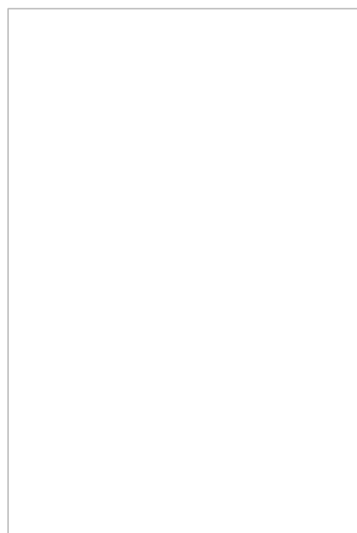


George Pelecanos

"Pelecanos" redirects here. For the 15th century scribe, see [Theodoros Pelecanos](#).

George Pelecanos



George Pelecanos at the 2013 Texas Book Festival.

Born February 18, 1957
[Washington, D.C.](#), United States

Occupation [Novelist](#), [journalist](#), [Television writer](#)

Nationality American

Genre [Detective fiction](#)

Website

www.hachettebookgroup.com/features/georgepelecanos/

George P. Pelecanos (born 18 Feb 1957) is an American author. Many of his 20 books are in the genre of [detective fiction](#) and set primarily in his hometown of Washington, D.C. He is also a film and television producer and a television writer. He worked extensively on the [HBO](#) series *[The Wire](#)*, and was a writer on *[Treme](#)*.

Early life

Pelecanos, a [Greek American](#), was born in [Washington, D.C.](#) in 1957.

Career

Novelist

Pelecanos's early novels were written in the first person voice of Nick Stefanos, a Greek D.C. resident and sometime private investigator.

After the success of his first four novels, the Stefanos-narrated *[A Firing Offense](#)*, *[Nick's Trip](#)*, and *[Down by the River Where the Dead Men Go](#)*, and the non-series (though some characters do cross over) *[Shoedog](#)*, Pelecanos switched his narrative style considerably and expanded the scope of his fiction with his D.C. Quartet. He has commented that he did not feel he had the ability to be this ambitious earlier in his career.^{[[1](#)]} The quartet, often compared to [James Ellroy's L.A. Quartet](#), spanned several decades and communities within the changing population of Washington. Now writing in the third person, Pelecanos relegated Stefanos to a supporting character and introduced his first "salt and pepper" team of crime fighters, Dimitri Karras and Marcus Clay.

In *The Big Blowdown*, set a generation before Karras and Clay would appear (the 1950s), Pelecanos followed the lives of dozens of D.C. residents, tracking the challenges and changes that the second half of the twentieth century presented to Washingtonians. *King Suckerman*, set in the 1970s and generally regarded as the fans' favorite, introduced the recurring theme of [basketball](#) in Pelecanos' fiction. Typically, he employs the sport as a symbol of cooperation amongst the races, suggesting the dynamism of D.C. as reflective of the good will generated by multi-ethnic pick up games. However, he also indulges the reverse of the equation, wherein the basketball court becomes the site of unresolved hostilities. In such cases, violent criminal behavior typically emerges amongst the participants, usually escalating the mystery. *The Sweet Forever* (1980s) and *Shame the Devil* (1990s) closed the quartet and Pelecanos retired Stefanos and the other characters that populated the novels. (Stefanos and other characters do re-appear in subsequent works.)

In 2001, he introduced a new team of private detectives, Derek Strange and Terry Quinn, as the protagonists of *Right as Rain*. They have subsequently starred in the author's more recent works *Hell to Pay* (which won a [Gumshoe Award](#) in 2003) and *Soul Circus*. While these books have cemented the author's reputation as one of the best current American crime writers and sold consistently, they have not garnered the critical and cult affection his D.C. quartet did. Rather, they seem to be continuing the author's well received formula of witty protagonists chasing unconflicted criminals behind the backdrop of popular culture references and D.C. landmarks.

