



# Interview with Kwei Quartey

*Sam Naidu*

**Abstract.** Guest editor Sam Naidu discusses with author Kwei Quartey his approach to his work, including his Black female detective Emma Djan.

**Sam Naidu:** In your view, are Black female detective figures still part of a countertradition in crime fiction?

**Kwei Quartey:** I think Black female detectives (e.g., Barbara Neely's Blanche White and Rachel Howzell Hall's Elouise Norton) in crime fiction are part of the countertradition since white male protagonists have historically dominated the genre's traditional landscape. Including Black female detectives adds a unique depth and diversity to character portrayal in crime fiction by offering fresh perspectives on societal issues, including racism, sexism, and intersectionality. The combination of Black and female creates a kind of magic.

**SN:** When you say magic, do you mean in terms of social critique or are you referring to an aesthetic or narrative charm/delight?

**KQ:** It may have appeared that I was alluding to magical realism or a similar concept, but I was actually considering the idea of two elements combining to produce an extraordinary result, akin to a "magical" transformation. To use a rather simple and banal example,

*Retired Ghanaian-American physician Kwei Quartey is the author of the Darko Dawson and Emma Djan series and a member of the Los Angeles branch of Sisters in Crime. His book Wife of the Gods (2009) made the Los Angeles Times Bestseller List. In 2010, he was named Best Male Author by the G.O.G. National Book Club and has appeared four times on the Top 100 African American Literature Book Club Bestsellers List. His 2020 novel The Missing American was an Edgar Award nominee in the Best Novel category.*

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