Author Q&A

Tim Trott on Due North

Where did the idea come from?

I kept thinking about how intelligence actually goes wrong. It rarely goes wrong because someone forges a document. Usually the facts are fine and the context is missing. I wanted a villain who never tells a lie, and Sentinel came out of that.

Why a Canadian protagonist?

Canada is the closest ally the United States has, which makes it the hardest place to imagine this happening. That distance between "impossible" and "almost plausible" is where the tension lives. Duchamp also gave me a view of American power from the outside, from someone who depends on it and has no vote in it.

Is the book political?

It's about politics, though it doesn't take a side. The president in the novel is deliberately generic. What interested me was the mechanism: how a principled person gets steered into something she would once have arrested someone for.

Why le Carré as a model?

His books trust the reader. The violence is mostly offstage, and the real action happens inside people's heads. I wanted *Due North* to feel like a debrief: precise, controlled, and more unsettling for it.

What should readers take away?

That being certain and being right are different things. The more competent you are, the more useful that difference becomes to someone else.

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Interviews and review copies available on request. TimTrottWrites.com