

**The Los Angeles Times – Spanish edition**  
**“The Blind Pool” : Suspense at High Velocity**  
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Paul McHugh delivers an exquisite narrative in his new book 'The Blind Pool' You need to have lived with great intensity in order to keep the reader engaged with every page and keep him hooked throughout a novel. Paul McHugh achieves that in his new book “The Blind Pool.” In this thriller, every situation that he narrates is delivered with an exquisite description. A reader can perceive the noise of engines, the scents of the tropics, the whispers of people and even the flavors of food.

“The Blind Pool” is a skein of stories revolving around a hunt for Leonid Andreyev, a skilled individual of Maltese nationality, but of Russian origin, who tightly controls a giant network of corruption that permeates the underworld.

Andreyev is a hidden, secretive figure who is nostalgic for the greatness of the Russian motherland. His profile is similar to some of the wealthy people who were publicly exposed when the “Panama Papers” scandal hit the news.

"I start with the idea that all human beings have very similar feelings," the writer explains. "When I imagine a character or how that character speaks, I want to put myself in the position or attitude of that character."

Paul McHugh says that Andreyev is obsessed with returning to his homeland to help renew the power of Russia. To accomplish this, he is willing to join President Vladimir Putin. But before that becomes possible, he has many schemes to tie and untie in different countries of the world.

"After you understand someone's culture, you win the ability to individualize that person. If you do not wish your character to seem superficial, you have to be careful to endow them with a truly distinctive personality," McHugh explains.

The network of corruption that surrounds Andreyev, of course, is made up of many characters of many nationalities. Such details help make this book an example of the classic thriller.

Unlike authors of other thrillers, who prefer to locate their plots in scenic cities such as Paris, London, or Hong Kong, McHugh takes us by the hand through the white sands of the Caribbean; by the tropical humidity of the port of Manta, in Ecuador. A prequel to this book will take place in Honduras, which will be presented with a similar level of detail.

"The reason I wanted to set many scenes in Latin American countries is because I think that, in general, the citizens of the United States do not have enough respect for Latin America, somehow they see Latin America as an appendix, instead of the other half of the Americas," says the author.

His meticulous way of intertwining the facts is due to the great narrative experience of Paul McHugh, who for decades devoted his life to writing about extreme sports, a profession that took him to many countries and allowed him to know in detail regions, foods, personalities, the human character in which there are no absolutes or pure strains of good and evil, but complex situations in which human feelings and ambitions emerge.

McHugh has reflected deeply on the private prisons that proliferate in the United States and has thought that when prisons aim to profit, the last thing they do is rehabilitate the prisoners, since what they are looking for is keep them behind bars as long as possible.

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McHugh, who reads three newspapers a day, says that with that reading, he obtains fresh and original material for his literary work. "I am ready to write with all the realism that news gives me."

"In my novel, I decided to do what fiction does best, to first take a logical proposition and then question what are the dangers here, what is the worst case? And part of the worst case is a scenario where the criminal abilities of a prison population are no longer considered a liability, but an asset. "

McHugh is an experienced investigative journalist. His own life could be considered a kind of thriller or adventure book. Risky anecdotes and unusual experiences abound in his biography, such as the time when he studied in a Catholic seminary, or when he launched himself on a sea kayak voyage from Oregon to San Francisco. That adventure was told in a series of 40 stories in *The San Francisco Chronicle*, eagerly devoured by that newspaper's daily readers.

"Because I spent decades as an outdoors journalist I can offer my novels a sense of 'physicality', I know how bodies move, I know what it feels like to be safe or fearful, I can describe those things because I've had an action-oriented life."

"Another element I can offer in my writings comes from my religious background, I was in a Roman Catholic seminary for six years, from the ages of 13 to 19. When I was in the seminary, I thought a lot about humanity and morality. Since then, I've thought a lot about who we are, not only as human beings, but who are we as souls. Why do we do what we do? These are issues that I try to incorporate in a narrative."

McHugh is not a rookie in the literary world. "The Blind Pool" is his third novel. The first one was "The Search for Goodbye-to-Rains," published in 1980. "Deadlines" is his second work of fiction, with which he won in 2010 the National Indie Excellence Award and the Bay Area Independent Publishers Award.

Throughout his career as an author, McHugh has focused on a rejection of stereotypes. So he endows his characters with complex characteristics, such as internal conflicts, wrong decisions and difficult confrontations. Such particularities brilliantly stand out in the female figures who inhabit the author's stories.

"I've always believed that if you want to have a funny Latin male figure, do not make him Cantinflas. If you want to present a sexy Latina woman, do not make her a Carmen Miranda. Instead, what you should do is understand the culture of the characters, their background, and then proceed to flesh out a recognizable human being and make that character breathe. What I wanted to do with the women (in "The Blind Pool") was to make them totally human and real, give them their own set of strengths and vulnerabilities. Not make them impeccable, but rather allow them to make mistakes, "says the writer.

In his search for these human realities, Paul is inspired by writers like John Lescroart, whom he defines as a great friend and admires primarily because his characters are quite human.

"The Blind Pool" was launched on September 7th in California and has won excellent reviews because from the first pages it manages to hook the reader and does not give him rest. Page after page, complex plots are developed in which the characters interact, all linked by a common thread, due to the extraordinary narrative capacity of McHugh.

The thriller fits McHugh like a glove, because a thriller author must have an ability to create credible characters, and "The Blind Pool" is filled to capacity with them.

The main point that McHugh wants readers to take away from *The Blind Pool* is a feeling that, yes, there might be dangers everywhere, yet there are human virtues that can confront and solve them, such as courage and determination.

Under that premise, *The Blind Pool* asks us a question: What would happen if the guardian and the owner of the prison were part of a criminal network?

That question is answered abundantly in 'The Blind Pool'. Do not miss it.

