



## Flesh Wounds

*John Lawton*

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## **Flesh Wounds** John Lawton

Praised for their riveting, ingenious plot twists, John Lawton's series of espionage thrillers featuring Chief Inspector Frederick Troy of Scotland Yard have an uncanny ability to place readers in the thick of history. Now in *Flesh Wounds*, an old flame has returned to Troy's life: Kitty Stilton, wife of an American presidential hopeful. Private eye Joey Rork has been hired to make sure Kitty's amorous liaisons with a rat pack crooner don't ruin her husband's political career. But he also wants to know why Kitty has been spotted with Danny Ryan, whose twin brothers, in addition to owning one of London's hottest jazz clubs, are said to have inherited the crime empire of fallen mobster Alf Marx. Before Rork can find out, he meets a gruesome end. And he isn't the only one: bodies have started turning up around London, dismembered in the same bizarre and horrifying way. Is it possible that the blood trail leads back to Troy's own police force and into Troy's own forgotten past? *Flesh Wounds*, a compulsively readable thriller, finds one of our most able storytellers at the height of his game.

## **Flesh Wounds Details**

Date : Published January 11th 2006 by Grove Press (first published February 18th 2005)

ISBN : 9780802142306

Author : John Lawton

Format : Paperback 352 pages

Genre : Mystery, Historical, Historical Fiction, Historical Mystery, Crime, Fiction, Detective

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# From Reader Review Flesh Wounds for online ebook

## Richard says

I enjoyed it immensely - like others in the series - but I would like to make a comment about comments posted by others for Lawton's books. It is irritating to see repeated complaints about the use of "British slang" by this author ... what on earth do they expect, the book is set in Britain? It is no more offensive or difficult than is the placing of American slang in books situated in the USA. If stuck - use a dictionary.

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## Sean says

A great read. I started reading it yesterday on a journey back from Portugal and only failed to finish it then because I fell asleep reading it in bed. I had some years ago read three other books by John Lawton and thoroughly enjoyed them so I knew what to expect. I don't read anywhere near as much fiction as I used to it but books like this could easily change that situation! It is labelled as crime fiction but it is so much more than that. Comedy, social comment, history, espionage - there is a lot there and I found it very readable. A particular highlight for me was when Troy was introducing a gluttonous gumshoe (long time since I saw that term!) to the delights of a chip butty in a greasy spoon. Then there was the juxtapositions between toffs and proles such as the incongruity of drinking Pouilly Fume with fish and chips. Another was leaving the reader to work out for themselves (if not American that is) what "playing hiding the salami" meant particularly when like me you nearly always see it sliced.

There are however elements of the novel which suited me perfectly and added to its appeal but some of which may not be as easy for others, at least not without quite a lot of background research. The novel brilliantly captures the time and place. I can vouch for this as I lived through the era described, being the same age as the author and being brought up in London and actually knowing all the places described as they were then. The author also makes lots of literary allusion without necessarily clarifying them. Being reasonably well read I think I got quite a lot of these. He is fond of PG Wodehouse for example. There are also characters in the novel who are obviously real but disguised as fictional and as this "history" use to be current affairs to me so I probably got all of these. Finally there is a lot of British (upper and lower class) slang - bollocks, shagging, shanks's pony, duffer, prole for example and references to institutions that only someone living in the UK would recognise such as LCC (no longer exists), NHS, MD for example.

I am sure that I have read many books where some of the better parts have totally eluded me. I have on occasion reread books that I read many many years ago and realised just how much I had missed first time round. But I do wonder how much this makes John Lawton less popular than he ought to be. In my view he is a brilliant author so I would recommend him unreservedly.

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## Dianne says

John Lawton has an excellent feel for time and place. This novel is set in 1959 London; MacMillan's 'Never had it so Good'; East End hoodlums rubbing shoulders with society; the beginnings of the sexual freedom of the sixties; and an overall mood for change. Nominally a procedural detective novel, the first half is the story of Freddie Troy, his character, loves and life, as he recovers from a head injury received when a booby

trapped police car explodes nearby. The second half is a more orthodox police thriller. Characters from previous novels are used as bit players, but the overall reference is to events in 1944, when Troy used a gang of urchins in bombed out East London to help him in a murder case (Black Out).

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## **MisterLiberry Head says**

FLESH WOUNDS opens with a scene from BLACK OUT (1995), and then skips 10 years ahead to 1959 and gang wars sparked by a fictionalized version of the notorious Kray twins. The psycho-killers twins are avatars of what the “Polish Beast,” Dr. Kolankiewicz calls “the moral decay we can expect in post-war life” (p30).

Troy suffers yet another major concussion, which sidelines the often-wounded detective for much of the novel and unleashes a parade of current and ex-lovers. (The Scotland Yard copper has had more head injuries than Merrill Hoge and as many lovers as Joe Namath!) He acquires a driver, Constable Mary McDiarmuid, who promises to be a welcome addition to Team Troy. Central to the plot is the surprise reappearance from the USA of Troy’s old flame Kitty Stilton after “seventeen years, ten months, three weeks ...” (p76)--but, who’s counting? Now married to a presidential prospect, Kitty is earnestly tailed around London by a New York City gumshoe who seems as theatrically dumb and obvious as Lt. Columbo--but, at least he’s paying attention, which Troy doesn’t do for much of the story.

