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www.humanjournal.org  •  human@humanjournal.org

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Nur Gökalp Akkerman
Hacettepe University

Reyyan Bal
TOBB Univ. of Economics & Technology

Işıl Baş
Boğaziçi University

Arina Cirstea
University of Warwick

Sibel Dinçel
TOBB Univ. of Economics & Technology

Neslihan Ekmekcioğlu
Adjunct professor

Mark Gallagher
University of Nottingham

Ali Güneş
Karabük University

Nursel İçöz
Middle East Technical University

Hasan İnal
TOBB Univ. of Economics & Technology

Ferda Keskin
Bilgi University

Rebecca Martin
Pace University

Ünal Norman
Middle East Technical University

Seda Pekşen
Ankara University

Kevin Quashie
Smith College

Laurence Raw
Başkent University

Steven Salaita
Virginia Tech

Halide Velioğlu
Adjunct professor, Beykent Univ.

Ayşegül Yüksel
Emeritus Professor
Introduction

Rebecca Martin

An interesting and revealing narrative about the lives we live today and about the popularity of crime writing may be implied by the tracing of a handful of themes in this collection of essays. The collection begins with Sam Naidu’s study of Sherlock Holmes, in many ways an exemplar of postmodern man. As he has developed, Holmes as a character is untroubled by his lack of a fixed identity and open to using masquerade as a professional tool and strategy, but that lack is also a trait that opens him to diverse textual communities, from those of fandom to academe. The collection ends with a study of the child detective and detective fiction for children. In exploring the subject, Ruth Anne Thompson and Jean Fitzgerald reveal the development of a genre that reflects the many social changes through the twentieth century but that is also a measure of each generation’s attempts to balance ideas about children’s innocence with the testing of the boundaries of the imagination and of the self and its power in which maturity lies. Along the way, all of these essays taken together form a narrative that reveals why the discourse of crime and detection continues to be so attractive to writers and irresistible to readers. The possibilities of good storytelling are there, yes, because of the suspense, discovery and surprises conventional in this type of story. But, the boundaries of the genre are extremely expansive, roomy and flexible enough for the most serious social critique, revelations of human depravity, and stories fit for eight-year-olds.

While Holmes’s standing as a (fictional) celebrity has made him a cultural icon, as Naidu says, celebrity, as the quintessential modern media status, contains an inherent tension between the author’s social prominence and the subsuming of authorial personality in the writing of the “true” crime text. As Siobhan Lyons points out in her essay, an ethical tension exists between journalism and celebrity culture in which the writing of and identification of “truth” may become particularly fraught. Such questions of truth are especially slippery and perilous in a century that began with the 9/11 attacks and the seemingly endless (and amorphous) “war on terror” that manifests a different identity, a different “truth,” depending on which facet we focus on and where we stand to look. As Christopher Davies explores in his essay on Michael Connelly’s *City of Bones*, mass cultural trauma can infect a society at all levels. Only by recognizing and relinquishing the voice of state ideology can individuals find their own way out of trauma and into reason.
Shifting genre boundaries, the shivery line between observer and the observed, and breached boundaries between states are all figures, on a sliding scale, of the boundaries and limens that exist in the narrative moments analyzed by İ. Murat Öner in Roald Dahl’s short story, “The Way Up to Heaven.” Highlighted here is how characters’ movements among narrative spaces—and their hesitations on thresholds and boundaries—are invested with transgressive significance. The model that Öner applies connects the apparently simple story of a crime to greater acts of resistance to state ideology; this move links back to the question of resistance to narratives in which states invest themselves while it also opens up interdisciplinary connections, another breach of boundaries. Productive tensions between genres and among narrative spaces are explored as well in Merja Makinen’s analysis of Ahmed Umit’s A Memento for Istanbul, identifying in the genres-at-cross-purposes present in the novel a challenge to readers’ expectations and even to the idea of crime fiction itself, a dynamic which joins the novel, knowingly or otherwise, to the postmodern.

Consideration by Walter Raubicheck of John P. Marquand’s Mr. Moto returns us to questions of identity, as Raubicheck explores this espionage figure’s resistance to the narrative role of either protagonist or antagonist in Marquand’s texts. His role as a spy never undermines Moto’s personal identity and self-assurance as a skilled professional and a Japanese patriot. This depiction of his character makes it possible to explore in the other characters in circulation around him questions of motivation of great significance in the period just prior to World War II and, in the final book, during the 1950s when America and Japan were allied in anti-Communist sympathies. Turning to contemporary Japan, the low birthrate is a social issue and cultural phenomenon that has entered detective fiction in a way that surprises and instructs. As Amanda Seaman explains in her essay covering three relatively recent novels, the introduction of the subject also challenges the conventions and capaciousness of the detective fiction form, though it may be seen to continue the genre’s tradition of social critique. Issues of life, from conception and birth to death, as well as considerations of femininity and the reality (and fantasies) of pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood, are, as Seaman says, “mysteries in and of themselves.” While Charlotte Beyer’s essay deals with childbirth, motherhood and children, too, the literature examined in her essay in many ways is the antithesis of Seaman’s. Rather than focusing on the careful, even obsessive, tending to conception, pregnancy and childbirth, Beyer’s essay deals with the 19th-c practice of “baby farming” and the infanticide that sometimes accompanied it. This is especially true in the case of murderer Amelia Dyer, whose depiction in a wide range of true crime texts provides the focus of Beyer’s critique of the gendered language, of the ideas about femininity, female sexuality and motherhood, and of the association of the female with evil that are drawn upon in these true crime texts.

Beyer cites the tensions between genre conventions and social critique so often evident in true crime, though, as these essays also demonstrate, many of the texts...
examined here can be said to test the limits of crime writing conventions in ways that make it very apparent that one of the most profound appeals of crime writing for both writers and readers is its ability to contain so much and to put so many issues into productive tension. Though the ghostly boundaries and limits of crime writing can hardly be identified, we can be certain they are present since the creative energies of the texts examined here—and of the essays themselves—could not exist without being contained in a textual environment that provides constant pressures and productive frictions.
Abstract
Since the publication of the first Sherlock Holmes text in 1887, the character of
Sherlock Holmes has captured the imagination of readers and sparked the creativity
of writers the world over. There has been over the years a bounty of stories and
novels, films, radio dramas, televisions series, magazines, plays, internet fanfiction,
computer games, and other forms of adaptation, produced with astonishing success
and influence, creating ‘communities of texts’. Scholars of literature and culture have
also engaged with this phenomenon and a robust corpus of Sherlock Holmes
scholarship exists. Significant also are the communities of fans which cohere around
this luminous cultural icon. Therefore, the main focus of this paper is the Sherlock
Holmes icon, which, with diversifying genres and media, has come to wield ever-
increasing cultural value in widely divergent locations globally, where communities
of fans have existed for nearly a century. This paper examines this phenomenon with
the intention of uncovering why it is that this particular fictional construct is invested
with such power within the social imaginaries of popular culture. First, a
historicisation of Holmes adaptations is presented, then a few of these adaptations
are examined to ascertain the basis of their cultural impact, and finally, some
conclusions are drawn about the role played by the Holmes icon in the construction
of personhood and fan communities.

Keywords: Sherlock Holmes; crime fiction; adaptations; intertextuality; fanfiction;
personhood; fan communities.
Sherlock Holmes:
Evolving Cultural Icon, Adaptations, Personhood, and Fan Communities

Sam Naidu

Introduction

This article is prompted by three main and related questions: 1) why is Sherlock Holmes such an enduring and ubiquitous cultural icon; 2) how is it that a character that is 128 years old has such relevance and popularity today; and 3) what sort of communities, imagined or otherwise, have arisen around this figure since the most recent resurrections of Sherlock Holmes by popular media?

Ever since the publication of the first Sherlock Holmes text, *A Study in Scarlet* by Arthur Conan Doyle which appeared in *Beeton’s Christmas Annual* in 1887, the character of Sherlock Holmes has captured the imagination of readers and sparked the creativity of writers the world over. In addition to the four novels and 56 short stories created by Doyle (referred to as the canon), there has been over the years a bounty of stories and novels, films, radio dramas, television series, magazines, plays, internet fanfiction, computer games, and other forms of adaptation, produced, with astonishing success and popularity. Numerous fan clubs, societies, publications, websites, archives, databases and purveyors of ‘Sherlockiana’ also thrive, with the *Baker Street Irregulars*, established in 1934, being the oldest and most prestigious of these. There exists also a robust body of scholarship on Holmes, straddling various disciplines and critical approaches. As far back 1944, Ellery Queen¹ noted in the introduction to his anthology of adaptations, *The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes*, “that more has been written about Sherlock Holmes than about any other character in fiction. It is further true that more has been written about Holmes by others than by Doyle himself.”² Seventy years later, Ellery’s words are more apposite than ever.

In recent years, the Sherlock Holmes icon, with diversifying genres and media, has come to wield ever-increasing cultural value in widely divergent locations globally where communities of fans have existed for almost a century. According to Ridgway

¹ Ellery Queen is both a pseudonym and a fictional character, created by two authors of crime fiction, Daniel Nathan and Manford Lepofsky, in the 1930s and 1940s in New York.
Watt and Green “the most recent bibliographical index, The Universal Sherlock Holmes, lists nearly 25 000 publications,” but these are just literary texts. The distinctive feature of the Sherlock Holmes icon is that is has been co-opted by an astounding diversity of genres and media. Further, with imperial networks in the past, and recently with modern technology, it is established as a transnational icon. From the UK, where the BBC’s Sherlock television series has generated unprecedented attention, to India, where the Sherlock Holmes Society flourishes, festivals are held in Mizoram, and Holmes spin-offs abound in literature as well as in Hindi cinema, to South Africa, where post-apartheid crime fiction utilises the figure of the quintessential detective to comment on a dysfunctional democracy, the mutating character of Sherlock Holmes continues to function as a cultural icon, traversing time and space with incredible facility. What is remarkable is not only the manner and strength with which the canon has spawned adaptations, but also the potency with which the adaptations have in turn generated their own fans and further adaptations. The extremely “palimpsestuous” quality of this phenomenon is quite astounding.

The specific forms the Holmes adaptations take vary widely, but it can be said that they all fall under the category of intertextuality, as defined by Julia Kristeva in “The Bounded Text” (1980). In this revision of structuralist semiotics, Kristeva expounds her theory of intertextuality, claiming that a text is “a permutation of texts, an intertextuality is the space of a given text,” in which “several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect.” Kristeva’s main concern here is to describe how every text is constructed from existing texts, and she reiterates this point by stating that “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another.” In the Holmes adaptations this intertextuality is particularly apparent because not only are adaptations responding to the canon, they are also absorbing, transforming and building on each other, creating what can be described as a community of texts.

There are, crucially, varying degrees of intertextuality and varying ways for a text to state its intertextual purpose, as Julie Sanders points out. Many film, television


4 According to Gerard Genette “[A]ny text is a hypertext, grafting itself onto a hypotext, an earlier text that it imitates or transforms.” Genette, Gérard. Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree. trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinski. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), ix. Here Genette, influenced by Julia Kristeva’s work in this area, is commenting on literature in general, but in the case of the Holmes adaptations the intentionality, intensity and prolific nature of the practice is extraordinary.


6 Ibid., 66.

or theatre adaptations of canonical works of literature “openly declare themselves as an interpretation or re-reading of a canonical precursor [and] may or may not involve cultural relocation or updating in some form.”

Sanders goes on to make a distinction between adaptation and appropriation, declaring that with the latter “the intertextual relationship may be less explicit, more embedded, but what is often inescapable is the fact that a political or ethical commitment shapes a writer’s, director’s, or performer’s decision to re-interpret a source text.”

This explication of intertextuality is taken further by Sanders who defines citation as a “deferential relationship; it is frequently self-authenticating, even reverential,” whilst demonstrating that, on the other hand, adaptation is “a more sustained engagement with a single text or source than the more glancing act of allusion or quotation, even citation.”

For the purposes of this article, Sanders’s comment that “[…] appropriation carries out the same sustained engagement as adaptation but frequently adopts a posture of critique, even assault” is instructive in that it points to the viability of adaptation as a general term, whilst reminding us that there are differing styles and degrees of adaptation.

For example, pastiche, a term derived from musicology, is often used to describe Holmes adaptations in general. Sanders states that pastiches contain an element of “artistic imitation” with a “satiric undertow or a parodic intention”, and she further observes that pastiches are often a “complicated blend of admiration and satire.” Many of the Holmes adaptations attempt this artistic imitation with the intention of expressing a tribute, going so far as to recreate the canonical Victorian setting and Watson’s idiosyncratic voice, down to socio-historical, even sartorial, details. Whilst alluding to parody here, Sanders does not offer a detailed definition of that form of adaptation, but Ridgway Watt and Green, in their exposition of the three main trends in Holmes adaptations include parody as one of those trends:

It inspired a wholly new domain of literature – the Sherlock Holmes parody. The phenomenon was unlike anything else in literature. Hundreds of parodies were to be written in the new [twentieth] century. Mainly comic in intent, richly variant in structure, and exploiting the countless nuances of the Canon, the genre inspired some of the most endearing and lasting contributions to twentieth-century fiction.

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8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid., 4.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., my emphasis.
13 Ibid., 5.
Though this celebratory comment rightly points to the divergent forms that Holmes parodies assume, it, unfortunately, does not actually mention the defining features of parody other than for a throw-away remark about “comic in intent”. For postmodernist literary theorist Linda Hutcheon, parody is “a form of repetition with ironic critical distance, marking difference rather than similarity.”\textsuperscript{15} An example of a Holmes parody\textsuperscript{16} therefore, such as Michiel Heyns’s \textit{Lost Ground} (2011), echoes a canonical mystery through plot, similarities in character and setting, and direct textual references, but the overall narrative and its intentions are markedly different to the canonical narratives. In this particular parody, the reader is presented with a narrative about a murder in a small South African town and expects a satisfying denouement, but difference from the canon is signaled in various ways throughout the narrative, mainly through deploying an anti-detective protagonist and denying the reader a neat resolution. In this way the novel critiques the celebration of reason that Holmes embodies in the canon.

Taking into account various art forms such as film, music and architecture, as well as the “various interventionist social agendas”, and that “parodic art comes in a very wide variety of tones and moods – from respectful to playful to scathingly critical”, Hutcheon concludes that parody “always implicitly reinforces even as it ironically debunks.”\textsuperscript{17} She calls this dual function of reinforcing and debunking the “doubled structure” of parody which inscribes “the past in the present.”\textsuperscript{18} This dialectic of past and present, or of source text and parody, coupled with the conservative potential of repetition and the revolutionary potential of difference, is what, according to Hutcheon, renders parody particularly transgressive. The Holmes parodies, whether of the canon or of the adaptations demonstrate this ‘doubleness’. Through parody, the original Holmes is reinforced as an enduring icon, even while he is spoofed, ridiculed or seriously critiqued for epitomizing the “romance of reason,”\textsuperscript{19} which is at the heart of the Holmes canon, and which ensured its intellectual, aesthetic and psychological success. Despite being a popular form this classic detective fiction is frequently parodied, mainly because of its celebration of the intellect and its reinforcement of a Victorian moral order. Critical though, for the fecundity of this character, are the peculiarities of the canonical Holmes, which result in him being both an icon of reason and an emblem of eccentricity.

\textsuperscript{15} Hutcheon, Linda. \textit{A Theory of Parody}. (New York: Methuen, 1985), xii.
\textsuperscript{16} There are numerous parodies of the canon but adaptations have also been successfully parodied. See \textit{Oklahoma} (2014), the hilarious spoof of the BBC television series \textit{Sherlock}, made by Norwegian actors Vidar Magnusson and Bjarne Tjøstheim. \url{www.youtube.com/watch?v=5PLsFTOpcRU}
\textsuperscript{17} Hutcheon, Linda. \textit{A Theory of Parody}. (New York: Methuen, 1985), xii.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
It follows then that parodies of adaptations are also both conservative and transgressive. Simultaneously, the canonical Holmes is reinforced through oblique or direct homage, while the parodied Holmes, for example, an openly gay or sociopathic Holmes who is a dismal failure of a detective, emerges as an icon of a contemporary social imaginary. Referring to adaptation in general, Sanders, like Hutcheon notes the “contradictory impulse towards dependence and liberation implicit in the majority of adaptations and appropriations.”

In other words, the modern adaptations are dependent on the canonical Holmes, whose unique combination of attributes renders him a consummate creative and critical inspiration in popular culture, and to some extent on fans’ familiarity with that frame of reference. However, the adaptations, with their ingenuity, transformations, and interventionist intentions, also liberate the Holmes from a Victorian social imaginary. This old/new quality of the Holmes icon is undoubtedly at the basis of its continued, wide-spread popularity. The shared frame of reference and an appreciation of the tensions between the canon and its protean adaptations, results in the construction of communities of fans who are just as likely to quote from *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) as they are to cite from *A Study in Pink* (2010).

Sanders, echoing Hutcheon, concludes that “[P]art of the sheer pleasure of the reading experience must be the tension between the familiar and the new, and the recognition both of similarity and difference, between ourselves and between texts.”

Shared knowledge and pleasure, and recognition by fans of similarity and difference between themselves, and of the interplay between the canon and the adaptations, is what brings texts, readers and artists together, across time and space and other divides, to create communities of texts and communities of Sherlock Holmes fans.

**Returning to the Canon**

Although reading a Holmes adaptation does not necessarily require prior knowledge of the canonical texts, this knowledge certainly enhances the reading experience and gives rise to the generative tensions described above. Sanders argue that “[A]daptation both seems to require and to perpetuate the existence of a canon, although it may in turn contribute to its ongoing reformulation and expansion.”

While some Holmes adaptations only rely on knowledge of the canon, others clearly attempt to expand the canon by feigning to have “rediscovered the cases referred to in the Canon that Watson, for a variety of reasons, chose not to publish, but which he

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21 The first episode of Series 1 of the BBC television series created by Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss which is an adaptation of the first Holmes novel by Doyle.
preserved in his old dispatch box.”  

To some extent, understanding the cultural value of the Sherlock Holmes icon in contemporary times, and fully appreciating some of these adaptations, requires what Hutcheon and Sanders would identify as a return to the past, to the canon. One has to go back to the nineteenth century to examine how and why classic detective fiction emerged as an immediately popular literary genre in order to comprehend why the canon has bred so many different and appealing adaptations. What social, cultural and literary conditions led to detective fiction burgeoning in the “modernity of the early to mid-nineteenth century?”

In terms of ‘western’ literary traditions one could examine antecedents as far back as myths and Classical literature, which portrayed crimes or transgressive acts, to begin tracing the lineage of detective fiction and thus answer these questions. In the nineteenth century the literary fascination with this murky “fallen world” of crime developed further with the advent of the Gothic novel, and what may be termed the ‘aestheticised crime novel’. Writing in the 1970s, Michel Foucault analysed this nineteenth century phenomenon of depicting the murderer as an artist, a phenomenon he describes as “the aesthetic rewriting of crime,” which also points to another popular sub-genre: ‘true crime’ or criminal nonfiction i.e. “historical chronicles, trial transcripts, newspaper reports, prison memoirs, and public confessions,” which in turn inspired and informed these fictional representations. At roughly the same time, Edgar Allan Poe published the first of his three ratiocinative tales “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” in 1841, inaugurating the successful publication of what some scholars identify as a sub-genre of crime fiction, detective fiction. In detective fiction the protagonist is the detective and the reader is invited to identify with the hero who solves the puzzle or the mystery through ratiocination. In other words, the emphasis is on the detective and the epistemological quest. Laura Marcus traces the origins of detective fiction to a nineteenth culture which was increasingly concerned with crime, punishment, discipline and surveillance.

Informed by Foucault’s thesis, and Marcus’ observation that social and historical contexts are crucial when considering the rise of detective fiction in the nineteenth century, the argument here is that the ratiocinative tale, and by extension its

protagonist, the detective, reflects and performs a role in this social imaginary which is geared towards increased knowledge and control of the individual. Holmes’s main aim, after all, is to survey the individual or the scene and then determine the identity of the criminal and the details of the crime. Thereafter the criminal is handed over to the authorities, usually the police, in the form of Lestrade of Scotland Yard, and one assumes the criminal is eventually suitably punished. The social context of growing institutionalized surveillance and the judiciary’s need for evidence (verifiable knowledge) which led to the incarceration of the criminal goes some way towards explaining detective fiction’s emphasis on narrating the meticulous process of ratiocination leading to the solving of the crime.

Holmes’s unique combination of the emerging discourses of science in the late nineteenth century with a hermeneutic strategy based on the laws of reason and logic is his method of arriving at the ‘truth’. In the fictional world created by Doyle, rationality triumphs in the face of threats and anxiety symbolised by crime. Another way of putting it is that the detective figure became the custodian of good, or of the moral order, which was threatened by the individual criminal. In the Holmes canon this threat of evil and criminality is represented most vividly by the character, Moriarty. So, through the canny use of narrative, Doyle presented the world with a complex icon of reason, a hero of civilization and order, a quirky character with nefarious habits, and an enduring symbol of good. For these reasons, the canonical Holmes is as popular today as he was in the prime of his life. Since 1887 Holmes has generated adaptations that also stand for reason, truth and good (arguably universal ideals), but equally, he has inspired adaptations that question, problematise and critique the late-Victorian social imaginary in which he was born.

**Confronting the Canon: Postmodern and Postcolonial Parodies**

As argued above the continued popularity of the canonical Holmes is due to that figure embodying a reassuring form of reason and order. But how do we account for the panoply of adaptations that subvert this ethos? Paradoxically, the revered figure became, in the twentieth century, the ideal basis for postmodernist and postcolonial revisions of the detective story in which an anti-detective (the antithesis of Holmes) features. Numerous attempts have been made to interrogate, subvert, and discredit the assumptions or principles underpinning the Holmes canon, and by extension, the socio-politics of the late nineteenth century which are reflected in it. Therefore, one of the most prolific forms of adaption has been the postmodern parody which has sought to undermine the hallmarks of the canon – the valorisation of reason and the epistemological quest. Laura Marcus explains that postmodernist anti-detective fiction is described generally in terms of ‘negative hermeneutics’. By this Marcus means that it is widely held that in the postmodernist, anti-detective novel “the quest for knowledge
is doomed to failure” and there is a tendency to focus on ontology and “not on the problematics of knowledge (as in the epistemological field) but on world-making.” Holmes and his ratiocination, or rather the ethos of epistemological or hermeneutic certainty he represents, are thus put to the test again and again in the anti-detective novel.

Perhaps one of the most successful Holmes adaptations and anti-detective novels is Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose* (1983). For Eco, detective fiction has been a laboratory where he has hypothesised about the processes of logical interpretation, troubled literary borders with his metafiction, and compared scientific interpretation with the “chain of inferences typical of a good detective story.” Using different methodologies, both scholarly works (e.g. *The Sign of Three: Dupin, Holmes, Peirce* 1983) and creative texts (e.g. *The Name of the Rose* 1983), Eco has propounded his postmodernist theories, which are largely derived from and aimed at refining Charles Peirce’s pragmatic semiosis. In particular, Eco seems to be informed by Peirce’s theory of abduction. According to Peirce, abduction informs us as to “why something is the way it is” and often “the abductive judgement comes to us like a flash. It is an act of insight.”

This process of inference is about making connections, conjecture and good guessing. It is the starting point of the hermeneutic process. Abduction, then, is the first or key inference on which deduction and induction hang. Bertilsson tells us that it does not have the same logical firmness as deduction and the ‘act of insight’ may not be true at all but it functions as “a reasonable (working) hypothesis” which “gives us a clue to reality but it always remains on the level of a maybe.” Although deduction and induction are absolutely necessary for survival, the unique power of abduction lies in “the act of seeing something anew,” and in thus kick-starting the other cognitive processes that follow. In *The Name of the Rose*, Eco invokes the voice of William of Baskerville to elucidate this point:

> ‘My dear Adso,’ William said, ‘solving a mystery is not the same as deducing from first principles. Nor does it amount simply to collecting a number of particular data from which to infer a general law (...). In the

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34 The name is, of course, a direct reference to one of Doyle’s most popular Holmes novels, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902).
face of some inexplicable facts you must try to imagine many general laws, whose connection with your facts escapes you. Then suddenly, in the unexpected connection of a result, a specific situation and one of those laws, you perceive a line of reasoning that seems more convincing than others.’

What William of Baskerville is describing here is a form of abduction which occurs when “we are confronted with a puzzle”, or “observations that do not fit our expectations.” In response to the puzzle, William of Baskerville tells us, we adopt a new way of seeing the world, a hypothesis through imagined connections. As it turns out, the denouement of *The Name of the Rose* reveals that William of Baskerville’s hypothesis was a false one, however elegantly conceived, and his unmasking of the villain (or ‘solving’ of the crimes) is accidental. With this conclusion, Eco reminds the reader that the chain of inferences was predicated on conjecture or a guess, and that the processes of logical reasoning are fallible. William of Baskerville is an anti-detective whose epistemological quest fails but who does come to see the world anew. Eco’s novel is an intricate, postmodern parody of the ratiocinative tale which pays homage to Holmes whilst offering a thorough-going critique of the discourse of reason that he exemplifies. Brian McHale sums up ‘negative hermeneutics’ by asserting that the detective’s failure “...undermines the basic assumption of the detective story from Poe’s Dupin through Sherlock Holmes to Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple and beyond, namely the assumption of the adequacy of reason itself, of ratiocination.” Whilst undermining and critiquing the canonical Holmes, postmodern parodies reinforce the icon and extend its influence well beyond its putative generic boundaries.

The postmodern parody is not the only literary progeny intent on critique and subversion while maintaining some filial respect. The postcolonial parody may be seen as performing a similar function to the anti-detective novel as Yumna Siddiqi’s description contends:

…”a recent spate of postcolonial novels that use the format of the mystery or detective story but tweak it or turn it inside out in what becomes a narrative of ‘social detection,’ to borrow a phrase from Frederic Jameson, a ‘vehicle for judgments on society and revelations of its hidden nature’.

Siddiqi identifies, with the help of Jameson, the shift here as being from detection of a crime to social analysis and another ontological focus – “the hidden nature” of society. While Siddiqi’s focus is on the ontological possibilities of postcolonial detective fiction, other postcolonial critics such as Tobias Döring have interrogated the “the inextricable link between crime fiction and the imperial enterprise.” Such studies have demonstrated that authority, order and discipline as primary imperial interests were affirmed through the fictional investigation of crime and the reconstruction of social stability, as found in the Holmes canon. Of course, postcolonial theory also informs many contemporary readings of the Holmes stories in which Doyle’s collusion with nineteenth century colonial discourse is examined. Döring, for example, denounces the often xenophobic, racist and stereotypical portrayals of foreigners, in particular of migrants from the colonies found in the Holmes stories.

For the postcolonial parody, subverting the formal conventions of ‘classical’ detective fiction, which is seen as complicit with colonialism, is often achieved through a strategy of ‘negative hermeneutics’. This is evident in Michiel Heyns’s *Lost Ground*, as mentioned previously, and in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *When We Were Orphans* (2000), in which Holmesian detective-protagonist, Christopher Banks, attempts to solve the mystery of his parents’ disappearance in Shanghai in the early twentieth century. Banks succeeds in unravelling the mystery of their disappearance but the mystery is subsumed by Banks’s personal, almost fantastical, journey into the past. He becomes embroiled in Chinese-Japanese political relations in the 1930s and his epistemological quest leads him down painful, existential paths in which parent-child and empire-colony relationships are analogously interrogated. Ultimately, Banks’s investigation is about his own nebulous cultural origins and the deeply personal and emotional matter of his mother’s love for him, not about the use of logical reason to solve the mystery. Not all, but many postcolonial parodies use the notion of ‘negative hermeneutics’ in this way to expose how ‘western’ discourses of rationality, whilst limited in any context, are particularly inadequate in the postcolonial context. The rising diversity of and experimentation with Holmes parodies in recent times, as it proliferates in wide-ranging geo-cultural locations and mutates into transnational literary phenomena, most definitely exhibits a questioning, not only of reason, but also of reason’s relationship to authority, social order and notions of justice. In this way, the postmodern and the


postcolonial parodies specifically amplify the communities of texts and communities of fans which have sprung to life around the Holmes icon.

**Adaptations, Personhood, and Communities of Fans**

What this account of Sherlock Holmes adaptations has attempted to demonstrate is that communities of Holmes texts and communities of Holmes fans exist, with each community having at its centre the Holmes icon, in its varying manifestations. The most striking contemporary examples are the text communities and the fan communities which have developed around the BBC television series, *Sherlock*. Obviously, the episodes of the series are modern-day adaptations of canonical texts in which Holmes and Watson and their fascinating escapades are given a twenty-first century revamp, creating one type of text community, that is, one in which the canon and the modern adaptations co-exist in a complex palimpsestuous or intertextual relationship. But, as already mentioned, the series has also inspired an astounding amount of internet-based fanfiction and also parodies such as the short film, *Oklahoma* (2014), by the Norwegian actors Vidar Magnussen and Bjarte Tjøstheim, which is available on YouTube, thus creating auxiliary, overlapping text communities. The series also has a huge fan community, with a dedicated website *Sherlockology: The Ultimate Guide for Any BBC Sherlock Fan,*\(^\text{41}\) serving as a hub for the community.

Ever-increasing innovations and reformulations in the adaptations, mainly driven by advances in technology, have been paralleled by burgeoning fan communities. In recent years these communities have grown exponentially with internet-based fan communities and fanfiction. This fanfiction, imaginative adaptations produced by fans of the canon, or by fans of specific adaptations such as the BBC *Sherlock* television series, constitutes just one aspect of contemporary Holmes fandom. The term fandom is used to describe collectively the fans and the fanfiction, the tweets, blogs, apps, clothing, jewellery, and various other spin-off forms of fan activity in practice. What these communities of texts and communities of fans amount to is a new modern ‘social imaginary’, as conceived by Charles Taylor. Taylor, who acknowledges his debt to Benedict Anderson for this formulation of the ‘social imaginary’, is mostly concerned with sketching “an account of the forms of social imaginary that have underpinned the rise of Western modernity”\(^\text{42}\) so as to comment on moral orders and how we construct personhood in relation to others (whether we physically encounter these others or not). He states that his “focus is on the way ordinary people ‘imagine’ their social surroundings, and this is often not expressed in theoretical terms, but is carried in images, stories and legends.”\(^\text{43}\) The fans of Sherlock Holmes who imagine

\(^{41}\) http://www.sherlockology.com/


new stories, who share distinctive yet mutable images, who share the pleasure and inspiration of the Holmes legend, transform their social imaginaries or create new ones by doing so.

