

= Sharon Kay Penman =

Sharon Kay Penman ( born August 13 , 1945 ) is an American historical novelist , published in the UK as Sharon Penman . She is best known for the Welsh Princes trilogy and the Plantagenet series . In addition , she has written four medieval mysteries , the first of which , The Queen 's Man , was a finalist in 1996 for the Best First Mystery Edgar Award . Her novels and mysteries are set in England , France , and Wales , and are about English and Welsh royalty during the Middle Ages . The Sunne in Splendour , her first book , is a stand @-@ alone novel about King Richard III of England and the Wars of the Roses . When the manuscript was stolen she started again and rewrote the book .

Her work is generally well received , with the more recent novels reaching the New York Times Bestseller List . Critics have praised her meticulous research of settings and events presented in her fiction , as well as the characterizations .

= = Career = =

Born in New York City , Penman grew up in New Jersey . She received her bachelor 's degree from the University of Texas at Austin , where she majored in history . She also received a Juris Doctor ( J.D. ) degree from Rutgers University School of Law , and worked as a tax lawyer before becoming a writer . While a student , Penman researched and wrote The Sunne in Splendour that chronicled the life of Richard III . When the 400 @-@ page manuscript was stolen from her car , Penman found herself unable to write for the next five years . She eventually rewrote the book and by the time the 936 page book was published in 1982 she had spent 12 years writing it , while practicing law at the same time . Of practicing law , she admits she " considered it penance . " Penman lives in New Jersey , and in the early 1980s moved to Wales to research her second book , Here Be Dragons . She has a second home in the Welsh mountains where , she says , the history inspires her and provides material for her novels .

= = Writing career = =

The Sunne in Splendour is about the end of England 's War of the Roses . In the book , Penman characterizes King Richard III as a healthy , if misunderstood , ruler . She chose to write Richard 's character in such a way after becoming fascinated with his story and researching his life , both in the United States and in the United Kingdom , which led her to believe that " his was a classic case of history being rewritten by the victor . "

Once finished with The Sunne in Splendour she claims to have become " hopelessly hooked " on writing . She had plenty of material to be written about the " rebellious sons and disgruntled brothers and conniving kings and willful queens " of the Plantagenets and hoped to write as many as a dozen books on the subject . After the publication of The Sunne in Splendour , Penman began work on the Welsh Trilogy , set primarily in Wales. The " Welsh Trilogy " was followed by the " Plantagenet series " , which presents the events of the life of King Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine .

Penman 's settings are all in the Middle Ages ; the Welsh Princes trilogy is set in the 13th century , two centuries earlier than The Sunne in Splendour . During her research for Here Be Dragons , the first book in the series , she became fascinated with the complexity of the role of women in medieval society ; for example , Welsh women at the time had a great deal more independence than the English women . Whether in Wales or in England , a noble wife had responsibility for a household , complete with household knights , whom the wife relied upon to keep the household safe .

In 1996 Penman published the first in the series of medieval mystery novels . Penman 's first mystery , The Queen 's Man , was a finalist for an Edgar Award for Best First Mystery from the Mystery Writers of America . Penman explains her reasons for turning to the mystery genre after writing only historical novels : " By the time I 'd finished researching and writing When Christ and His Saints Slept , I was in danger of burning out . For the first time in nearly two decades , my boundless enthusiasm for the Middle Ages had begun to flag . So I decided I needed a change of pace , and since I am a long @-@ time mystery fan , it occurred to me that a medieval mystery might be fun to

write . Once that idea took root , it was probably inevitable that I 'd choose to write about Eleanor of Aquitaine , surely one of history 's most memorable women . "

Set in the 12th century , Penman presents the young Justin de Quincy as a medieval sleuth . In the first book he is elevated to the status of " queen 's man " by Eleanor of Aquitaine . The Queen 's Man and Cruel as the Grave depict the period after King Henry II 's death , as Eleanor , about age 70 , rules the Angevin empire with one son ( Richard ) in captivity , and another son ( John ) hovering at the edge of power . The third novel in the series , The Dragon 's Lair , is set during the same period , but Penman shifts the locale to northwest England and north Wales . And finally , in the most recent novel of the series , Prince of Darkness , Penman continues to show the conflict between mother and sons , and weaves in de Quincy 's conflicts as well .

In addition to the Edgar Award , Penman is the winner of the 2001 Career Achievement Award for Historical Mysteries from Romantic Times .

