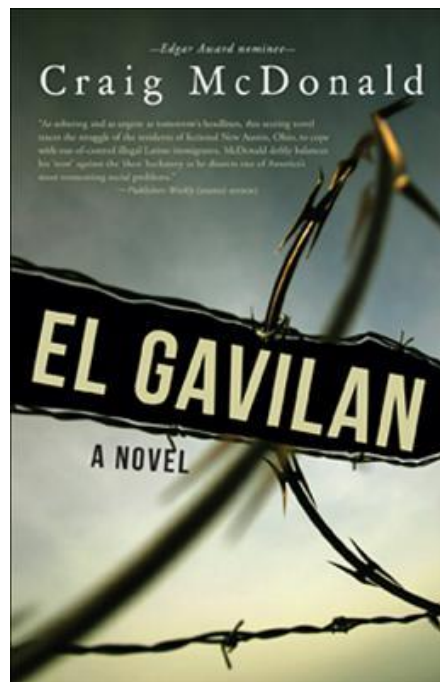




El Gavilan

Craig McDonald

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"The competition for the future of crime fiction is fierce, as it should be, but don't take your eyes off Craig McDonald. He's wily, talented and rarest of the rare; a true original. He writes melancholy poetry that actually has melancholy poets wandering around, but don't turn your backs on them, either. I am always eager to see what he's going to do next."

Laura Lippman

The news is full of it; escalating tensions from illegal immigration, headless bodies hanging off bridges, and bounties placed on lawmen on both sides of the border. New Austin, Ohio, is a town grappling with waves of undocumented workers who exert tremendous pressure on schools, police, and city services. In the midst of the turmoil, three very different kinds of cops scramble to maintain control and impose order.

But the rape and murder of a Mexican American woman triggers a brutal chain of events that threatens to leave no survivors. *El Gavilan* is a novel of shifting alliances and whiplash switchbacks. Families are divided and careers and lives threatened. Friendships and ideals are tested and budding love affairs challenged. With its topical themes, shades-of-gray characters, and dark canvas, *El Gavilan* is a novel for our charged times.

Craig McDonald, author of the internationally acclaimed Hector Lassiter series, is an award-winning journalist, editor, and fiction writer. His short fiction has appeared in literary magazines and anthologies. His fiction and nonfiction have earned him nominations for the Edgar, Anthony, Macavity, and Gumshoe awards. He resides in Ohio.

El Gavilan Details

Date : Published December 18th 2011 by Gallery Books (first published November 18th 2011)

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Author : Craig McDonald

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From Reader Review El Gavilan for online ebook

Richard says

I think Mr. McDonald has captured the problems and tensions of a sudden influx of illegal immigration into a small Midwestern town very well. The rape and murder of 4 young Mexican women causes an odd schism between the four lawmen and Mr. McDonald builds on that tension skillfully. This is an important book about serious problems.

It is brutally frank with some really tough language.

Jessica says

[free nook book]

Bob says

Half an outstanding book that goes from literary crime to straight crime in its last half. Great, involving characterizations, unbiased two-sided insight and commentary on the illegal immigrant situation and good use of a Midwest setting. Some of the secondary subplots (the loathsome reporter) are very good indeed, but what was needed here was a good editor. The story weaves back and forth between Bush-era and past, giving a backstory that's a lot less necessary and uninteresting to the point where I took to skimming.

Still, McDonald is always interesting and insightful and this is mostly a strong outing, aside from my criticisms.

Shellie (Layers of Thought) says

Original review by John posted at Layers of Thought.

3.5 stars actually

An unflinching tale of how three different US cops react to the wave of illegal immigration and try to maintain control amidst the turmoil.

About: Tell Lyon is an ex-border patrol officer who takes over as police chief in an Ohio town which is beset by a wave of immigration – much of it illegal. He soon bumps into county Sheriff Able Hawk (hawk is “gavilan” translated from Spanish, which provides the title for the book). They are two very different characters who approach their jobs in very different ways. Lyon is a fluent Spanish speaker who was married to a Mexican-American woman, before she was murdered by a Mexican gang who fire-bombed their house. While tough, he is keen to be fair and soon wins the trust of most of the local Latino population. Hawk, on the other hand, is a much rougher character who takes a very hard line with illegal immigrants and also has little tolerance for what he sees as weak federal government. But he is fiercely protective of legal immigrants, Latino or otherwise, and forms a strong bond with some of them.