As shown with the postmodern and postcolonial parodies, the potential for subversion of the ethos underpinning detective fiction is great. With fanfiction adaptations, this potential is increased for three main reasons. First, fanfiction exists outside of the media and literature industries, meaning it is not subject to the same strictures of censorship, market forces, or discursive conventions as mainstream adaptations. This oppositional stance of fanfiction is noted by fanfiction researcher, Megan Van Der Nest, who sees it as a “collective strategy that focuses on the evasion of dominant social imaginaries by forming interpretive communities that subvert the preferred or intended meanings of popular media.”

Second, fanfiction utilizes modern technologies for creation and dissemination, increasing accessibility and impact in the everyday lives of fans. Third, fanfiction generally shifts the focus from the mystery of the crime to the identity of Holmes and to his interpersonal relationships. In this way, by downplaying reason and amplifying the emotional and ontological life of the character, fanfiction continues the project of postmodern and postcolonial parodies.

According to Van Der Nest, a large amount of Holmes fanfiction is comprised of stories about sex and relationships, ranging from short pornographic vignettes known as PWP, or Porn Without Plot, to detailed novel length stories which portray complex relationships within the context of a larger plot. Many of these fanfictions depict sexual and romantic relationships that do not conform to traditional heteronormative expectations. Slash fanfiction, for example, a genre that depicts romantic and sexual relationships between male characters, represents a reaction against mainstream constructions of male sexuality and masculinity, which do not permit the open expression of affection or desire between men.

The most recent Holmes adaptations, then, imagine non-heteronormative sexual and romantic relationships, giving fans within the community a means to counter dominant social imaginaries which impose a hetero- and gender normative narrative on them.

Feminist theorist, Drucilla Cornell, like Taylor, also turned to the notion of an ‘imaginary’ to conceptualise personhood, linking the project of personhood to the values of equality and freedom. For Cornell the person or individual being is involved in a “project that demands the space for the renewal of the imagination and the concomitant re-imagining of who one is and who one seeks to become.” Cornell is resolute that personhood is a process which engages the imagination – one imagines

oneself into being and concludes with this “insistence on the imaginary domain as crucial to the very possibility of freedom.” When considering the communities of texts and the communities of fans which surround the Holmes icon today, one cannot overstate the role of the imagination in constituting those communities, and in creating liberatory possibilities for fans. In imagining new stories, images and legends, the fans use Holmes as a conduit to imagine new identities and relationships for themselves.

Conclusion

However radically the newest adaptations imagine Holmes, they turn on the ‘doubleness’ of this icon and on the ‘doubleness’ of repetition and revolution which characterises the relationship between source text and adaptation. Fanfiction adaptations hone in on Holmes’s eccentricities, already in existence, albeit less flamboyantly, in the canon, in order to comment on his romantic and sexual relationships, but they also utilise his extraordinary intelligence and uncanny powers of detection, which were emphasised in the canon. In the fanfiction, where the emphasis is on emotion rather than reason, his main occupation is still the solving of crimes. As Sherlock fanfiction author, Atlin Merrick, observes it is Sherlock’s superhuman, heroic qualities and his human frailty that draw fans to him:

When you write about this modern-day Sherlock, he can metaphorically fly, soaring over everyone as his fast-blink gaze takes in everything. But after telling tales of the near-impossible, you have to come down to earth and talk about his heart, how what he does affects people, how it sometimes hurts more than it heals.49

First fans want to engage with the ‘old’, the emissary of order and justice from a bygone era whose intellectual powers still have relevance today. But they want also to plumb new depths, understand Holmes the man, his ability to love, his sexuality and sex life, his romantic and platonic relationships, and so on, breathing new life into Sherlock Holmes, who, after 128 years is still adapting and evolving. In short, they want what fans have always wanted and enjoyed – the freedom to imagine Holmes using the canon and using their own élans. Thus the two questions posed at the start of this article – why is Sherlock Holmes such an enduring and ubiquitous cultural icon,

47 Ibid.
48 A distinction is made between canonical text (the original Holmes canon) and source text (any text which inspires an adaptation i.e. an adaptation can be a source text).
and how is it that a character that is 128 years old has such relevance and popularity today – are answered. The fans continue to imagine Holmes.

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Bibliography


In Cold Ink:
The Celebrity True Crime Author and Ethical Journalism

Siobhan Lyons

Abstract

The genre of true crime has, since its inception, garnered much scholarly attention and come under increased scepticism. Involving factual events with narrative-style writing, the legitimacy and authenticity of many true crime novels has been debated, and the writer’s moral and ethical responsibility has been called into question. A number of authors have achieved a significant degree of fame through writing a true crime novel, including Vincent Bugliosi’s *Helter Skelter* (1974), Norman Mailer’s *The Executioner’s Song* (1979), James Ellroy’s *The Black Dahlia* (1987), and, more notably, *In Cold Blood* (1965) written by Truman Capote, whose role in the investigation of the Clutter murders, which made him a celebrity, has since provoked much discussion regarding the author’s motives and the novel’s authenticity. Having gained intimate access to the police reports and interviews with the convicted murderers, many of Capote’s critics accused the author of taking advantage of the condemned men’s stories for the purposes of writing a bestseller, creating a significant link between crime and celebrity. Famously, the more gruesome and detailed the narrative, the more a crime author can benefit both financially and professionally. This paper will explore the problematic link between true crime and authorial celebrity specifically through *In Cold Blood* – celebrating its fiftieth anniversary in 2015 – and other famous true crime novels and their authors, offering an analysis on the lucrative relationship between celebrity culture and the genre of true crime, and the ethical considerations that this relationship provokes.

Keywords: True crime, celebrity, journalism, ethics, Truman Capote
In Cold Ink:  
The Celebrity True Crime Author and Ethical Journalism  

Siobhan Lyons

Introduction

The garnering of fame through true crime writing is an intriguing phenomenon; relying on horrific incidents and death, the celebrity status of these authors is forever associated with and dependent on death. The celebrity crime author’s star status stems from and relies on murder and death, which immediately brings into focus the ethical consideration of the crime writer’s motives and actions when writing a true crime novel. The ability to gain wealth and celebrity from the horrific details of a crime, as various theorists have noted, puts the celebrity crime author in an ethically unstable position.

Although authors have continuously become famous through their writings, the popularity of the crime writer is of a different nature, and their celebrity functions in a different manner to other authors focusing on different genres. This illustrates the significant link between a celebrity author and their association with crime and murder. More so than the crime fiction writer, the author whose celebrity is directly linked with real life murder and death is an intriguing phenomenon. The attainment of celebrity from such cases of brutality deserves and requires greater attention. Explicitly or not, through the creative exploitation of famous crime stories, many authors have developed a celebrity status that relies on their association with the crime and true crime genre and invites questions regarding the role and responsibility of the crime author. Crime has thus become a lucrative area of investigation for authors, whose celebrity status is often created by and anchored in their exploration and writing of various murder stories, many of which remain grim and ghastly in their severity.

Crime and Spectacle

Elizabeth Fraser argues that the appeal of the true crime novel steams from the “desire to see criminals punished for the crimes they commit, and [that] arduous investigations offer readers a fast-paced, adrenaline filled story with satisfying
conclusions”¹. She also argues how the true crime novel offers readers an analysis of the criminals’ possible motives. The true crime novel is thus associated with disclosure, but also with the spectacle of the chase.

In the true crime genre, murdered ‘real’ people become unintentionally famous. James Ellroy’s Black Dahlia made Elizabeth Short a household name, cataloguing her murder and the subsequent investigation of her death. Vincent Buglioni’s *Helter Skelter* enabled Charles Manson to develop a notorious celebrity status. And Capote’s account of the Clutter family murders in *In Cold Blood* made him, and the Clutter family, internationally famous. But it is Capote’s name – and fame – that endures, over that of both the Clutter family and the convicted murderers. While the murdered victim gains notoriety and a significant, if not disconcerting, level of fame and obsession, it is the authors who deliver the true crime stories that achieve a more long-lasting kind of celebrity.

The crime author also enables a certain amount of glamour to surround both the victims and murderers involved in various cases. In his work *Celebrity* (2001), Chris Rojek, discussing James Ellroy, makes a necessary link between fictional works and historical celebrity: “The fiction of James Ellroy and Jake Arnott spins a mantle of glamour around notorious historical celebrity figures like Lee Harvey Oswald, Sam Giancana and Reggie and Ronnie Kray”². Similarly, the notoriety of Charles Manson has taken on a life of its own following the publication of *Helter Skelter*, while the murderers of the Clutter family, Dick Hickock and Perry Smith, have had their life stories greatly detailed in Capote’s book, and have often been portrayed in film and television in an almost romanticised manner. This is something that, as Andrew Pepper argues, is of direct interest to James Ellroy, whose *Black Dahlia* explores the media frenzy attached to murder (which is, in itself, another incentive for the crime author’s motives). Pepper argues:

[Elizabeth] Short’s murder is picked up upon and exploited by a salacious mass media eager to boost circulation by pouring over every gruesome detail of her assault. In doing so, Ellroy is suggesting that the spectacle of her disembowelled corpse, once commodified by this mass media, becomes part of the spectacle of the city.³

The spectacle that is linked to murder automatically transfers onto the author for whom the murder-story becomes their ticket to celebrity and esteem. To ensure that a

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¹ Elizabeth Fraser, *Reality Rules II: A Guide to Teen Nonfiction Reading Interests* (Santa Barbara: Libraries Unlimited, 2009), 15.
crime novel becomes a best-seller, an author must often include particular details that are of fascination to the public. This may include: blood, sex, dismemberment, and often the eventual execution of the perpetrators.

Susan Weiner, discussing *In Cold Blood*, notes that true crime novels often rely on the sensationalism of crime and are often categorised by contradictory elements, notably where pictures of the victims are juxtaposed with grissly images of the crime photos. She also writes: “The compulsory photograph of the author, often placed at the end of the book, suggests ominously that the faceless reporter has somehow transformed himself into a celebrity.”[4] Capote was hardly faceless at the time of his own investigation and research, though *In Cold Blood* certainly propelled his fame to greater and more successful heights. Beforehand he might have been categorised as a famous author. Following the book’s publication, however, he made the significant transformation from fame to celebrity, a transformation which, as Daniel J. Boorstin argues, is something of a demotion. Boorstin, in his notable essay ‘From Hero to Celebrity: The Human Pseudo Event’ (1962), distinguishes between fame and celebrity, noting that in the twentieth century: “we seem to have discovered the process by which fame is manufactured”[5]. Written only a few years before the publication of *In Cold Blood*, Boorstin’s analysis of celebrity as ‘inferior’ to fame coincides with American culture’s growing fascination with true crime cases in the media and in literature, followed by *Helter Skelter* in 1974, and *The Executioner’s Song* in 1979.

**Criminal Celebrity**

2015 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *In Cold Blood*. In that time Capote has become regarded as both a celebrity and great literary author. Both his book and his persona are engrained in popular American culture, evidenced not only in the adaptations of his famous book and the 2005 biopic *Capote* (with the late Philip Seymour Hoffman in the title role), but Capote’s many appearances in the media that made him a star. David Gates once called Truman Capote ‘the Elvis Presley of American Letters’. Discussing the legacy of Capote’s celebrity, Ralph Voss writes that the well-travelled author would always return to New York City “because it was the centre of [Capote’s] celebrity-writer life.”[6]

On November 15, 1959, four members of the Clutter family of Holcomb, Kansas were found brutally murdered: the father and mother, Herb and Bonnie Clutter, and

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two of their four children, Kenyon and Nancy. After reading about the murders in a *New York Times* article, Capote travelled with his childhood friend and fellow writer Harper Lee to Kansas to interview the residents of Holcomb, the detectives investigating the case, and the accused murderers, Hickock and Smith. This research would make up his hugely popular work *In Cold Blood*, described as a ‘non-fiction novel’ which helped establish the genre of nonfiction literature. The book details the Clutter family’s life and status in Holcomb, the murders, the police hunt for the murderers, their capture, and their executions.

Before its publication, Capote was already an established writer, receiving critical acclaim for his novella *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* (1958). But it was his true crime novel that was to catapult him to a unique kind of fame, and although Capote was not awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his work, something which the author was particularly disappointed about, *In Cold Blood* was heralded as the definitive work of the true crime genre, with Capote himself considered a pioneer of the genre. Capote’s fame is therefore irretrievably linked to the horrifying murders of a well-respected family. Although it is not a rarity to achieve fame through death, Capote’s case is something of a remarkable case. Having always desired celebrity, Capote had finally achieved great fame and attention, and could boast of a celebrity status that, whether he liked it or not, would always be linked to death and murder.

His work was first serialised in *The New Yorker*, and became an instant sell-out, much to the surprise of the publishers themselves. The Clutter family became household names across the United States, though it was Capote’s name that continued to circulate throughout the media. A year after its publication, the adaptation *In Cold Blood* (1967) was released, and was nominated for four Academy Awards including Best Adapted Screenplay.

Following the book’s release, Capote was catapulted into literary fame. But it was a fame eternally tethered to crime and bloodshed. Tison Pugh writes that following the success of his book, “another facet of Capote’s celebrity persona emerged: that of public expert on crime, punishment, and the justice system.”

Pugh also notes that despite any actual credentials other than his famous novel, Capote was called upon as a witness before the US Senate in 1966, discussing the Supreme Court’s *Miranda v. Arizona* ruling, which grants criminals the right to a lawyer during interrogations, of which Capote opposed. Literary critic Harold Bloom similarly notes that Capote “was a natural celebrity from the moment he published his first book. *In Cold Blood* gave him the chance to instruct his countrymen on the depths of American disorder.”

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8 Ibid, 131.
In a similar manner to Capote, Bugliosi also served as a crime expert in many interviews and cases following *Helter Skelter*. In comparison to Capote, who had already established a ‘flamboyant’ celebrity status before the publication of his crime novel, Bugliosi was relatively unknown prior to his best-selling novel. A practicing attorney (which Capote was not), Scott Patrick Johnson explains that Bugliosi, was considered a charismatic man, and that he used his “colourful personality to convict defendants.” He was a successful prosecutor, and was, in fact, the inspiration behind two television movies and the television series *The D.A.*, for which he served as technical advisor. Johnson notes: “With the advent of the celebrity media in the 1990s, Bugliosi has appeared regularly as a legal commentator on various news programs to express his thoughts on high-profile cases.” The success of the crime author therefore extends beyond simple celebrity and acclaim, as the crime author becomes an authoritative figure in the process. Both Bugliosi and Capote were directly and intimately involved in the crime cases they reported on, giving them a greater air of authority. Bugliosi was Manson’s prosecutor, while Capote, as I will show, was also seen as something of a prosecutor for the Clutter family murderers.

**Capote and Ethical Journalism**

*In Cold Blood* took approximately eight years to write, during which time Capote wrote over 8,000 pages of notes. Capote wrote the book in the third-person, and yet many critics have noted a strong authorial voice within the work. As Rosalind Coward writes: “While Capote did not literally include himself in the text, the book has a strong personal voice. It is beautifully written and constructed and Capote’s voice can be heard in the distinctive, powerful individual style.” Yet Coward points out that Capote’s presence within the story is also “the elephant in the room, ethically speaking.” Capote’s presence, although authoritative, is undermined by the fact that many of the details in the novel are exaggerated or even fabricated. For instance, despite some writers who have previously discussed Capote witnessing Smith’s execution, a scene which not only features in the book but in *Capote*, the author, according to George Plimpton in a 1997 *New Yorker* article, did not actually attend Smith’s hanging, but ran out before Perry was executed.

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10 Voss, 95
12 Ibid., 470.
14 Ibid., 60.
Many other scenes that appear in the book are notably novelised or fabricated for greater emphasis and depth of character, including the personal thoughts of various people, and the final ‘graveyard conversation’ scene in the book’s conclusion, the reality of which, as Laura Miller writes, has been questioned by Capote’s critics. As Symonds notes, in these instances, “the author is never a neutral voice and, with his own narrative agenda and presence inevitably becomes a participant in the story, a character in the text, and subject to any fictionalisation undertaken.” Further, Susan Weiner argues: “As report becomes story through the imagination of the journalist turned novelist, the reader can only wonder if truth is really stranger than fiction. Or are they both the same?”

One of the most long-standing rumours regarding the novel regards Capote’s supposed affair with Smith, with whom he became very close, evidenced throughout the book which presents Smith’s story in a more detailed manner and sees Smith as the gentler of the two killers. Capote did not watch Smith’s hanging, but, as Plimpton argues, Capote was both happy to have a satisfying ending to his book and saddened by the events: “The execution of Hickock and Perry, while it helped Truman provide a spectacular conclusion to his book, was a traumatic experience for him.” Capote was said to have been ecstatic about the executions, providing a riveting ending for his book, but was also said to have cried for two days following the hanging. Capote is quoted as saying: ‘No one will ever know what In Cold Blood took out of me. It scraped me right down to the marrow of my bones. It nearly killed me. I think, in a way, it did kill me.’

Yet Capote purportedly had a heated argument with writer and theatre critic Kenneth Tynan, over Tynan’s review of the book in The Observer. Tynan argued that Capote did not try hard enough to save the murderers from execution, a point he emphasised due to the fact that it was these same murderers who guaranteed Capote fame and prestige. In his review he writes:

We are talking, in the long run, about responsibility; the debt that a writer arguably owes to those who provide him – down to the last autobiographical parentheses – with his subject matter and his livelihood... For the first time an influential writer of the front rank has

been placed in a position of privileged intimacy with criminals about to
die, and – in my view – done less than he might have to save them.20

The implication that Hickock and Smith’s deaths provided Capote with an
award-winning and financially secure ending provokes ideas about the responsibility of
the crime writer. In this case, Capote had secured a close relationship with the
murderers, who provided him with the necessary detail to pen a brutal account of
murder, the details of which secured for Capote his fame and literary reputation. It also
was financially beneficial. As Tynan continues: “In cold cash, it has been estimated that
In Cold Blood is likely to earn him between two and three million dollars […] It seems to
me that the blood in which his book is written is as cold as any in recent literature.”21
Composer Ned Rorem expressed similar sentiments in the Saturday Review of Literature,
saying: “Capote got his two million and his heroes got the rope.”22

Discussing Capote’s In Cold Blood and the ethics of jurors writing books, Sarah
Conde writes: “In an ethically dubious move, the author befriended one of the killers,
leading the killer to believe he was actually going to help him. Capote traded his
promised help for the killer’s story, in which he took an obsessive, and admittedly
mercenary, interest.”23 Browder, discussing the 2005 biopic Capote, similarly points out
the moral ambiguities surrounding the celebrity crime author. She writes that the film
Capote puts “something of an uncomfortable spotlight on the relationship between true
crime writers and the events and people they document”24, and that the film ‘focused
on the moral compromise at the heart of In Cold Blood.”25 She further notes:

Capote, too, found himself in a fraught position: his book could not
succeed without the death of the two killers – and to get his intimate
portrait of them, he had befriended them over the years. Indeed, the two
men believed (probably incorrectly) that Capote had the power to gain
them another stay of execution. Their last days, in which Capote dodged
their desperate telegrams and then declined to visit them on the day of
their execution, laid bare the essential falsity of their relationship.26

21 Ibid.
edited by Nickerson, Catherine Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 130.
23 Sarah Conde, ‘Capote in the Jury Box: Analyzing the Ethics of Jurors Writing Books’ (The
Georgetown Journal of Legal Ethics, 2006), 1
24 Ibid., 130
25 Ibid., 130
26 Ibid., 130
Symonds, too, notes that the film suggests that: “there were ruthless, sleazy, and egotistical motives at the core of Capote’s narrative requirement for a conviction and hanging to produce the aesthetic of his nonfiction novel.” Indeed, it appeared that the only suitable ending of the book was the execution of the two men, something that makes Capote’s investigation and involvement with the men immediately suspect and particularly controversial. Mary Welek Atwell speculates that had the book ended before or without the executions, “it would have left unresolved questions – whether the state is justified in taking lives with no consideration of the offenders’ mental state, without even knowing if any mitigating circumstances existed.”

Yet, Atwell notes that “Capote seemed compelled to send the reader off with a sense of the rightness of it all.” Atwell also discusses the infamous ending which, as Brian Conniff claims, is pure fiction, and “misleads by suggesting that the story’s meaning is found in the cemetery, rather than on the gallows.” Although, as Atwell explains, Smith’s defence lawyer felt that Capote felt genuine sympathy for the condemned men, in particular Smith, “to some critics, the writer’s exploitation of the condemned men for the purposes of his best-seller was obvious.”

Capote’s simultaneous sympathy for the condemned men and desire to publish a riveting crime novel complete with a satisfying, dramatic ending has famously put the author is a position where he has been at the mercy of his critics, who have picked apart his book to dissociate the facts from the fiction. As Laura Miller has explained, questions relating to the book’s authenticity (not just ethical issues) have dogged the author from the moment In Cold Blood was published. In 2013, more evidence came to light discrediting some details in Capote’s book, specifically regarding the length of time between a tip-off regarding the identity of the murderers and the subsequent investigation of this lead. The lead involved a prison inmate who overheard Hickcock discussing his plan to rob and murder the Clutters and any and all witnesses. Although Capote writes that head detective Alvin Dewey – the hero of the novel – followed up the tip immediately, new evidence that emerged in 2013 suggested that Dewey took longer to investigate the lead, given that the detective believed the murderer was a local who was known to the Clutters.

Laura Miller suggests that this might have been less a case of Capote deliberately covering up evidence, and more about protecting the man who had given him such intimate access to the police reports and investigators. She says:

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27 Symonds, The Aesthetics of Violence in Contemporary Media, 103
29 Ibid., 64
30 Ibid., 65
31 Ibid., 65
Chances are, if Capote fudged the account of how quickly the KBI acted after receiving that decisive tip, the author did it because he thought the detail didn’t matter much. Capote does portray Dewey as wedded to the (erroneous) idea that the Clutters were killed by someone they knew, but the writer might have decided — whether as a favour to a source who had done a lot for him or to make a better story — to downplay how much Dewey allowed that belief to shape his investigation.32

Miller further notes: “In the many recent controversies over falsehoods and exaggerations in nonfiction articles and books, it’s usually the author’s desire to tell a more conventionally satisfying story that gets the blame.”33 “A journalist who contradicts a major source’s version,” she elaborates, “risks being accused of betrayal and misrepresentation by someone who may have come to seem like a friend.”34

The issue of authenticity, which many critics have argued is increasingly less important in writing, is brought to a heightened level of significance in true crime cases when death and murder is involved. As Coward notes:

Authenticity, another issue which has become increasingly pressing as journalism deals with more intimate emotional issues, was also an issue in the reception of In Cold Blood […] Some critics thought he had possibly falsified, or at least been overly creative with, his reconstructed dialogues […] This representation of the other is always an issue within journalism. These are real people, not fictional characters and journalism promises factility and truthfulness about those encounters.35

Various people who were interviewed and appeared in the book later complained that their comments were taken out of context. More than any other book, In Cold Blood raised questions regarding the ethical issues regarding authenticity and responsibility in the true crime genre. Coward states that In Cold Blood was “one of the first works which threw up all those questions that have become increasingly pressing in intimate, professional journalism.”36

The writing of a crime novel often demands that the work be factual. But, more importantly, if an author’s literary reputation and star status depend on the selling of the work, authors may feel under pressure to elaborate – or change – aspects of factual events to enable the work a greater degree of commercial viability. In this sense a true

33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 Rosalind Coward, Speaking Personally: The Rise of Subjective and Confessional Journalism, 60
36 Ibid., 61
crime author’s celebrity often may have little to do with the facts. In his book *Writing and Responsibility* (2005), Carl Tighe writes:

> Responsibility is the crux of the issue of how a writer is placed in society, of what a writer’s function may be. Regardless of the faults of “the system”, if we are honest with ourselves we all know that we are responsible for the state of our own minds, our own families, and our own homes and workplaces, for the things we write and the opportunities we create. It is only by pressing home questions of responsibility, by insisting that writing, even when it is part of the entertainment industry, is also more than that, by attempting to clarify the issues—what sort of world-picture this writer presents; how this writer reveals the world to me; to whom and in what way this writer is answerable—that we might hope to have something useful to say about the role of writers.37

In this instance, the role of the writer is seen to contradict or conflict with the role of the celebrity, the latter of which is more often linked to spectacle and glamour. Ideals and conventional views of writers as bound by a degree of faithfulness and responsibility continue to dominate discourses of authorship, by which the writer is viewed through a Romantic-lens of authority, and even genius. These values are intensified in the field of crime writing, which demands greater faithfulness to the facts due to the victims of the crime, who remain speechless and insurmountably defenceless in the process. Yet the disparity between a fictionally enticing true crime novel and a dogmatically accurate one may determine the success of an author’s career and star status. Although discerning audiences may be aware of this when reading true crime books, the popularity of the genre suggests that the readers themselves may desire a degree of fiction and exaggeration for the purposes of entertainment.

**Conclusion**

More so than the celebrity author, the celebrity crime author is a deeply paradoxical, if not morally compromised, figure. That their fame depends on not only murder, but often the more severe and brutal crimes, tarnishes and diminishes the integrity of their fame by linking it with disconcerting elements without which no such fame would exist. Without a corpse, the crime author has no story and therefore cannot adequately gain any prestige for their accounts, and so their career somewhat depends on the brutality of crime to exist. This complicates the task of the crime author, and puts them in a contentious position in which the promise of fame is elevated with the

37 Carl Tighe, *Writing and Responsibility* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 155
severity of the crime, meaning that their celebrity is determined by particularly cold-blooded deaths. Capote’s fame is partly defined by the emotional strength of his novel, a novel which, as discussed, has been at the centre of an ongoing debate since its publication relating to its authenticity and legitimacy in reportage. Capote’s fame has also been feverishly discussed in proximity to his responsibility as a true crime author. The spectacle of celebrity culture is seen to discredit the grounds on which journalism and true crime writing functions. And yet the spectacle that is, as previously stated, automatically linked to crime enables the crime writer a degree of flexibility. The crime author is not only a journalist, nor are they purely a novelist. The mingling of fact and fiction in the genre of non-fiction narrative and true crime illustrates how the celebrity crime author is bound by two seemingly incompatible demands: the demand for entertainment, and the demand for accuracy. No other novel more than *In Cold Blood* reveals this dilemma more acutely, for Capote’s very reputation rested on the ethical dubiousness of gaining intimate details from the murderers, details which, as fortunate for Capote, were particularly ghastly and, therefore, particularly lucrative.

**Bibliography:**


Acts of Memory: 
Narratives of Trauma and 9/11 Politics in Michael Connelly’s City of Bones (2002)

Christopher J. Davies

Abstract

Michael Connelly’s 2002 crime novel, City of Bones, follows an investigation by LAPD Detective Harry Bosch into the unsolved murder of a 12 year old boy, registered missing in 1980. Bosch’s investigation to uncover the circumstances that led to the boy’s murder, and therein uncover the hidden identity of the killer, is transposed against ‘the struggle everyone had to find meaning after such a catastrophic event, literally witnessed first-hand through television’¹. An early entrant in what quickly blossomed into a rich tapestry of cultural material critically (and not so critically) engaged with the politics of 9/11 and the unfolding war on terror, City of Bones questions the extent to which an absolute truth can be arrived at in the narrativisation of a trauma by its immediate experiencers. Moreover, in a narrative of crime where the political imperatives of the LAPD consistently assert control over trauma’s narrativising – a consequence of which is an unfolding sequence of further traumatic deaths – City of Bones explores how the imperatives of a political hegemon may militate against trauma’s abatement by hijacking post-trauma narrativisation to create a record of trauma that confers legitimacy upon the recurrence of violence as the response to trauma.

Read within the post 9/11 context into which the novel emerged, my paper contends that City of Bones offers an allegorical microcosm of the Bush administration’s efforts to manage the narrativising of 9/11 into a position directly relational to the 9/11 attacks; a position from which revanchist counter-violence emerged as a legitimate response to the trauma of 9/11.

Keywords: 9/11, Post 9/11, terror war, trauma, mourning, ideology, City of Bones, Michael Connelly, Sigmund Freud, Pierre Janet, psychoanalysis, repetition compulsion, narrativising, crime, crime genre, neoconservative.

¹ Michael Connelly. 9/11, City of Bones, and Lost Light. Interview by author. E-Mail Correspondence, March 30th, 2014.

Christopher J. Davies

Trauma and Narrative

Michael Connelly’s 2002 crime novel, City of Bones, is approached in this article as an example of what Jeffrey Melnick calls ‘9/11 culture’, a ‘complex vein of American political and cultural expressive practices’ that have marshalled the known referential frames of popular culture (here crime fiction genre) to re-engage the link between individual experience, history, politics, and a traumatic, destabilising present. Connelly’s novel merges the conventions of crime genre narrative progression with psychoanalytical models of trauma, in a narrative of crime that telegraphs debates into the formation of the philosophical and political conditions under which the narrative of 9/11 trauma was being managed to support the waging of terror war.

Originally intended for an early 2002 publication, Connelly held City of Bones from publication until April 2002 in order to, as Connelly says, ‘infiltrate it with 9/11’, weaving the impact of an event that ‘touched every person in the country at least psychologically’ into the outlook of its characters, and therefore ensuring the novel’s relevancy for a post 9/11 audience. Emerging within the context of the invasion of Afghanistan which comprised the first phase of the overt military response to 9/11 under the auspices of the U.S. led ‘War on Terror’, City of Bones revolves around Detective Harry Bosch’s criminal investigation into the death of 12-year-old Arthur Delacroix, whose bones have been unearthed by a dog-walker in Laurel Canyon on New Year’s Day 2002, twenty-two years post-mortem. A series of violent and harrowing deaths, which traumatised the novel’s protagonists, follow in the wake of the discovery of the boy’s remains. The fallout from trauma consequently induces a series

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2 Jeffrey Melnick, 9/11 Culture: America under Construction. (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 1
3 Connelly, 9/11, City of Bones, and Lost Light.
4 Ibid.
5 In an interview with this author, Connelly explained that as his novels are set contemporaneously to the time of their publication he did not want to publish a novel set in 2002 that bore no mention or feeling of the changes that 9/11 induced. Moreover, Connelly explained that the literary response to 9/11 had lagged behind that of the crime genre, whose practitioners offered an immediacy of response that was more timely and had greater significance for healing and self-examination.
of repetitions of violence; a traumatic feedback loop which returns the characters to the founding incident of trauma, whilst compelling yet more trauma in its wake.

