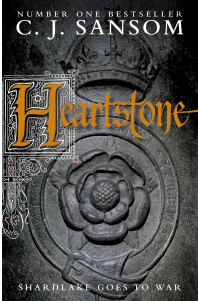


book of the month



Title: *Heartstone*

Author: C.J. Sansom

Publisher: Pan Macmillan

www.panmacmillan.com 

Shardlake goes to war . . .

Summer, 1545. England is at war. Henry VIII's invasion of France has gone badly wrong, and a massive French fleet is preparing to sail across the Channel. As the English fleet gathers at Portsmouth, the country raises the largest militia army it has ever seen. The King has debased the currency to pay for the war, and England is in the grip of soaring inflation and economic crisis.

Meanwhile Matthew Shardlake is given an intriguing legal case by an old servant of Queen Catherine Parr. Asked to investigate claims of "monstrous wrongs" committed against a young ward of the court, which have already involved one mysterious death, Shardlake and his assistant Barak journey to Portsmouth.

Once arrived, Shardlake and Barak find themselves in a city preparing to become a war zone; and Shardlake takes the opportunity to also investigate the mysterious past of Ellen Fettipace, a young woman incarcerated in the Bedlam. The emerging mysteries around the young ward, and the events that destroyed Ellen's family nineteen years before, involve Shardlake in reunions both with an old friend and an old enemy close to the throne. Events will converge on board one of the King's great warships, primed for battle in Portsmouth harbour . . .

C. J. Sansom was educated at Birmingham University, where he took a BA and then a Ph.D. in history. After working in a variety of jobs, he retrained as a solicitor and practised in Sussex, until becoming a full-time writer. He lives in Sussex. Many thanks to Pan Macmillan for allowing us to share a recent interview with the author here ...

What makes you smile?

The many harmless sillinesses of human beings, not least myself.

What book do you wish you had written and why?

Jurassic Park. It's such a simple, brilliant idea.

If you could be any figure from history who would you be?

Clement Attlee, one of the great British prime ministers.

What's your favourite place in the world?

Madrid.

What's your favourite time of day?

Early morning. I am a 'morning person' and do most of my work then.

Are you superstitious?

No.

Which living person do you most admire?

I was in the US when Barack Obama was elected last year. He is inspiring in many ways. Will he break decisively from the dogmatic free-market policies which have brought the world to rack and ruin? The jury is out.

What keeps you awake at night?

Insomnia, which I suffer from, I can't settle if my mind is active. I usually read something like a political biography to settle my mind - anything fairly dull.

Which writers, if any, do you think have influenced your work?

H. G. Wells as a child; Graham Greene, John le Carré and John Steinbeck. Ruth Rendell and especially PD James for expanding what the thriller format can do. And of course Umberto Eco for *The Name of the Rose*.

Who are your favourite fictional detectives?

Morse; Henning Mankell's Kurt Wallander; Michael Connelly's Bosch; Helen Mirren as Jane Tennison on TV.

What did you find were the main differences between writing novels in your *Shardlake* series, and a standalone novel such as *Winter in Madrid*?

You don't have an established framework of characters and settings in a standalone; and in *Winter in Madrid* instead of one first-person narrator there were three third-person

narrators. That was harder work in some ways – telling the same events from the viewpoint of three evolving characters.

Do you have a long-term 'vision' for the Shardlake series or do you just plan the books one by one?

I plan the books one by one. I don't like tying myself down too much where future plans are concerned. I like every book to have a different setting and theme, tied to the rollercoaster of historical events in mid-Tudor England. Heartstone, my latest novel, has Henry VIII's war against France in 1544-45 as the central theme. As for musings about Shardlake's future –well, the more I read the more I am convinced that Henry VIII was a monster, and a disastrous ruler; I would like to take Shardlake on through the short and tumultuous reigns of Edward VI and Mary I – he might have to go into exile under Mary – and into the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, whom I admire almost as much as I loathe Henry. I would love to have her as a character. Shardlake will 56 when she comes to the throne, and could still be active. I feel she and Shardlake are like-minded people in many ways, and might get on well...

Would you always want to write fiction with a historical setting, or can you see yourself writing a novel set in the present day?

I've never really felt the urge to write a modern novel - but never say never.

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Author Pic by Fergus Greer

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