= = Welsh Princes trilogy = =

Here Be Dragons ( 1985 ) is the first of Penman 's trilogy of novels about the medieval princes of Gwynedd . Of the novel , Penman states , " I think Dragons is so popular because it was virgin territory for most readers . The saga of the Plantagenets was much better known , but not many people were familiar with medieval Wales or its princes . And then , too , the story of Llewelyn the Great and Joanna , King John 's illegitimate daughter , is a remarkable one , which struck an emotional chord with many readers . "

In Falls the Shadow ( 1988 ) Penman chronicles the family relationships of King Henry III and his brother @-@ in @-@ law Simon de Montfort . Falls the Shadow is a bridge novel as Penman uses the Simon de Montfort rebellion to lead her to the conclusion of the trilogy in The Reckoning . As Penman explains : " After I 'd finished Here Be Dragons , I knew I wanted to continue the story . At first I 'd planned to write one book in which Simon de Montfort would share top billing with Llewelyn Fawr 's grandson , Llewelyn ap Gruffydd , who later wed Simon 's daughter . I soon realized , though , that this was too much to tackle in one book , that Simon and Llewelyn each deserved his own novel . So I decided to devote Falls the Shadow to Simon and The Reckoning to Llewelyn " .

Penman 's characterization of Simon de Montfort is that of a man increasingly disillusioned by his sovereign , who rebels in 1263 , becomes regent to Henry III , and attempts to reestablish rights granted under the Magna Carta . In addition to the story of Simon de Montfort and his wife , Eleanor the Countess of Pembroke and sister to King Henry III , the novel presents characters such as the Welsh ruler Llywelyn Fawr and London 's FitzThomas .

Of her research for Falls the Shadow , Penman explains : " I did a great deal of on @-@ site research , visiting the castles and battlefields that figured in Falls the Shadow , visiting the Reading Room at the British Library , the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth , and local reference libraries . Here at home , I made use of the University of Pennsylvania Library in Philadelphia , which has an excellent medieval selection . But it really helped to see the scenes for myself . At Lewes , we actually walked along the same path that Simon de Montfort and his men would have followed . It was breathtaking to stand on the Downs , gazing out upon the same view that he would have seen " .

The Reckoning ( 1991 ) chronicles the reign of England 's King Henry III in Penman 's final volume of the series that began with Here Be Dragons . The conflict between the Welsh prince Llewelyn ap Gruffydd who is the grandson of Llewelyn the Great of Here Be Dragons , and England 's King Henry III is one subplot . Additionally , Penman chronicles the life and character of Ellen , daughter of Simon de Montfort and niece to Henry III ; her betrothal to Llewellyn ( negotiated prior to de Montfort 's death ) ; and the conflict between Ellen and her cousin Edward , soon to become King Edward , who opposes the betrothal .

= = Plantagenet series = =

The Plantagenet series focuses on the Angevin King Henry II and his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine , beginning with the sinking of the White Ship , the marriage of the Empress Maude and Geoffrey of Anjou , and Henry 's birth and childhood in *When Christ and His Saints Slept* . Of Henry and Eleanor , Penman explains :

Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine were larger than life , legends in their own lifetimes . He was one of the greatest of the medieval kings , and she was the only woman to wear the crowns of both England and France . They loved and fought and schemed on a stage that stretched from the Scots border to the Mediterranean Sea . Their children were branded by contemporaries as " The Devil 's Brood , " but they founded a dynasty that was to rule England for three hundred years .

My first novel in their trilogy [ sic ] , *When Christ and His Saints Slept* , traces the beginning of their tempestuous union . *Time and Chance* continues their story at high noon . From the greenwoods of Wales to a bloodied floor at Canterbury Cathedral , theirs was an amazing story , and I very much enjoyed being along for the ride !

*When Christ and His Saints Slept* introduces the genesis of the Plantagenet dynasty as Queen Maude fights to secure her claim to the English throne . In the 15 years she spent writing three novels and four mysteries set during the period of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine Penman claims she found no villains . Instead she focused on the human characteristics : she believes Henry II was a brilliant king but a bad father . Of Eleanor of Aquitaine , she claims she was a " law unto herself " , and Penman was intrigued by the role of a medieval queen .

*Time and Chance* ( 2002 ) , a New York Times Bestseller , continues the story of Eleanor of Aquitaine and her husband , and focuses on the rift between Henry II and Thomas Becket . *Time and Chance* spans a 15 @-@ year period from 1156 to 1171 as Henry II became estranged from his wife ( although Eleanor and Henry have eight children during thirteen years ) , and from his close friend and advisor Thomas Becket . King Henry 's decision to elevate Becket to the Archbishop of Canterbury becomes a fulcrum for discord between Henry and Eleanor .

*The Devil 's Brood* ( 2008 ) opens with the conflict between Henry II , his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine , and their four sons , which escalates into a decade of warfare and rebellion pitting the sons against the father and the brothers against each other while Eleanor spends the period imprisoned by Henry . Penman places the characters against a tightly woven tapestry of medieval life , personal conflict , and dramatic characters .