Psychoanalytic and historiographical theories of trauma, in the months after 9/11, quickly became an established paradigm through which 9/11 and the subsequent ‘war on terror’ received critical engagement. Trauma offered a theoretical framework not only for cultural critics and political commentators exploring the significance and ramifications of 9/11 as a moment in U.S. political and military history, but strands of criticism evaluating both 9/11’s representation and resonance in popular cultural across a range of media and genres, and the manner in which the narrative of 9/11 was being framed by the Bush administration in conjunction with a complicit media corpus to suit neconservative ideology that would ultimately find expression militarily in the war on terror.

One of the novel’s key traumatising incidents occurs approximately at the novel’s mid-point. In an underground car-park, during the apprehension of Johnny Stokes, a childhood friend of the dead child, Bosch’s lover and colleague, Julia Brasher, shoots herself in the shoulder in a botched attempt to frame Stokes and allow her to kill

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him in retaliation. The bullet however ricochets off the bone and into her heart, killing her. Subsequent contesting of the narrative of Brasher’s death is both evocative of what Connelly describes as ‘the struggle everyone had to find meaning after such a catastrophic event, literally witnessed first-hand through television’,

9 Connelly, 9/11, City of Bones, and Lost Light.

10 See Butler, Precarious Life.

11 For relevant discussion see:


13 Ibid: 242

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

simultaneously as the ‘cells are suffused with the active power of adrenalin, or coated with the anaesthetising numbness of noradrenalin’\textsuperscript{17}. The traumatic experience of the shooting constitutes for Bosch a signal event (or limit event), a point at which the ongoing narrative is breached, suspended by trauma, and a point at which the status quo of lived reality is overwhelmed.

A traumatic event, as Cathy Caruth notes, is one ‘experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the [...] repetitive action of the survivor’\textsuperscript{18}. Trauma’s primary experience then, is in effect the experience of 	extit{not} knowing at the moment of inception, which has instituted a psychical repression; a forgetting simultaneous to experiencing, which renders the experience of trauma as a gap in experience. Repression, in the Freudian conception, accounts for the manner in which normal processes of memory registration, creation, and recall are bypassed to instead register below the conscious level, embedding deep in the psyche and held in abeyance away from any direct and immediate referential processing\textsuperscript{19}. Withholding experience, repression is a means of ‘manage[ing] the unbounded psychic energy that comes from an external traumatic impact, expelling painful and unpleasurable memories and affects from the conscious system’\textsuperscript{20} leaving them inhabiting the subconscious as ‘an unforgettable if not always remembered reference-point’\textsuperscript{21}. In repression’s resistance to allowing the conscious mind access to the experience, the possibility for assimilating, processing and working through the experience, and therefore negating the trauma, is deferred.

In the aftermath of the shooting, as Bosch tries to explain the incident to Detective Gilmore of the Officer Involved Shooting division (OIS) of Internal Affairs, Bosch finds that ‘the images of what he had seen kept replaying in his mind’\textsuperscript{22} – a traumatic repetition returning the event to him in a fragmentary loop of those ‘fleeting images [...]’, disconnected, cacophonous\textsuperscript{23}. As Bosch’s experiences suggests, for the psyche, trauma is an event caught between two competing acts of memory existing in tension: ‘Repression’, and the repetition compulsion\textsuperscript{24}.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{18}Cathy Caruth. \textit{Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History}. (Baltimore, MD & London, UK: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 3-4.
\item \textsuperscript{19}For Freud’s explanations see: Sigmund Freud, \textit{Beyond the Pleasure Principle}, trans. C. J. M. Hubback. (London & Vienna: The international Psychoanalytical Press, 1922).
\item \textsuperscript{20}Luckhurst, \textit{The Trauma Question}, 48.
\item \textsuperscript{22}Connelly, \textit{City of Bones}, 260.
\item \textsuperscript{23}Culbertson, “Embodied Memory, Transcendence, and Telling”, 174
\item \textsuperscript{24}For Freud’s theorizing see: Sigmund Freud, \textit{Studies in Hysteria} – 1895, trans. A. A. Brill. (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1937); and Freud, \textit{Pleasure Principle}.
\end{itemize}
It is in the repetition compulsion – flashbacks, recurring dreams, anxieties and a host of associated symptoms – in which traumatic memory is later made available to the conscious mind. Fragmentary, disembodied shards of memory and experience return against the will of the subject, experienced anew in the present, as if the subject were back there in the past, as the trauma demands understanding and witness, compelling its remembering. A cycle of re-experiencing the trauma ensues, returning the debilitating anxiety of the experience, with no avenue of resolution as remembering and forgetting are locked in an impasse. It is these conflicting acts of memory, the ‘forgetting’ of repression in the moment of experience, and the ‘remembering’ of after the fact repetition, around which trauma’s registry and recall oscillates.

Bosch makes the supposition that she must have shot herself ‘because there was no one else there but her, me and Stokes. I didn’t shoot her and Stokes didn’t shoot her’\(^25\), but is unable to provide any actual memory evidence to support it. Questioned as to how Brasher could possibly shoot herself in the left shoulder holstering a gun on her right hip, Bosch concedes ‘I don’t know. […] I only know what I saw. I told you what I saw’\(^26\). Bosch cannot translate the reality, the truth of the experience, to language in a way that will reveal a definitive narrative, because the truth of the experience for Bosch was the experience of not knowing. The trauma experience of Brasher’s demise was the experience of uncertainty; of poor light, compromised senses, and sudden unexpected shocks, of which the visual evidence of a gun discharging, the hand that held it, and the circumstances of its discharge were withheld from its living witnesses by the experiential circumstances of its registry.

No certain rendition can be gleaned from Bosch’s testimony because he experienced nothing – no actual ‘thing’, it was missed at inception. For Bosch, the trauma of Brasher’s death conforms to Caruth’s notion of traumatic aporia, where ‘the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur in an absolute inability to know it’\(^27\), producing the paradoxical situation in which the speaking of the trauma coheres as a reinforcement of a conception of trauma as unspeakable, an event ‘grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence’\(^28\).

In Freudian psychotherapy, the discordance of the remembering and forgetting dynamic of post trauma registry and recall may be managed through narrativisation, in which traumatic memory is transformed into narrative memory. In narrativising the gap in memory attendant to trauma’s remembering and forgetting dynamic can be bridged, reconnecting the historical event of the trauma, with the loss to conscious

\(^{25}\) Connelly, City of Bones, 258.

\(^{26}\) Ibid.

\(^{27}\) Caruth, Unclaimed Experience, 91-92.

thought of the experience, and a present condition of existence post trauma; making the unknowable known and holistically integrating the trauma into an ongoing lived narrative shorn of returns to the violence of trauma. However, absolute truth arrived at through narrative is not a foregone conclusion, Freud acknowledging that as ‘there are no indications of reality in the unconscious, […] one cannot distinguish between truth and fiction that has been cathected with affect’ 29. Moreover, narrativising in an attempt to bridge the gap in memory attendant to trauma is vulnerable to suggestive direction – direct or indirect, from within and from without – as the narrativising process is so firmly grounded in the post. Reliant on after the fact editorialising on behalf of the traumatised, traumatic memories are left open to dislocation and reconfiguration, in which reality and fantasy may be blended together to form a hybrid traumatised reality 30 31.

The trauma event of Brasher’s death, in its paradoxical cacophony of sensory impacts, at the heart of which is an event that in its experiencing eludes direct experience and becomes ‘no thing’ to which one can speak, has the effect of making the narrative of Brasher’s death one of multiple, fragmented narratives, founded on suppositions of what the sum of the memories available could add up to. Over the course of the OIS interview, as Gilmore finds the gaps in Bosch’s narrative, four different narratives are proffered, ‘collaps[ing] distinctions between knowledge, rumour and speculation’ 32: Brasher was disarmed and shot by Stokes; Brasher shot herself in a struggle with Stokes for control of her weapon; Brasher discharged her gun accidentally as she re-holstered it; and Brasher shot herself on purpose. This heterogeneity of narrative testifies to the manner in which trauma ‘issues a challenge to the capacities of narrative knowledge’ 33, and which trauma ‘In its shock impact […] is

29 Freud, Studies in Hysteria, 264.

30 See discussion in:
Pierre Janet, The Mental State of Hystericals: A Study of Mental Stigmata and Mental Accidents, trans. Eugene Rollin Corson (New York: Putnam, 1915); and

31 The potential for the obscurement of truth through outside influence and environmental factors during the recall of traumatic memories, and their translation into narrative, is perhaps best highlighted in Pierre Janet’s use of hypnotherapy in treating traumatic neuroses. Whilst Freud abandoned hypnosis for the very reason of wanting to limit (if not eliminate) the possibility of therapist/outside manipulation (direct or indirect) on patient narrativising, Janet’s approach to trauma resolution relied on specific interjection of, and by, the psychotherapist. Resolution was to be attained through inducing hypnosis, placing the patient in a suggestive state, and from there assisting the traumatised in a narrativising of trauma that sought less to bring to the surface the traumatic memory in order to come to terms with it and work it through, than to erase its very existence. Janet’s treatment involved narrativising to transform traumatic memory into narrative memory, but it was the manipulation of memories to create false narrative, recalling certain specific details accurately but obfuscating others until traumatic memory was replaced with a less shocking or painful version of the truth.

32 Luckhurst, The Trauma Question, 79.

33 Ibid.
anti-narrative, [yet] […] also generates the manic production of retrospective narratives that seek to explicate the trauma’34.

Ideology and the Hijacking of Trauma Narrative

As the interview progresses, Gilmore turns the conversation to a critical examination of the narratives Bosch has offered against Bosch’s individual circumstances at the time of the shooting. Querying how reliable Bosch’s vision could be in a dark garage just minutes after being blinded by cleaning fluid, Bosch’s previous claim to “Only know what I saw”35 is implicitly presented as a claim to have seen nothing, and therefore to be unable to “know” anything, as Bosch’s previous statements make “seeing” and “knowing” dependent upon each other. Under the weight of Bosch’s undeniably compromised physical condition, and having already planted the seed that an accidental shooting during a re-holstering of Brasher’s gun doesn’t match the physical evidence, the potential for the gun discharging during a struggle for control of the weapon (Bosch simply unable to discern the fine detail) has gained credence.

As the details are hashed over, Gilmore attempts to lead Bosch into acknowledging the possibility that Brasher’s death resulted from a struggle for control of her gun by attaching this possible confrontation to the list of things Bosch missed through his compromised vision: “So you’re saying you didn’t see the struggle for control of Brasher’s gun before the shot occurred.”36. The lack of credible recollection to prove this didn’t happen conversely functions to bolster the viability of this version of the narrative. Implicit in Gilmore’s statement is the suggestion that just because Bosch did not see a struggle for the gun, it does not mean that one did not take place. Questioning the reliability of all other scenarios depicted has closed down Bosch’s heterogeneous trauma narrative. The result is a monoglossia derived from a heteroglossia, in the mode of neoconservative attempts to straight jacket the narrativising of 9/11 into simple binaries of good and evil, East and West, upon which longstanding neocon targets for American unilateralism could be appended as notional co-conspirators37. The struggle for the gun is effectively City of Bones’ prescient allegory of the contest over Iraq’s chemical weapons capabilities, both before and after 9/11, as neocon hawks sought reasons to unilaterally engage Saddam Hussein; just because it’s not seen and no evidence is immediately apparent, doesn't mean it isn't there.

34 Ibid.
35 Connelly, City of Bones, 260.
36 Ibid: 262.
37 For relevant analysis see: Finnegan, No Questions Asked, 2007.
The back and forth between Bosch and Gilmore, with Bosch’s narrative credibility slowly being chipped away and made subservient to Gilmore’s account, illustrates the manner in which the narrative / anti-narrative dynamic of trauma provides the conditions in which an ideology may ape trauma’s narrative confounding characteristics to assert an anti-narrative force. Ideology, in its conformity to a rigid set of principles or viewpoints (to the detriment of all others) echoes the description of trauma’s effect on the psyche of inducing a ‘narrowing of the field of consciousness’ around a fixed idea. This narrowing motivates the production of an exclusive narrative practice, closing out narrative avenues and contextual details which do not conform to the fixed ideas of the ideological frame. As Connelly concludes:

> It was important for […] the department to conclude that Brasher was shot during a struggle for control of her gun. It was heroic that way. And it was something the department public relations team could take advantage of and run with. There was nothing like the shooting of a good cop – a female rookie, no less – in the line of duty to help remind the public of all that was good and noble about their police department and all that was dangerous about the Police Officer’s duty.

The narrativising of Brasher’s death has seen ideology stand in for trauma. Ideology takes over, exploiting trauma’s production of gaps in memory that confound narrativising by stepping into those gaps, and expanding the narrative to form a bridge; a masquerade of truth. This faux bridging by necessity maintains and bolsters those gaps, in an attempt to instil selective forgetting in the face of trauma’s command to remember; a command that manifested in that initial multiplicity of narrative. Forgotten is the uncomfortable, politically troubling version of Brasher's death, and remembered, and indeed intended to be returned to, is the version that establishes Brasher as the victim of a dangerous fight against those that would wield extremes of violence.

Within the fictive post 9/11 of the novel, LAPD press releases, graveside speeches, and newspaper obituaries for Brasher would, under the scenario described, channel the Bush administration’s concerted mobilisation of the image and occasion of wounding to marshal public sentiment at the horror of the 9/11 attacks. Where Bush called for Americans to ‘not forget this wound to our country’, issuing reminders that ‘in the ruins of two towers, at the western wall of the Pentagon, on a field in

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39 Connelly, *City of Bones*, 263-264.
Pennsylvania, this nation made a pledge41, in order that America’s 9/11 wounds were foremost in the public imaginary whenever the administration attempted to establish a moral argument for terror war activity and policy, so in City of Bones functions the senseless death of a rookie female cop. Brasher’s death then is City of Bones’ 9/11 moment; offering the LAPD (standing in for neocon hawks) the tantalising possibility of a reference point for the scourge of contemporary crime, available for repeated application as an emotional fulcrum from which to leverage public and political support for violent and uncompromising prosecution of crime.

During Gilmore’s interrogation Bosch recalls ‘Brasher’s questioning him a few nights earlier about a scar on his left shoulder. About being shot and what it had felt like’42. With a gunshot wound the mirror of his own, the possibility that Brasher inflicted the wound upon herself in a combination of criminal activity and thrill seeking belatedly dawns on Bosch during the interview, and is bolstered later as Bosch ruminates on Brasher’s emotional damage from a prior love affair and the mementos around her home that testified to a life pursuing danger, including swimming with sharks and visiting live volcanoes.

An uncensored narrative in which Brasher deceitfully engineers a thrill-seeking scenario through which to justify an unlawful killing, invests the trauma of Brasher’s death with the potential to destabilise existing ideological assumptions the LAPD holds and projects internally and externally; both in terms of the morality of its officers, and the ethicality of their conduct (and by extension the ethicality of the LAPD as a whole). Just as the post 9/11 ‘military-media complex’43 was engaged in the ‘pervasive communication […] that danger and risk are central features of everyday life’ after 9/1144, the crux of Gilmore’s interview with Bosch has been to establish for LAPD Public Relations a narrative of Brasher as an undisputed victim of an everyday ‘War on Crime’ that the LAPD’s officers are invested in, and from which they keep the citizenry safe at great personal cost to themselves. By extension, any action Brasher may have taken would be presented as performed in the execution of her duty to protect the citizenry and bring criminals to justice.

The establishment of Brasher within the narrative of crime solely as a victim works to suppress consideration of how that pre-trauma context of her life may have provided the impetus for her death. Instead, the locus of culpability remains trained on the spectre of inexplicable criminality. The avoidance of inconvenient or uncomfortable truths about the potential for hidden criminality in LAPD officers is the most politically beneficial aspect of the constraining of Brasher’s narrative; it absolves the LAPD’s pre-

42 Connelly, City of Bones, 260.
43 Altheide, “Fear, Terrorism”, 16.
44 Ibid: 11.
recruitment psychiatric screening processes of any culpability in Brasher’s demise, and in turn prevents any associated scrutiny that Brasher may not be an isolated case. It is this thread that most overtly channels the critiques of narratives of 9/11 that fostered and maintained the myth that, as Douglas Kellner notes, pre-9/11 geopolitical contexts are irrelevant to the post 9/11 narrative, contributing to an ‘impoverished understanding of the historical context of terrorism and war’\(^{45}\). The closing-off of Brasher’s pre-trauma personal history from consideration within the narrative of her death functions in a manner akin to the ‘stif[ling of] any serious public discussion of how US foreign policy has helped to create a world in which such acts of terror are possible’\(^{46}\). As Fritz Breithaupt notes, ‘Once one manages to position oneself as a “trauma” victim, one seems absolved from any possible involvement’\(^{47}\) and the battle for narrative hegemony is already half won.

With the questions about Brasher’s capacity for criminality clearly existing in Bosch’s mind, the fact that Bosch failed to voice them when interviewed by Gilmore, and that the LAPD feels the need not merely to leave them unanswered, but altogether unspoken, not only conveys the potential and power of traumatic events (certainly within the context of this novel) to destabilise ideological assumptions – here about the morality and ethicality of the LAPD’s member officers and management – but also the force with which ideology may exploit the conditions of trauma in order to rework, smooth out, and head-off any challenges to the hegemony of those assumptions. Under the twin onslaught of the gaps in memory attendant to trauma’s modes of registry and recall, and the exploitation of those gaps by ideological imperatives to ratify a particular version of trauma narrative, truth in narrative becomes ‘bound up within its crisis of truth’\(^{48}\).

Moreover, the attempts by Gillmore to manipulate the narrative of Brasher’s death to paint her solely as a dedicated challenger of society’s aggressors, ruthlessly cut down, carries a coding about what counts as acceptable violence that has a particularly post 9/11 relevance. Judith Butler describes how an alliance between government interests and certain facets of the media – what David Altheide refers to as the ‘military-media complex’\(^{49}\) – had established a consensus on what terms like terrorism would mean after 9/11. Violence named as terrorism was clearly distinguished from violence that might be sanctioned by the state through the declaration of war, by that very act of naming. In such scenarios, Butler tells us, a particular understanding of what constitutes justifiable violence emerges as a component part of the narrative frame, as it

\(^{45}\) Kellner, *From 9/11*, 69.
\(^{47}\) Breithaupt, “Rituals of Trauma”, 70.
\(^{49}\) Altheide, “Fear, Terrorism”, 16.
did with neocon narrativising of 9/11 and terror war\textsuperscript{50}. In the LAPD’s construction of Brasher the victim-cop, the emotional and philosophical ground is laid for the continuance of violence in the prosecution of criminals, and the veneration of those who would discharge the mandate of the state.

Within the novel this ultimately results in the apparent execution of Johnny Stokes by Brasher’s partner, Edgewood, who takes advantage of a scene of sensory confusion, similar to that in which Brasher died, to engage Stokes in a gunfight. Who fired first is a question left unresolved, but when the smoke clears the manner in which Stokes’ body is presented has the distinct feel of staging to ensure he fits the template of legitimate threat; hands out front, one holding a gun. In his deceased state, ‘covered with his own blood, entry wounds on his chest and right below his left eye’\textsuperscript{51} and surrounded by the reek of burnt cordite, Stokes is arguably an even more ghoulish portrait of criminal alterity than Brasher’s original attempt at framing him could ever have created; Stokes’ bullet-ridden visage finding an easy reference in the demonic portraits Bush administration rhetoric would paint of Taliban and Al-Qaeda fighters\textsuperscript{52}. Importantly, Stokes now ably fulfils the role of aggressor that Brasher had attempted to fabricate. Having successfully completed the frame-up and retaliatory killing of Stokes that Brasher was attempting when she shot herself, Edgewood has bolstered the hegemony of a narrative of justifiable violence when it is directed against individuals the state names as aggressors.

Brasher’s death is ultimately declared an accident during the re-holstering of her weapon. Bosch’s insistence that Stokes didn’t kill Brasher is conceded, but the version of her death that will reach the public will be a fabrication. With the internal investigation suspended Bosch finds himself reluctantly complicit in what amounts to an act of collective repression; directed by the state, the full breadth of trauma’s narrative will be withheld not only from trauma’s direct participants, but the wider public. Moreover, in the curtailing of his narrative, Bosch experiences a repetition of the psychical effects of the trauma experience as his voice is figuratively dissolved once again, curtailing the efforts to reclaim the voice that the trauma experience silenced by taking away his immediate access to the experience as it happened.

\textsuperscript{50} See discussion in: Butler, \textit{Precarious Life}.
\textsuperscript{51} Connelly, \textit{City of Bones}, 398.
\textsuperscript{52} For salient examples and discussion see: George, W. Bush, "Address to the Nation - Washington, DC, September 20, 2001,” http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/speeches/09.20.01.html (Accessed April 17th 2012.);
Failure of Narrative and Resistance in Failure

Presenting Bosch fully aware of his subordinate position to a narrative hegemony foisted upon him by agents of the state, that awareness may be read as a deliberate prompt from Connelly to reconsider the extent to which a post 9/11 audience may themselves have become subordinate to control on the parameters of the nation’s trauma narrative by a White House-Media alliance. Furthermore, emphasis on the character’s awareness of the source of (and rationale behind) their manipulation, invites the reader to consider the extent to which, given over to such control, they may be unwittingly complicit in the realisation and dissemination of those particular identifiers for post 9/11 America – ‘freedom, civilisation, innocence, resolve, victimhood, unity, and the pursuit of justice via legitimate war’ – that were being conveyed ‘in the dominant media frame’.

Despite these failures to achieve an inclusive narrativisation of trauma, *City of Bones* offers a resistance to the narrative hegemony that defeats its protagonist, and by extension proffers a means of resistance to narrative hegemony exerted by war on terror ideology for the immediate post 9/11 audience who received the novel upon its publication. With Stokes’ death signalling the abrupt closure of the Delacroix case, and having been informed he is to be transferred to another department, Bosch begins packing up his desk. Bosch is halted in his packing by recognition of an unsettling duality that comes with carrying the LAPD badge: “He had always known that he would be lost without his job and his badge and his mission. In that moment he came to realise he could be just as lost with it all. In fact, he could be lost because of it”.

In continuing to wear the badge of the LAPD, Bosch is complicit in the narrative hegemony cranked out by the LAPD PR machine. In the fictive world of the novel, it is the hegemony of the LAPD PR machine that bearing the badge makes Bosch complicit with; a realisation that prompts Bosch to retire rather than transfer to another department. In the real-world of the novel’s publication it is the hegemony of neoconservative narrativising of 9/11 and terror war under the ‘military-media complex’.

Asking the desk-sergeant to call him a cab, Bosch exits the building before the desk-sergeant can finish replying: ‘You might want to wait in.” With the abrupt termination of a voice, *City of Bones* returns, trauma-like, to Brasher’s death; the prose replicating the abrupt loss of voice as the oxygen mask clamped down over her mouth, which had foreshadowed Bosch’s own muzzling. Rather than signifying a loss of voice,

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54 Ibid.
55 Connelly, *City of Bones*, 408.
56 Altheide, “Fear, Terrorism”, 16.
57 Connelly, *City of Bones*, 409.
and therefore the triumph of narrative failure, it may be considered the discharging of a specific speech act on the part of Bosch. ‘The door closed, cutting off the cop’s voice’\textsuperscript{58} signals Bosch, an agent of the state, disaffiliating himself from the voice of that state; a stripping away of the confines that the neocon-esque narrative machinations of the LAPD would confer upon Bosch.

There is a contempt in Bosch’s dismissal of the cop’s voice, suggesting the voice which the LAPD will allow to be heard has become so compromised in detail and integrity that it is no longer worth hearing. Instead, the novel suggests all that would be heard would be another act of memory issuing a command to forget in order to meet political imperatives favouring narrative’s frustration. The badge, the signifier of the authority to both speak and be heard in the official record, for Bosch, is now ‘the thing that drew the shroud of futility around him’\textsuperscript{59}. Relinquishing the badge, the symbol of his ability to speak “officially”, serves as a rejection of the capacity of the LAPD to speak \textit{for} him. It is an assertive counter ‘movement from passivity to mastery’\textsuperscript{60} over the inciting trauma which provoked narrativisation and, and the force of political interest that would pervert those processes for their own imperatives. To withdraw one’s voice from the narrative hegemony, transforms silence into a speech act in and of itself. If the LAPD cannot speak for Bosch, and he no longer has to fill his mouth with the words assigned by those with the power to grant him the ability to speak, via the badge, Bosch has regained authority over his own voice. Ceding to anti-narrative by relinquishing the “official voice” of the badge is the only way in which, conceptually, the other narratives attendant to the trauma of Brasher’s death can continue to exist, as Bosch is free to openly carry them with him.

The contempt for any continuance of the voice of the state by Bosch is mirrored in the novel’s abrupt ending just four lines later with Bosch standing under a moonless sky, isolated and alone. The abrupt end, as the reader accompanies the character with whom they have been encouraged to align out into the dark away from the agents of the state, confers a sense of the novel figuratively “shrugging off” the constraints state agencies would impose upon narrative after 9/11. It is as if the novel must set itself apart from the confines of trauma narrativising that neocons were imparting on the post 9/11 arena the novel was to be received into, re-affirming the political subversions of Connelly’s prose. In this way, \textit{City of Bones} suggests to a post 9/11 audience, that silence, reformulated into a speech act becomes one means of ‘opposing the single-mindedness of ideology and ideologically inspired terror’\textsuperscript{61} that had become prevalent in 9/11 discourse.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid: 408.
\textsuperscript{61} Versluys, \textit{Out of the Blue}, 3.
City of Bones perhaps ultimately tells us then, that presented with a trauma as grand and seismic as 9/11, that ‘reorients the culture and marks it in its deepest substratum’\(^{62}\), the only way in which we stand a chance of mastering the trauma, in a manner which avoids melancholic dead-ends which allow for trauma to be ideologically appropriated by war-mongers is, as Nancy K. Miller said in relation to the New York Times Portraits of Grief, to ‘accede to the big through the little’\(^{63}\). If ‘the only way to bring it to language is to think small, cutting it down to size’\(^{64}\), withdrawing the voice from the hegemonic chorus is a way to bring trauma to the small-scale personal level. Placed thusly into an arena where some element of personal control can be exercised, we may occupy a position from which we may more adequately ‘insist upon the re-opening of that space of vulnerability and inter-dependency, against the cowboy mentality of the American republican imaginary’\(^{65}\) that drives the war on terror’s cycles of ever reciprocating violence in response to 9/11.

In the end, City of Bones tells us that resistance is available to war on terror narrativising of 9/11 trauma, but that it faces opposition which may be too much to overcome. And in the instances where it is overcome, that the victories are fleeting and small-scale, and likely requiring sacrifice (personally and professionally) on the part of its proponents. Resistance to the assertion of narrative heterogeneity is therefore still possible, if only on the small scale, personal level, of individual acts of disaffiliation from the hegemonic chorus, as exercised by Bosch in discarding the policeman’s badge.

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Crime on the Threshold:  
A Geocritical Analysis of Roald Dahl’s “The Way Up to Heaven”

İ. Murat Öner

Abstract

Roald Dahl’s “The Way Up to Heaven” is categorized as a crime story, and the narrative structure of this short story is skillfully uncomplicated. Dahl presents the characters, setting, conflict, and resolution quite smoothly. Yet, this narrative is not as simple as it seems, for “this is not the age of simplicity” as Westphal states. Far from being a simple narrative, the story is constructed upon a highly complicated spatiality. Hence, this paper suggests an alternative analysis of “The Way Up to Heaven” as a crime narrative. Considering the nature of the crime depicted in the story, spatial reading of “The Way Up to Heaven” may enhance diverse interdisciplinary approaches towards criminality in fiction. Contrasting Dahl’s more macabre stories like “Lamb to the Slaughter” or “Man from the South,” the crime described in “The Way Up to Heaven” is curiously vague, if not slightly amusing. To evaluate the nature of this particular crime on a spatial plane, this paper utilizes the geocritical concept of transgressivity, and it also analyzes spaces in a linear order together with the narrative which offers multiple strata. Each stratum in the story contains an unseen power relation with the bodies in space; in de Certeau’s language, “The Way Up to Heaven” also creates a spatial trajectory “[b]y means of a whole panoply of codes, ordered ways of proceeding and constraints.” In the narrative, Mrs Foster’s fluctuating movement through real-and-imagined geographies is juxtaposed with her mental transgression across multiple spheres varying from sanity to madness, and from initial submissiveness to ultimate resistance towards state apparatus. The crime in the story is a form of transgression which occurs on the threshold, hence, crime on the threshold.

Keywords: Crime, Roald Dahl, The Way Up to Heaven, literary spatiality, geocriticism, transgressivity, threshold, epiphanic threshold, mental liminality, state apparatus.
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Roald Dahl’s “The Way Up to Heaven” is categorized as a crime story, and the narrative structure of this short story is skillfully uncomplicated. Dahl presents the characters, setting, conflict, and resolution quite smoothly. Yet, this narrative is not as simple as it seems, for “this is not the age of simplicity” as Westphal states.¹ Far from being a simple narrative, the story is constructed upon a highly complicated spatiality. Hence, this paper suggests an alternative analysis of “The Way Up to Heaven” as a crime narrative. Considering the nature of the crime depicted in the story, spatial reading of “The Way Up to Heaven” may enhance diverse interdisciplinary approaches towards criminality in fiction. Contrasting Dahl’s more macabre stories like “Lamb to the Slaughter” or “Man from the South,” the crime described in “The Way Up to Heaven” is curiously vague, if not slightly amusing. To evaluate the nature of this particular crime on a spatial plane, this paper utilizes the geocritical concept of transgressivity, and it also analyzes spaces in a linear order together with the narrative which offers multiple strata. Each stratum in the story contains an unseen power relation with the bodies in space; in de Certeau’s language, “The Way Up to Heaven” also creates a spatial trajectory “[b]y means of a whole panoply of codes, ordered ways of proceeding and constraints.”² In the narrative, Mrs Foster’s fluctuating movement through real-and-imagined geographies is juxtaposed with her mental transgression across multiple spheres varying from sanity to madness, and from initial submissiveness to ultimate resistance towards state apparatus.

