openly flirts with teenaged son Ben but never crosses the line. Ultimately, they are kindred spirits, but the sensitive and artistic Ben follows his own dreams, though he prefers to keep them to himself. The first-person narration alternates among the three characters, which makes for a brisk though never choppy pace. Published in Ireland in 1987 and Nelson's first book to be published here, this is a riveting story of how family bonds are tried and tested. Academic and public libraries emphasizing contemporary fiction will want to add this title.—Lisa Nussbaum, Dauphin Cty. Lib. Syst., Harrisburg, PA


No one would ever accuse Patterson of avoiding hot topics: Balance of Power and Protect and Defend considered gun control and late-term abortion, respectively, while this novel takes on death penalty convictions. Fifteen years ago, brothers Rennell and Payton Price were sentenced to death for the brutal murder of nine-year-old Thuy Sen. Now, as Rennell's scheduled execution approaches, pro-bono lawyer Theresa Peralta Page (also seen in Eyes of a Child), along with her attorney husband and attorney stepson, takes his final appeal all the way to the Supreme Court. At the same time, Theresa deals with her troubled teenage daughter and her own guilt. While it is apparent that the author opposes the death penalty, Patterson nevertheless provides compelling evidence for both sides of the argument. In his sure hands, this fascinating and often agonizing in-depth look at the death-penalty process becomes a personal journey for the lawyers, the convicted, and the reader. Highly recommended for all public libraries. [See Prepub Alert, LJ 9/1/04.].—Stacy Alesi, Palm Beach Cty. Lib. Syst., Boca Raton, FL


Told entirely in dialect, this first-person narrative features Sadie, a third-generation slave emancipated during the Civil War. Sadie is making a quilt with her granddaughter, Marianne Libre, who was born free and must decide whether to marry and move away or remain with the grandmother who raised her. This inspires Sadie to tell the story of her own separation and loss. It is Sadie's story, but it is an archetypal story likely shared in some form by most slaves. In particular, Sadie recalls her husband, Jim, and their two children. Jim was sold away and later escaped to freedom with none other than Huckleberry Finn (a surprising detail that is not further developed). Sadie was later sold away from her children, neither of whom survived to freedom. As Sadie tells this story, she clearly depicts both her inner life and the details of her daily existence. The intimate and immediate nature of the narrative draws the reader quickly into Sadie's story of physical and emotional pain. Rawles won the American Book Award for her first novel, Love Like Gumbo; this new work is highly recommended for all YA and academic fiction collections.—Rebecca Sturh, Grinnell Coll. Libs., IA


Rimington, former director general of Britain's security service M15, introduces us to Liz Carlyle, a young, hip, and incredibly intuitive counterterrorism intelligence officer. Working out of London, Liz receives troubling information that leads her to the coast to investigate a fisherman's homicide. Initially, the case seems connected to a local smuggling ring, but the military assault-style murder weapon arouses Liz's suspicions. Her fear grows as information trickles in: nearby are two members of the Islamic Terror Syndicate (a Pakistani fighter and an unidentified British female), leaving dead bodies, abandoned vehicles, and homemade bomb fixings in their wake. But where are they now, and what is their ultimate target? Despite a few dropped story lines, the author pulls off an exciting thriller with nods to Ken Follett's style and Evelyn Anthony's rage against the daily grind of his protagonists' lives. Overall, a commendable though not essential addition to the literature of World War II; recommended for general collections.—David Keymer, Modesto, CA


Ah, the tricky nature of translation. On the one hand, it brings you closer to a world that may otherwise be inscrutable; on the other, it forever limits your reading experience. This American debut by a popular Croatian writer epitomizes the problem. Although admirable, the translation doesn't quite convey the fury of the protagonist in the original (admittedly, the Croatian language is well endowed with profanities). Still, her pain is universal, as is the story's appeal. Tonka, a middle-aged, anti-feminist feminist, spends an entire night in front of the TV, rambling to an imaginary audience about her grievances about her own life and the world around her. She is a freethinking woman who (finally) doesn't give a damn, but she is also a victim of a hypocritical society to which she has no choice but to succumb. This novel was hugely popular in Croatia, and rightfully so: it not only reaffirms a fiercely provocative literary voice but might also announce the arrival (or revival) of an inspiring genre where language makes all the rules while tragedy and comedy linger indistinguishable. Highly recommended.—Mirela Roncevic, Library Journal


Soothsayer Primo Verona's life unravels when his wife leaves him for his best friend, Pasquale Benvenuto, maker of the best salamis and baker of the most succulent fruit breads in all of Capetown. Primo, not used to wielding bad magic, curses Pasquale's shoes, which causes the laces to continually unravel—nothing a pair of loafers can't fix. He also concocts a more serious curse that he puts on hold for a later date; however, it manages to unleash itself with disastrous results. This work delves into the past lives of its richly drawn characters as well as those of their ancestors, Italian Jews who survived the Holo-