Perhaps sensing this, Pelecanos again switched his focus in his 2004 novel, *Hard Revolution*, taking one of his new detectives, Derek Strange, back in time to his early days on the D.C. police force. In another interesting move, Pelecanos attached a CD to the book itself, emulating [Michael Connelly](#) who included a CD with his 2003 Harry Bosch book *Lost Light*.

In 2005, Pelecanos saw another novel published, *Drama City*. This book revisited the examination of dogfighting begun in his book *Hell To Pay*. Pelecanos is a dog owner and has written about his views of dogfighting.^[2]

In 2006 he published *The Night Gardener*, which was a major change of style and which featured a cameo of himself. Pelecanos has also published short fiction in a variety of anthologies and magazines, including *Measures of Poison* and *Usual Suspects*. His reviews have been published in *The Washington Post Book World*, *The New York Times Book Review*, and elsewhere.

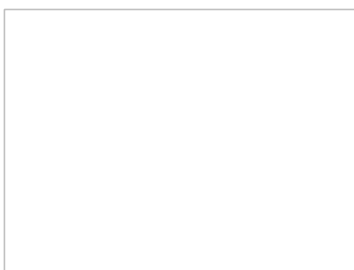
The Turnaround was published in August 2008, reflecting a return to his roots, as the novel opens in the 70s in a Greek diner, and a continuation of his more modern style in the portion set in the present. *The Turnaround* won the 2008's [Hammett Prize](#).

In 2011, Pelecanos published "The Cut", introducing the character Spero Lucas, a young veteran of the Iraq war. The former Marine works part-time as a private investigator for a D.C. defense attorney as well as taking jobs finding stolen items for a 40% cut of the value of the returned item. In 2013, Pelecanos published "The Double", the second Spero Lucas book.

Film and television

Pelecanos has written and produced for HBO's *The Wire* and is part of a literary circle with *The Wire* creator [David Simon](#) and novelist [Laura Lippman](#). Simon sought out Pelecanos after reading his work. Simon was recommended his novels several times but did not read his work initially because of territorial prejudice; Simon is from Baltimore.^[3] Once Simon received further recommendations, including one from Lippman, he tried *The Sweet Forever* and changed his mind.^[4] The two writers have much in common including a childhood in [Silver Spring, Maryland](#), attendance at the University of Maryland and their interest in the "fate of the American city and the black urban poor".^[4] They first met at the funeral of a mutual friend shortly after Simon delivered the pilot episode.^[4] Simon pitched Pelecanos the idea of *The Wire* as a novel for television about the American city as Pelecanos drove him home.^[4] Pelecanos was excited about the prospect of writing something more than simple mystery for television as he strived to exceed the boundaries of genre in his novels.^[4]

Pelecanos joined the crew as a writer for the first season in 2002.^[5] He wrote the teleplay for the season's penultimate episode "Cleaning Up" from a story by Simon and [Ed Burns](#).^{[6][7]} Pelecanos was promoted to producer for the second season in 2003.^[8] He wrote the teleplay for the episodes "Duck and Cover"^{[9][10]} and "Bad Dreams" from stories he co-wrote with Simon.^{[11][12]} He remained a writer and producer for the third season in 2004.^[13] He wrote the teleplay for the episodes "Hamsterdam"^{[14][15]} and "Middle Ground" from stories he co-wrote with Simon.^{[16][17]} Simon wrote the teleplay for the episode "Slapstick" from a story he co-wrote with Pelecanos.^{[18][19]} Simon and Pelecanos' collaboration on "Middle Ground" received the show's first [Emmy Award](#) nomination, in the category [Outstanding Writing for a Drama Series](#).^[20] Pelecanos left the production staff of *The Wire* after the show's third season to concentrate on writing his novel *The Night Gardener*.^[21] His role as a producer was taken on by [Eric Overmyer](#).^[21]



