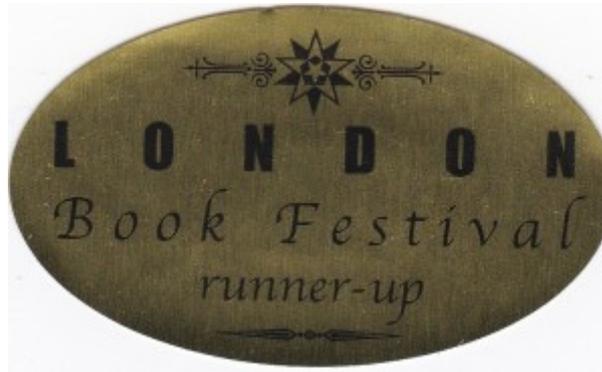


*Sable Shadow and The Presence* has been awarded runner-up in adult fiction at the London Book Festival, 2013.



Over 3,000 books were submitted to this contest, and there were about 130 books awarded honourable mention in fifteen categories. Full details are available at <http://londonbookfestival.com/portal/content.asp?contentid=606>.

In my comments at the award ceremony, I mentioned that my original idea for *Sable Shadow and The Presence* was to write a novel in the first person (which I had never done before), and that my key idea was that the central character would, as a child, hear voices which he did not recognise, and which he came to know as Sable Shadow (a representative of the devil) and The Presence (a representative of God). I produced about three chapters and sent them to my friend, Peter, who is an avid reader of quality literature, and who says exactly what he thinks. About three weeks later I got an email advising me that the work I had done was 'boring'. I had to admit that the book wasn't fulfilling my expectations, either, so I put it aside, and in the meantime, I wrote *The Iranian Scorpion*.

But, after a year, I felt that the unfinished work deserved attention. I had some additional thoughts: that Henry, the principal character would reveal the relationships (both good and bad) that exist in large corporations, and that he would begin to hold an existentialist's view of the world. (I think that Existentialism is wrongly thought of as anti-Christian. In fact, I think it has much to recommend it as a way of understanding human life. Besides, I had some concepts to add to the existentialist portfolio.) So, I went back to work: re-writing much of the work I had done, and writing more. The novel was finished, edited and published. I gave Peter one of the first copies. About three days later, I got an email from Peter in which he said he couldn't put it down, that it was a fascinating book, and he thanked me for writing it. I closed my talk by thanking Peter for his reviews - particularly the first, and thanking the Festival for selecting the novel.

*Sable Shadow and The Presence* was the winner in the General Fiction category of three regional contests this year: Los Angeles, Southwest and Northwest Book Festivals; it was runner up in the General Fiction category at the 2014 Great Southeast Book Festival.

*Sable Shadow and The Presence* received its sixth literary award: Reader's Choice Awards 2014: Honourable Mention, Memoir/ Autobiography/Biography. I am grateful for the recognition, but I'm not sure *Sable Shadow and The Presence* fits into the Memoir/Autobiography/Biography category. As fiction, it isn't an autobiography, and while my dictionary doesn't say so, I think that, in common usage, the subject of a memoir or biography is a real person, living or dead. Any way, thank you, Reader's Choice.

Royal Dragonfly Book Awards, Honourable Mention, Fiction