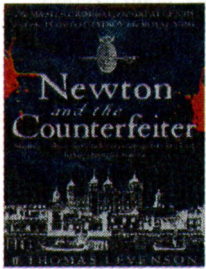


**Newton and the Counterfeiter**, by Thomas Levenson (Faber, £9.99)



Everyone knows Newton the great physicist. Some even know that he was also an obsessive alchemist. But who knew that he was a gumshoe? The “man who brought order to the cosmos” was also warden of the Royal Mint from 1696, charged with protecting the king’s currency, a role that forced him to become a criminal investigator, hunting down coiners and counterfeiters. Levenson weaves science and the history of money into a gripping tale about how the “most disciplined mind in Europe” did battle with London’s underworld. For two years Newton relentlessly pursued William Chaloner, his most ruthless and cunning foe. It was, says Levenson, “a masterpiece of empirical research”. Newton was a surprisingly effective interrogator, examining suspects in Newgate jail. Some have said that he actually enjoyed “terrorising his captives”, but Levenson argues he was “just doing his job”. Apparently Newton mastered “every dirty job required of the 17th-century version of a big-city cop” - quite something for a Cambridge don. **PDS**