George Pelecanos at the [Quais du polar](#), [Lyon](#), in 2008

Pelecanos remained a writer for the fourth season in 2006. He wrote the teleplay for the penultimate episode "[That's Got His Own](#)" from a story he co-wrote with producer [Ed Burns](#).^{[22][23]} Simon has commented that he missed having Pelecanos working on the show full-time but was a fan of *The Night Gardener*.^[21] Simon also spent time embedded with a homicide unit while researching his own book *Homicide: A Year on the Killing Streets*. Pelecanos and the writing staff won the [Writers Guild of America \(WGA\) Award](#) for Best Dramatic Series at the [February 2008 ceremony](#) and the 2007 [Edgar Award](#) for Best Television Feature/Mini-Series Teleplay for their work on the fourth season.^{[24][25]} Pelecanos returned as a writer for the series [fifth and final season](#). He wrote the teleplay for the episode "[Late Editions](#)" from a story he co-wrote with Simon.^{[4][26][27]} Pelecanos and the writing staff were again nominated for the WGA award for Best Dramatic Series at the [February 2009 ceremony](#) for their work on the fifth season but *Mad Men* won the award.^[28]

Following the conclusion of *The Wire* Pelecanos joined the crew of the HBO World War II mini-series *The Pacific* as a co-producer and writer.^[29] After a lengthy production process the series aired in 2010. He co-wrote "Part 3" of the series with fellow co-producer [Michelle Ashford](#).^[30] The episode focused on Marines on leave in Australia and featured a displaced Greek family in a prominent guest role.^{[30][31]} Pelecanos saw the project as a chance to make a tribute to his father, Pete Pelecanos, who served as a Marine in the Philippines.^[32]

Also in 2010 Pelecanos joined the crew of HBO New Orleans drama *Treme* as a writer. The series was created by [Simon](#) and [Overmyer](#). It follows the lives of residents of the Tremé neighborhood after [Hurricane Katrina](#).^[33] Pelecanos wrote the teleplay for the episode "At the Foot of Canal Street" from a story he co-wrote with Overmyer.^[34] Pelecanos returned as a Consulting Producer and writer for the second season in 2011. He joined the crew full-time as a writer and executive producer for the third season in 2012. He remained in this role for the fourth and final season in 2013.

Following the conclusion of *Treme* Pelecanos worked with Overmyer on his next series *Bosch*. The series was developed by Overmyer and is based on the series of novels by [Michael Connelly](#). The series stars *The Wire* alumni [Jamie Hector](#) and [Lance Reddick](#). Pelecanos and [Michael Connelly](#) co-wrote the show's fourth episode "Fugazi".

He is currently developing a series based on his Derek Strange character for HBO. The first season will be based on the Derek Strange novel *Hard Revolution*.^[35]

Personal life

As of 2006, Pelecanos lives in the Washington, D.C. suburb of [Silver Spring, Maryland](#)^[36] with his wife and three children.

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Filmography

Production staff

Year	Show	Role	Notes
2013		Executive producer	Season 4
2012	<i>Treme</i>	Executive producer	Season 3
2011		Consulting producer	Season 2
2010	<i>The Pacific</i>	Co-producer	Mini-series
2004	<i>The Wire</i>	Producer	Season 3
2003		Writer	Season 1

Writer

Year	Show	Season	Episode title	Episode	Notes
2003		Season 2	Duck and Cover , Bad Dreams	8,11	
2004	<i>The Wire</i>	Season 3	Hamsterdam , Slapstick , Middle Ground	4, 9, 11	
2006		Season 4	That's Got His Own	12	
2008		Season 5	Late Editions	9	

Writer

Year	Show	Season	Episode title	Episode	Notes
2011	<i>Treme</i>	2	"What is New Orleans?" ^[40]	9	Teleplay by Pelecanos, story by Pelecanos and David Simon
2010		1	"At the Foot of Canal Street" ^{[34][41]}	4	Teleplay by Pelecanos, story by Pelecanos and Eric Overmyer
	<i>The Pacific</i>	1	Part 3 ^[30]	3	Co-written with Michelle Ashford
2008		5	" Late Editions " ^{[26][27]}	9	Teleplay by Pelecanos, story by Pelecanos and David Simon
2006		4	" That's Got His Own " ^{[22][23]}	12	Teleplay by Pelecanos, story by Pelecanos and Ed Burns
			" Middle Ground " ^{[16][17]}	11	Teleplay by Pelecanos, story by Pelecanos and David Simon

