

Delicious Historical Fiction

by Anna Berkes - February 13, 2009

In honor of Presidents' Day, I tried really hard to think of some Abraham Lincoln-themed material for this post, but the best I could come up with was a blurb about a work of fiction set during George Washington's presidency.

Over Christmas I finally finished a book that I'd been serially checking out of the [public library](https://jml.org/) (<https://jml.org/>) for at least 6 months: *A Conspiracy of Paper*, by [David Liss](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Liss). (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Liss). I was really astonished at how good it was (although a tiny bit long). Liss apparently wrote this book while working on his Ph.D. in eighteenth-century literature, and then decided he liked writing fiction so much that he dropped the whole Ph.D. plan and turned to writing history-mysteries full-time. *A Conspiracy of Paper* is set in 1719 in London, just as some of the main mechanisms of our modern stock market system were forming, and just as one of the first stock-speculation crises was coming along, so there's some intriguingly timely financial stuff in there as well - as in most of Liss's other novels.

Anyway, what's this got to do with Jefferson? Liss's newest book is called [The Whiskey Rebels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Whiskey_Rebels) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Whiskey_Rebels), dealing of course with the 1794 Whiskey Rebellion, the formation of the National Bank, Alexander Hamilton...and you can't talk about Alexander Hamilton without talking about You-Know-Who, his Arch-nemesis. Indeed, through the wonders of Amazon I can see that on page 149 there is a description of a cockfight at a tavern between two roosters, one "stout and muscular and resplendent with shiny black feathers," named Jefferson, and another "scrawny and weak and pale" named Hamilton. So even if Jefferson himself doesn't actually make an appearance in this book, there is at least a chicken named Jefferson. Good enough for us! Look for this book on our shelves sometime soon...

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