

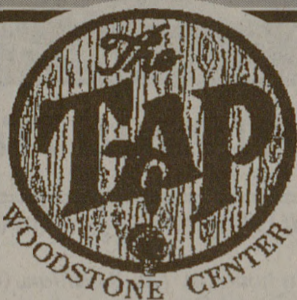
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The International/Assignment Hong Kong
Antoine Black
Published by S Affiliated

Mr. Styles is the modern equivalent of Shaft — or so the author would like readers to believe. *The International* is a series based on the adventures of



Chang and Eng
Darin Strauss
Published by Penguin Books

Darin Strauss' first novel, *Chang and Eng*, the product of three years of research, weaves the tale of conjoined twins from Siam, better known as Chang and Eng.

Although their names probably do not ring any bells, the book is based on the actual lives of the twins, whose canvassing of two continents in the 1800s left such a mark on people that, to this day, conjoined twins are still called Siamese twins.

The book is historical fiction, meaning that while most of and perhaps all the characters in the story existed, the dialogue is

merely Strauss' account of what Eng may have thought or felt.

Strauss is a talented writer. However, he falls into the same role he is trying to vilify — spectator — and reduces the twins' story into the same fluff that Eng grates about for 23 chapters in the novel.

The most infuriating element of the novel is that, because the language of the novel is lyrical and well-structured, readers might get the impression they are better than the leering, cat-calling spectators Chang and Eng catered to during their lives and can understand and sympathize with their grotesque bond.

No, no, no. Through *Chang and Eng*, Strauss is playing a 21st century barker, cajoling

Julian Styles, an African-American businessman with an affinity for beautiful women and shoot-'em-ups in exotic locations. Sound familiar? Unfortunately, this book does not live up to either the James Bond or Shaft characters.

The author concentrates on making his character a new-age Renaissance man — highly educated and sophisticated, but quick with his fists, or guns, as the case may be. This technique would be merely hackneyed if not for the author's incorporating one more facet to the character — a cool hip side. This aspect might have been endearing on the big screen, but in print it falls flat. Lines like "baddest mutha in the sea" just do not work in print.

Overall, the author does little to set moods for events, relating them in chronological order like a laundry list rather than making the reader feel like a part of the action. The characters are so stereotypical they are unbelievable in an age of unbelievable characters. Every element in the book is meant to create an atmosphere of opulence and splendor far beyond the reader's life. This is the only part of the book that creates any atmosphere at all. But for those who cannot afford Jaguars, the book comes off sounding pretentious rather than glamorous. (Grade: D)

— Jason Bennyhoff

readers into the tent, letting them feel the 5-inch band of cartilage and then spilling the twins' dirty laundry of alcoholism and adultery all over the stage as a finale.

While the novel does attempt to present the twins in a respectful and unremorseful way, it fails them by throwing in enough callous, tabloid bits to make the novel trying. Strauss shows himself to be a gifted writer, but his first novel is a bust. (Grade: D)

— Beverly Mireles

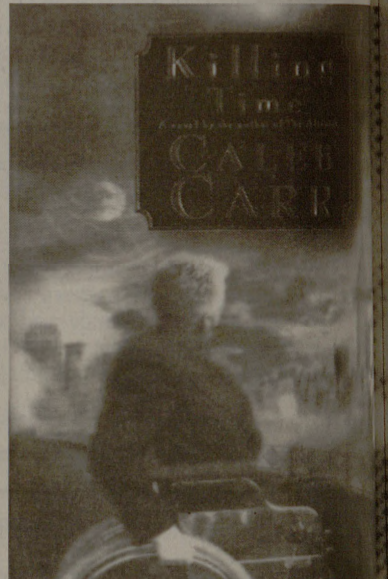
Killing Time
Caleb Carr

Published by Random House

Caleb Carr is quickly establishing a reputation as the consummate crime writer of his first hit, *The Alienist*, would enjoy his latest work, *Killing Time*. Carr retains a highly detailed writing style that makes his previous writings so engaging, but in setting his detective drama in the past, moves it 23 years into the future.

This book is filled with plot twists and surprises enough to keep even the least attentive reader spellbound. A departure from his *Alienist* series, the plot centers more on the influences of technology on society on crime. In the futuristic setting Carr describes, the Internet is the primary source of information and disinformation for the world. Carr explores the degree to which such misinformation could ultimately deceive people and the effect it could have on world politics and economies.

Dr. Gideon Wolfe, the protagonist in the book, is a psychiatrist and criminologist who mirrors the doctor in the *Alienist* series.



his brilliant but enigmatic personality. He begins the story searching for the criminal who shot the doctor of a computer disc that showed the assassination of the first female American president. Wolfe tries to prove the assassination theory that the world believes is a hoax, but he soon finds himself trapped in the organization he is hunting. The rest of the novel centers on self-examination about whether he is ultimately doing the right thing by teaching the evils of misinformation, or whether he has merely been brainwashed by the sensationalizing criminals who surround him.

This is truly a novel for this modern age of information and technology and, though it may be overly paranoid, it is an excellent read. (Grade: B+)

— Jason Bennyhoff

A = Literary classic	D = Don't buy it
B = A cut above	F = Waste of paper
C = Passable reading	

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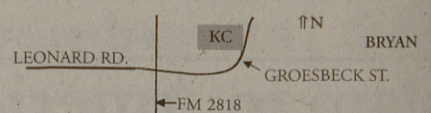
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- For more info email tamu_du@hotmail.com
- The Brazos Center is located on Briarcrest 1/4 mile past Highway 6