FLESH WOUNDS is full of cynicism about politics and political parties (“Jam Forever!”), about urban renewal and police corruption. Insightful for a moment, one of Troy’s wicked twin sisters tells him something that applies equally to his romantic life and to his police method: “Your trick is to let things happen. To let things take their course” (p330). Our dark-minded, rather misanthropic series hero hasn’t changed much from 1938 to 1959. However, one transformation during FLESH WOUNDS is very important. Once a notoriously bad marksman, Troy has taken lessons from master gunsmith Bob Churchill (Inspector Troy, #4) and become a crack shot with just about every model of handgun made-- a handy skill, even if you disdain firearms, when you’re going after two gun-crazy psycho-killers!

(PERSONAL TIRADE: Largely to spite Amazon.com, I prefer reading books checked out from the public library. This can be a problem when a previous borrower has marked up the book--in heavy black ink, no less! My borrowed copy of FLESH WOUNDS is filled with underlinings and squiggles where British argot has confounded some anonymous previous reader. Words and phrases like “spag bol,” “down the nick,” “elevenses,” “karzey” and “punters.” Irritating, unconscionable and impossible to ignore.)

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## **Sam Reaves says**

This is apparently book number five in a series featuring Inspector Troy of Scotland Yard; I grabbed it because I had really liked Lawton's *Then we Take Berlin* and wanted more of the same. With this series, however, it turns out that it pays to start with the first one rather than jump in anywhere, as there's a lot of back story which keeps popping up throughout, not always relevantly. So don't start with this one; start with... well, that's a good question. The publication order is not the same as the chronological order, some of the books came out under different titles in the U.S. and the U.K.... Maybe *Blackout*. Consult Lawton's Wikipedia page for guidance.

Anyway, in this one, Troy gets banged up early in a car bombing and is on medical leave for much of the

book; meanwhile coppers and male prostitutes are getting killed, the wife of a U.S. presidential candidate is in the U.K. sleeping with any man who catches her eye, Troy's love life is getting ever more complicated and unwholesome, and a pair of really rotten twins from Troy's East End patch are trying to take over the London rackets. There's a lot going on.

It reminded me of some of Margery Allingham's London novels with their quirky characters and peculiar locales, and sure enough, at one point Troy takes "an old Penguin Margery Allingham" up to bed with him, confirming my guess as to one of Lawton's literary influences.

The crowded back story can be a little distracting, but that might be part of the fun if you have been with the series from the start. The writing is excellent, sharp and witty; the people are eccentric but believable, and it makes London in the 50s sound like a lot of fun.

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### **Lysergius says**

Another John Lawton. Just as gripping as the last. A writer you want to read all of. The year is 1959. I remember it well. A general election, Supermac was going strong and the Profumo affair was still on the horizon. The country had to wait a few more years to get rid of the sleazy Tories. Ah well, you cannot win the all. As somebody said...

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### **Christopher Williams says**

Yes pretty good I thought. The latest in this series I have read and set mainly in the late 1950's although this book seems to start out rehashing events of the earlier books and adding some bits we were not aware of earlier. Interesting idea. Don't think have seen that done before. The main theme after that is a politicians who may be a spy; East End gangsters (identical twins no less) who mix with politicians and own a West End club and then some brutal murders. Sounds a little familiar? To take real historical events and fictionalize them is not a bad idea, even if things pan out a little differently. Certainly keeps you gripped until the end!

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### **Pete says**

Luv, luv, luv John Lawton. Prose are decidedly "UK" influence so getting stuck on a turn of phrase will occur from time to time. That said, character development is awesome; story line has more twists than the stripe on a barber shop pole; intrigue and surprises from cover to cover!

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### **Pamela says**

Much the best of Lawton's Inspector Troy novels. Perhaps because it is more of a police procedural rather than and attempt to mix London based police work with international espionage involving the secret services, as do his other novels. Also, the sex is less porny. However, this writer's obsession with nitwit nymphos is still on display and still unbelievable.

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## Nicki says

Although it kicks off in 1944, this book soon moves on to 1959, by which time Troy has reached the rank of Chief Superintendent in the Met and is running the Murder Squad at Scotland Yard.

There is actually no real story here until about half way through the book. Instead it focuses on Troy's personal life, which appears to consist of tangled sexual liaisons where everybody in his circle sleeps with everybody else with no apparent regard for feelings, consequences or even decency. One particular liaison was shocking and, to my mind, completely unnecessary to the story.

The police procedural part (when it finally gets going) appears to be inspired by the Kray twins. Troy is the kind of copper who is perfectly happy to disregard the law in favour of doing whatever he thinks is appropriate, which is one of his less appealing traits.

This is one of the poorer books in the Troy series for me. If I'd picked this up first, I wouldn't have continued with the series. I hope that Mr Lawton sticks with young Troy in the future, not middle-aged Troy.

