry conveys an earnest message about obsession, sacrifice, and faith at a dazzling crossroads of East and West civilizations.

Library Journal

In the 13th century, one city stood between the Holy Roman Empire and the Holy Land: Constantinople. In a switch from her Victorian mysteries, Perry (*Buckingham Palace Gardens*) weaves a complex and richly layered tale against this exotic backdrop. Anna, a young physician, comes to the city disguised as a eunuch to learn the truth behind the exile of her twin brother, who was implicated in a murder. No simple task, it takes years for her to work her way up through the many layers of Byzantine society until she is in a position to gain the truth. As her story unfolds, Constantinople struggles against internal and external forces in order to remain true to the Orthodox faith that set it at odds with Rome, all the while preparing for the next crusade. Like Judith Tarr in *The Eagle's Daughter*, Perry

brings to life a lesser-known time and place. Both the mystery and the love story are enjoyable, but it is the city itself that is the true star. VERDICT Fans of historical fiction and Perry's historical mysteries will enjoy this.

Read A-likes...

The High City by Cecelia Holland

It is the early years of the reign of Basil II, who became one most successful, and most feared, Byzantine emperors. But for now, Basil rules as a co-emperor with his brother Constantine, and makes war on a would-be usurper, Bardas Phokas, son of a General who Basil supplanted.

Basil's most trusted troops are foreign mercenaries, the Varangian guard hired from the North. Rus and Norsemen, Viking raiders and wild horsemen from the steppes, they fall upon the elegant city of Constantinople like wolves on a garden party. Among them is the wily young son of an Irish slave, who comes to the notice of the emperor's wife. But being noticed by an angry emperor is not safe at all.

Belshazzar's daughter by Barbara Nadel

When a brutal murder shocks Istanbul's rundown Jewish quarter, the Turkish police force unleashes their best weapon - the chain-smoking, brandy-swilling Inspector Cetin Ikmen, husband to a strict Muslim woman (who disapproves of his drinking) and loving father of eight (with another on the way). With such a colorful personality and unrivaled investigative powers, Ikmen will surely join the ranks of beloved foreign cops Aureilo Zen and Guido Brunetti.

Crossed: a tale of the Fourth Crusade by Nicole Galland

Venice, 1202. Tens of thousands of crusaders set sail for Jerusalem to liberate the great city from Muslim rule. Among them is a British vagabond grudgingly taken under the wing of a pious knight who believes that the mission is truly blessed by God. Before leaving, the vagabond rescues a woman pretending to be an Arab princess, hoping that under the protection of his benefactor knight, he can smuggle the

young woman back to the Holy Land. However, this 'holy' campaign sinks into tragic moral turpitude -- first in an attack on the Adriatic port city of Zara, and ultimately in the fall of the seat of the Byzantine Empire, Constantinople.