“The Way Up to Heaven” starts with the description of Mrs Foster’s frantic obsession with “missing a train, a plane, a boat, or even a theatre curtain.”³ This neurosis keeps her on the threshold between sanity and insanity, and this liminal sphere is marked by a twitch – “just a tiny vellicating muscle in the corner of her left eye, like a secret wink.”⁴ As Turner suggests, a passage into the liminal is always

⁴ Ibid., 42.
defined by a symbol. The theory of the liminal was initiated by Arnold van Gennep’s *The Rites of Passage* (1909), where he suggests that “a man’s life [is characterized] by a succession of stages with similar ends and beginnings,” and each social passage contains three stages: preliminal rites, liminal rites, and postliminal rites. Turner describes the liminal rite as “interstructural situation.” Szakolczai, after pointing to van Gennep and Turner’s description of the first stage of a passage as a metaphorical death, refers to the liminal stage as “a genuine Alice-in-Wonderland experience,” and the threshold, Szakolczai states, is “a situation where almost anything can happen, [as] once previous certainties are removed and one enters a delicate, uncertain, malleable state; something might happen to one that alters the very core of one’s being;” and the ultimate sphere, he states, is a new birth in which an individual gains a new experience of life.

The concept of threshold can be utilized to analyze criminality in fiction on a wider scope, as suggested in this work. On a spatiotemporal stratum, any spatial or temporal movement creates two well-defined states, and a liminal zone emerges between these two states; similarly, on a mental level, two different understandings or realizations can be scrutinized as two different spheres with a threshold, or ‘an epiphanic threshold’ as proposed in this study. Crime and criminality in general, and specifically in fiction, can be examined in a similar way; a crime as a threshold – or a line of flight as we may also call it, stands between pre-crime and post-crime states, which are two well-defined zones. This can be best exemplified with the case of Rodion Raskolnikov in Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* (1866). The particular crime in *Crime and Punishment* is located on the threshold of two distinct zones. Crime creates a spatiotemporal transgression across various borders. As Westphal states, the word *transgress* has spatial foundation: “[…] one transgressed when passing to the other side of a boundary or river, or when moving from one argument to another. Something that exceeded its measure also transgressed.” Crime fiction also recounts a border-crossing movement. Any spatiotemporal movement is a journey; hence any crime narrative is
also “a travel story – a spatial practice” in de Certeau’s language. The crime in “The Way Up to Heaven” is a form of transgression and a line of flight which also occurs on the doorsill of six-storey house on East Sixty-second Street, that is, on a physical threshold.

In the narrative, Mrs Foster’s mental in-betweenness coincides with the physical bodies of in-between spaces, “the elevator” and “the hall.” Mrs Foster enters this psychological in-between zone using the elevator, and waits for her husband’s appearance in the hall, “flutter[ing] and fidget[ing] about from room to room until her husband, who must have been well aware of her state, finally emerged from his privacy and suggested in a cool dry voice that perhaps they had better get going now, had they not?” Mrs Foster’s movement from room to room as a symbol signifies her liminal state, and moreover, her search for a smooth space. Mr Foster’s unperturbed and prompt emergence from his seclusion insinuates a deliberate tone in his attitude to keep Mrs Foster in this liminal state, even though Dahl initially leaves this part of their relationship indistinct, as the concept of threshold always creates a curious indistinctiveness and ambiguity. Yet, Dahl makes it clear that Mr Foster has created a controlled space where “[Mrs Foster] would never dare to call out and tell him to hurry, [since Mr Foster] had disciplined her too well for that.” A controlled space always necessitates limes where one seeks a line of flight. The concept of controlled and policed-space can also be named “state apparatus” (following Deleuze and Guattari). Westphal indicates that, unlike limen (or threshold) where one may expect free flow and crossing, limes (border) suggests control and closure. Therefore, Mr Foster controls the limes and thwarts Mrs Foster’s sliding into a total hysteria by just keeping her controlled in the liminal: “He must also have known that if he was prepared to wait even beyond the last moment of safety, he could drive her nearly into hysterics.” Threshold as a spatial concept stands between two distinct states, and, as Mukherji postulates, threshold offers a compelling and resonant hold for creative artists and writers, and she attributes this force to the tentativeness and ambiguity of this concept. Mrs Foster’s mental fluctuation creates continuous transgressions across physical and psychological thresholds; therefore, this concept is multifold in “The Way Up to Heaven.”

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13 Ibid., 42.
Westphal’s theory, transgressions accompany “movement and motive.” Mrs Foster’s transgressive movement also implies metamorphic border-crossings; whilst Mrs Foster crosses from one state to the other, she also transforms herself. On the day of her journey, Mrs Foster’s enthusiasm and vigilance to visit her daughter and grandchildren who live in Paris signifies her search for a (deterritorializing) line of flight from Mr Foster’s control mechanism.

Geocritical transgressivity underlines that homogeneous (or striated) spaces have lines of flight which enable movements of all sorts. “Lines of flight” in Deleuzoguattarian philosophy are thresholds or passageways between assemblages; Bonta and Protevi define them as “the primary constituents of all assemblages, all bodies, all spaces, plugged by machines of enslavement and order but unplugged by forces of desire and smoothing.” As one traverses from one assemblage to another, s/he uses lines of flight, or thresholds. Mr Foster’s controlled space, or state apparatus functions as a machine of enslavement, and Mrs Foster as a slave of this machine desires smoothing movements. Homogeneous (or striated) spaces are “limited and limiting [and] oriented in relation to one another, divisible by boundaries, and can interlink; what is limiting (limes or wall, and no longer boundary) is this aggregate in relation to the smooth spaces it “contains,” whose growth it slows or prevents, and which it restricts or places outside.”

Mr and Mrs Foster live in a large six-storey house on East Sixty-second Street in New York City with their four servants. The house is a gloomy place with few visitors; this place in fact contains many spaces which are referred as “the hall,” “the room,” “the elevator,” and “the study.” What makes them spaces rather than places is their reference to the bodies within. These spaces also provide Mrs Foster with physical and mental mobility, which makes them non-places at the same time in Auge’s postulation. Tuan identifies space with movement whereas place with pause, and, in Cresswell’s suggestion, a space turns into a place through naming. Auge considers “spaces” as “unnamed or hard-to-name places.” In “The Way Up to Heaven,” the only named location is the airport: the Idlewild Airport. The airport in the narrative suggests an

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21 Yi-Fu Tuan, Space and Place-The Perspective of Experience. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 6.
ultimate border-crossing zone and a threshold leading into a smooth space for Mrs Foster, hence, it is given a name “Idlewild,” which is a (non)place for her, while her own living space is referred as “a large six-storey house in New York City, on East Sixty-second Street.”

The creation of this lived-space along with Mr Foster’s (in)deliberate controlling indicates a striation within the body of this house, and Mrs Foster’s intended (smoothing and) transgressive movement brings momentary changes in the fabric of this space:

On this particular morning in January, the house had come alive and there was a great deal of bustling about. One maid was distributing bundles of dust sheets to every room, while another was draping them over the furniture. The butler was bringing down suitcases and putting them in the hall. The cook kept popping up from the kitchen to have a word with the butler, and Mrs Foster herself, in an old-fashioned fur coat and with a black hat on the top of her head, was flying from room to room and pretending to supervise these operations.

On her departure day, Mr Foster does not come out from his study as usual, which once again puts Mrs Foster into her typical emotional distress. She thinks to herself that this is “the one plane she must not miss,” for it has taken her some months to persuade him to let her visit their daughter and grandchildren in Paris. In the quotation, “the one plane” provides her with a certain degree of smoothing, hence emphasized. However, the real problem is that he wants to see her off at the airport. Mrs Foster is depicted as a woman who is loyal, well-intentioned, yet, submissive. She is so devoted to her husband that she feels unfaithful even when she thinks of living near her grandchildren while her husband is still alive. As he comes out, not one minute early or late, saying “[they]’d better get going fairly soon if [she] want[s] to catch that plane,” moving slowly, and inspecting the sky, and commenting: “It looks a bit foggy, [and] it’s always worse out there at the airport. I shouldn’t be surprised if the flight’s cancelled already,” to (un)intentionally intensify his wife’s already agitated state of mind, who is by now in the car waiting and twitching. For Mr Foster knows the limes of his wife’s endurance, he checks her emotions to keep her exactly between the spheres of sanity and insanity.

Dahl reveals more about Mr Foster’s controlling mechanism and the striation he has created. On the way to the airport, they use a hired Cadillac, and the contained space of this automobile epitomizes the policed-space he erects; the reader learns that

25 Ibid., 43.
26 Ibid., 44.
27 Ibid., 45.
Mr Foster’s state apparatus not only involves Mrs Foster, but also all the other bodies in his striated space: “I arranged everything with the servants […]. They’re all going off today. I gave them half-pay for six weeks and told Walker I’d send him a telegram when we wanted them back […]. I’ll move into the club tonight. It’ll be a nice change staying at the club.”28 When Mrs Foster meekly asks if Walter should stay in the house just in case, he responds quite sharply: “Nonsense. It’s quite unnecessary. And anyway, I’d have to pay him full wages […]. What’s more, you never know what people get up to when they’re left alone in a house […].”29 Moreover, it is exactly in the contained and liminal space of this automobile Mrs Foster begins transgressing the borders of her old consciousness into a new realm, a fresh realization by passing through, what I call, ‘an epiphanic threshold.’ Thomassen indicates that liminal experience may occur instantaneously on a temporal plane.30 Epiphany, which is, in McDonald’s terms, “a sudden, abrupt, and positive transformation that was profound and enduring,”31 may be combined with the concept of liminality, for epiphany is an in-between territory betwixt two distinct perspectives and understandings. McDonald identifies epiphany with positive outcomes which “transform the individual’s concept of self and identity through the creation of new meaning in the individual’s life.”32 In Mrs Foster’s case, miniscule transgressions across various thresholds lead her to a better-defined epiphanic threshold just before the criminal act; hence, her movements are of fluctuating nature. Their journey towards the Idlewild Airport coincides with the physical presence of the fog, which symbolizes her hazy transgression into her still vague but new realization, and in one of these epiphanic moments, she sees a new image of Mr Foster:

She couldn’t be sure, but it seemed to her that there was suddenly a new note in his voice, and she turned to look at him. It was difficult to observe any change in his expression under all that hair. The mouth was what counted. She wished, as she had so often before, that she could see the mouth clearly. The eyes never showed anything except when he was in a rage […].

She turned away and peered through the window at the fog. It seemed to be getting thicker as they went along, and now she could only just make out the edge of the road and the margin of grassland beyond it. She knew

29 Ibid., 45.
32 Ibid., 90.
that her husband was still looking at her. She glanced at him again, and this time she noticed with a kind of horror that he was staring intently at the little place in the corner of her left eye where she could feel the muscle twitching.33

When they arrive at the airport, they learn that the flight has been postponed; therefore, she decides to stay at the airport, for she does not want her husband to prevent her from this passage. To her, smoothing body of an airport seems safer than the striated space of their house; Deleuze and Guattari indicate that smooth spaces offer “variability” and “polyvocality.”34 Even though airports may alternatively be viewed as striated spaces controlled by the state apparatus, they also offer patches of smoothing lines of flight for travellers. An airports as a space of mobility is a non-place meaning “the traveller's space” in Auge’s terms.35 Auge indicates that “non-places” provide mobility, and individuals have specific relations with them.36 Auge further observes that a person entering the space of non-place is relieved of his usual determinants. He becomes no more than what he does or experiences in the role of a passanger, customer or driver. Perhaps he is still weighted down by the previous day's worries, the next day's concerns; but he is distanced from them temporarily by the environment of the moment. Subjected to a gentle form of possession, to which he surrenders himself with more or less talent or conviction, he tastes for a while – like anyone who is possessed – the passive joys of identity-loss, and the more active pleasure of role-playing.37

Similarly, Idlewild Airport as a non-place strips Mrs Foster off her usual determinants: a passive and submissive subject of Foster household. For Mrs Foster, who is also possessed with her specific condition, the Idlewild Airport stands as a liminal and smoothing space where “the passive joys of identity-loss, and the more active pleasure of role-playing” interact with her.38 The airport presents a threshold through which she slides from the striated space of Mr Foster into the smooth space of her

34 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, translated by Brian Massumi. (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 382.
36 Ibid., 94.
37 Ibid., 103.
38 Ibid., 103.
daughter and grandchildren, whom she only knows through photographs – spatialized objects of her smooth(ing) desire:

Mrs Foster didn’t care much for the Frenchman, but she was fond of her daughter, and, more than that, she had developed a great yearning to set eyes on her three grandchildren. She knew them only from the many photographs that she had received and that she kept putting up all over the house. They were beautiful, these children. She doted on them, and each time a new picture arrived she would carry it away and sit with it for a long time, staring at it lovingly and searching the small faces for signs of that old satisfying blood likeness that meant so much.39

Mrs Foster then considers getting a room instead of going back home, and calls her husband, who is already ready to leave for the club; and Mr Foster reprimands her in his common controlling voice: “That would be foolish […]. You’ve got a large house here at your disposal. Use it […]. Don’t be so stupid, woman. Everything you do, you seem to want to make a fuss about it.”40 As she travels back home, she notices that the fog is clearing away just as her epiphanic awakening. After her arrival, Mr Foster informs her that he has already ordered a taxi for her, and he will not see her off; however, to her horror, he sees “no reason why [she] shouldn’t drop [him] at the club on [her] way,” even though the club is downtown, not on the way to the airport.41 At this moment, her epiphanic realization is much clearer, which indicates that Mr Foster was attempting to striate her smoothing movements by keeping her on the margins of limes of his striated space controlled by his state apparatus. She starts questioning his posture as her husband, and becomes conscious of the limes beyond which he controls her life: “She looked at him, and at that moment he seemed to be standing a long way off from her, beyond some borderline. He was suddenly so small and far away that she couldn’t be sure what he was doing, or what he was thinking, or even what he was.”42

In the morning before their departure, Mr Foster in his relaxed, if not lethargic, attitude, comes to the hall asking if she has made any coffee. After her reply that he could get a nice breakfast at the club, he wants to get some cigars, and eventually, after keeping her on the threshold of a mental breakdown for few more minutes, he appears at the door, halfway down the stairs, he stops to check the weather. Watching him going down the stair, Mrs Foster crosses the borders of her deterritorialized self into a reterritorialization, and realizes that “his legs were like goat’s legs in those narrow

40 Ibid., 48.
41 Ibid., 48.
42 Ibid., 49, (emphasis added).
stovepipe trousers that he wore,”43 which points out that, in her new understanding, he resembles a demon who controls her life and fate.

However, the instant he gets in the car, Mr Foster starts searching through his overcoat, and asks driver to stop the car for he cannot find the small gift box for their daughter. To Mrs Foster’s horror, he leaves the car saying he must have left it in the bedroom. This box is a metaphorical object of torture, and simultaneously becomes a catalyst for her final border-crossing. All of a sudden, she sees a white object “wedged down in the crack of the seat on the side where her husband had been sitting,” and she noticed that this small box has been “wedged down firm and deep, as though with the help of a pushing hand.”44 Mrs Foster runs to the door holding the key to call her husband, and puts the key into the keyhole; yet, instead of opening the door, she stops and waits on the threshold where her most tangible transformation takes place. Dahl’s depiction of the final moments of her transgression on the threshold reflects the tentativeness and ambiguous nature of the liminal:

She hurried out of the car and up the steps to the front door, holding the key in one hand. She slid the key into the keyhole and was about to turn it – and then she stopped. Her head came up, and she stood there absolutely motionless, her whole body arrested right in the middle of all this hurry to turn the key and get into the house, and she waited – five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten seconds, she waited. The way she was standing there, with her head in the air and the body so tense, it seemed as though she were listening for the repetition of some sound that she had heard a moment before from a place far away inside the house.

Yes – quite obviously she was listening. Her whole attitude was a listening one. She appeared actually to be moving one of her ears closer and closer to the door. Now it was right up against the door, and for still another few seconds she remained in that position, head up, ear to door, hand on key, about to enter but not entering, trying instead, or so it seemed, to hear and to analyse these sounds that were coming faintly from this place deep within the house.45

As Beer states: “[d]oors police the threshold,”46 she traps Mr Foster in his own striation, and by this, her deterritorialization is complete, she achieves a new

43 Ibid., 49.
45 Ibid., 52.
reterritorialized self: she is reborn. At this one split second, Mr Foster’s limes which is set to control her turns into a limen, meaning a threshold offering her many new opportunities – only if she prefers to cross it through this crime. Mrs Foster’s experience is that of, what Thomassen calls, “pure liminality” where one is transformed by spatiotemporal vectors. As Thomassen also states, the liminality can be experienced in many varieties ranging from a single moment to an epoch, from an individual to a whole society. In Mrs Foster’s case, her gradual passage takes place in one day; yet, her complete metamorphosis occurs in a few seconds and in the physical presence of the doorsill of their house.

Dahl’s use of the threshold concept and theory in this narrative makes the crime indistinguishable, if not questionably justified. Mr Foster physically gets stuck in the elevator. The elevator is a non-place (a means of transportation), a liminal space, an in-between realm, and becomes a metaphorical coffin where he is trapped alive. Mrs Foster, instead of helping him out of this enclosed space, transgresses and reterritorializes herself into a new smooth space and state. This crime creates an alternative line of flight for Mrs Foster from the striation of the policed-space, a large six-storey house on East Sixty-second Street in New York City, and Mr Foster’s controlling mechanism. In other words, this ambiguous crime serves Mrs Foster in her desperate – and quite timely – attempt of smoothing the striated assemblage Mr Foster has been building over the years. In this short narrative, Mrs Foster (or the transgressor), crosses the borders of this striated space and first enters into a liminal and-smoothing sphere where she becomes “structurally, if not physically, invisible” “neophyte,” and then, by reterritorializing herself through this crime, she becomes a liberated nomad in “the variability, the polyvocality of directions […] of smooth spaces” in the language of Deleuze and Guattari.

Mrs Foster takes the key from the door – symbolic weapons of the murder, one of which turns the liminal into striated, and the other polices the space. While Mrs Foster’s metaphorical death and rebirth takes place, Mr Foster’s entrapment in the liminal body of the elevator denotes his metaphorical and physical death. As the narrative illustrates, Mrs Foster, as a reterritorialized body in space, is now a changed woman who holds the key to salvation and damnation, and controls the space. At this moment, we see that “her face had turned absolutely white and that the whole

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48 Ibid., 17.
expression had suddenly altered. There was no longer that rather soft and silly look. A peculiar hardness had settled itself upon the features. The little mouth, usually so flabby, was now tight and thin, the eyes were bright, and the voice, when she spoke, carried a new note of authority."^{52}

In conclusion, the narrative of "The Way Up to Heaven" is stratified on many levels; de Certeau suggests that "[e]very story is a travel story – a spatial practice,"^{53} and, while Dahl narrates Mrs Foster’s travel story from New York to Paris, he also describes her metamorphosis through multilayered transgressions. Auge states that "space" is originated by "a double movement: the traveller's movement [and] a parallel movement of landscapes."^{54} In "The Way Up to Heaven," real-and-imagined spaces are created by Mrs Foster’s physical and psychological movement and the narrative’s linear progress; hence the analysis has followed the narrative spaces in a linear order. "The Way Up to Heaven" is not only a crime story, but also "a travel story – a spatial practice,"^{55} and Mrs Foster is

a solitary traveller [who] find[s] prophetic evocations of spaces in which neither identity, nor relations, nor history really make any sense; spaces in which the solitude is experienced as an overburdening or emptying of individuality, in which only the movement of the fleeting images enables the observer to hypothesize the existence of a past and glimpse the possibility of a future.^{56}

Mrs Foster transgresses various *limes* as she moves, and the crime designates her motive to smooth Mr Foster’s striation. Furthermore, the crime takes place on the threshold, which concurrently makes Mr Foster and the crime invisible. As Mr Foster attempts to keep Mr Foster in a mental in-between space, he gets entrapped in a similar in-between space: the elevator. The elevator gets stuck, becoming a striated space; and without a line of flight, it also turns into a deathtrap for Mr Foster. Yet, this liminal-and-striped space liberates Mrs Foster from the constraint of striation and control mechanism of Mr Foster. Mr Foster’s death, one may presume, is a kind of suicide, as he becomes the victim of the policed-space he himself has created and striated.

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^{55} Ibid, 87.
^{56} Ibid, 87.
Bibliography


The Competing Claims of Crime versus Heritage in 
*A Memento for Istanbul*, Ahmed Ümit

Merja Makinen

Abstract

This paper notes the competing narrative drives, in *A Memento for Istanbul* by Ahmed Ümit, of a crime police procedural and of a celebration of the history of Istanbul. It examines the tensions in play with these competing trajectories and questions whether they compete for attention in an expansive layering of the readerly experience, or pull in opposite and damaging directions? Noting that readers are always plural, and some will look for the whodunit while others will enjoy the historical information, the paper traces the different ways in which history is used in the novel, beginning with the obvious placing of the murder victims at the various cultural sites which trace the emerging history of the city, starting with Byzantium and ending in the present. The theme of being able to evolve into a new future, while treasuring the past memories, comes from the battle between the conservationists and the developers around Istanbul’s main historical sites. The theme also transmutes into the personal life of the Detective Inspector investigating the crimes, honouring the memory of his deceased wife and child, while exploring a new relationship. His boyhood friends, in contrast, are unable to move on and become obsessed with their personal and the city’s public past. While acknowledging the effectiveness of the theme for the crime narrative, the paper still queries the length of focus on the architectural treasures of Istanbul, and notes how the text betrays its own dichotomy as the Detective Inspector constantly comments, that admiring the history was not the main focus, they were out to catch the killers. This mix of taut crime narrative and travel guide, the paper concludes, could perhaps be most usefully considered as a hybrid text, a ‘cross-over’ novel incorporating two separate generic expectations where neither is secondary to the other.

**Keywords**: Ahmed Ümit, *A Memento for Istanbul*, Istanbul architecture, history, crime, police procedural, narrative tension, generic expectation.
The Competing Claims of Crime versus Heritage in

Merja Makinen

One might almost argue that Ahmed Ümit’s 2010 *A Memento for Istanbul* has a split personality: it cannot seem to make up its mind whether it is a celebration of the history of Istanbul or a crime narrative. As a novel it has certainly been successful, a national bestseller (as its cover proclaims), translated into English a year later and a second edition by 2014. This analysis of the novel does not question the narrative’s popular success but rather its generic successfulness. Do the two narrative trajectories, coalesce or pull apart in opposite directions?

At the outset, I should acknowledge my belief that crime fiction is a wonderfully elastic and expansive genre, from Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories through to Alexander McCall Smith’s African No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency series. The genre contains both conservative and transgressive narratives and has given a voice to a whole variety of previously marginalised positions in relation to gender, race, ethnicity and sexualities as witnessed by the growth of feminist crime in the eighties and nineties, and the postcolonial and transnational crime in the twenty-first century. The starting point for this discussion of *A Memento for Istanbul* is therefore not a retrograde insistence on a ‘Decalogue’ purity of the Detection Club rules, against what is positioned as extraneous material. Barbara Wilson’s subversive transgender *Gaudi Afternoon* remains one of my favourite texts precisely because it pushes the crime genre’s expectations to its limits, without quite breaking them. The question is not therefore should Ümit’s *A Memento for Istanbul* contain quite so much detail of Istanbul’s iconic architecture, but rather, is the narrative trajectory of the text asking different things of the readers’ interest in the city’s past history to their generic excitement at the uncovering of the crimes and perpetrators? Do the two narrative foci compete for attention in an expansive layering that adds to the experience of reading the novel; or do they detract from each other, pulling in different directions so that the reader either skips the history to get to the crime thread or forgets the urgency of discovery, to enjoy the instructive historical explanations that pause the tension?

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2 In the 1920’s Ronald Knox published *The Decalogue*, the 10 rules that detective fiction should abide by, for the Detection Club.
In one sense the answer will always be both, since readers are always plural in their reasons for reading. Both the city’s contemporary inhabitants and the numerous tourists (the active and the armchair varieties) who flock to Istanbul will find multiple fascinations in the novel. Mine is a more technical question, arising from a previous exploration of the tensions between radical ideologies, like feminism, appropriating potentially conservative detective genres. Here, in Ümit’s text, the tension under investigation is between a desire to elaborate with pride and love on Istanbul’s history as exemplified though its iconic buildings, as a paean to the extraordinary riches of the city, alongside the need for a taut police procedural urgently trying to unravel the motives behind the seven sacrificial murders in seven days and apprehend the killers.

Nevzat Akman, the middle-aged Chief Inspector, is a lover of history from boyhood. His two side-kicks, the young detectives Ali and Zeynep are less familiar with the history of their city. Zeynep, the resourceful and intelligent female officer becomes interested in the history as a potential for discovering clues to the crime while the hot-headed Ali, variously described as the ‘young pitbull’ and ‘little Doberman’ initially refuses to engage with what he sees as irrelevant education. Akman chastises both of them for not appreciating their city in a trope that also implicates the reader. The murder victims are each left at the site of an iconic monument, clutching an ancient coin that links the building to a specific era in Istanbul’s history, with their arms extended in an apparent clue to the site of the next body. The first, an architect, is found at the site of a previous temple to Poseidon, clutching a coin from the reign on King Byzas, thus locating the murder site to the Greek originators and the city’s first incarnation as Byzantium. The second murder is of a town planner lying at the feet of Constantine’s Column and clutching a coin from the Roman’s reign, linking him to the city’s evolution into Constantinople. The third body, a journalist, is found at the main gate of the walls built by Theodius II and the coin too indicates this Roman emperor. The fourth, an architect, is found at Hagia Sophia linking it to the emperor Justinian’s rebuilding of Constantinople. The fifth murder, a deputy-Mayor left at Fatih Mosque with a coin from Sultan Mehmed’s reign, shifts the city from its identity as Constantinople to that of Kostantiniyye, and from Roman to Ottoman rule. ‘Another coin, another ruler, and another landmark from that ruler’s reign’ sums up the Chief Inspector.

In the space of a mere four days, the killers had taken us on a two-thousand year journey from King Byzas’ Byzantium all the way to Sultan

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3 I include myself here, generously given the book by Professor Ahmet Saglamer after my talk on Agatha Christie at the Pera Palace Hotel in 2014, as the Chief Inspector becomes a detective because of Christie’s The Death of Roger Ackroyd.
5 Ibid, 295.
6 Ibid, 427
The Competing Claims of Crime versus Heritage in A Memento for Istanbul, Ahmed Ümit – Merja Makinen

Mehmed’s imperial capital Konstantiniyye, with five killings in four days. There was no telling what their next move would be…

The sixth, a lawyer, is found at the tomb of Mimar Sinan the architect of the Süleymaniye mosque, with a Süleyman coin and the final victim, the city developer, is left at the foot of the statue to Kemal Atatürk, commemorating the beginning of the Turkish Republic and the city of Istanbul. The two main suspects are a group wanting to turn the major site on the peninsula around the Süleymaniye mosque, Sultanahmet, into a profitable tourist development and offices, and a left-wing activist group trying to preserve the city’s heritage. Alongside these is a third group of possible Islamic terrorists trained in Afghanistan but they are soon discounted, so that the majority of the focus is on the tussle for the future of the city between these two oppositional groups. In trying to anticipate the next site, and so catch the serial killers, the police engage the director of the Topkapi Museum as an expert to help them decipher the clues and inform them in detail of the history of Istanbul. Clearly history is going to be key to the detection trail, and there is much discussion of Istanbul itself as a victim and needing protection, a view which Akman, with his fascination with the city’s rich past, supports. History and monuments necessarily become the central focus as the police try to decipher whether it is rulers or buildings that exercise the killers, thus eliciting further descriptions on both.

The major theme of the novel echoes the city’s successful ‘evolution’ from one incarnation to another, and its adaptation to different empires and religious beliefs. Developing from Byzantium, through Constantinople and Konstantiniyye to the present Istanbul, the text notes how the buildings continue to have viable lives by changing to accommodate the needs of their subsequent inhabitants. The Little Hagia Mosque, originally built by Justinian as the Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus, ‘was later converted into a mosque by the Ottomans and its name changed’; the Obelix of Theodosius ‘was originally made to commemorate Pharaoh Tutmosess III, not the Roman emperors’; the marvellous Medusa heads on the columns of the Basilica Cistern were looted from a pagan temple; the Hagia Sophia, “has been a church for nigh on a thousand years and then a mosque for five hundred years before Atatürk had it designated a museum’.

Holding on to the past is an important part of this theme of evolution. “Everyone in this city should be fascinated by it... Otherwise we’ll never be able to

7 Ibid, 43
8 Ibid, 30.
9 Ibid, 173.
10 Ibid, 314.
11 Ibid, 342.
truly appreciate Istanbul’s true splendour”, Chief Inspector Akman exclaims, and his friend, the poet and architect, Yekta, is even more forthright:

This city is losing its grasp of the past, and cities as you know, are just like people – if they forget their history and lose their sense of the past, then they also lose their sense of self. Nothing remains, no character, no distinctiveness. 13

The developer’s attempts to destroy the past for present profit, diminish the historical treasure of the Sultanhamet to ‘a mere plot of land rendered worthless by the bundles of money he’d poured into it’ stands as the binary opposite to Yekta’s view, but both extremes are wrong. Ignoring the past damages the self and prevents a true appreciation, but living in the past is equally dangerous. Yekta, obsessed by the loss of his wife and young son, lives in a morbid stasis, ‘he never forgives and never forgets’. 15 Yevzet Akman’s personal life continues this theme of evolving as he too, like Yekta, has lost a wife and child but, in contrast, having mourned them he is beginning to move forward with a new relationship. The life-affirming Evgenia manages Akman’s guilt at loving again. Overwhelmed by the past and his grief, Akman finds it hard seeing her at his family table, but her tact insists they acknowledge the presence of his memories and toast his dead wife and daughter.

They are still a part of your life; a part of you and everything that makes you who you are … I’ve never viewed you independently from them. I’d never dream of doing such a thing. They’ve always been there, and they are here with us now… The four of us can be together. They’ve been a part of my love for you from the very beginning. 16

Like Istanbul itself, Evgenia accommodates the past while savouring the present, valuing both appropriately and guides Akman to a new and joyful relationship. The public and the personal in this novel initially complement each other thematically, before they collide more concretely in the final pages of the plot.

Another element in the theme of evolving from the past comes in the discourse around policing in Turkey. This police procedural acknowledges that the institution has not always been a force for good during its recent history. Akman recalls his early career when martial law was declared and the police were drafted into the Political

12 Ibid, 313.
13 Ibid, 95.
14 Ibid, 479.
15 Ibid, 498.
16 Ibid, 82.
Crimes Unit. ‘The whole of Istanbul had been turned into a hunting ground for the generals and we were the lapdogs doing their dirty work’. The novel admits that some elements of police brutality still exist,

I was a copper after all and so he naturally waited for an outburst, for a violent explosion of rage and abuse which was so frequent and so commonplace in Turkish policemen but when he realised no such outburst was imminent, he relaxed.

