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James Bradley. *The Resurrectionist*. Picador, 2006.

Reviewed by Gillian Dooley in *The Adelaide Review* 19 May 2006, p. 16.

Dickensian London, a grimy world of grave-robbing and poverty, is the setting for James Bradley's third novel. But *The Resurrectionist* has none of Dickens' sentiment or comedy. It's dark and lugubrious from beginning to end.

Gabriel Swift is a surgeon's apprentice in London in the 1820s. His master is a teacher and the recently dead are their stock-in-trade. Without any legal means of acquiring bodies, they necessarily have connections with a clutch of criminals some of whom will stop at nothing to satisfy their lucrative market. Gabriel becomes drawn into the supply side until he is saved by transportation to Australia.

Bradley's research has been thorough, but as he says in his publicity interview, 'what's important is knowing enough not to need to reassure readers (and yourself) you're confident with the material.' He reassures us well, using nineteenth century idiom fluently both in Gabriel's first-person narration and the dialogue. But Gabriel is an anguished creature: even the clear sunlight of New South Wales can't shake his remorseless gloom and alienation. There's no doubt that this is an accomplished novel, but, unless drawn to its gruesome picture of the body trade, readers may find it difficult to enjoy.