After some initial sparring and testing each other out, the two agree to work together and soon find themselves pitted against the corrupt sheriff of a neighboring county, Walt Pierce, who will stop at nothing to maintain the peace in his territory. Matters quickly come to a head when Thalia Ruiz, a legal immigrant that Hawk had taken under his wing, is brutally raped and murdered and dumped in a spot close by the county line.

We learn the horrific back story of how Thalia's family made the illegal journey into America several years previously, during which many of them died while walking across the Sonoran desert. Only a young child at the time, Thalia could never understand why they had left their tropical and bountiful home, but for her parents the siren call of the rich promised land to the north proved irresistible. The remnants of the family find the US anything but bountiful, barely managing to exist while having to take low-wage menial jobs. Over the years Thalia drifts north, eventually becomes legalized, and then loses her new husband in an explosion at a factory, leaving her to somehow care for their daughter on her own.

Thalia's murder threatens to ignite the local Latino population, so Hawk and Lyon are determined to quickly solve the case, but they face an ugly battle with Pierce who insists that he has jurisdiction over the case. The growing tensions divide families as careers and more lives are threatened.

John's thoughts: This is a great topic for a novel. Despite the sloganeering of many politicians who want to make immigration a simple black-and-white issue, this can only be seen as many colors of gray – which provides a lot of material that authors can use to create rich backdrops for their novels. And McDonald does a fine job of crafting an interesting plot that does provide a variety of perspectives on immigration.

At the same time this is a good police procedural novel, following the cops as they try to unravel a vicious crime, while at the same time getting tangled up in complex personal, career and inter-departmental issues. No-one comes out of this squeaky clean, though for sure some are a darn sight cleaner than others.

It is a fast-paced and easy-to-read novel that I devoured quickly. I would opine that it has a little too much going on it, resulting in some things seeming a little rushed or not adequately developed. The same thing goes for some of the characters, though I did like the way that McDonald developed the Lyon and Hawk personalities. They feel like good material for a movie or TV show; and I'm thinking there may be follow-up novels on the horizon?

Anyhow, overall I found it an enjoyable read and would rate it 3.5 stars. I'd definitely recommend it to anyone who likes a good police/thriller novel, and also to anyone who wants to read a story focused around immigration – a subject which doesn't seem to get a lot of attention in novels.

Jack says

A moving story about Mexican immigration and local policing in the US. I found the references to building a border wall interesting in the present climate.

Jack Goodstein says

Mexicans legal and illegal in Ohio and the local lawmen's attempts to deal with them both honestly and dishonestly. Could use some intensive editing,

Josh says

As New Austin, Ohio struggles to police the ever growing numbers of illegal Mexican immigrants, three police chiefs from three distinctly different backgrounds meet to counteract the problem. What Tel (formerly from Border Patrol and new chief), Hawk (old school cop with good intentions), and Pierce (shady cop with a string of questionable deaths of those in his custody) didn't envision, was the impact a rape/murder of a local Mexican resident would have on their respective counties and the bloodshed that would ultimately claim their respective postings.

EL GAVILAN is one of those rare novels that blends plot with the natural progression of character development without sacrificing key elements to either. Tel, Hawk and co are well rounded and believable. I couldn't help but back Tel's every move while sympathised with some of the difficult predicaments Hawk found himself in.

As far as the multiple plot devises and threads go, I thought author Craig McDonald did a great job by concluding it all in once nice bundle of violence at the completion of the book.

Backstabbing, wrong doing, murder, good intentions, misguided justice and vengeance are all prevalent throughout proceedings ensuring there is never a dull moment or skerrick of filling – just straight-up cop noir.

Review first appeared on my blog: <http://justaguythatlikes2read.blogspot...>

Evelyn says

Three law enforcement officers, Chief Tell Lyon, Sheriff Able Hawk and Sheriff Walt Pierce, have their own agendas in dealing with the ever increasing problems of Mexican illegals in western Ohio. Tell Lyon is a former Border Patrol agent who lost his wife and young daughter when his house was bombed by Mexican gang members. Able Hawk (Hawk is El Gavilan in Spanish) takes a hard line with illegals, but underneath it all has a heart and befriends several legal citizens as well as their illegal family members, and Walt Pierce is a braggart and bigot who will do whatever he can to maintain control of his county. Then, a young widow is brutally raped and murdered, and the three officers vie for control of the crime scene, blurring the lines between right and wrong.

Last year while traveling on the Ohio Turnpike my husband and I encounterd several border patrol cars at a rest area and jokingly said what are you doing here only to be told that Ohio is one of the hottest illegal crossing areas in the country. Wow! We never knew. So when I heard about this book, I really wanted to read what McDonald would do with the situation and setting. I couldn't put the book down, it has interesting, multi-faceted characters, a good mystery and I can't wait to read his next book.

