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Mistress of the Art of Death by Ariana Franklin,
Berkley Publishing Group, 2008

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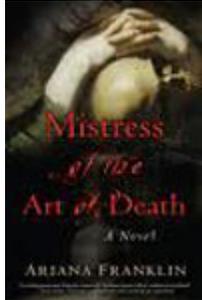
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Recommended Readings



Mistress of the Art of Death

by Ariana Franklin, Berkley Publishing Group, 2008

Reviewed by Richard McGowan

CSI meets medieval England! A series of children's murders puts Catholics and Jews on edge in Cambridge. King Henry II requests aid from his cousin, the King of Sicily, who sends him a forensic scientist. However, King Henry, like others, is surprised and annoyed that Adelia Aguilar, a product of the School of Medicine in Salerno, is the mistress of death (not the mister of death).

Adelia brings with her some able assistants and she relies on the help of King Henry's allies. However, the book is about Adelia's attempts to apply scientific principles to the investigation of the murders.

Though the feminist sloganeering sometimes grates on the reader-history is a bit more complex than authors normally make it out to be, the characters and plot are very well developed.

The details regarding King Henry II's England are wonderfully presented. In fact, I researched several scenes in the book and discovered that Ms. Franklin had indeed done her homework. For instance, there was a School of Medicine in Salerno that included women in the student body; and King Henry's personality matched the book.

There are other ways of getting an understanding of a time and place, but a good roman a clef, where historical events and characters are presented in novel form, is certainly more appealing than many history textbooks. In *Mistress of the Art of Death*, Ms. Franklin has used a genre associated with murderous death to make medieval England come alive.

- Richard McGowan is instructor of business ethics at Butler University.