

The Story Behind The Book—In John Banville’s Words:

All my writing life I have had the misfortune to be known as a “writer’s writer”, who can say why—certainly I do not write for other writers, or for critics or academics. I like to think that my readership includes all kinds of people. The best review I have ever had was when my novel *The Book of Evidence* was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 1989; I was walking from my home to the train one morning when a workman, a complete stranger, leaned down from his bicycle as he rode past and shouted: “Great f***ing book!”

I have always been a keen reader of detective and crime novels—Richard Stark’s Parker books seem to me masterpieces not only of the genre but of literature in general—but it was not until recently that I came to Georges Simenon, when the *New York Review of Books* a few years ago published a series of what he termed his “romans durs” or “hard” novels, such as *Dirty Snow*, *Tropic Moon*, *Monsieur Monde Vanishes*, *The Man Who Watched Trains Go By*. These books do not involve Simenon’s best-known creation, Inspector Maigret; indeed, they are not meant as mere entertainments, but are masterpieces of existential fiction, better than anything by Sartre or Albert Camus. When I read these books I was astonished at the depth and complexity that Simenon had achieved with the sparest of means, and I determined to see if I could do something that might approach the level of Simenon’s compelling directness. So *Christine Falls* was born.