The Chief Inspector is himself a force for change in the policing of the city, and there is a sub-plot to his education of Ali, restraining his young colleague’s ‘loutishness’ and fostering his ‘principles’. This political history of policing arises in relation to the suspect Namik Karaman, initially a fighter against the generals with a criminal record for wounding a policeman who has renounced violence to become a surgeon and leader of the pacifist IDL (Istanbul Defence League). Recalling his previous treatment at the hands of the police, he is surprised at Akman’s procedures when in custody, eliciting the response ‘‘The world is changing, Mr Karaman, which means we’ve also had to evolve’’. Similarly a sub-plot around another suspect, the devout Muslim Ömer, recruited to fight for the Taliban in Afghanistan through a biased mis-reading of the Koran, explores the Turkish police’s Anti-Terror Squad’s liaisons with their American counterparts, and has Ömer effusively recant violence once he has been supported through a proper understanding of the Koran by his girlfriend Efsun, a Sufist intellectual. Just as Evgenia gently guides Nevzet’s emotional evolution, Efsun guides Ömer’s religious evolution. Both sub-plots exhort the same message, that no-one has the right to kill for their beliefs, to accompany the mounting pile of bodies with their throats brutally cut and an antique coin in their hands.

The personal relationships also extend to the city, working to flesh out Akman’s character. Tied up with the detective’s pride in and awe of his capital’s historic monuments, his fascination with history that leaves him in a ‘trancelike state’, is his present engagement with the environs, coloured by his personal recollections. As we are reminded, by the activist IDL ‘It is people who create cities and histories’ and the city is also defined as the locale that holds the personal memories of its citizens. Nevzet Akman, moving from one location to another, at times gives rather undigested travelogues of the separate localities: Samyata, an historic district of old stone houses,
old mosques, ancient churches, narrow streets with cosy old inns'. Çarsamba’s strict Islamic dress, with the women in burqas and Ali’s ‘This place looks more like Iran than Turkey’, elicits a page long exposition from Akman on the way different religions have always been influential in this area. ‘I drove onto Şehzadebaşi, an area which used to be an entertainment district for the middle-classes...’ But alongside these thumbnail sketches for the tourist, the city comes to life when he recalls his own family and childhood connections. The part the city plays in his personal past, with his mother taking him to the various museums enforces that Istanbul is also a part of him, and he is of it. Driving to interview a victim’s ex-wife, he finds she lives on the same street as one of his own family.

My aunt Şadihye used to live in an old wooden house on the same street years ago. I used to go there during religious festivals to pay my respects. The house had three outstanding memories for me: the view of Little Hagia Sophia’s dome from the window, the smell of vanilla which infused into the furniture and the best tapioca pudding on the face of the earth.

His knowledge of the dilapidated district of Eğrikapi, comes from playing football there as a child, and ‘I’ll never forget the time Demir got lost in the winding passageways of the Dungeons of Anemas’. His love for the city stems from its connections to his own personal history and family, the bricks and mortar a repository of his memories and hence his identity as a citizen.

I live in Balat, by the shores of the Golden Horn, and my elders and loved ones are all buried there. My best friends all live in this city, I work here, my fondest memories are all from, in and of this city, and hopefully I’ll spend my final days here.

The title, a memento for Istanbul, works on a number of different levels and none are more successful than this theme that cities are built by people, for people, and their significance comes from the intangible meanings people invest in them. Tied to the big public history of Istanbul and the monuments that mark it, is this recognition of the personal histories of its inhabitants. The closure of the novel indicts the developers for

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22 Ibid, 16.
23 Ibid, 147.
24 Ibid, 461.
27 Ibid, 448.
also destroying this personal connection: “They ruined this city, Nevzat!...Our city, Nevzat! They ruined our childhood and they soiled our cherished memories”.

However, the majority of the pages in this novel are dedicated to the big public monuments and rulers of Istanbul, a memento to the city’s past, not to give resonance to a characterisation, but to educate the reader as to Istanbul’s extraordinary heritage. The motive for the murders, and coincidentally the detective novel, is this desire to teach the reader about the city, “the killers are instructing us in our own history”. And here we come to the crux of the tension within the variant narratives; how much can the vehicle of a crime novel, teasing out the perpetrators while setting a series of red herrings to pleasurably ensnare the reader, also carry the weight of erudition and instruction? Many a crime novel brings some forms of enlightenment in its setting or its intellectual detective, but it is the extent of it that is problematic in this novel. Colin Dexter’s Inspector Morse series tells us about the colleges of Oxford and the operas of Wagner, but Morse doesn’t usually pause to hear about the detail of the architecture as he passes through. Chief Inspector Akman does. Entering the Topkapi Palace to interview the director, on page 387, they park the car and head to her office, on page 390 they move into the Regimental Courtyard amongst the excited tourists of many nations, on page 392 they are directed towards the Gate of Felicity for the second, Enderun Courtyard. On the next page, having entered the courtyard, we are given an explanation of the various parts of the building, the privy stables with the Harem and the Imperial Council above, the kitchens and the halls that now display collections of porcelain, silver, carriages. Even the four page memory of his mother bringing him here as a child and trying to instil her love of history, does not leaven the information overload. Moving towards the third gate, Akman explains the different styles of architecture for the three gates, Persian, Frankish and Turkish before moving into the Audience Chamber. On p. 399, having gained the central building, Akman decides,

However, guiding Ali through the history and etiquette of the chamber was not my main priority. We were there on business. Topkapi Palace may have been the seat of a dynasty which ruled half the known world centuries ago but we were on the hunt for a killer.
And the museum director was our prime suspect.

The text here betrays its own discomfort with the bifurcating foci, vocalising its attempt to wrest the heritage tour guide back towards the detective’s pursuit. But having reminded the reader of Akman’s main business, the next chapter begins with a description of the director’s office as in a former kitchen, and lights on a painting of the

28 Ibid, 561.
29 Ibid, 418.
second courtyard and from there, develop a two page exegesis on the Sultan who built the palace and his reasons for choosing this spot. They then get down to business in identifying the most recent coin, which elicit three more pages of the history of the buildings and rulers as they try to guess where the next body will be found. To reiterate, it has taken the detective nine pages to leave his car and get to the director’s office and another nine pages before the entry of the parcel, containing the next victim’s head. From page 387 to 409, the focus has been on Topkapi Palace itself. This narrative process is not isolated. While the five page history lesson on Byzantium is textually linked to their investigation,

[...] here we were, police officers working on an unsolved murder case, and instead of [...] our normal course of action, we were more like archaeologists, probing the dark and ancient mysteries of the city. It’s not that I wasn’t enjoying it but there was an unsolved homicide case that needed to be closed.31

At other points, there is no clear link to the case. Agreeing to meet the museum director at the Obelisk, which has no direct relevance with the case apart from being a convenient meeting place, results in another four pages of architectural description and a history lesson before Akman decides, ‘We were wandering into topics [...] which were irrelevant for my needs; I’d always had a fondness for history but not in the middle of a murder investigation’.32 No wonder that the opening suggestion of this essay was that the novel’s narrative is in two minds, since the text itself betrays an anxiety about the discrepancy and calls our attention to its own dichotomy. In a different generic format, the three page detailed explanation of the history and architecture of the Süleymaniye Mosque, the significance of its minarets and its şerefe and the theorisation of the Ottoman aesthetic of introspection which informs the building,33 would be (and is) fascinating. And clearly at play here is a transnational wresting of the crime genre to encompass the pride in the location and an attempt to effect the validity of this by making certain locales part of the teasing out of the motives, the ‘M.O.’ of the criminals. But as it stands, these historical and architectural disquisitions pause the conventional urgency of the detective’s desperate attempt to prevent the killers striking again. The reader, alongside the detective, wonders which is the priority. ‘I suppose it could be argued that at least one good thing to come out of the investigation was that we were learning things about Istanbul’.34 Is sweeping the reader through the various red-herrings to discover the perpetrators the main aim of the book,

31 Ibid, 52.
32 Ibid, 176.
33 Ibid, 468-70.
34 Ibid, 441.
or a travel guide celebrating the city’s riches? And, if the former, what is the reader to do with the stand alone passages that open each section of the novel? These are set aside from the main story, both by space and by a separate italicised typeface, and are an imagined historical rendition of each ruler offering their monument’s completion to their appropriate deity. These passages are the most opaque and resistant to the crime genre. At first the puzzled reader interrogates them to see if they contain a vital internal clue to the investigation. But what happens when it transpires that there is no such clue and yet the subsequent passages still demand to be read? It is only in the final pages that it is revealed that they are the compositions of one of the murderers, imaginatively rendering the importance of the chosen building, and by then it is too late to accommodate the readers’ confusion (unless of course they re-read the novel).

Perhaps this is the point to introduce the suggestion that Ahmed Ümit’s *A Memento for Istanbul*, might be read as a hybrid format? Not historical crime fiction in the usual sense of the term such as *The Name of the Rose* by Umberto Eco, since Ümit’s is set in the contemporary present and the history is not the quiet setting or background to the story but a central plank of the narrative alongside the whodunit - but rather a hybrid of history and crime as a ‘cross over’ novel incorporating two separate generic expectations where neither is secondary to the other.

Ümit’s *A Memento for Istanbul* is a complex and multitudinous text that contains a wealth of interest for different readers, as evidenced by its popular success, and if the two contrasting narrative compendiums do not quite tie up in the thin and unreconciled denouement, this does not detract from the pleasures in the process of reading its 577 pages. What other detective closure has the Inspector ignoring the bloody bodies of the seven murder victims, their throats brutally cut, to agree with the perpetrators that they are the real ‘victims’ of the experience and, rather than reminding them of the appropriate recourse to law, berates them for not involving him in their vicious crimes, upset that he has been excluded? It is the ending where the real rupturing of the narrative becomes impossible to resolve and the text’s choice of the personal and the architectural over law and order borders on the generically ludicrous. But it needs to be said that the ludicrous is lexically close to the ludic, the playful calling into question of the rules and ideology of a narrative. This ludic ending of the cross-over text obviously raises the question of postmodernism. Postmodern readings, as Connor and Gibson amongst others argue, embrace transgressive mixing of different genres and discourses while arguing that no denouement can ever bring an appropriate closure to the richness and length of a novel. Postmodern writing calls into question the myth of a unified and coherent text as an ideal or even a possibility. This cross-over

text, with its variant generic expectations and competing narrative disciplines and conventions, is a melange of discourses and therefore could potentially be described as a postmodern crime text equal to Paul Auster’s *New York Trilogy*, despite its lack of a knowing textual self-reflexivity. But then, perhaps for some, the uncomfortable acknowledgement of the disparate splitting of the narratives in Ümit’s text, the betrayal of a textual disquiet, is itself the self-conscious alerting of the reader to the very different discourses in play? Textual discomfort or arch knowingness – readers will need to make up their own minds when reading this intriguing novel, since both positions are plausible.

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36 This is a detective novel that sports the footnotes of a history book.

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Marquand, Moto, and the Far East

Walter Raubicheck

Abstract

John P. Marquand’s series of espionage novels featuring the Japanese agent Mr. Moto is one of the most significant achievements of American popular culture between 1935 and 1942, both as crime fiction and as the highly successful movies starring Peter Lorre. Marquand did this by integrating into a tale of self-discovery the complexity of the pre-World War II Far East, as Japan and Russia vied for dominance, particularly in China, and America developed strategies to protect its interests. The political background of the Moto series gave it a contemporary relevance that today is replaced by the considerable historical interest of the series, particularly since Marquand decided in 1935 to make a Japanese agent the recurring character of the books.

Although his literary reputation has always been based on his novels of manners—one of which, The Late George Apley, a satire on the Boston Brahmin society of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1937—Marquand’s Mr. Moto books have been periodically reprinted during the last eighty years, inspiring websites, graphic novels, and continued interest in the Lorre films. This paper will focus on the novels themselves, not the films, because it is in Marquand’s originals that we find the spy genre raised to the level of literature, a rare achievement before Marquand entered the field. The primarily Asian settings of the books is particularly evocative since Marquand himself spent purposeful time in the Far East preparing to write the Moto books.

Keywords: Ambler, Eric, Biggers, Earl Derr, Buchan, John, Chan, Charlie, Fu Manchu, Greene, Graham, Le Carre, John, Maugham, Somerset, Marquand, J. P., Moto, Mr., Rohmer, Sax, The Late George Apley, Your Turn, Mr. Moto, Thank You, Mr. Moto, Think Fast, Mr. Moto, Mr. Moto Is So Sorry, Last Laugh, Mr. Moto, Right You Are, Mr. Moto, Ming Yellow, Saturday Evening Post, Collier’s Weekly.
Marquand, Moto, and the Far East

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John P. Marquand’s series of espionage novels featuring the Japanese agent Mr. Moto is one of the most significant achievements of American popular culture between 1935 and 1942, both as crime fiction and as the highly successful movies starring Peter Lorre. This paper will focus on the novels themselves, not the films, because it is in Marquand’s originals that we find the spy genre raised to the level of literature, a rare achievement before Marquand entered the field. He did this by integrating into a tale of self-discovery the complexity of the pre-World War II Far East, as Japan and Russia vied for dominance, particularly in China, and America developed strategies to protect its interests. The political background of the Moto series gave it a contemporary relevance that today is replaced by the considerable historical interest of the series, particularly since Marquand decided in 1935 to make a Japanese agent the recurring character of the books. Inevitably, he discontinued the series in 1941, only to resurrect it one last time in 1957 when anti-Japan fervor had finally dissipated in the United States. Perhaps the most striking feature of the series is its refusal to submit to current racist and imperialistic attitudes towards its Asian characters and cultures.

Why would an American author decide to write a series of espionage novels about a Japanese spy as late as 1935, a mere six years before the two countries entered into the most destructive war in modern history? The answer is both commercial and thematic. The commercial aspect was determined by the Saturday Evening Post, which commissioned Marquand to write serialized stories for the magazine featuring an Asian detective to capitalize on the success Earl Der Biggers had in the Post with the Charlie Chan series, one which was also adapted into a popular series of films that continued throughout the thirties. Biggers died in 1933, and the Post regarded Marquand as a potential successor, partially financing a trip he made to the Far East in 1935 to imbibe the atmosphere and culture. However, where Chan had been a police detective and the Chan series belongs to the Golden Age of detective fiction genre that features the traditional suspects, clues, and brilliant sleuth, the Moto series, though its characters are initially steeped in mystery about their allegiances and motivations, is clearly an entry in the developing espionage fiction genre, one established by the Richard Hannay series of John Buchan during the first World War and recently reinvigorated by British authors such as Somerset Maugham and Eric Ambler.

Thematically the Moto series succeeds because Moto himself is never the protagonist of these novels. He is a decidedly a secondary character, disappearing for huge chunks of the story, as the narratives focus on another recurring character: an American, usually in his thirties, who is an exile in the Far East for political or personal
reasons. Circumstances draw him into a world of warring powers and their agents, and through his struggle to survive these conditions he learns something about his own innate loyalties and capabilities that at the beginning of the stories lay latent. He is helped in this process of self-discovery by a beautiful young woman who has also become enmeshed in the same dangerous world through her work or her family history. Moto is occasionally a friend and occasionally an antagonist of the American hero, depending on the constant shifts of power among the Japanese, Chinese, Russian, and American agents or military leaders involved. But his appearance in each novel guarantees that the true protagonist, the American, has now found himself involved in deadly international intrigue.

The Charlie Chan figure, particularly as he has been portrayed in Hollywood films, has often been dismissed as an embarrassingly racist caricature of a Chinese male. It is true that Biggers utilizes stereotypical behavior and speech that is a peculiarly American impression of what a Chinese man must act and speak like, though Chan is clearly a figure we are meant to admire both for his intelligence and his manners (unlike the depictions of evil Asian and European characters in the Sax Rohmer Fu Manchu novels or the imperialistic John Buchan novels). Marquand, unlike Biggers, can avoid such censure because Moto’s stereotypical Japanese mannerisms are clearly used by the spy as a bogus set of disguises that he can discard at will and reveal his true steely, ruthless efficiency and imperturbable devotion to country and Emperor. On the surface, Moto presents an almost comic character, with his sibilant hiss, his excessively polite manners, his imperfect, clipped English. As James Baird puts it, Moto “superficially fits the Japanese stereotype that existed at the time the books were written: He is short, has prominent teeth, wears glasses, and is unfailingly courteous. One of his favorite expressions is ‘very, very nice.’ Nevertheless, Moto can suddenly turn violent; he is an expert in judo, and on several occasions he cold-bloodedly murders unarmed opponents”\(^1\) In other words, when the occasion calls for it, Moto self-consciously adopts the 1930s’ Western stereotype of the Japanese male when it is useful for him to do so and discards it completely whenever he needs to achieve his immediate goals. For Charlie Chan, on the other hand, the stereotypical speech and comportment are endemic to his character.

This is not to say that Marquand’s Chinese, and Russian characters are fully developed individuals: he often resorts to a rather limited set of national and racial characteristics in presenting his spies and their victims. On the other hand, this is true of his American and British characters as well. The one fully developed character in each book is the American: he is also the only dynamic character in each book, undergoing major changes in self-identity and self-confidence as each narrative develops. It is Marquand’s careful psychological study of this character’s transformation that gives the series its literary quality, along with the quite remarkable Asian settings that are

\(^{1}\)Baird, 1261.
rendered in stunning sensory detail. China, in particular, becomes a character itself in several of the novels, contributing significantly to the protagonist’s self-understanding.

The novels published in the thirties and early forties contain many similar situations and conventions, so I will focus here on the first two and the most successful of the five: *Your Turn, Mr. Moto* (1935), originally published as *No Hero*, and *Thank You, Mr. Moto* (1936). The other three are *Think Fast, Mr. Moto*, from 1937, *Mr. Moto Is So Sorry*, from 1938, and *Last Laugh, Mr. Moto* from 1942. This novel was actually completed before the Pearl Harbor attacks in 1941 and is the only one to be published originally in *Collier’s Weekly*. The last novel in the series, *Right You Are, Mr. Moto*, was published in 1957 as *Stopover: Tokyo* and will be considered separately, since its post-war setting makes it an unusual entry: it is the longest and, in many ways, the best. (A seventh spy novel set in China, *Ming Yellow* (1935) precedes the series and contains many of its major characteristics, with the exception of Mr. Moto himself.)

Marquand’s place in the American literary canon, interestingly, does not currently depend on the Moto series but on the novels of manners he began writing at the same time, in the mid-thirties. The most well known, *The Late George Apley*, won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1937. It is an epistolary novel that gently satirizes the Boston Brahmins of the last few decades of the nineteenth century and the first few decades of the twentieth. Reminiscent of Edith Wharton’s New York fiction, Marquand reveals the snobbishness and provincialism of this world but in a style markedly different from the Moto books: he adopts the genteel diction of his upper-class narrator, a friend of Apley’s who is attempting to eulogize him. And since the narrator depends on letters and records of Apley’s occasional speeches but does not understand the personal limitations they reveal, the novel is rich in dramatic irony but lacking in the vivid descriptions of place and environment that characterize the Moto books. In fact, without being informed of the fact, it is hard to imagine any reader recognizing that the same man wrote both *Apley* and the Moto books.

The first novel in the series, *Your Turn, Mr. Moto*, sets the narrative pattern the others will follow. Casey Lee, an American pilot during WWI and later a professional stunt flier, is in Tokyo waiting to fly a plane from Japan to the United States to publicize a tobacco company. When the project is cancelled due to lack of funding, a drunken Lee, convinced that his country has let him down by not supporting his fading career as a stunt pilot, goes on an anti-American diatribe in the bar of the Imperial hotel in Tokyo. His denunciation of the government attracts a crowd of Japanese, including Mr. Moto, whom we meet here for the first time. Moto promises the destitute Lee he can hire him to fly the Pacific in a Japanese-made plane—in exchange for apparently innocuous information Lee can procure for him from officers of the U.S. Navy he will be asked to socialize with in Shanghai. The desperate Lee agrees, and he joins Moto’s spy ring, which includes a beautiful Russian girl named Sonya who has obviously been charged with keeping Lee committed to Moto’s strategies. Though Lee agrees with
Moto that his assignment seems to be “a harmless commission,” he is conscious that he has created a genuine moral quandary for himself: “I was aware in some way that I had sold part of my soul. I did not mind it just then, so long as I was getting value for it.”

It is not that Lee is an ignorant man, unaware of the political and nationalistic forces at work in Asia at the current moment. From our historical perspective a short speech he makes to Moto in an attempt to justify his seeming traitorous agreement is noteworthy: “What I mean…is the event of war. Both our countries have discussed it, but I do not see the possibility of war between us. I think that possibility was over when the United States gave up using the Philippines as a large naval base. The United States has no means of attacking you. While the Hawaiian Islands are under the American flag, it is nearly impossible for you to reach the coast of North America…Sensible men discount war talk, I think, Mr. Moto.”

The naïve American now finds himself actively supporting the movement of Japanese expansion that recently included the invasion of Manchuria and the creation of the puppet state of Manchukuo. Russia, which was driven from Manchuria near the beginning of the twentieth century, was expanding again under the aegis of the Soviet Union and had turned Outer Mongolia into a buffer state. All of China was vulnerable to these newly imperialistic forces. And as Lee is dimly aware, America’s security hung in the balance. As he sails on a Japanese vessel from Tokyo to Shanghai, Lee is awakened in his stateroom at night by an invisible figure who attempts to pass on to him a secret note intended for an U. S. navy officer in Shanghai simply because he has learned that Lee is an American. It is this appeal to Lee’s nationality that begins his transformation from an aviator-for-hire to a man with a self-definition that now, for the first time in years, includes nationality: “He had appealed to me because, by accident of birth, I was an American, and something inside me which has lain dormant for a long while was struggling to answer that appeal, strongly, mutely, against my reason, my cynicism and self-interest. My nationality had become so important to me, as a matter of such deep significance, that I was startled. I had never realized that a place of birth could mean so much, but it was true. My entire point of view was changing, because I had been called an American.”

However, unlike the British heroes of Buchan’s novels, Lee becomes patriotic, but not nationalistic—meaning that his respect for the Japanese, Russian, and Chinese men and women he encounters as a result of the awkward position in which he has chosen to be never falters. They are not “evil” to Lee: he understands that they are operating out of a dedication to their country which, till this new moment of self-awareness, he had lost. He knows now that he must escape from Moto and sever his connection to the Japanese agent’s plans, but not because of anything Moto had done to

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2 Marquand, *Your Turn*, 64.
3 Ibid., 59.
4 Ibid., 87.
him—it is simply his own recognition of who he truly is that accounts for his drastic action of jumping from the ship into Shanghai harbor: “I was through with Mr. Moto and through with the whole lying devious affair in which he had involved me, and through with all the motives which had drawn me into it. I was myself again. I was Casey Lee. It was a long while since I had been myself.”

As Lee attempts to determine why Moto and his operatives believe that he does possess the note that was never successfully delivered to him, he finds himself drawn into a world quite different from the Japan he has recently left behind: the more opaque world of China. Throughout the Moto series, especially in the four books that are dominated by a Chinese setting—as is the non-Moto thriller *Ming Yellow*—Marquand saves his most powerful and descriptive writing for the most-populated Asian country. His American protagonists such as Casey Lee are invariably affected by the size, the age, and the history of the Chinese land and culture. Japan and Russia are expansionist and acquisitive: the China in these novels is in turmoil on the surface yet always calm and even imperturbable in its deepest spirit. When Lee later thinks back on the Chinese he encounters in Shanghai, “…in spite of their dark poverty and evidences of disease and of grinding labor, [my] impression has always been one of peace. It was a peace born of a knowledge of life and of human relationships. I could understand why China had absorbed her conquerors....Their bland patience was impervious to any fortune.” Another recurring image in the novels is that of a China that has become Westernized to the superficial appraisal but which is untouched in its essence: “I think of running slippered feet and of unfamiliar enunciation; of lights and banners Japanese and English and American novelties. I think of a China meeting the impact of the West and somehow absorbing and changing the West to conform to its ancient culture.”

The resolution of Casey Lee’s external conflict is brought about by his ability to discover the lost message—a set of instructions that would have enabled each of Japan’s warships to double its cruising radius—and destroy it so that it can be of no benefit to either of the countries involved: China (in the person of Wu Lai-Fu, a powerful warlord Lee has encountered in Shanghai), Russia (in the person of Sonya, who has left Moto’s employ to try to benefit her homeland), Japan (in the person of Moto) or the United States—which benefits the most, though, from this blow to Japan’s war machine. His internal conflict is resolved by his vanquishing of his self-pity in his newly-found dedication to his country and his gradually-developing passion for Sonya, who ultimately reciprocates his feelings.

In this first novel in the series Moto is actually an obstacle in the way of Lee’s process of self-discovery, for it is the Casey Lee we meet at the beginning of the novel, the man without a country, who interests Moto. As Lee rediscovers his American

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Ibid., 113.
Ibid., 140.
Ibid., 192.
identity, he first escapes from his new Japanese employer by jumping into Shanghai Harbor and then finds himself in direct competition with him in the search for the hidden fuel formula. Yet their relationship is always characterized by the politeness and impeccable manners that never fail to mark Moto’s dealings with both friends and enemies. Proud that he was partially educated in America and that he worked for a while as a gentlemen’s valet in New York, Moto bears no animosity towards Lee and the other American protagonists in the series—but will certainly eliminate them if they stand in the way of his duty to his Emperor.

In the next novel, Thank You, Mr. Moto, the protagonist is someone much more intimately involved in the day-to-day life of the Orient—Tom Nelson, an expatriate American who has “gone native,” complete with a Chinese home in Peking, Chinese servants, and Chinese robes. He is not a failure like Lee who wants to blame his own country for his disappointments but instead a cynic whose favorite phrase to sum up any situation is “It doesn’t matter, does it?” Almost randomly he finds himself involved in a power struggle among the same nations that dominated the previous book—the Chinese, the Japanese, and the Russians.

Again, Japanese aggression in China is the context of the protagonist’s unwilling participation: he is told early on that “They [the Japanese] want a ring around China. You’ve seen them start. They haven’t finished yet. They’ve snapped their fingers at Europe and have jolly well gobbled up Manchuria, and now they’re reaching for North China. You’ve seen what’s happened in the last few months. They’ve made the Chinese army move out of Peking. North China’s as good as Japan, right now, and their agents are moving into Mongolia and Turkestan.”

Nelson is uninterested in these developments until a young woman he knows socially is implicated in the murder of a British major who is deeply involved in the current political unrest, and then someone also tries to kill Nelson himself. He and the young woman are thrown together by these circumstances: in this case the woman is not a Russian spy, as in the previous novel, but a buyer for an American art museum who has come to China to purchase a set of eight famous scrolls that are among the great treasures of Chinese art; they have not been seen for many years but have recently resurfaced. As in many of the other books in the series, she is an American, too—a self-confident, intelligent, resourceful woman who refuses to be regarded as any kind of damsel-in-distress. Their relationship, like the one between Rodney Jones and the Russian Sonya, begins with misdirection and mistrust but develops true concern and intimacy as they struggle to survive in this environment that neither of them truly understands. And as the peril intensifies and the connection between them deepens, the male protagonist finds himself changing his values—in this case, Nelson’s indifference to the world around him, his pet theory that history was made by circumstances, not by individuals: “I was caught up by something else and now I could not stop if I tried. I

8 Marquand, Thank You, 42.
was in the midst of one of those upheavals about which I had tried to write. I was struggling against it but I wondered if my struggles mattered. Nevertheless, something mattered. For the first time in a long while I was not able to say to myself: ‘It doesn’t matter, does it?’ It mattered because I was instinctively sure that Eleanor Joyce was caught in the same current.”

The centrality to the story of the lovely but mysterious woman each of the protagonists in the series encounters, befriends, and ultimately loves certainly raises the question of the role of women in the Moto books. On the one hand, they inevitably fall in love with the male hero and want to marry him, yet on the other hand they are all independent, self-reliant people who have not needed any males to protect them before despite their adoption of extremely dangerous livelihoods and roles. In *Thank You, Mr. Moto*, it is the art dealer Eleanor Joyce who takes an action that saves both her life and Tom Nelson’s: while they, Moto, Moto’s militaristic Japanese adversary, and Nelson’s closest Chinese friend Prince Tung are being held prisoner by the bandit General Wu, she impulsively pulls his Luger from his gun belt, a move so audacious that it bordered on the unthinkable. But her courage and skill change the entire dynamic between captor and captured: Nelson takes the gun from her and is able to lead them to their escape. She has brought about the final resolution of Nelson’s inner conflict: he can now abandon his crippling assumption that no individual can affect the course of events:

‘But you moved circumstances,’ she said. ‘We both did, didn’t we? At least I have taught you that.’

‘What?’ I asked her.

‘At least I’ve taught you that it isn’t always worth while to drift. You can be as much of a fatalist as you like, but don’t forget there are times when you can do something. There are times when anyone can make fate change a little. Men have done a good deal to change the world. You and I have changed it a little. People may be altered by circumstances but they can alter circumstances too. At any rate I’ve taught you that.’

The next novel in the series, *Mr. Moto Is So Sorry* (1936) also has a Chinese setting with a similar backdrop of Japanese-Russian struggle for dominance, this time over Mongolia. The American protagonist, on his way to join a scientific expedition in the area, is this time thrown together with an American artist who is heading to join the same expedition, and they become enmeshed in Mr. Moto’s attempt on the part of his Emperor to rein in the excesses of the Japanese military. (It is interesting in retrospect to note that Moto always represents the more conservative wing of Japanese foreign policy, that party that views war as a last resort, not a first one, in regards to nationalist

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9 Ibid., 120.
10 Ibid., 266-7.
expansion.) In the next two novels, Marquand changes the settings: in *Think Fast, Mr. Moto* (1937) the action takes place almost exclusively in Honolulu, while *Last Laugh, Mr. Moto* (1942) is set in Kingston and one of the nearby largely Caribbean deserted islands. The narrative pattern is still the same: an American finds himself searching for a purpose to his life and encounters a solitary and attractive young woman as well as Mr. Moto, the result being one more move in the chess game of international intrigue, a move engineered primarily by Moto, and a new self-definition for the American protagonist. Interestingly, *In Last Laugh*, which was published in book form shortly after Pearl Harbor but written just before it, the American outwits Moto at the very end, destroying a piece of airplane technology that would have aided the Japanese war machine. Not surprisingly, Marquand ended the series as soon as America was attacked by Japan.