2004	3	" Slapstick " ^{[18][19]}	9	Teleplay by David Simon, story by Pelecanos and David Simon
		<i>The Wire</i>		
		" Hamsterdam " ^{[14][15]}	4	Teleplay by Pelecanos, story by Pelecanos and David Simon
		" Bad Dreams " ^{[11][12]}	11	Teleplay by Pelecanos, story by Pelecanos and David Simon
2003	2	" Duck and Cover " ^{[9][10]}	8	Teleplay by Pelecanos, story by Pelecanos and David Simon
2002	1	" Cleaning Up " ^{[6][7]}	12	Teleplay by Pelecanos, story by David Simon and Ed Burns

Awards

Year	Award	Category	Result	Work	Notes
2009	Writers Guild of America Award	Outstanding Dramatic Series	Nominated ^[28]	<i>The Wire</i> season 5	Shared with Ed Burns , Chris Collins , Dennis Lehane , David Mills , Richard Price , David Simon and William F. Zorzi
2008			Won ^[25]	<i>The Wire</i> season 4	Shared with Ed Burns, Chris Collins, Kia Corthron , Dennis Lehane, David Mills, Eric Overmyer , Richard Price, David Simon and William F. Zorzi
2007	Edgar Award	Best Television Feature/Mini-Series Teleplay	Won ^[24]		Shared with Ed Burns, Kia Corthron, Dennis Lehane, David Mills, Eric Overmyer, Richard Price, David Simon and William F. Zorzi
2005	Emmy Award	Outstanding Writing for a Drama Series	Nominated ^[20]	<i>The Wire</i> episode " Middle Ground "	Shared with co-writer David Simon
1999	Maltese Falcon Award , Japan	Best hardboiled mystery novel published in Japan	Won	<i>The Big Blowdown</i>	

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- [George P. Pelecanos](#) at the Internet Book List
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Works by [George Pelecanos](#)

Nick Stefanos series	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Firing Offense (1992) • Nick's Trip (1993) • Down by the River Where the Dead Men Go(1995)
D.C. Quartet series	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Big Blowdown (1996) • King Suckerman (1997) • The Sweet Forever (1998) • Shame the Devil (2000)
Derek Strange and Terry Quinn series	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right as Rain (2001) • Hell to Pay (2002) • Soul Circus (2003) • Hard Revolution (2004)
Other novels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoedog (1994) • Drama City (2005) • The Night Gardener (2006) • The Turnaround (2008) • The Way Home (May 2009) • The Cut (August 2011)

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George Pelecanos was born in Washington, D.C., in 1957. He worked as a line cook, dishwasher, bartender, and woman's shoe salesman before publishing his first novel in 1992. Pelecanos is the author of eighteen novels set in and around Washington, D.C.: *A Firing Offense*, *Nick's Trip*, *Shoedog*, *Down by the River Where the Dead Men Go*, *The Big George Pelecanos* is an American writer. He has written many novels and has also worked as a motion picture writer and producer. He has written for the series *The Wire*, *The Pacific* and *Treme*. He wrote the novels: *A Firing Offense* (1992). *Nick's Trip* (1993). *Shoedog* (1994). *Down By The River Where the Dead Men Go* (1995). *The Big Blowdown* (1996). *King Suckerman* (1997). *The Sweet Forever* (1998). *Shame the Devil* (2000). *Right as Rain* (2001). *Hell to Pay* (2002). *Soul Circus* (2003). *Hard Revolution* (2004). George Pelecanos was born in Washington, D.C. He worked as a line cook, dishwasher, bartender, and woman's shoe salesman before publishing his first novel in 1992. Pelecanos is the author of twenty-one novels set in and around Washington, D.C. In *Entertainment Weekly*, Stephen King wrote that Pelecanos is "perhaps the greatest living American crime writer." Pelecanos would like to note that Mr. King used the qualifier "perhaps." read more. Q & a in *Conversation Interviews Photos*.