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## Tracyk says

I love this series because it covers a period in time that I enjoy reading about and want to know more about and the books are so beautifully written.

Flesh Wounds, originally published as Blue Rondo in the UK, is set in London of 1959. Troy is older and is being encouraged to retire due to injuries received on the job. A former lover, Kitty Stilton, has returned to London. She is the wife of an American presidential hopeful. Thus private investigator Joey Rork is in town to insure that Kitty behaves while in England. The complex plot involves dismembered bodies and criminal gangs.

This was not one of my favorites in the series, and one of the reasons was the over-the-top sex. But it was a very good plot, and it kept me interested from beginning to end. And I was very interested in the continuing characters.

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## Joe says

### UNIQUE SERIES

This is the fifth installment in the Frederick Troy series. Troy is a London homicide detective of Russian heritage - his father an immigrant who became a very powerful and wealthy newspaper publisher. The series takes place between the 1930's and the sixties and although there is a chronology to these books, the series doesn't follow a calendar. Also several of the books, including this one, have been published under different titles, i.e. same book, different title depending on if it's the British or American version.

I have not run across many folks who are familiar with this series which is unfortunate - these are great

books - *Flesh Wounds* or *Blue Rondo* - being no exception. The books are historically based mysteries with historic figures - for instance Eisenhower makes an appearance in this one - and follow the events of the time. Our hero Troy is somewhat of a lone wolf on the police force - jaded just enough to be both pragmatic and at times very funny but personable, politically savvy and competent enough to climb the promotion ladder. He's the Chief Superintendent in this one.

There's also a supporting cast of characters - Troy's family, his friends and co-workers, including a distant cousin of Winston Churchill - who are well developed and engaging on their own. The books are a blend of mystery, police procedural and political intrigue, all handled extremely well by the author. Lastly, much like Charles McCarry's books, there is a lot of sex in this series and there's even more bed-hopping in this book than its predecessors - including one brief but bizarre and somewhat disturbing scene.

*Flesh Wounds* begins with a brief flashback to 1944 and war-time London and then moves forward to 1959. Troy finds himself embroiled in a case in which the London East End underworld is in transition as an increasingly violent group of Young Turks is supplanting their older predecessors. Troy and his cohorts get knocked around a bit and find themselves not only dealing with this new breed of criminals but also the same old corrupt politicians - but they come out on top in the end.

A very good book and highly recommended although - and I seem to be saying this with more and more frequency - I wouldn't start here simply because you miss a lot of Troy's history - specifically familial - if you haven't read the earlier books.

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## **LindaH says**

The title refers to a classic piece of jazz, "Blue Rondo", on the 1959 album *Time Out* by the Dave Brubeck Quartet. I wish I'd known this fact when I started reading *Blue Rondo* by John Lawton; it would have saved me the expectation of a good conventional mystery and given me something else to appreciate, namely, the unusual rhythm of the story. Lawton is an excellent writer, and there are many brilliant passages, but I confess to attention-deficit during the detours involving the women in Chief Inspector Troy's life. There is a jazz-like cycling of themes here however, and I must have missed many along the way.

So much for comparing this book to music, which I would not know how to do, but I can tell the author had intentions. I'll just mention what I loved about it. First, I was caught up in Troy's relationships (other than romantic): with supervisors and reports as well as fellow detectives, with witnesses and suspects, with his siblings and in-laws. Also, I was totally engaged when Troy was being introspective. Lawton is very good at making the reader think about character, morality, and the law. The opening flashback to Troy's initiation into firearms was surprisingly good reading, and I was riveted from Chapter 100 on to Lawton's knockout resolution. Finally, I like Inspector Troy. He is, as one character puts it, "a clever dick who thinks the rules weren't made for him."

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## **Jess says**

John Lawton's Inspector Troy series has given me mixed feelings before *Flesh Wounds*. When he hits his stride, he writes amazing police procedurals. The characters are well developed, and while he can be a bit long-winded at times, he writes so well that the pages move quickly.

In his other books, he explored his characters' sex lives in such depth that it seemed to go a bit far. I'm no prude, but sex has its place and while some is fine in a detective novel, the amount and level of detail Mr. Lawton indulges in is more than seems necessary or appropriate. I know how the mechanics of it work, and I don't need the depth of detail he employs in his novels. Then we get to one particular sexual encounter our protagonist has in this book. One that had me saying, as it became obvious where things were going, "No. No. He's not really going to... Oh, jeez!" Without spoiling it, I will say it's one of those things that I realize happens in this world. But it's considered taboo, at least by cultures with which I'm familiar, and more to the point, I don't see how it added anything to the story. It didn't add to the character, either, and I don't know what the point of this particular scene was. Truly baffling and off-putting. Troy is clearly made very human and fallible, but to what degree does Lawton need to taint him?

If a lot of the sex were removed, or at least made a little more PG-rated, I think the overall book would be far better.

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## **Peter Babani says**

### **Brilliant depiction of coppers in post war London**

Excellent story full of East End characters. Inspector Troy is a marvel, noir writing at its very best-read the novels in the order they were written to gain maximum enjoyment as many of the luminaries feature over and over again

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