Fifteen years later he decided to add one final book to the Mr. Moto series, *Right you Are, Mr. Moto* (1957), the longest and most psychologically rich entry. Originally published as *Stopover, Tokyo*, this final book has a new Cold War theme, the contrast between being “inside” or “outside” the American intelligence business. The protagonist is a professional American spy, and the woman he meets for the first time in San Francisco on the way to Japan is one as well. Moto is a middle-aged but still quite efficient anti-Communist Japanese operative. His attitude towards the American conquerors is simple: “To happy peace between the United States and poor Japan….Very foolish men made the war. Ha-ha. Nearly all of them are dead,” further evidence that he had never been strongly supportive of his country’s imperialist wing. The Communists are planning both a political assassination and anti-American demonstrations in Tokyo, and it is therefore in the best interests of both Moto and the American spy, Jack Rhyce, to stop them. Their effort focusses on another American, the mysterious “Big Ben,” a Communist who is the major force behind the upcoming Soviet actions in Japan. Rhyce and his colleague, Ruth Bogart, encounter Ben by accident on Wake Island during the flight to Tokyo, and the remainder of the novel involves their efforts to stop him, and, as is typical for this series, they fall in love as they attempt to do so. These efforts are complicated by the fact that Moto at first believes that Jack Rhyce himself is “Big Ben”; indeed, in physical appearance and even personality they are quite similar. After Ben murders the local American intelligence agent with whom Rhyce and Bogart are assigned to work, Rhyce wants nothing more than to take “Big Ben” down himself, which towards the close of the book he effectively does.

But the espionage plot is secondary to the novel’s main concern, which is the double life expected of all intelligence agents, the role playing essential to the profession. As Jack and Ruth become closer and closer to each other, the conflict between their personal feelings and the adopted feelings of the “cover” roles they are

playing becomes painful: after they first arrive in Tokyo, ostensibly just a young couple in love, they bring the conflict out into the open:

‘I keep wondering what sort of a person you really are. I mean, what you’re like when you’re being yourself, what your tastes are, what you want most and everything like that.’

‘You know,’ he said, ‘I’m really beginning to forget what I used to be. That’s the trouble with this business, isn’t it?’

‘Yes,’ she said. “It’s beginning to be the same way with me. I keep forgetting. I wish we could have met on the outside.”

At the end of the novel, Ruth is captured by the Communist operatives and Rhyce is forced to accept her death in order to insure that his mission to stop the Communists succeeds. As a result, despite the pleadings of his Chief, he quits the agency to keep a promise he had made to Ruth that he would return to the ‘outside” if she died on the job and he didn’t.

This notion of the personal sacrifices necessary to be a successful spy would be explored much more deeply by novelists like Graham Greene and John Le Carre, but it is one more example of how Marquand attempts to infuse a melodramatic espionage story with a theme concerning self-identity, a strategy he began with the first Moto book and carried through to the last. In addition, in the Moto series he was able to present a largely Western reading public with “Oriental” characters and settings that are relatively free of any racist overtones or overt nationalism. Some of the American protagonists do gain a new patriotic pride, but never the kind that degrades the cultural values of the Other. The way Marquand presents Mr. Moto is not only unusual for its time, the 1930s, but rather unique in crime fiction—neither a protagonist nor an antagonist, but as an admirable figure of efficient devotion to one’s craft and country. China and Japan are also presented in the books as cultures steeped in traditions that are worthy of profound Western understanding and respect. It is no surprise that for many readers his espionage fiction, once seen as ancillary to his novels of manners, are becoming the surest signs of J. P. Marquand’s literary legacy.

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12 Ibid., 84.

Stretching the Boundaries:
Japanese Women’s Detective Fiction

Amanda C. Seaman

Abstract

Detective fiction as a genre in Japan has had a long and rich history from its introduction in the Meiji Period (1868-1912). Japanese detective fiction and mystery writers have also drawn on the generic qualities of detective fiction to critique what they find troubling about Japanese society. This essay looks at the recent work of three women detective fiction writers who set their stories in low fertility Japan. Japan has one of the lowest fertility rates in the industrial world at 1.4 children per woman. The first author, Matsuo Yumi, sets her story in Tokyo of the near future where “artisanal” pregnancy has become the rage. In this world, a murder is committed by a pregnant woman and the detective has to solve it. The second author, Aoi Natsumi, has a midwife as a detective. Although the crimes here are puzzles rather than murders, Aoi demonstrates that pregnancy and childbirth have a lot of mysteries. The final story is written by Murata Sayaka and features a society that has tried to solve its problems through the introduction of the “birth-murder system” in which anyone who can give birth ten times is allowed to murder whomever they choose. The protagonist in this story wrestles with the acceptance of the idea before eventually succumbing to it.

Keywords: Pregnancy, Murder, Detective Fiction, Childbirth, Society, Future.
The Japanese have had long a love affair with detective fiction. From the early Meiji Period (1868-1912) onward, authors have embraced the genre’s inherent mix of puzzle games and its potential for social critique. In fact the two categories of detective fiction most commonly found on bookshelves in Japan are the *honkaku* or puzzle type mystery and the *shakai-ha*, or social critique mystery. In Japan as elsewhere, detective fiction is an elastic genre that can be molded to encompass other genres as well such as satire, science fiction, and even serious literature. As long as the fundamental genre components are present in the genre, the Japanese call it mystery fiction. This generic elasticity and social critique are put to the test, however, in some recent works by Japanese women writers who take pregnancy and childbirth as part of their settings and plots.

On the surface, detective fiction does not seem to have a lot in common with pregnancy and childbirth. In a certain sense, however, both pregnancy and childbirth are mysteries in and of themselves. When a child is conceived, the parents are faced by a series of questions: what sex will the child be? Will it be healthy? It is not just the mysteries of pregnancy and childbirth, however, that make detective fiction a fitting genre in which to discuss the larger issues surrounding pregnancy. The plot of detective fiction often builds upon a foundation of “real-life” social problems (corruption, sexual scandals, financial misdeeds, etc.). The generic conventions of detective fiction allow the reader to explore the social issues by focusing on the minutiae of everyday life (which provide the clues from which the detective derives her solution). In detective fiction, the mysteries of pregnancy and childbirth get explored as a social question.

The deeper mystery that these stories raise is one that is vexing the politicians, demographers and economists: why are women abandoning their “natural” roles as mothers. In Japan today the birthrate is hovering at 1.4 children per family. Starting in 1989 with “the 1.57 shock”, there have been collective handwringing and recriminations and even some proposals for how to increase the birthrate. Each successive prime minister has come up with new ideas for change, such as adding a cabinet level position to address the birth rate. With so much focus in the media, it is not surprising that the birthrate problems have shown up in mystery fiction. These three authors, all female, have proposed a range of ideas on how solve the birthrate problem that range from the horrific to the humorous and have stretched the already elastic boundaries of Japanese detective fiction. They are Matsuo Yumi, whose series *Murder in Balloon Town* was
popular in the 1990s, Aoi Natsuki, who got her start creating fiction on cell phones and uploading to a popular reader’s site, and Murata Sayaka, who is making a mark for herself as one of Japan’s new fiction writers.

In 1994, Matsuo Yumi has gained a reputation for her quirky collection of detective stories set in a futuristic Tokyo with her collection of short stories, *Murder in Balloon Town*. The critical success of *Balloon Town* led to two sequels. All of Matsuo’s *Balloon Town* stories are hybrids of the science fiction and mystery genres, set in a Tokyo whose urban spaces have been organized according to function, with special areas set aside for activities like manufacturing, commerce and entertainment. In this future society, efforts to rationalize and increase production have been extended to the human body itself: normal pregnancy has been replaced by a system called the artificial uterus (AU), in which couples gestate their fetus outside of the woman’s body with the aim of protecting the baby from environmental threats as well as birth defects.  

Despite these advantages, there are still women who prefer to do things the old way—that is, by gestating their babies in their own wombs. In order to accommodate them, the metropolitan government of Tokyo creates a secure, gated community where pregnant women can come and live from the time their pregnancies are confirmed until a month after they give birth. This “Special Seventh Ward,” quickly nicknamed “Balloon Town” on account of the swollen bellies of its new inhabitants, has been designed to provide maximum comfort for its residents, filled with lovely parks and comfortable apartments where pregnant women can feel safe and nurtured while they in turn nurture the next generation. There is, in fact, no need for residents to leave Balloon Town, since concerts, shopping, and enrichment classes are provided for them, and the classes and other fees are covered under the aegis of the National Health Insurance program. The philosophy of the community is embodied (figuratively as well as physically) by a huge statue of a very pregnant woman, surrounded by large fountains inside the entrance gates and inscribed with the words, “The Good Vessel.”

As Matsuo’s novella begins, however, it becomes clear that even this apparent paradise is not without its problems: the popular swimming coach is found stabbed to death, and a pregnant woman is reported to have been seen fleeing from the scene. Unable to make heads or tails of the case, the Tokyo Metropolitan police hierarchy assigns it to Eda Marina, a young detective chosen largely because, as a woman, she can go undercover in Balloon Town without drawing unnecessary attention to herself. After the first day of her investigation, however, Marina is just as stumped. When she interviews the witnesses, all of them describe the suspect simply as “female, pregnant, approximately 28 to 30 weeks, with a *togari* or pointed stomach, medium build, medium

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height, wearing a salmon pink sundress.”\(^2\) Despite being a competent detective, Marina is stymied by her attempts to solve the crime by her lack of “local knowledge”—knowledge not only about the environs of Balloon Town, but by the physical and cultural aspects of being pregnant that so thoroughly define the place. Indeed, Marina’s everyday life in a world where pregnancy has been eliminated threatens to fatally compromise her ability to do her job, since all the crimes in Matsuo’s series—a murder to protect a secret, an assault to advance a career, and industrial and political intrigues—center around pregnancy and the arcane knowledge surrounding it.

Marina’s investigation begins to right itself only when she runs into Kurebayashi Mio, an old college friend who is pregnant and living in Balloon Town. While Mio cheerfully offers to be the Watson to Marina’s Sherlock, she plays a far more important role in their crime-fighting partnership due to her familiarity with the details not only of life in Balloon Town, but of pregnancy per se. In particular, while in the first novella Marina and the other members of the Metropolitan Police Force dismiss the witnesses’ unending references to the size and shape of the suspect’s pregnant belly, Mio quickly recognizes that this is a telling detail, one that ultimately provides the clue to the entire mystery. Later in the series, it is Mio’s understanding of traditions and superstitions about pregnancy that prove essential to Marina’s other investigations.

Matsuo’s Balloon Town stories thus depend upon, but also play with, a number of detective fiction conventions. The first of these is the notion of the detective’s special (and spatial) knowledge. In all detective fiction, the detective’s ability to unearth what was concealed and to assemble her findings into a coherent whole depends upon her knowledge of where to look and what to look for, and who might be found there. As R.G. Kelly points out, this knowledge concerns people both as “individuals—that is, in their rich circumstantiality and idiosyncrasy—and as members of particular social groups or occupants of particular social roles, who thereby possess the special knowledge associated with the group or role—especially the knowledge of the cultural rules that structure and inform role specific behavior.”\(^3\) Therefore, it is both the detective’s distance from the people she is studying and her closeness to the crime that she is investigating that allow her to piece the clues together and solve the crime. Just as important as the detective’s ability to “read” people is his ability to “read” the physical and social environments that they, and he (or she), inhabit. As an observer and interpreter of the city, the detective must be able to move easily around the urban landscape and among its denizens, and recognize the disparate parts of the city as part of a greater whole. Through his contact with the streets and their people, the detective

\(^2\)Matsuo creates a special vocabulary to describe pregnant bellies that mirrors folk wisdom about the sex of the baby found in the United States and Europe. *Togari* means she is having a boy, while *kamebara* means she is having a girl. Matsuo Yumi, *Murder in Balloon Town*, (Baruun taun no satsujin), (Tokyo: Hayakawa, 1994), 33.

accumulates a wealth of knowledge about the city and the connections that form it, providing him with a special kind of “power . . . founded in observation and description rather than in lived experience.”

In Balloon Town, however, Matsuo’s detective, Eda Marina is unable to solve three of the four crimes she investigates. Even though she strives to obtain the observational, descriptive power of the classic detective by doggedly pursuing the criminals’ trails and taking up residence in the world they inhabit, she finds herself stymied by a very different knowledge gap—namely, that between her own single, childless existence and that of the pregnant women who surround her. Knowledge of the city streets here is thus less useful than lived, bodily knowledge, and it takes Kurebayashi Mio to see the small things—for example, the shape of a pregnant woman’s belly or the traditional folk practices of determining the child’s sex—that point to the mystery’s resolution.

Matsuo similarly subverts genre expectations through her treatment of urban space. In the hard-boiled detective fiction that Balloon Town both echoes and parodies, the intensely solitary, masculine detective masters the cityscape and understands the dark elements within it. Matsuo’s detective Eda Marina, however, is a woman in a woman’s world, rather than a man in a man’s world. In turn, by creating a place for women only, in which a uniquely feminine process, reproduction, is the primary activity, Matsuo accomplishes another displacement that parodies urban spatial practice. Through this kind of play with the gender conventions of detective fiction, therefore, the author creates an imaginary space in which the situation of women, their bodies, and their reproductive functions become dramatically clear.

This imaginary landscape, however, although full of familiar places such as parks and ponds, is also presented as a profoundly odd and off-kilter place, by moving pregnant bodies from the margins to the center of everyday life, and making them the template and standard according to which everyday practices and items are designed and laid out. This effect is enhanced by Marina’s wide-eyed bafflement at the pregnant body itself, epitomized by her first encounter with a group of pregnant women out for a morning stroll:

Basking in the sunshine were a number of people sitting or strolling around. All them of pregnant women . . . If you have never seen a pregnant woman, you would imagine that they are normally proportioned women except for their protruding bellies. You would be wrong. Their hips and thighs were fleshy, the lower halves of their bodies were massive, and from every direction and every angle they produced

4 Margaret Crawford, “Investigating the City—Detective Fiction as Urban Interpretation: A Reply to M. Christine Boyer,” in Algrest et al, eds. The Sex of Architecture, 121.
unusual silhouettes. They wore jumper skirts with enormous gathers, making them look like triangles.5

Indeed, as soon as Marina enters Balloon Town, as (ostensibly) one of its new inhabitants, she quickly realizes that the pace of daily life itself is subordinated to the imperatives of child bearing.

By playing with the genre conventions, Matsuo is thus able not only to critique the often-unstated gender structures of the hard-boiled detective novel, but also to offer her readers a fresh perspective on the place of pregnancy within Japanese society as an increasingly infrequent, and for that reason increasingly exotic and socially-marked, experience. By doing so, the Balloon Town stories take aim at both how women are treated in Japanese society and the oppressive maternal culture that is ever present in Japan. Grounding her parody in Japan’s own historical past—such as reorganizing city space to conform to social hierarchies and the existence of the parturition hut to segregate women who were giving birth to protect them and because of the fear of pollution from childbirth—Matsuo envisions a society where female “emancipation” is accomplished by segregating women from their biological choices.

Matsuo’s parody of the genre reinforces the efficacy of detective fiction as a form of cultural critique, as she highlights the various metaphysical underpinnings of the genre in order to show how they are implicated in maintaining the status quo. Murder in Balloon Town also demonstrates how Japanese culture—or culture in general—inform the underlying system of knowledge that the detective must have to solve the mystery. In this case, Marina’s lack of specific cultural knowledge, resulting in her inability to know Balloon Town, demonstrates how particular knowledge is necessary. Ultimately Mio solves the case, identifying a pregnant woman who killed the swimming coach to hide the secret that she used the illegal birth technology, the cyborg uterus.

The path blazed by Matsuo’s Balloon Town series had few fellow travellers, until 2001, when a little-known writer named Aoi Natsumi published Looking for Baby (Akachan o sagase), a clever detective novel featuring as its protagonist a young apprentice midwife. Aoi began her writing career in 1994 with a self-published book on baseball, followed by a series of mystery novels that she uploaded to an Internet mystery fiction site. She gained enough of a following there to be offered a contract by a mainstream press, leading to the publication of Looking for Baby (which soon was adapted for NHK television) and two sequels, Many Babies (Akachan ga ippai, 2003) and A Baby in a Dream (Akachan made yume no naka, 2012).

Aoi’s novels are predicated upon the intimately mysterious quality of pregnancy itself, in which a series of questions about the coming baby ultimately are resolved and

5All translations of Matsuo and Murata’s works are mine. Matsuo, Murder in Balloon Town, 20.
explained. In the twenty-first century, both mysteries of pregnancy and criminal mysteries often are attacked with technical weapons, since, like the questions posed by pregnancy, those posed by a crime or mysterious happening often are resolved more quickly by the application of various technical devices or processes—genetic analysis and ultrasound on the one hand, DNA or ballistics tests on the other. In Japan, as in other industrialized countries, when parents choose a midwife to assist them in giving birth they are choosing a less medicated and technology-assisted pregnancy. Nevertheless, as medical professionals, midwives are similar to detectives, in that they can read the mother’s body’s clues in order to solve the mysteries that it, or that of the growing fetus, might present. In her midwife series, Aoi merges these two roles in the person of Kameyama Hina, an apprentice midwife in her early twenties struggling to build a professional career. Hina’s most frequent employer is Ikutama Satoko, an older midwife who specializes in home deliveries, and who takes on Hina as her assistant with unusual or vexing cases, the resolution of which provides the plot of each novel.

Aoi’s work falls firmly within the subgenre of the “cozy” mystery, in which the focus is upon the solution of puzzles by amateur sleuths rather than the professional investigation of crime and the social ills that breed it. In each of her books, therefore, the midwife partners solve a series of riddles that emerge from the pregnancies they are assisting. In the first story, Akachan o sagase, for example, a wealthy owner of a health food company contacts the midwives because he wants a home birth for his coming baby. When Hina and Satoko arrive, however, they are confronted with not one but three pregnant women. As their employer explains, although one of these women is his actual wife, he is hedging his bets in order to guarantee a male heir: regardless of who the boy’s mother happens to be, he will register the child as issuing from his union with his legal wife. Satoko finds the situation repellent, and initially refuses to take the case, but Hina, desperate for the generous wages they have been offered, convinces Satoko that they can figure out in advance which woman is Kagami’s true wife. While at first the women attempt to hide their true identities from the midwives, Satoko eventually sees through their subterfuge, with the final twist provided by the birth of three baby girls, in spite of Kagami’s careful plan to gain a son.

In contrast to Matsuo Yumi’s feckless detective, Aoi’s midwife detective Hina is able to solve the mysteries she encounters precisely because of her specialized knowledge, in particular her (and Satoko’s) ability to read and to comprehend the physical circumstances of pregnancy and of pregnant women. Her work as a midwife provides her with intimate access to people, whom she can question without arousing undue suspicion or reticence. Moreover, since most of the questions that she is trying to answer revolve around pregnancy and its effects, she does not run afoul of the police or other authorities. Likewise, the gentle humor of Aoi’s stories offers a more easygoing exploration of the contemporary Japanese landscape than do Matsuo’s sharply parodic sci-fi mystery hybrids: Hina and Satoko really attempt to understand the motives and
feelings of the people they encounter in order to figure out what drives them to do what they do.

Nonetheless, despite the gentleness of her storytelling and the absence of serious crimes, like those investigated by Matsuo’s undercover police detective, Aoi takes on a number of problematic features of contemporary Japanese society. In her first book, for example, Aoi reveals how a husband’s desire for a boy to take over his company leads him to denigrate his own wife and willingly pass off another person’s child as his own. Since the two other expectant mothers are pregnant by other men, he is not interested in genetic paternity, but rather on perpetuating his ie (patriarchal family unit) through any means possible. This is particularly striking in light of the longstanding Japanese proverb hime ni taro (first a daughter, then a son); as the nuclear family superceded the extended family as the primary familial unit, daughters were considered to be desirable because they were thought to be able to take care of aging parents.

At a more general level, Aoi’s choice of occupation for her protagonists reveals the changing nature of childbearing itself within Japanese society. While midwives have been delivering babies in Japan for millennia, their activities came under increased scrutiny during the Meiji Period, as the government attempted to medicalize birth and improve the overall hygiene of the nation. As women began to give birth in hospitals and away from their homes, obstetricians were the more popular choice as caregivers, and the numbers of midwives in Japan plummeted, reaching a low of 23,000 in 1995.6 Ironically, however, the declining birthrate in Japan has contributed to a rebound in midwifery, as pregnant women have been given more choices about where and how to give birth. The popular manga artist Sakurazawa Erika’s autobiographical volume Zeitaku na shussan (A luxurious birth) in 2001, which chronicled her decision to have a home birth assisted by midwives, lent added luster to this option, and midwives have begun to regain their role in the birthing process, working in everything from traditional institutions, like university research hospitals and maternity hospitals, to theme park-like maternity hospitals that mimic the experience of living in the Tokugawa era (1603-1868) with all the amenities of modern medicine, to women’s own homes. All the same, the career difficulties faced by Aoi’s protagonist Hina reflect real-world challenges facing contemporary midwives: work is harder to come by, not only due to the stubborn low birthrate, but also (and ironically) due to the increasing respect afforded to midwives as medical professionals. As Aoi herself points out in the forward and afterword to her books, the legal reforms that bolstered the autonomy and authority of the midwife made it much harder to become certified as a practitioner.

Murata Sayaka’s “Birth Murder” (Shussan satsujin, 2014) is a story that on the surface does not look like detective fiction, having more in common with the dystopian aspects of Matsuo’s series. Murata, who has been writing since 2003, has taken a turn

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for the surreal in her most recent collection named for its title story. This story, with its horrific and dystopian exploration of a method to improve Japan’s birthrate, not only plays with new ideas about how to solve the low fertility problem but also is compelling in terms of genre. In Murata’s fictional Japan, the Japanese government has imported a “birth murder” system from overseas in order to combat the persistently low birthrate. This system allows anyone who gives birth ten times to murder whomever he or she wants without any legal consequences. In order to allow men to participate in this system, they can have artificial uteruses implanted and artificial insemination is commonplace. The artificial uteruses allow for anyone at any age to take part in the system. At first, the Japanese people found the practice discomfiting but it is adopted quickly. Thus, murder has been naturalized as something not horrific but an activity that you have to earn through hard bodily work. Moreover, there is a legal structure in place to prevent the abuse of this system. If someone kills someone without performing the sanctioned labor, in what the novella terms, daiko satsujin or vicarious (surrogate) murder, then that person is taken to jail and forced to bear children until they die.

The story functions not only as an explanation of the “birth murder” system, but also shows readers how people who are ambivalent about the system are forced to make a choice. When the novella opens, Ikuko, the narrator, is at work celebrating the fact that Mizuho, one of their colleagues, is going to become an umihito (or a person who is going to bear ten children). Sakiko, the new girl, joins the party. As the narrative unfolds, it is revealed that Ikuko is hiding a secret: her own sister Tamaki is a birthing person. Even though being an umihito is socially sanctioned, Ikuko hides the fact. Gradually Ikuko allows two people to learn the truth about Tamaki; one, her young cousin Misaki, and her work friend Sakiko, who it turns out belongs to a group, the Rudbeckia Society, that is dedicated to ending the birth-murder system. While supportive of her sister, Ikuko seems ambivalent about the birth-murder system, so she does not talk about it publically.

Finally, after a lot of cajoling, Ikuko invites the two women to accompany her on her next visit to Tamaki at the Birthing Center. When the three women meet Tamaki, Misaki becomes a supporter of the birth-murder system due to her affection for Tamaki while Sakiko tries to convince Tamaki that she is being exploited. After Tamaki throws Sakiko out of her room, Sakiko tells Ikuko that she wants to have a baby the old fashioned way, through a loving relationship with a man. Ikuko breaks off her friendship with Sakiko because of her regard for her sister and what she has done. Once Tamaki has her tenth and final baby, she decides to kill Sakiko because she is so offended by her stance on the birth murder program. She entices Ikuko to help her kill her, and the two sisters stab the woman to death. As they make mincemeat of Sakiko’s body, they discover that she was pregnant. They hold the little fetus in their hands. Tamaki is scared but insists that if they never tell anyone they will not get in trouble;
Ikuko rejects this as insufficient and decides that in payment she will become a birthing person.

In this society, the umihito are fully present members of society, and their status is not a secret. In fact they are respected, and in one instance, referred to as “worshipped.” In fact, becoming an umihito, as Mizuho does, merits an office going away party. People who are killed through the birth murder program are mourned in a public and ritual way. When Ikuko’s work friend Chika is killed when a former girlfriend of her single father chooses her as his target, Ikuko and the others go to the funeral. The participants wear white and are sent off with a garden of white flowers.

Despite the fact that men can also give birth in this system, men are tellingly absent in this story, making this world as equally feminine as the one created by Matsuo in the Balloon Town stories. Set in the women’s bathrooms and break rooms of the office, Starbucks coffee shops and the birthing centers, the conversations in the book revolve around personal bodily maintenance such as the concern about UV-rays on the skin and the improbable fashion of consuming snacks made of insects. Men are no longer needed for making babies and so they retreat to the back of the narrator’s consciousness. Murata’s offers this observation through Ikuko’s eyes, which suggests that the bulk of the birth-murders are done by women. Unlike in the Balloon Town stories where the thought of a pregnant woman who kills causes the characters to react in horror, the pairing of women with birth and murder in a deliberate fashion is not remarked upon by any of the characters in the text, leaving it another incongruity that is naturalized by this system.

At first Murata’s story does not seem like a mystery story at all; rather, it shares a number of characteristics of the dystopian novel. Nevertheless, the story tries to find a solution to the larger mystery of why women do not want to become mothers by appealing to their murderous natures. And yet, these women are mothers only in the minimalist sense: they bear ten children and then turn them over to the State to raise.

On closer examination, “Birth Murder” is like a murder mystery deconstructed. In a regular murder mystery, the conservative rule of law and order must be upheld in order to give shape to the world and to remind readers that the murderer always gets caught and justice is restored. Traditional murder mysteries feature murders that are hidden and must be brought to light. In contrast, Murata’s story features the murder, which has now been brought to the fore and has been legitimized. Not only has it been socially sanctioned, but it has also been celebrated through the person of the “birthing person.” All one has to do in order to commit murder is to bear ten children, boosting the low birthrate in Japan.

Now since murder can be condoned in this society, what is illegal? In answering this question, Murata comes back to the structure of the murder mystery. The readers know that unsanctioned murder—that is, murder committed when one has not given birth to the requisite number of children—is punishable. Where does that leave Ikuko
and Tamaki, who have killed Sakiko’s unborn child while they are killing her, thereby stymying birth by killing an unborn baby? Under the *shussan satsujin* system, Tamaki is in the clear. She begs Ikuko to just forget about it, telling her, “A fetus is not a murder. If you don’t say anything, no one will know.” But Ikuko becomes entranced by the fetus, comparing it to a crushed flower, and is set in her plan to become a birthing person so that she can make up for the crime. This decision places Ikuko, who had been ambivalent about the process of *shussan satsujin* from the beginning, in a position where she has to commit. Thus she ends up paying for a life that she took by creating a number of new lives. Her action turns an unplanned murder into a property crime, one that demands restitution. The birth-murder system cheapens life by making baby production like a factory. The economic problems of having no children are solved by this mass production system, a Taylorization of life.

Murata’s scenario of creating the birth murder system seems to be one that is more rational than the one Matsuo concocted in Balloon Town. Matsuo’s story shows that the female-only space of Balloon Town is a place for women to create life, while Murata’s Japan become a de facto woman-only space, but it is really a place for death. The world of Balloon Town has moved to an automated system of gestation and birth, but the government also accommodates women who want to gestate their own children—like a handicraft movement. The children born from this intense gestation are like an expensive handcrafted object. In contrast, Murata’s world has women (and men) who are motivated to give birth so that they can kill someone else. As Misaki points out in the novella, by the time she is an adult, over half the children in Japan will be born from the “birth-murder” system. Thus, in this “birth-murder” system, life becomes quantifiable and factory produced. The creation and the destruction of life has become a property crime that demands restitution. Life is fungible and becomes purely economized. What this system does it that it situates the birth murder system as a solution to an economic problem, designed to create more workers.

The fact that Matsuo, Aoi and Murata have chosen detective fiction as the platform for their explorations of pregnancy and childbirth in modern Japan should come as little surprise; the generic structures of detective fiction, its focus upon posing and resolving puzzles, and its ability to integrate fantasy with realism are flexible enough to accommodate stories of life ending in the midst of riotous fecundity as well as one focused on solving the mysteries of that fecundity itself—as Aoi puts it, ones “not about killing people but about how people are born.” Informing all of these novels, is the same social reality—the falling birthrate in Japan—and it is striking how these authors use different elements and insights from detective fiction to address the social problems and attitudes that declining fertility has brought to contemporary Japanese society. And yet, these stories do not answer the larger question about why many

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women have abandoned becoming mothers. Despite the unusual scenarios that these authors have set up, mystery fiction also reassures us that society will not spin out of control no matter how gruesome the scenarios created by these authors. The premise of mystery fiction is that guilt is individual, regardless of the social situation so that the looming potential of a society where the population is all descended from murderers holds no fear and that the crime will be solved and everything will return to the status quo.

Bibliography


True Crime and Baby Farming: Representing Amelia Dyer

Charlotte Beyer

Abstract

This article examines recent true crime writings about the nineteenth-century British practice of baby farming. The primary textual focus for my investigation of the representation of true crime is Allison Vale and Alison Rattle’s book, entitled The Woman Who Murdered Babies for Money: The Story of Amelia Dyer. In the article I draw on a range of recent critical examinations of true crime and femininity, in order to provide an understanding of the context and depiction of baby farming. I also explore the questions raised by these portrayals of true crime, such as linguistic and gender-political dimensions of representation in Allison Vale and Alison Rattle’s book, in order to investigate the complexities inherent in contemporary recasting of historical and true crime.

Keywords: True crime, baby farming, Amelia Dyer, serial killer, femininity, Alison Rattle, Allison Vale.
True Crime and Baby Farming: Representing Amelia Dyer

Charlotte Beyer

Introduction: True Crime and Infanticide

My article explores recent true crime writing about the notorious female murderer Amelia Dyer who was involved in the nineteenth-century British practice of baby farming. The main focus of my discussion in the article is Alison Rattle and Allison Vale’s 2011 book on Amelia Dyer, entitled The Woman Who Murdered Babies for Money: The Story of Amelia Dyer. Contextual references are also made in the article to other recent works on this particular topic. My article investigates the contemporary linguistic and social construction of true crime and its representation in the book. A central aspect of this endeavour is exploring the gendering of criminality and evil in portrayals of baby farming and infanticide.

