



Book of the Week

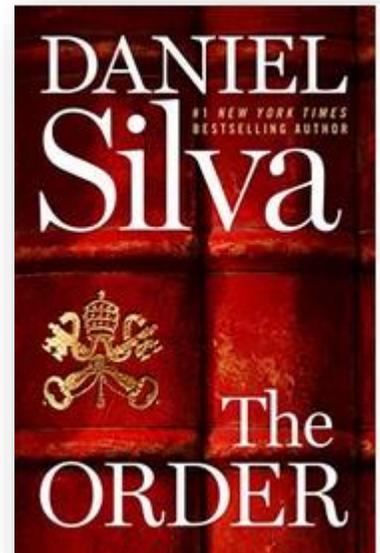
***The Order* by Daniel Silva**

Book Review by Wayne Wilkerson

The Order is Daniel Silva's 20th novel, in a series that began in 1996 with *The Unlikely Spy*. The protagonist in his first three novels was Michael Osborne. His fourth novel, *The Kill Artist*, introduces us to Gabriel Allon. Gabriel is an Israeli whose mother was a Holocaust survivor. He was a promising artist at the time of the Black September massacre of Israeli Olympic athletes in September 1970. He was recruited to hunt down and eliminate the terrorists responsible. Once his task was complete, he tried to return to his art career, but that was not to be. He is soon a rising star within the Mossad, Israel's top intelligence community.

By the time *The Order* is written Gabriel is probably in his 60s and is working hard to balance his career and a second marriage. As the novel opens Gabriel is trying to enjoy some rest and relaxation with his family in Venice when he learns that an old friend has died. As it happens, this old friend was Pope Paul VII, and it's not long before Allon is summoned by the pontiff's personal secretary. Archbishop Luigi Donati has reason to believe that the Holy Father did not die a natural death. Allon discovers that the most likely culprits in the death of the pope are connected to far-right leaders throughout Europe. The rediscovery of a lost Gospel also sheds new light on Christian anti-Semitism. The villains here are Catholic traditionalists "populist" politicians who appeal to nativist, anti-globalist sympathies. As Silva looks at European contempt for a new wave of immigrants from Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, he finds a model for this xenophobia in ancient hatred of the Jewish people, an antipathy that has its roots in the New Testament.

If you think you would be interested in reading this book, I suggest starting with *The Kill Artist*. Silva has a core of characters, both good and evil, that he uses throughout the entire Allon series. Although Silva does give some background in each new novel, there is not enough time to fully develop each character. So start with *The Kill Artist* and read each book in sequence. Go to Daniel Silva's Wikipedia page and you will find all his novels listed in chronological order. This was a great help to me as I worked my way through the series. Another plus for me was that Silva does a good job of describing each novel's



settings as the plot moves along. If you have traveled in Europe or the Middle East, you will be able to recognize important cultural and physical landscapes. In this offering much of the plot is spent in Rome, specifically in the Vatican City. He provides a map of the Vatican for reference, and this helps to add a depth to his story line. One last positive comment about the series is that Silva cranks out a new book every spring like clockwork. I am sure this is to capture the summer vacation trade, because this is the perfect beach book. I start looking on-line in March to see when I can order the latest addition to the series. My copy of *The Order* will be available at the next book sale. I hope you enjoy this work of fiction as much as I did.

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