



**Title:** The Committee

**Author:** Sterling Watson

**Description:**

The Committee is set in a sleepy late 1950s Florida university city. Its characters—professors, students, townspeople rich and poor, and politicians—are both typical of such a place and unusual, even bizarre, for the challenges they face and the changes they undergo when their lives are suddenly disrupted by the nefarious workings of a shadowy group of men, The Committee, who use the powers of government and the police to investigate and reveal the most private acts of innocent men and women.

This is a story of love, both licit and hidden, war, friendship, betrayal, compromise, and finally the necessity to stand firm against the encroachments upon freedom by men who believe they do God's and the government's righteous work. Set against the backdrop of political turmoil and the clash of classes and cultures—Southern, academic, patrician, and demimonde—The Committee pits protagonist Tom Stall, scholarly, ambitious, and rising in his world of teaching and administration, against two men and a woman: a colleague, a university president, and an old friend turned deadly enemy in a struggle for the soul of a town, a university, and an ideal.

Tension and suspense build with crushing inevitability as hidden forces and unforeseen events threaten Stall's career and finally his very life.

**Reviews**

**[The New York Journal of Books:](#)**

Sterling Watson's new novel, *The Committee*, transmutes Lavender Scare investigators' ruthless assaults on suspected homosexuals in 1950s Gainesville into heart-racing fiction that's every bit as spellbinding as Watson's noir masterpiece *Suitcase City*. From the novel's indelible opening moments, when Committee-outed English professor Jack Leaf takes a walk in the air from a third-floor window and lands in a pool of blood at the feet of a distraught co-ed, *The Committee* proves nearly impossible to put down, so vivid is its pull-no-punches portrayal of the personal consequences of the John's Committee's reckless, unmitigated cruelty.

**[Publishers Weekly:](#)**

Watson ably evokes a sense of the McCarthy era's regional impact in this thought-provoking story.

**[Kirkus Reviews:](#)**

The dialogue is realistic, and the pacing, especially toward the end, is quick and intense. Any reader wanting a history lesson wrapped in a compelling, believable novel will find much to contemplate here.

**[The Tampa Bay Times:](#)**

Compelling...In this sharply crafted novel, [Watson's] seventh, he re-creates the era

with rich detail and a creeping sense of dread.

**Creative Loafing:**

The Committee takes place on campus, but deserves to be included with those academic novels like Mary McCarthys *The Groves of Academe*, Randall Jarrells *Pictures from an Institution*, Kingsley Amiss *Lucky Jim*, and Jane Smileys *Moo*, all books that burst out of their scholarly settings to light up the characters and societies they live in...This book will hold you to the very end, and after.

**Michael Koryta, New York Times best-selling author of HOW IT HAPPENED:**

*The Committee* is a triumph of historical fiction and a warning from our past. Sterling Watson swiftly and elegantly anchors the reader in an era that many would love to forget, and then reminds us of the humanity within the history. Watson is the rare writer who can address the big ideas—politics and power, love and hate, fear and freedom—without ever losing sight of the characters at the story's heart.