Kathy says

A timely novel from Craig McDonald revolving around the Latino populace of a small Ohio town and how the people there react to them. Many of the Latinos are illegal. They pack three families into single family homes and are placing tremendous pressures on local infrastructure. The tensions are building.

Three police officers are at the center of the story and at the forefront of the action - two veteran sheriffs and one new police chief fresh off the border patrol in California. Tell Lyon, the police chief, has no patience for prejudice. His late wife was Mexican American. The two veteran sheriffs, one of whom is called El Gavilan "The Hawk" are struggling to come to terms with the Mexicans in their districts. When El Gavilan's friend Thalia, a Mexican American, is murdered, he forms an alliance with the new police chief to find the killer. But evil forces are at work and alliances are tested.

Great story by new to me author Craig McDonald. I'm thrilled that Tyrus Books has joined the Net Galley family. I'm looking forward to many wonderful mysteries and crime stories.

Dee Renee Chesnut says

This ebook was free from Barnes and Noble when I downloaded it to my Nook library in 2012. The pacing is uneven in this story of multiple police departments dealing with illegal immigrants and protecting its citizens. I was uncomfortable with the descriptions of violent acts and the vigilante justice.

Jmgurgeh says

Reminded me of Power of the Dog. A lot less ambitious in its scope and focused on illegal immigration instead of drugs but the same structure (several story-lines which interact). It highlighted the ills of society caused by illegal immigration in general and at the same time put a human face to illegal immigrants. Just a grumble about this book: the investigation at the heart of the book was just too simplistic

Kariss says

I am a fan of Craig McDonald. I still am after this book. Interesting look at Ohio's people.

Linton says

The political issues aren't that vital to enjoying this book. I have lived and worked at the border for many years, and written about it professionally as novelist and journalist. And I get damned sick of all the parvenu writers coming in for ten minutes and writing disinformed crap about the border area. Even good writers like Wambaugh and Jefferson Parker have blown it.

The smart thing about "El Gavilan" is that it's not set at the border, except in some pastiche flashbacks. So

the author can stick to what he knows and get it right... and tell an interesting story that isn't dependent on the "immigration" buzz for its value to you as a reader.

Because the massive presence of Mexicans and Central Americans in Heartland USA is a reality, and possibly more important that one goes on in border states. That's an issue in "El Gavilan", but not so much as to over-ride the story. And it's a good story that keeps you wondering where it will go. The characters are interesting and complex enough to escape stereotypes. Sheriff Hawk, the title character, is a good example: a lawman totally opposed to illegal immigration and those who coddle and abet it, yet personal friend to illegals and in the business of selling them fake ID's so he can keep track of them.

It's not world class writing and plotting (whatever that would be). Many plot turns are clumsily telegraphed, then revealed as a surprise. (The dead girl was beaten by a guy with a lot of rings, the evil sheriff wears a lot of ring and keeps his hands in his pockets. Gee...) One thing I chuckled at was a touching story of cross-border love marred by the idea that Mexican girls are easier to "score" than American girls, a famously false premise, unless there is cash involved. This was one of the few incursions of this book into Mexico and an illustration of what I mean by it being better for writers to stick to the milieux that they know.)

But it's a good read, satisfying, and thought-provoking. Most people would rather have opinions on immigration than think about it, so it's good to see some balance.

Gloria Feit says

This novel basically asks a simple question: What is Justice? It pits several characters against each other and looks at the social unrest caused by illegal immigration on a small Ohio town. Two lawmen, Tell (yes, his father was enamored of Louis L'Amour westerns and named him after William Tell Sackett) Lyon, newly appointed Chief of Police of New Austin, and Able "El Gavilan" Hawk, the county sheriff, play the dominant roles in this tale. The sheriff of an adjacent county also plays a pivotal part in the action.

An interesting technique the author employs to fully inform the reader is interspersing flashbacks with earlier events in the various characters' lives to give an insight into present actions and motivations. While the tensions created by the unsettled and undocumented population of the town may be an underlying premise of the plot, the story is more concerned with the various principal persons and, as such, is more of a character study than any other genre. Needless to say, "El Gavilan" (Spanish for "the hawk") is a well-worthwhile book to read, enjoyable, and written with verve, and so is recommended.

Marilyn Tafro says

Parts of this book were very hard to read as they were so Graphic. However, the story held me all the way thru.
