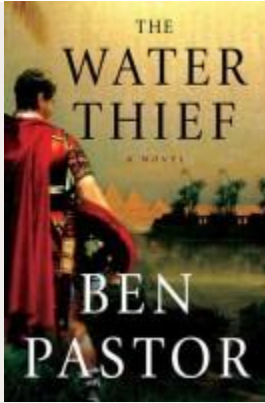


## HISTORICAL NOVEL SOCIETY

### THE WATER THIEF

*By Ben Pastor*



*The Water Thief* is a puzzle within a conundrum – an academic mystery turned deadly. In 304 C.E. Aelius Spartianus, commander in the army of the Emperor Diocletian, is commissioned to write the biography of Hadrian. Diocletian is specifically interested in the death of Hadrian’s favorite, the boy Antinous. As Aelius reconstructs the events of the boy’s death in Egypt, the mission takes a distinctly non-academic turn. Two murders and a personal attack lie behind him as Aelius follows the dead Antinous’s track to Rome... and more savagery. Hadrian sent not only his favorite’s remains to Rome but also a letter whose contents are so volatile men will kill to prevent its coming to light.

The story moves at a fast pace and has some great twists and an excellent climax. The author’s expertise in historical research is evident throughout. A disconcerting feature of the story is its narrative style. Both narrator and characters speak in 21st century idiom. There is an odd sensation that the characters could as easily be contemporary Americans as ancient Romans.

Still, if you love history and appreciate the historian’s trade you will enjoy *The Water Thief*. Highly recommended!