*The Devil 's Brood* was supposed to be the final volume in Penman 's Plantagenet series , but the " Angevins were not ready to go quietly into that good night . " *Lionheart* ( 2011 ) is about the children of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine . The book focuses on Richard the Lionheart 's Crusades in the Holy Land and on what happened to Eleanor when she was finally released after spending sixteen years in a confinement that was ordered and enforced by her husband . *A King 's Ransom* is about the second half of Richard 's life , during and following his imprisonment , ransom , and life afterward .

= = Writing characteristics = =

Penman 's approach to her novels is to present meticulously researched medieval life and history as everyday life , and to present the nobility as fallible . Set against a backdrop of political tension , power struggles , war , and hardship , the main characters confront personal drama such as conflict in love , conflict between family members , conflict with God , and conflict in friendship , as well as conflicted loyalties between family , self , king and country . A Library Journal review praises Penman 's attention to detail in which she " combines an in @-@ depth knowledge of medieval Europe with vivid storytelling , re @-@ creating the complex events and emotional drama of the 12th ? 15th centuries . "

Although set in the 12th and 13th centuries , Penman sets the characters and narrative in her novels in medieval sites that still exist and can be visited , including castles , churches and archeological areas . Areas such as Aber Falls and Dolwyddelan Castle have important scenes in Penman 's novels . In *Devil 's Brood* , Penman sets the characters in scenes in a variety of medieval royal residences , castles and abbeys , in England and present day France , many of which still exist

such as the Château de Chinon , Fontevrault Abbey , and Chateau de Loches .

= = = Welsh Princes Trilogy = = =

Here Be Dragons New York : Holt , Rinehart , and Winston , c1985 ISBN 0 @-@ 03 @-@ 062773 @-@ 7 London : Collins , 1986 ISBN 0 @-@ 00 @-@ 222960 @-@ 9

Falls the Shadow New York : H. Holt , c1988 ISBN 0 @-@ 8050 @-@ 0300 @-@ 2 London : Joseph , 1988 ISBN 0 @-@ 7181 @-@ 2923 @-@ 7

The Reckoning New York : H. Holt , 1991 ISBN 0 @-@ 8050 @-@ 1014 @-@ 9 London : Joseph , 1991 ISBN 0 @-@ 7181 @-@ 2948 @-@ 2

= = = Plantagenet Series = = =

When Christ and His Saints Slept New York : H. Holt , 1995 ISBN 0 @-@ 8050 @-@ 1015 @-@ 7 London : Joseph , 1994 ISBN 0 @-@ 7181 @-@ 3585 @-@ 7

Time and Chance New York : G.P. Putnam ? s Sons , c2002 ISBN 0 @-@ 399 @-@ 14785 @-@ 3 London : Joseph , 2002 ISBN 0 @-@ 7181 @-@ 4308 @-@ 6

Devil 's Brood New York : G.P. Putnam ? s Sons , c2008 ISBN 978 @-@ 0 @-@ 399 @-@ 15526 @-@ 0 London : Joseph , 2009 ISBN 0 @-@ 7181 @-@ 5465 @-@ 7

Lionheart New York : G.P. Putnam 's Sons , c2011 ISBN 0 @-@ 399 @-@ 15785 @-@ 9 London : Marian Wood Books / Putnam , 2011 ISBN 978 @-@ 0 @-@ 399 @-@ 15785 @-@ 1

A King 's Ransom New York : Marian Wood Books / Putnam , c2014 ISBN 978 @-@ 0 @-@ 399 @-@ 15922 @-@ 0 London : Macmillan 2014 ISBN 978 @-@ 0 @-@ 230 @-@ 76805 @-@ 5

= = = Justin de Quincy Mysteries = = =

The Queen 's Man New York : H. Holt , 1996 ISBN 0 @-@ 8050 @-@ 1015 @-@ 7 London : Joseph , 1996 ISBN 0 @-@ 7181 @-@ 3981 @-@ X

Cruel as the Grave New York : Henry Holt , 1998 ISBN 0 @-@ 8050 @-@ 5608 @-@ 4 London : Joseph , 1998 ISBN 0 @-@ 7181 @-@ 4307 @-@ 8

Dragon 's Lair New York : G.P. Putnam ? s Sons , c2003 ISBN 0 @-@ 399 @-@ 15077 @-@ 3 London : Penguin , 2005 ISBN 0 @-@ 14 @-@ 025098 @-@ 0 ( pbk . )

Prince of Darkness New York : G.P. Putnam ? s Sons , c2005 ISBN 0 @-@ 399 @-@ 15256 @-@ 3