Critical discussions and historical accounts of baby farming have revealed the practice of sending unwanted and illegitimate babies and children away and paying a baby farmer for their care. As these critics have also demonstrated, babies and children cared for by baby farmers often suffered neglect and frequently died as a result of their mistreatment. The extent of the practice of baby farming has now become apparent, and with it, critical and popular preoccupation with specific historical figures associated with this practice, typically women. These figures have also become the subject of a number of true crime books, such as those referred to in this article. Presenting a mixture of evidence from historical sources, photographic depictions, and anecdotal material, these true crime books treat the problematic subject of baby farming, but not all do so convincingly or with complexity.

The true crime genre provides a fascinating field of study, though it is not without controversy. Laura Miller calls true crime a “stigmatized genre”, and says such

1 An earlier version of my work on this topic was presented as a paper at the ‘True Crime: Fact, Fiction, Ideology’ conference, organised by Hic Dragones in Manchester, UK, on Saturday 7 June, 2014. The paper was entitled, “‘Angel Makers’: Recent True Crime Stories of Baby Farming”.
2 The book was first published in Britain in 2007 under the title Amelia Dyer: Angel Maker.
3 The practice of baby farming was also known in Australia and North America; see Cossins, The Baby Farmers on Australian conditions, and “The Adoption History Project” on American baby farming practices.
4 Kilday, Anne-Marie. A History of Infanticide in Britain, C. 1600 to the Present. (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013), 94. See also Rattle and Vale; Cossins; Homrighaus.
works are: “branded with screaming two-word titles stamped in silver foil, blood dripping luridly from the last letter [...] coated with a thin, greasy film of dubious repute and poor taste.” The association of true crime with bad taste and the lowest denominator of popular culture is one of the assumptions my article challenges. Such questions of authorship, quality, and originality frequently levelled against true crime works highlight the outmoded distinction between literary fiction and genre fiction, a topic Elizabeth Edmondson discusses. That is not to say that one cannot find examples of true crime books that do indeed possess that “thin, greasy film” Miller describes. One particularly book that treats female criminals only, among others Amelia Dyer, uses lurid terms to demonise the women it describes, namely William Webb’s Scary Bitches: 15 of the Scariest Women You’ll Ever Meet! The vocabulary used in the book’s title is sensationalist in its construction of Dyer and the cultural practices that produced her. In contrast, as we shall see, although Rattle and Vale’s book echoes some of the discursive traits of true crime, it sets out to present an in-depth and multi-faceted narrative about one particular woman and her crimes.

My essay analyses the discursive and imaginative construction of femininity and criminality in true crime writing. Drawing on crime fiction criticism and literary criticism, the article examines the idiom of true crime as a subgenre of crime fiction and historical biography, and explores the authority and function of true crime and its depiction of female criminals. I argue that true crime books about baby farmers serve the purpose of alleviating the reader’s discomfort and unease with this chapter of Britain’s history, in which constructions of the maternal and the mother-infant bond were made problematic by class differences that impacted on them. As we shall see, true crime books about baby farming serve the purpose of establishing a conceptual and emotional distance, while at the same time disrupting the reader’s sense of equilibrium by positioning the scene of the crime in the most intimate of places, the domestic sphere.

The Context and Literary Language of True Crime

Alison Rattle and Allison Vale’s The Woman Who Murdered Babies for Money: The Story of Amelia Dyer constitutes a fascinating and complex example of the discursive construction of femininity and history through the prism of true crime. In their book on Amelia Dyer, Rattle and Vale provide an explanation of Victorian baby farming practices and the reasons baby farming existed. They state that:

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8 Similarly, Geoffrey Abbott’s book Female Executions: Martyrs, Murderesses and Madwomen takes a rather lurid approach to the topic.
single mothers were judged harshly [...] Shame and poverty condemned many of them, and their children, to lives of destitution and starvation. An unmarried mother’s only alternative was either to abandon her child or foster it out into the care of a “nurse” or “baby farmer” for a weekly fee, or to have it adopted permanently for a one-off payment, or “premium”.9

Rattle and Vale point out that the system was inadequate in safeguarding child welfare, and that the authorities were ill-equipped to take on this task. Therefore, they state, many babies and children died in baby farms, where the fee for their care was the only thing that mattered, and once that had been received, the babies: “were often starved or drugged to death; some met a speedier end and were murdered outright.”10 Dyer was finally tried for her crimes and executed in 1896 at Newgate for the murder of 300 babies.11 Baby farming is to an extent ignored or forgotten today, according to Vale12, except in the realm of true crime. In an article in The Independent, Allison Vale accounts for the contemporary rise of interest in the topic: “While largely forgotten today, Amelia Dyer’s crimes paved the way for one of the most sensational trials of the Victorian era – and spotlighted the pandemic problem of infanticide in 19th century Britain.”13 Among true crime authors, interest has grown in Amelia Dyer as an example of a notorious baby farmer, as can be seen from the number of sources referred to in this article as part of my contextual study of Rattle and Vale’s The Woman Who Murdered Babies for Money: The Story of Amelia Dyer.

The sheer scale of Amelia Dyer’s crimes and the number of victims involved in her case means that critics have compared her to other serial killers in their assessment of her crimes. In his book, Murderous Women: From Sarah Dazley to Ruth Ellis, Paul Heslop specifically compares Dyer to other female murderers and serial killers, and situating these geographically and historically. Comparing Dyer to a more contemporary British serial killer figure, the medical doctor Harold Shipman, who took advantage of his position of trust to kill patients, Vale notes that the latter: “is generally considered to be Britain’s worst serial killer, with more than 250 murders ascribed to his name.”14 During the course of researching this material, it became apparent that, while it certainly seems that the practice of baby farming and the crimes committed by Dyer have largely been forgotten or repressed by contemporary society, in the context of true

10 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
crime research and popular true crime investigations, Amelia Dyer is a well-known, even notorious figure, whose crimes are regularly listed alongside those of other serial killers. While serial killers often attract much attention in contemporary culture as the critic Christiana Gregoriou shows\textsuperscript{15}, true crime writers are now also reclaiming figures from the annals of past history, such as the likes of Amelia Dyer. Through the critical evaluation of historical events and figures, true crime participates in the cultural and political project of reassessing the past, and thus has a significant part to play in articulating the terms of that reassessment.

The fact that Dyer was able to carry on her practice over the years pretty much unhindered was due in no small fact to a failure in the legislation, as the critic Chris Payne explains. According to Payne, in 1871, the government set up a Select Committee on the Protection of Infant Life, and their recommendations were later included in the Infant Life Protection Act 1872.\textsuperscript{16} However, Payne states, “local authorities were erratic in putting the measures into practice [...] One terrible consequence of this failure was the case of Amelia Dyer whose serial infanticide shocked the nation in 1896.”\textsuperscript{17} Jeremy Paxman’s book \textit{The Victorians: Britain Through the Paintings of the Age} accounts for the Victorian era and its traces in today’s world and imagination. Inevitably, when the talk falls on Victorian times, Paxman mentions Amelia Dyer’s wicked deeds, but he also discusses the difficult conditions Victorian women negotiated in relation to sexuality and childbirth, and the stigma of having a child outside marriage, factors that contributed to the practice of baby farming.\textsuperscript{18} In their edited book, \textit{Neo-Victorian Families: Gender, Sexual and Cultural Politics}, Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben examine representations of the family and crime, but employ an academic approach and discourse that minimises the topic’s sensationalist and emotive impact. Citing Rattle and Vale in her discussion, Anca Vlasopolos’ essay associates the practice of baby farming with economic and political issues:

Dyer, her daughter, and her son-in-law were caught because of the 1872 Children’s Act, but she and her accomplices were only the most notorious practitioners of ‘angelmaking’ [...] what might be termed Victorian family “terrorism” sent desperate young women with unwanted children to disposers of infants like Dyer and her family.\textsuperscript{19}

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\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Paxman, Jeremy. \textit{The Victorians: Britain Through the Paintings of the Age.} (BBC Books; Reprint edition: 2010) 148.
\textsuperscript{19} Vlasopolos, Anca. “Family Trauma and Reconfigured Families: Philip Pullman’s Neo-Victorian Detective Series.” In Kohlke, Marie-Luise and Gutleben, Christian (Eds.) \textit{Neo-Victorian Families: Gender, Sexual and}
\end{flushleft}
These books provide contextual information and make reference to Dyer, but in contrast to Rattle and Vale, they do not tend to go into as much detail regarding Dyer and her life, nor do they elaborate extensively on the individual murders she committed.

One of the central aspects of true crime narratives is their representation of the punishment apportioned to the criminal(s). This dimension is vital to their construction, and the topic also features prominently in Rattle and Vale’s book. Here, the reader does not simply witness depictions of prison regimes, but is also given detailed accounts based on documentary evidence of Dyer’s time spent in mental institutions and the treatment she received there. Although an abhorrent crime to the present-day reader, baby farming was not as heavily punished in the Victorian times as other types of crime, Rattle and Vale state. Commenting on the six-month prison sentence Dyer received in 1879 for negligence leading to the deaths of infants in her care, Rattle and Vale argue that: “she had in fact escaped lightly. The Victorian passion for harsh punishment of any crime against property meant that theft carried with it far tougher sentences than those for many other misdemeanours.” It was not until effective legislative measures were imposed that baby farming began to be adequately addressed by the authorities. One might suspect that the typical lower-class status of the babies and infants involved meant that little value was attributed to their lives. Rattle and Vale’s detailed description of the physical punishment inflicted on prisoners at the Shepton Mallet House of Correction, where Dyer was imprisoned between 1879 and 1880, furthermore adds to the impression of a harsh prison regime, fitting for a rather brutal age: “Whippings were commonplace, the prisoner strapped at the ankles and wrists to an x-shaped frame, and lashed with a cat-o’-nine tails. Restraint, too (leather cuffs for women, irons and straightjackets for men), was standard practice.” The role of such portrayals of punishment and justice in true crime narratives is to underline the extreme nature of the criminal and their crime, to detail society’s response, and to reaffirm the status quo of the social order and its gender roles.

An analysis of the literary language used to embellish and exaggerate the physical and psychological characteristics of Dyer, as representative of the female baby farmer, is key to an examination of the discursive construction of femininity and crime in true crime, and in Rattle and Vale’s *The Woman Who Murdered Babies for Money: The Story of Amelia Dyer*. This discussion further investigates these ideologically driven

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*Cultural Politics.* (Rodopi, 2011) 301.


21 Gregoriou also discusses notions of punishment in relation to true crime narratives; see Gregoriou 7; 174.

22 Rattle and Vale “Dyer”, 73.

23 Ibid, 76-77.
portrayals and the wider problems surrounding the representation of true crime and questions of gender, authenticity and realism. The portrayal of Amelia Dyer is extreme, and it foregrounds these questions perfectly. The use of contrast and references to popular cultural discourses feature strongly in Rattle and Vale’s depiction of Dyer. Her external appearance and looks are described in such a way as to emphasise her symbolic, demonised function:

The middle-aged, slightly coarse-looking woman who answered the door eyed Charles suspiciously, her heavily built figure filling the doorway. Her dirty brown hair, streaked with grey, was dragged back severely from a centre parting into an untidy bun. She had a deeply lined, almost masculine face, a fleshy chin and loosely drooping eyelids. The straight, hard set of her mouth and a glimpse of blackened tooth stumps did nothing to warm her features.24

This lengthy description of Dyer’s physical appearance and body language draws on literary echoes for impact. Dyer’s portrayal echoes the conventional depiction of the fairy tale witch, who is described in the following way: “In popular imagination, which has been influenced in particular by fairy-tale illustrations and animation, the witch has an ugly physical appearance, aligning her in the iconography of the classical fairy-tale with the realm of evil.”25 Further qualities associated with negative femininity, such as ageing, are also characteristic of both the image of a witch and descriptions of Dyer.26 References to her stature and “flabby” skin serve to underline this impression of ageing femininity and abjection. Importantly, fairy tales also associate the mistreatment of children with witch-like figures: “Folktale witches engage in a range of evil and villainous acts, including [...] cooking and eating children.”27 These descriptions and allusions confirm Cossins’ argument that “the construction of a folk devil [...] was a product of cultural and historical sexing processes of either the male or the female body [...] this sexing process gives rise to symbolism, exaggeration and distortion to produce a culture of fear and a symbolic figure of danger”28.

In Rattle and Vale’s true crime narrative, Amelia Dyer’s mental health as well as her physical appearance is portrayed in negative terms, as a means of establishing her notoriety and evil nature, and as an explanatory factor for her serial killings. The book suggests there is uncertainty as to whether Dyer’s mental disturbance was genuine, or

24 Ibid, 18-19
26 Ibid, 1033
27 Ibid, 1032
whether she used her asylum stay as a way of shirking responsibility for her actions. Reflecting this ambiguity towards Dyer’s mental state, the authors at one point state that: “Whether Mother’s suicidal and delusional paranoia was feigned or laudanum-induced is now impossible to tell.” Mental illness is utilised to further demonise Dyer, and to link psychological evil to external revulsion. During one episode of mental illness in 1891, Dyer is described in the following terms by Rattle and Vale:

She was unkempt: her skin filthy; her hair feral; her teeth decaying, blackened or entirely missing; her tongue dirty and thickly coated. She ranted incessantly, spitting in fury, fuelled by terror; and repeating over and over that the voices in her head wouldn’t rest until she has brought about her own annihilation.

The description of Dyer’s mental illness supports Cossins’ and Kilday’s discussions of a “moral panic” emerging over baby farming and infanticide in late nineteenth-century Britain. Drawing on such popular cultural and literary imagery of and allusions to a morbid and witch-like being in the depiction of Dyer, Rattle and Vale establish the infamous evil of Dyer, by elevating her figure to a status of notoriety which is beyond that of ordinary humans.

The true crime genre thus exacerbates the association of Dyer with excess and transgression. Descriptions of her appearance are used to reinforce the idea of the monstrosity of female power and authority gained through Dyer’s regime of fear and violence against her family and the babies in her care. As Rattle and Vale observe: “The Dyers’ was clearly a matriarchal household.” The term “matriarchal” is employed to question the validity of female authority running unchecked, and to draw attention to the problematic figure of the mother in Victorian times. The Woman Who Murdered Babies for Money: The Story of Amelia Dyer highlights the maternal aspect of Amelia Dyer in several respects – they describe Dyer’s relationship to her own daughter, and frequently use the term “Mother” to refer to Dyer. When contrasted with the callous way she treated the infants in her care, these textual strategies highlight the discrepancy between Dyer’s conduct and demeanour, and the values and qualities conventionally associated with femininity and the maternal. The figure of the “ideal mother” occupied a prominent position in Victorian society and culture, as the critics Claudia C. Klaver and Ellen Bayuk Rosenman state, in their introduction to the book Other Mothers: Beyond

30 Ibid, 99-100
32 Kilday Anne-Marie, A History of Infanticide in Britain, C. 1600 to the Present. (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013), 95.
33 Rattle and Vale “Dyer”, 95
the Maternal Ideal: “The virtues of the middle-class woman and of the home over which she was to preside emanated from an image of the mother as pure, self-sacrificing, and devoted, a spiritual influence and a moral instructress.” Conversely, as Klaver and Rosenman explain, there was a mirroring preoccupation with what they term the figure of the “demonic mother.”

Amelia Dyer is presented as one such “demonic mother” - a baby farmer and a serial killer. In his book, British Serial Killers, Nigel Wier investigates a number of infamous criminals, including Amelia Dyer. What is interesting about his book is the way he uses the critical vocabulary and lens associated with analyses of serial killers, the majority of whom are men according to his investigation, in order to discuss this intensely female and private sphere focused case. One of the book’s stated intentions is to align the various cases with a common denominator of the definition of serial killer and what this term represents. Wier explains that: “A serial killer is typically defined ‘as an individual who has murdered three or more people over a period of more than thirty days.’” Wier furthermore distinguishes between a mass killer and serial killer, stating: “Being a mass or spree killer would mean that you kill on one incident or in one day normally at the same place. A serial killer would kill in clear and separate incidents over a period of time.” Reading Dyer as a serial killer, alongside other criminals of a similar ilk, means reading her killings in a specific, fraught context of horrific transgression. Perhaps this is why the true crime genre resorts to cliché – because the contents are unspeakable, using instead, as Miller states, the clichéd motifs of “tragic maidens; idyllic small towns; smiling devils; winsome, doomed tots.” It is thus evident that, terrifying though the Amelia Dyer case is, baby farming cannot be reduced to one evil demonised individual, but instead needs to be recognised as a social and cultural practice.

True Crime and Reader Affect

True crime uses literary language specifically to appeal to and involve the reader, and to trigger affective responses such as ambivalence or abjection. John van der Kiste’s chapter on Amelia Dyer’s crimes in his book Berkshire Murders is entitled “The Notorious Mrs Dyer”, and uses familiar though somewhat lurid vocabulary and terms to build up a picture of her exceptional evil. Like other works that have emerged in recent years chronicling Amelia Dyer’s crimes, van der Kiste’s book problematises the

34 Klaver, Claudia C. and Rosenman, Ellen Bayuk (Eds.) Other Mothers: Beyond the Maternal Ideal. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2008),2.
37 Ibid, xii.
38 Miller, “Sleazy”
representation of the female serial killer, emphasising the detachment from her victim’s plight that renders Dyer a pariah. However, some writers attempt to “spice up” the subject of infanticide by using humour, and not always successfully. One recent true crime book that documents historical murder cases rather gorily lists the methods used for murder, and also references Amelia Dyer in the section entitled “Murder by Strangulation”. The book in question is Bloody Versicles: The Rhymes of Crime, by Jonathan Goodman. Goodman attempts to trivialise this preoccupation with the morbid, by describing himself as “an original”, thereby hoping to pass off its subject matter and the person who wrote the book with disarming (rather than disturbing) eccentricity: “Like its author, Bloody Versicles is an original. It is an anthology of amusing, informative doggerel about true crimes committed in the United States and Great Britain.”

This method of categorisation and the vocabulary used is problematic, because it appears to confirm the suggestion that preoccupation with true crime is morbid and weird, or at best, “original”.

Anthony Stokes’ book Pit of Shame: The Real Ballad of Reading Gaol mentions the Dyer case, and also uses emotive language in order to distance itself from the gruesome nature of its subject matter. Whereas Goodman’s book refers to verse, Stokes’ volume alludes to the ballad in its title. Stokes explains that the intertextual allusion in the title “The Ballad of Reading Gaol” is an echo of Oscar Wilde’s 1896 poem. Wilde’s poem is cited at length in the book itself, as well as in the title, to evoke the hardship endured by those in prison. Both these books suggest that literary language and forms conventionally associated with the evoking of affect, such as poetry and songs or ballads, lend themselves to the depiction of true crime. This suggests that literary language provides the tools to deal with and process the material, making it palatable to the reader and assisting in “managing” the reader’s response. In contrast, Annie Cossins’ 2015 scholarly monograph, Female Criminality: Infanticide, Moral Panics and the Female Body, offers an impressive, sophisticated and scholarly rigorous account of infanticide and baby farming. Cossins’ work offers the historical and critical context of this crime and the era which is crucial to further investigations of Victorian motherhood and female crime.

Rattle and Vale use emotive language in a variety of ways, too, including in individual chapter titles, such as Chapter 2, called “Suffer Little Children”. This and subsequent chapters towards the book’s beginning depict the investigations by the NSPCC into Amelia Dyer in the 1890s. The authors recount the work of Charles Thomas Bennett, an inspector for the recently established NSPCC (National Society for

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42 Ibid.
43 I have also discussed the issue of affect and the reader in relation to true crime, in Beyer “Mediatization” and Beyer “She Decided.”
the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) as an example of the way in which cruelty against children was depicted and represented, and the struggle against it that he was part of, concluding: “The systematic mistreatment and murder of children was commonplace in Victorian England and the NSPCC was one of a number of organizations leading a vigorous crusade to help prevent it.” The work that Bennett undertook is described through the images he used in his shop window to visually depict the process of saving children from mistreatment and death. These images portray: “children and babies in distressing conditions: naked, skeletal, barely human figures with huge, haunted eyes, twisted limbs and swollen bruises; bones protruding from paper-thin skin that in some cases hung off their frail frames like hand-me-down clothes.”

Rattle and Vale establish the importance and impact of the work done by NSPCC to rescue children from this kind of fate. The book contrasts the terrible images of child cruelty with: “photographs of the same children, the rescued ones, taken months later: plump-cheeked and smiling, dressed in clean, stiff jackets and sitting straight-backed on the photographer’s chair. Those found alive, in whatever deplorable condition, were the lucky ones.”

These painful and grotesque depictions of the effect of child cruelty are extremely disturbing, not merely because of their factual and historical accuracy, but because of the emotional response they elicit, even demand from the reader. Such images recur throughout Rattle and Vale’s book, driving home to the reader the realities of baby farming. Across the historical distance of more than a century and immense social and cultural changes, these graphic pictures of child cruelty profoundly affect the modern reader.

The Woman Who Murdered Babies for Money: The Story of Amelia Dyer frequently includes detailed representations of dying and dead infants, in order to render the depiction of Dyer’s crimes realistic, but also to shock the reader:

Little May was too weak to express hunger, and so went mostly unfed [...] There was Bessie, too; only a month in the world and already thin and grey and beginning to take on the sunken features of one far beyond her age.

These haunting portrayals of the infants’ deterioration, suffering, and eventual death, is central to text’s construction of femininity and evil and the specific form of true crime examined in the book. The authors furthermore show that Dyer’s later regime was even more brutal. Rather than slowly starving the babies and infants to death, she strangled them soon after they had been passed on to her care. The book

44 Rattle and Vale, “Dyer.” 12
45 Ibid, 12
46 Ibid, 12
47 Ibid, 58
features several tortured and lurid passages of descriptive prose, detailing these strangulations:

The tape was pulled tight, held for a second, and then tied in a knot. Too young to comprehend, to fight back or resist, Doris would have struggled for her last breath until her limbs went limp and she lost all consciousness. For a few short minutes her chest continued to heave in an involuntary attempt to fill her lungs and her mouth opened and closed like a baby bird in a last, silent bid for life.\(^{48}\)

While not gory in the conventional sense, due to the subject matter and the defencelessness of the babies involved, these detailed descriptions are not only highly disturbing and therefore effective, in their meticulous revelling in the method of killing and the feeble responses of the victim. Overall, Rattle and Vale’s use of literary strategies and textual techniques, such as gradual unveiling, building up suspense, circular narrative structures, is reinforced by thematic continuity. Demonstrating this thematic continuity, the book’s first chapter is called “What the River Revealed” and its final chapter is called “A Brown Parcel” – these could be both referring to the same incident but they do not. Instead, they are intended to illustrate the magnitude and persistent nature of infanticide. Such speculative and linguistically enhanced discourse contributes to creating the atmosphere of true crime narrative. The representation of Dyer as a cold-blooded serial killer is underlined in the book by the way her actions are shown to conflict with conventional conceptions of feminine behaviour.

Discussing the appeal of true crime, Robert Everett-Green states that: “Real murders have been recounted in plays, ballads and epic poems for centuries, but ‘true crime’ is the creation of a modern society equipped with many ways of talking to itself about what it fears most.”\(^ {49}\) This idea of society “talking to itself” about those repressed horrors and haunting echoes of past suffering is also important to the reader’s experience in true crime engagement. Reader response and engagement is central to how true crime texts operate. In the case of Rattle and Vale’s *The Woman Who Murdered Babies for Money: The Story of Amelia Dyer*, the discomfort experienced by the reader in engaging with these narratives, reflects the problematic, almost voyeuristic position of the reader in relation to the material being treated, and suggests acceptance of the premises of the narrative. Such responses confirm the critic Jean Murley’s assertion that, true crime allows the reader to: “hide prurience behind a kind of curiosity motivated by

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\(^{48}\) Ibid, 173.

moral outrage.” Laura Miller concurs, stating: “The very thing that makes true crime compelling — this really happened — also makes it distasteful: the use of human agony for the purposes of entertainment”

As we have seen, the reader’s affect and emotional identification are central aspects in the complex dynamic of these true crime narratives. They play on and exploit the reader’s inability to “look away”, as shame, guilt, anger, disbelief, and abjection are provoked by their images and narratives. Yet it is important to remember that these true crime stories also examine and re-present documented historical realities. True crime exposes the hypocrisy of Victorian society, and exploits the contemporary reader’s responses of powerlessness and disbelief. Historical true crime narratives support a perhaps problematic version of history as progress. In The Woman Who Murdered Babies for Money: The Story of Amelia Dyer, the insistence on historical distance helps to alienate and detach the reader from what they are observing, by allowing them to hide behind an attitude of enlightenment. But at the same time the question persists. What is it about this figure and her particular crime that remains compelling to a contemporary readership? The curiosity about the hidden side of others and ourselves is suggested by the title of Ruth Paley and Simon Fowler’s book that refers to Dyer’s baby farming practices: Family Skeletons: Exploring the Lives of our Disreputable Ancestors (2005). As Allison Vale states, in her article on Amelia Dyer in The Independent:

The world which enabled this wholesale trade in infant life may seem entirely alien today, but its scars are remarkably recent. Our Dickensian vision of Victorian urban filth is missing one grim detail: the bodies of dead infants littered the streets of British cities

This insistence on a degree of detachment and temporal distance between the manifestations of true crime and the modern audience serves the purpose of enhancing the sense of monstrous otherness associated with baby farming and infanticide.

The engendering of abject shock and “moral outrage” is very much part of the reader’s response to true crime stories of baby farming. As Robert Everett-Green states, commenting on Murley’s analysis of true crime, its appeal and dynamics, that it: “allows us to seize on a particular crime or criminal as symbolic of what’s wrong with society or with the human animal.”

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51 Miller, “Sleazy”
53 Vale, “Amelia”
54 Everett-Green, “Why”
foregrounds the somewhat reductive tendency to pin the blame on one individual who is seen to represent deviance, even evil.\textsuperscript{55} The disturbing fact about baby farming exposed in Rattle and Vale’s \textit{The Woman Who Murdered Babies for Money: The Story of Amelia Dyer} is the widespread nature of the practice, and that infanticide continued after Dyer’s execution. This social phenomenon was the result of a structural inequality, and as Laura Miller states, reflecting on the valuable lessons that can be drawn from true crime: “Crime fiction can afford to go on telling us what we want to hear, but at its best true crime insists on telling us what we can’t afford to forget.”\textsuperscript{56}

\textbf{Conclusion: The Cruellest Crime}

Through the contemporary reconstruction and retelling of true crime in Rattle and Vale’s \textit{The Woman Who Murdered Babies for Money: The Story of Amelia Dyer}, the double standards of the Victorian age and the dominant constructions of femininity are problematised, and their ambiguities and contradictions are exposed. The fascination that Amelia Dyer holds for true crime writers and the possible reasons for this are discussed by the crime fiction writer Martina Cole, in a television programme entirely devoted to Dyer, featuring interviews with Rattle and Vale.\textsuperscript{57} Confirming Jean Murley’s assertion that, “the cultural work of true crime is fixated on the presentation of both horror and justice”\textsuperscript{58}, the penultimate chapter of Rattle and Vale’s book addresses the second of these two questions; namely justice. In Chapter 59, entitled “Legal Repercussions”, the authors explain that, due to the outrage caused by Amelia Dyer’s case and the magnitude of her baby killings, the authorities were finally forced to intervene. The Home Office introduced new, tighter legislation for the care and welfare of children, and imposed a responsibility for local authorities to regulate and inspect houses and individuals suspected of involvement in baby farming.\textsuperscript{59} Detailed description of Dyer’s conviction and execution serves to underline the significance in true crime of seeing justice done, particularly in historical accounts. Rattle and Vale observe, in their discussion of Dyer’s response to her conviction in the courthouse, how that justice was received by her, thereby eliciting their readers’ response of satisfaction:

The colour drained from Amelia Dyer’s face as Justice Hawkins donned the black cap and in solemn and measured tones pronounced the death

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{56} Miller, “Sleazy”
\textsuperscript{58} Murley, “Interview”
\textsuperscript{59} Rattle and Vale, “Dyer”, 245.
sentence. The muscles of her face twitched and she began to rock backwards and forwards on her feet. 

This detailed close-up allows the reader the gratifying sight of Dyer’s body language that gives away her anguish, but this process is far from unproblematic for the reader. It is important to note, with regard to justice, that although Amelia Dyer was executed in 1896, that didn’t put an end to the now infamous baby farming practices: “Three more baby farmers would hang for infanticide during the ten years that followed the execution of Amelia Dyer.”

Thus, in this article we have examined the construction of evil and femininity in true crime accounts of baby farming, and discussed the tension between contemporary appropriations and reporting of real historical crime, and the implications of this for our understanding of said crime. As Laura Miller notes: “We believe in evil, but we also want pop psychology to explain it away.”

Recent true crime texts about baby farmers cannot merely be regarded as “pop psychology”. They serve an important function, enabling us to reassess historical accounts of the past and re-evaluate social values. In its examination of baby farming, Rattle and Vale’s book *The Woman Who Murdered Babies for Money: The Story of Amelia Dyer* exposes but also exploits the tensions and contradictions within the true crime genre and its construction of femininity.

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Children Detectives and Crime Stories

Ruth Anne Thompson and Jean Fitzgerald

Abstract

The adult world of crime fiction has given rise to the popular genre for children and adolescents, an adaptation that can only partly echo the style and subject matter of the adult models but replicates the intense appeal that crime fiction has for readers of all ages. From picture books to chapter books to full-fledged crime fiction for adolescents, from bedside to classroom, parents and teachers have capitalized on the appeal of these books to entertain, teach and inculcate ethical values and admirable personal characteristics. Beginning approximately in the eighteenth century with John Newberry, publishing works for children became a growing and lucrative enterprise. Cheap books, broadsides and chapbooks were found in even some of the poorest homes. Often that material was sensational in nature, depicting the activities of killers, highwaymen and thieves of every stripe, which appealed to both adults and children. The nineteenth century saw an increase in publishing for children, with stories sometimes modeled on adult crime fiction, but usually lacking the more violent aspects. The period between the two World Wars, the Golden Age of crime fiction, coincides with the exponential growth of children’s crime stories, the earliest of which tended in be clue-puzzle stories emphasizing mysteries and fair play. The 1920s and 30s saw a significant increase in multiple series stories of child detectives, especially those created by the Stratemeyer Syndicate in America. Today the world of children’s crime stories and the activities of children detectives mirror those in the adult genre, limited by the ages of the children and the cultural imperatives society imposes on the concept of childhood.

Keywords: children’s literature, Nancy Drew, detective fiction, Edward Stratemeyer, Hardy Boys, Stratemeyer Syndicate.
Children Detectives and Crime Stories

Ruth Anne Thompson and Jean Fitzgerald

From the first volume in 1930 to the present day, the Nancy Drew series of girl detective stories has generated 175 volumes, millions of copies, in forty-five languages worldwide, film, television and video games, theater productions, and picture books for three year olds—impressive statistics for these mystery stories for children and adolescents. Nancy Drew, “a literary character and pop culture phenomenon . . . has received a fair amount of scholarly attention throughout the last decade”¹ chiefly because not only does she reflect the feminist movement of the twentieth century, but also because she appeals to generations of women who see the feisty girl detective as a kind of icon symbolizing freedom and determination.² Her character, impulsive and headstrong, is remembered with delight by many women including U.S. Supreme Court Justices Sandra Day O’Connor, Ruth Bader Ginsberg and Sonia Sotomayor, former First Ladies Laura Bush and Hilary Clinton, Oprah Winfrey and Barbara Walters, all of whom cite inspiration, motivation and fascination with the character. The stories reflect a world where “the oppressive restrictions of age and gender can be successfully overcome”³ and capture the essence of feminism before it became a widespread social force. And the series such as Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys are neither alone or unusual in capturing the enormous appeal of the genre of detective fiction for children. The bookseller Amazon lists more than 2000 current mystery titles, one of which is Detective Kids: Children’s Books and Bedtime Stories for Kids Ages 3-8 for Early Reading, in both print and Kindle editions. From picture books to chapter books to full-fledged crime fiction for adolescents, from bedside to classroom, parents and teachers have capitalized on the appeal of these books to entertain, teach and inculcate ethical virtues and admirable personal characteristics. Children, of course, have simply enjoyed them.

Critics differ about the categories in the literary genre of crime fiction and the characteristics and relation of stories to the culture of the times, but whatever their position, crime stories have made their way into respectability after a beginning which identified them as lower class and marginal. This adult world of crime fiction has given rise to the genre for children and adolescents, an adaptation that can only partly echo

the style and subject matter of the adult models but replicates the intense appeal that crime fiction has for readers of all ages.

**Quality and Quantity**

C. S. Lewis in his essay “On Three Ways of Writing for Children” defines what he calls two bad ways of writing for children and one good way. The bad ways consist in the writer finding out what children want and giving it to them and writing for a particular child because, similarly, the story is shaped by what that child wants. He recounts his own experience of reading children’s books as an adult and finding pleasure in them, so Lewis concludes that the best way to write for children is to recognize that the children’s story is the best art form for what the writer has to say. The danger, he finds, is that sentimentality can creep in if authors write about children as seen by adults. This, of course, is exactly what much writing for children has done and continues to do, producing a considerable body of material that can, especially in detective fiction for children, rarely be considered good writing. Lewis’ acid test is that a children’s story that is enjoyed only by children is a bad children’s story. Of the hundreds of thousands of books for children, the majority are written to give children what they want or what adults think they should want. They are motivated by the adults’ conception of what will entertain children or what children will respond to; to judge by the mystery books that line shelves of schools, libraries, book stores, and more recently, in endless internet listings, very often adults have been wrong. Fantasy and science fiction may come closest to what may be well-written children’s stories and have produced excellent works worthy of the popularity, admiration and the plethora of awards they have garnered. The Harry Potter and the Narnia series are examples of writing that is both popular and good. There are others, but seldom are they examples from the genre of children’s crime stories.

**History**

The history of children’s literature, that is, literature written for children, may be seen to have begun in earnest in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Before this time, folk tales and Bible stories were the dominant materials available to the uneducated and non-literate population, adults and children alike. When John Newbery, "The Father of Children's Literature," began publishing works like “Little Goody Two-Shoes” in the middle of the eighteenth century, he usually focused on the kind of material that was meant to instruct children in moral development. It was he who first made publishing for children profitable and in honor of his achievement, the

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Newbery Medal has been named for him. Those books which have won this prestigious award beginning in 1922 are among the best writing for children. Most are historical fiction, with few in the category of crime fiction. It was not until 1967 that a crime story with child murders, *The Egypt Game* by Zilpha Keatley Snyder, won the award.

By the eighteenth century the statistics on child mortality began slowly to improve from what may have been a death rate from 30% to 50% in medieval times. Social concerns about child welfare grew along with the increases in child populations. By the nineteenth century the issue of the condition of children’s lives became a political one. The Parliamentary reforms in England in the first half of the nineteenth century addressed issues of working hours for women and children and demanded minimal education levels for children up to age twelve. Jeremy Bentham’s focus on utilitarianism, “the greatest good for the greatest number,” gradually improved the conditions that are so graphically pictured in novels like Dickens’ *Oliver Twist* (1838). The changes in educational standards increased the literacy rate which in turn widened the market for publications of all kinds. In America a similar concern developed. More than 370 periodicals and newspapers aimed specifically at children were published in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Publication of *St. Nicholas Magazine*, one of the longest running and most successful, began in 1873.

Families, especially poor families, always relied on the economic value of children. Those from the poorer classes worked early and long to contribute to the family security, on farms, in mines and in cities. Exposure of these abuses in Parliament, in the popular press and in literary works depicted life in orphanages and workhouses in all their misery, increased public support for social change. The changes came slowly for the working poor, but more rapidly for the middle class. As the Industrial Revolution opened new opportunities for economic growth, parents were able to invest more time and energy in the raising of their offspring, emphasizing the importance of education and focusing on literacy as a way to climb the social ladder. It was chiefly in middle class homes that reading material of various kinds was likely to be available. The Bible, sermons and other religious tracts had been standard items for centuries, but cheap books, broadsides and chapbooks had also found their way into even some of the poorest homes. Often that material was sensational in nature, depicting the activities of killers, highwaymen and thieves of every stripe. In the eighteenth century the English penal code, nicknamed the “bloody code,” listed more than two hundred crimes punishable by death. The code focused generally on the protection of property and restitution of it to the victims, a focus usually characteristic of the crime stories written for middle school children.

There was widespread fascination with public executions and ongoing sensational stories about highwaymen who, since they robbed the rich, often had great popular appeal with the poor. It was more than probable that literate children were exposed to these crime stories, either with or without parental approval. The Newgate
Calendar, also known as the Malefactor’s Bloody Register, first appeared in 1773 as a collection of news items about crimes. It was intended as a deterrent to crime by depicting its painful consequences, and many middle class homes regularly subscribed to it. The sensation novel, which grew from the widespread popularity of such information, grew to prominence in the 1860s and 70s and in turn fed “the tendency of the expanding penny press and middle-class newspapers to include more crime reporting.” The worsening crime conditions in the crowded cities and the newspaper coverage of them kept the focus on the issue and increased the public’s appetite for sensation fiction. The novels were serialized in periodicals and newspapers, and lending libraries made them readily available, usually to the middle class who paid a small fee for library membership. The penny dreadful provided the same kind of material to the poorer classes.

The Victorians gradually developed notions of childhood as a separate stage in life, one requiring protection and isolation from harsher realities to maintain the unspoiled innocence of offspring. “The history of childhood and children’s literature in nineteenth-century Britain is thus shown to be an awakening consciousness, a Romantic dawning, not only to the joy of childhood but to the freedom and innocence of children: Alice rises triumphantly after decades of Goody Two-Shoes.” But even as publishers and book sellers rushed into the lucrative market of supplying adult reading matter, a parallel development in publishing for children took place. Many of the books produced at the time were illustrated versions of nursery rhymes, folk and fairy tales, animal stories such as Beatrice Potter’s Peter Rabbit tales. They also depict lives of proper middle class children whose manners and morality proved to be beyond reproach. Children’s magazines, constructed as much for instruction as delight, which multiplied in both England and America throughout the nineteenth century, sometimes offered clue-puzzles and encourages readers to enter contests to solve them. Many lasted for only a few issues and the quality was very uneven. Every editor probably can sympathize with the imaginary critic of the Youth’s Literary Messenger who described the journal as:

a sort of anomaly in literature ... too far advanced for childhood, too childish for maturer years; too grave for the gay, too light for the serious; too rational for the romantic, too religious for the worldling, too worldly for the pious; too orthodox for thesectarian; too liberal for the orthodox. In the endeavour to avoid exciting the passions it failed to awaken interest;

and in steering a middle course, which enabled it to shun the rocks above water, it often went aground on the shoals. But though it was not good enough for commendation, it scarcely deserved censure; and judicious counsel might have done much to amend it, had its career been prolonged.8

One of the most famous early moralizing books for children, frequently reprinted on both sides of the Atlantic, was James Janeway's *A Token for children: being an exact account of the conversion, holy and exemplary lives, and joyful deaths of several young children.* Published in England in 1709, thirteen model children die in its pages. If children were to have such materials, it is no surprise that they turned eagerly to less uplifting and more exciting fare.

By the twentieth century a taste for more muscular stories developed. The period between the two World Wars, the Golden Age of crime fiction, coincides with the exponential growth of children’s crime stories. The earliest of these tended in be clue-puzzle stories which emphasized solving mysteries and fair play.9 Children’s magazines like *Parley’s, Youth’s Companion* and *St. Nicholas* were popular by middle and late nineteenth century and these often contained the kind of stories that which were meant to challenge young minds. Sherlock Holmes and Auguste Dupin, those models of superior ratiocination who made indelible marks on the genre of adult crime fiction, also affected stories for children. Today Encyclopedia Brown stars in a series as a boy with a mind like a computer, a Sherlock Holmes figure because of his intelligence and range of knowledge. The series of twenty-nine novels published from 1963 to the present led to a comic strip, a television series, books of puzzles and games and a feature film.

The tough private eye fiction for adults which developed between the two wars, however, was judged unsuitable for children, especially as many of the mystery books were used in school to teach reading and supplement reading instruction. As adult crime stories focused increasingly on amateur sleuths rather than police and on individuals characterized, not by “superhuman intellectual skills, but on “toughness and tenacity,”10 so too did this become characteristic of the detective heroes of children’s works. Since John Newbery had popularized and profited from the market for children’s books, canny publishers were not reluctant to hop on this bandwagon. The 1920s and 30s saw a significant increase in multiple series stories of child detectives, especially those created by the Stratemeyer Syndicate using the pseudonym of Franklin W. Dixon for both the Hardy Boys and Ted Scott series, the latter being one of the first Stratemeyer Syndicate books to be reprinted in a foreign country and language. The

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8 William Stavely, *Youth’s Literary Messenger: 1837-1839.*
10 Horsley, *Twentieth Century*, 73.
Hardy Boys, first appearing in 1927 and still being published in multiple volumes annually, the Ted Scott flying stories (1927 – 1943), the Nancy Drew series (1930 to the present) and the Trixie Belden series (1948 – 1986, with new editions starting again 2003), are among hosts of others. Having found a formula that proved profitable, publishers hastened to replicate it as often as possible, with protagonists whose ages spanned all the years of childhood and adolescence. Trixie Belden, at fourteen a younger and less sophisticated version of the Nancy Drew persona, is insecure about her looks, struggles with math, grumbles about chores and is often frustrated by life with both older and younger brothers as she goes about the business of solving crimes.

The formula for the success of many of the series mysteries was developed by Edward Stratemeyer, founder of a book-packaging firm. He created the Hardy Boys series by writing plot outlines and hiring a series of ghost writers over the years who all used the pseudonym Franklin W. Dixon. In 1959 extensive revisions were made to the series to remove racial stereotyping, as was done with the Nancy Drew books. A new series, the Hardy Boys Casefiles, was created in 1987, and in keeping with the increased realism of children’s crime stories in the latter decades of the twentieth century, features murders, violence, and international espionage. Sales of over one million copies a year in more than twenty-five languages, computer games and five television bear witness to its appeal. Critics have offered many explanations for the characters’ longevity, suggesting variously that the Hardy Boys embody simple wish fulfillment,11 American ideals of boyhood12 and a respected father who is paradoxically inept.13 Stratemeyer was aware that the Hardy Boys series was popular also with girls so he developed a similar series featuring an amateur girl detective as a strong female character, Nancy Drew. Again he wrote plot outlines and hired Mildred Wirt Benson to ghostwrite the first volumes in the series under the pseudonym Carolyn Keene.14 As with the Hardy Boys series, subsequent titles have been produced by a number of ghostwriters, all under the pseudonym Carolyn Keene, who were paid from $75 to $125 for each book. Stories of the turf wars among all of the publishers of children’s literature in the twentieth century are amply documented in Leonard S. Marcus’ Minders of Make-Believe: Idealists, Entrepreneurs, and the Shaping of American Children’s Literature.

Family and Friends

A large part, undoubtedly the major part, of a child’s life depends upon successfully deciphering how the world works, how to fit into a family and a culture and how to learn the values of the adult caregivers. Children as they mature are quick to pick up subtle and not so subtle clues from adults about positive and negative behaviors and beliefs. This instinct may account in part for the appeal of stories in which the central child character solves mysteries by interpreting clues others have missed. Margery Fisher “enumerates the child-investigators’ natural advantages for detection: ‘curiosity, an eye for insignificant details, the power to lurk unseen, and an awareness of environment as intense as that of a policeman on the beat.’”15 However, in order to function this way, the child or adolescent “detective” must first be somewhat detached from the supervision and control of the adult world in order to uncover misdeeds, identify miscreants and restore a sense of rightness and order to the world, as the adult detective does. This autonomy of the child detective is a necessity, so for many of these characters, there is no mother character, presumably because mothers would attempt to confine the child to keep him or her from the kinds of dangerous situations encountered in pursuing criminals. The adults who figure in the child detective’s world may be entirely absent, as in The Boxcar Children by Gertrude Chandler Warner, a series first published in 1924, reissued in 1942, and continued today with a number of writers using Warner’s name. Having lost their parents, the children take up residence in an abandoned boxcar and reach out to help neighbors who are victims of crime, usually of theft. The Bad Beginning (1998) by Lemony Snicket, a pseudonym of American writer Daniel Handler, is a Gothic spoof that takes the entire series to solve, tells the story of the plight of three children whose parents have been killed and who are pursued by a guardian who is intent on robbing them of the family fortune.

Father figures are more likely to be present in the stories, although more distant and more willing to allow offspring considerable freedom. The father of motherless Nancy Drew is a criminal lawyer and the father of the Hardy boys is a private detective. Both fathers are kindly but somewhat peripheral figures who clearly lack the brilliant investigative skills of their offspring to whom the fathers often turn for aid in their cases. The father of Encyclopedia Brown, the boy detective “with a mind like a computer,” from the series for nine and ten year olds by Donald J. Sobol, published from 1963 to the present, is the town’s police chief. He describes his difficult cases which, using the clues given, his son always solves by means of codes, logic and observing contradictory details. These parental careers provide a rationale for the child characters’ continual exposure to crimes and criminal activity. As Prager points out

regarding the Hardy Boys series, “Never were so many assorted felonies committed in a simple American small town.” However, as the series developed, the Hardy boys emerged into the wider world which they cruise in cars, boats, planes and motorcycles. One more recent work, *Space Case*, has even presented the hero, twelve year old Dashiell Gibson, with a murder on a lunar colony (Gibbs).

But the limitations natural to youngsters require they have support in their activities. Family relations, especially siblings, and friends are usually involved in the actions so few of the child detectives need to operate alone. Typically Nancy Drew has her friends Bess and George and her boyfriend Ned. The Hardy boys, Frank and Joe, have each other, the Boxcar children are a close knit family of four. In the Trixie Belden mystery series Trixie solves mysteries along with brothers and friends who form a club called the Bob-Whites of the Glen. *Nate the Great*, an American series by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat published from 1972 to 2009, has a child protagonist, Nate, “with the cool detachment of a Sam Spade. . . [who] likes to work alone” to solve his mysteries, but he does have his dog Sludge who, like Nate, loves pancakes.

This focus on family support is seen in children’s mysteries in many cultures. In the Arabian “Five Adventurers” series of more than two hundred books by Egyptian author Mahmoud Salem, the leader Tawfiq, nicknamed “Takhtakh,” solves crimes with his siblings, two brothers and two sisters. The five protagonists range in age from seven to fifteen. Because “boys and girls are educated separately, except in small villages, in most Middle Eastern countries,” the children know few members of the opposite sex outside the extended family. . . . the adventurers usually are related, emphasizing the role of family” in that society. The behavior of the boys is “a model of decorum, indicating respect for the girls and for each other.” Another of the more realistic stories, *Emil and the Detectives* published in 1929 by German writer Erich Kastner, is set in contemporary Berlin. It has a number of tough characters one of whom steals the money Emil intends to give to his grandmother. With the aid of a local boy named Gustav and twenty-four children who call themselves “the detectives,” Emil captures the thief whom the “detectives” hold for the police. The French Tintin series (1929 – 1986) by Belgian cartoonist Georges Remi who wrote under the pen name Hergé first appeared in 1929 in *Le Petit Vingtième*, a youth supplement to the Belgian newspaper *Le Vingtième Siècle*. The stories have had sales of more than 200 million copies in more than 70 languages. The young reporter who has adventures worldwide has the bumbling Captain Haddock as his bodyguard. Animal companions also serve as protectors. The fox terrier Snowy (Milou in the original version in French) often bites through ropes when young Tintin is captured and tied up in his pursuit of dangerous cases. One of the few adult protagonists in children’s crime stories is Agaton Sax, the humorous hero created by Swedish author Nils-Olof Franzen, in a series which ran from 1955 through

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1978. Agaton, with his rotund figure, hat and moustache, very much resembles Hercule Poirot, and he too relies on his brilliant dachshund dog, Tikkie. An early adopter of the computer to help him solve cases, Agaton runs a detective agency and a newspaper with the aid of a Watson-like sidekick, the helpless Inspector Lispington of the Yard.

**The Crimes**

The nature of the crimes that are solved by children detectives varies widely depending on the age of the child detectives. In *Bloody Murder: The Homicide Tradition in Children’s Literature* Michelle Ann Abate analyses the changing ways violent crime is depicted in stories from *Alice in Wonderland* to the Nancy Drew mysteries. She points out that the oral literature in folk and fairy tales and the biblical stories to which children are exposed today and in previous centuries are full of bloody crimes. From the murder of Abel by Cain in the Garden of Eden through tales of the grandmother in Little Red Riding Hood being devoured by the wolf, to the jealous Queen demanding the head of Snow White, these stories have addressed some of the darkest motives in human behavior. Yet earlier twentieth century children’s stories, especially those written for use in language arts programs in schools, tended to sanitized the violence. More recently Disney movies have rewritten classic tales like “The Little Mermaid” and other stories to soften their impact by downplaying elements of blood and gore, in keeping with some modern sensibilities. Ironically this occurred at the same time that children were devouring comic books, and more recently video games, about super heroes in their violent clashes with criminals. This downplaying of violence also characterized much of children’s literature of the late nineteenth century, reflecting a pervasive belief in the need to protect the innocent state of childhood, and with as little success. Children, in the same way as adults, manifest a fascination with the sensational. Contemporary media have made it increasingly unlikely for children to be kept from an awareness of the seamier side of human behavior. Modern psychology, particularly the work of Bruno Bettleheim in *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, recognizes the importance of some violent stories to educate and liberate children’s emotions.

The crimes in stories for younger children tend to be those of theft, missing jewels, missing documents and missing relatives. The first Nancy Drew mystery, *The Secret of the Old Clock*, concerns a missing will which Nancy must find so that the deserving poor relatives of the dead man are not cheated by the rest of the avaricious family. The first Hardy Boys story, *The Tower Treasure*, is about the robbery of a car, jewels and securities. However, later volumes regularly involve murder, drug peddling, race horse kidnapping, diamond smuggling and auto theft, crimes which were often linked to their father’s cases. Late in the twentieth century the crimes that children detectives encounter have grown more violent, particularly in books for adolescents.
The Hunger Games trilogy by Suzanne Collins illustrates this trend, with its “kill or be killed” theme. At the other end of the spectrum is the picture book What Really Happened to Humpty?: From the Files of a Hard-Boiled Detective by Jeanie Franz Ransom, directed towards pre-kindergarten to third graders and suggested for use in the classroom. Complete with trench coat and fedora, Humpty Dumpty’s detective brother Joe tries to find out whether his brother fell or was pushed off that wall. In this spoof of film noir detective stories, Mother Goose characters are involved, providing an opportunity for children who may be unfamiliar with nursery rhymes to experience them. Those who believe in withholding any knowledge of violence from the very young may never have paused to reflect that the lullaby “Rock-a-bye Baby” ends with a potentially fatal crash of the baby from the tree.

So gradually throughout the twentieth century threats and violence became more characteristic of the experience of the child detectives, particularly those stories aimed at adolescents. The notion of a protected childhood no longer has the same force it once possessed by the Victorians. Wars and other violence, daily more visible in film, newspapers, television and the internet, are reflected in the crime stories for children, beginning roughly in the middle of the twentieth century. The hard-boiled private eye of adult crime stories ultimately found an iteration in the tougher child protagonists, threatened with murder, shooting, beatings and various forms of physical mayhem against which, no matter how unrealistic, they are saved by their own cleverness.

Conclusion

The world of children’s crime stories and the activities of children detectives mirror those in the genres of adult crime fiction to a degree limited by the ages of the children and the cultural imperatives society imposes on the concept of childhood. Child detectives are restricted in terms of freedom and mobility. The compensation for these limitations causes the genre to violate the first principle of good mystery writing for adults, namely that accident and coincidence have no place in a well-crafted story. In addition, the invention of multiple media forms to convey stories, in verbal and pictorial forms, the lucrative markets for peripheral items such as tee shirts, dolls, board games and X-box games, insures a continued supply of stories that sometimes, but all too rarely, fulfill C. S. Lewis’ description of what constitutes good writing for children. This is especially true of many of the mystery series. However, even a work of indifferent quality can often be the first book that introduces a reluctant child to the enjoyment of reading and an eagerness to read the next title in a series. An appetite for sometimes poorly written mysteries is not confined to children. At best these works provide entertainment, increase the pleasure in reading and help create the new generation of crime fiction fans.
Works Cited


Theft
by
Cindy Veach

How I came down from Quebec to work in the mills—
How I never imagined it would be such hell. How industry. How factory bell. How many miles of cloth I conjured from the bloody cotton. How my eyes couldn’t get enough of the one window—the Great Out There. How I lied—about a cloudless sky; there was one solitary cloud far up in the cerulean vault. How I schemed to leave—steal my wages instead of sending them back home to make a gentlemen of my brother—my heart fluttered, like a prisoned bird with painful longings for an unchecked flight—how your grandmother, mother, you, how your daughter—because I came here. Because I did not flee.
Vienna’s Kunstkammer to Reopen

by

Alexis Quinlan

For years, the objects were heaped in private rooms, a bricolage of world beauty—gold salt cellars, shark teeth, insanely intricate ivories, a shawm shaped like a dragon—lavish

mounds dumped to demonstrate they had the stuff, and the stuff had power. Because stuff has power. Duh. In this way, the Habsburgs were like the

hoarders we saw on TV this week only they had many maids and plenty of space. Or like me. When I want a thing I slip it in my purse and walk to the exit toward the new day. It was Franz Josef who finally said Let’s build a place to show it all off, then there will be no doubt. Masons hired.

Actually, I stopped stealing long ago but remain a thief. And to want a thing for later is sensible for this life is certain as a plastic wrapper
around a PVC toy made in China that pleases no child. Empire. At the press conference we’re told the “magical” collection reflects “the entire universe.”

In English it is “The Chamber of Art and Wonders.” How those things—French perfume, a bright bikini, a white goose down vest—would make me someone or make me safe when I didn’t know the difference or hear the tune. Whenever I want I can Google to learn what became of the Habsburgs.
Bir Grbavica Polisiyesi

by

Mustafa Bal

Grbavica’da kalan bu kadın
dönüp baktığım
sonra dönüp bir daha baktığım
sonra durup bakakalan bu gözleri
burada ve buranın zamanında
donuk bedeninden kaldırdığım

Grbavica’da kalan bu kadın

sonrasında şahit yazıldığım
muamması şu ihlamlarında saklı
sirensiz bir polis yetinin
forenzk soruşturmasında
görüduğum parmakların
saçlarında körü olduğum olduğu

Grbavica’da kalan bu kadın

Poe, Christie, Doyle
ya da Ebüssüreyya Sami'nin
gül aromalı pipoları, kekleri
ve kakuleli kahveleri ile
sirtı minderli koltuklarında
hayal meyal yazdıkları
anestetik öykülerden
daha gerçek
daha ölü
ve daha canlı

[134]
Grbavica’da bir kadın
obsesif kompulsif tekrarlı gibi
bir üslupla yeniden yazılan
Grbavica’da bir kadın
formaldehitlenmiş
bir kadavrunun
daha mat saçları
daha mor parmakları
ve tarihten daha gerçek
daha yakın
daha burada
daha şimdi
Grbavica Whodunit

by

Mustafa Bal / trans. Reyyan Bal

this woman in Grbavica
to whom I turn and look
and turn and look again
and from whose cold body
these gaping eyes I lift
in the here and the now of the here

this woman in Grbavica

this crime scene with no sirens
to which I was to bear witness
its mystery shrouded by that linden
those fingers I saw
in the forensic investigation
tightly grabbing her hair

this woman in Grbavica

than the anaesthetic stories
written by Poe, Christie, Doyle
or Ebusureyya Sami
with their rose-flavoured pipes, cakes
and coffee with cardamom
dreamily sitting
on their soft-cushioned chairs
more real
more dead
and more alive
this woman in Grbavica

re-written as if
obsessive-compulsive repetitively
this woman in Grbavica
than a cadaver enbalmed
in formaldehyde
duller hair
purpler fingers
more real than history
more near
more here
more now
Heading to the Corner Shop on a Winter’s Day

by

Russell Jones

The air shattered
in a scream which I followed, pounding,
and found a woman lying
snow-angel still on the ice
repeating, half choking, half heaving,
my baby, my baby –

Two men lifted her forward, slowly
unfastened the sling from her shoulders, held her
away from the crushed sack of limbs
as we telephoned.

It was something none of us could take
or leave, so we stood
together, separate
in a limbo of stillness and dread
until the useless immediacy of the ambulance arrived
and we were relieved.
Leaf Blower
by
Catherine Bull

I watch the manager next door
where older, poorer people have to live, just stand
and blow the dust around, and hate him some.
I wonder if he is a good person though.
He is a person who stands there with a leaf blower
in a season without leaves, so probably not.
And he is also fat and now struts down
the drive in plastic sandals while a girl
with stringy hair does all the work. She weeds
and doesn’t seem to do it well, and has to lift
the awkward dumpster lid all by herself. But,
it could be that he knows them all by name,
his tenants, knows their birthdays, buys balloons.
Perhaps this blowing of the dust from place
to other place is satisfying to the thing in him
that’s corresponding to the thing in me
that’s satisfied when I adjust some commas.
And so I wonder if he’s good, if I am terrible
for looking down from five floors up.
But he is fat and struts in plastic sandals
and blows the dust unnecessarily around
and doesn’t turn the damn thing off,
so no, I think it’s safe to say he’s not.
Hello. This is Jane.
(1972, Chicago)

Judith Arcana

1. Jane at Work

The May morning is already bright but Denah and Eli are deep in sleep; it’s maybe six when the phone rings, startling them awake. The phone’s on his side of the bed.

Hullo? Huh? Yeah, just a minute. He hands the phone to Denah, rocking her shoulder and mouthing silently: It’s for Jane.

Denah sits up to get clear. Hello? Yes, this is Jane. Who’s this?

Her voice gets stronger. What’s happening? Where are you?

Denah sits all the way up, against the headboard. Ok. Now, wait, please stop talking for a second and take a few deep, slow breaths. She breathes into the phone, a model. Then, suddenly, she throws herself across the bed, across Eli, and slams the phone down.

Omygod, Eli! Get up – there’s a woman, across the street at Grant, she’s there right now, she went there to miscarry. Some doctor has been threatening her, and she’s hysterical – he grabbed the phone right out of her hand just now – yelled at me – says he knows where I am! He said, We know who you are. We know where you are. He says they’re coming right now!

Eli sits up fast and says, Let’s look. They jump off the bed, rush to the front window, the side of their building that faces the hospital. The street is empty, silent.

Denah is wild-eyed; Eli is calm. He puts his hands on her shoulders and says, Let’s get out of here.

Yes! And we have to get the Jane stuff out! Jesus! Eli – I have everything! The cards, the file, the phone machine, the beeper – it’s all here.

We’ll take care of it. He’s getting dressed as he talks. We’re going to put everything – all of it – in my golf bag. I’ll go out like always, down the fire escape. You go out the door,
walk toward the lake on Webster. I’ll meet you in the car at the corner of Clark. In the car we’ll figure out where to go.

They’re both dressed now – cut-offs, t-shirts, glasses; she pushes the Jane gear into his bag, he slides in a couple pairs of socks and stuffs a jacket on top. They’re out of the apartment in less than four minutes, at the corner of Clark Street in less than two more.

Eli drives south on small streets, zig-zagging like a Jane on a work day. They stop at a gas station past Roosevelt Road, so Denah can call Allie.

Allie opens the door of her Hyde Park apartment wearing a bathrobe and long sparkly earrings. Her face is puffy from sleep. When they’re inside, she goes to her front window and looks out.

Nothing. I think it was a bluff. He didn’t really know where you were, or who you are. You weren’t her counselor – she just called you Jane. Why did she even have your number?

I said Rita could give it to her for backup, in case Rita couldn’t deal with whatever she needed when labor started. You know, the kids or something. So she gave her my number and just told her it was another Jane. But here’s the thing – if they have that number, they can get the name&address from Reverse Information – I don’t know why they didn’t, or haven’t. Or maybe they did. Maybe they have – by now.

Eli says, Well, maybe she didn’t have it written down. Maybe she memorized it.

Denah and Allie look at him.

Allie says to Denah, More likely she dialed before he came in, so the number wasn’t sitting out there when he busted in on her and grabbed the phone. If he had that number, maybe he would have done what he said; they’d’ve been in your apartment before you were out of it. I think he doesn’t have it. He doesn’t know. He can’t know. Who he is and how he thinks, every day of his life, keep him from knowing who we are and what we do. Guys like that never know these things because they can’t – lucky for us – imagine them.

Eli dodged around on the way here – we didn’t take the Drive. I’m sure nobody followed us. But I want to leave everything here for a while, Allie. At the next meeting we can decide – if nothing’s happened – where it all should be, whether it’s safe to keep it at my place again.
In the car on the way home, Eli says, It’s not safe to have that stuff at our place, Denah. It never was, and now for sure. How much closer do they have to be – I mean, that hospital is across the street, forgodsake.

If nothing happens, I think Allie is right – he was bluffing. There’s no reason to change anything.

There is silence in the car. Then Eli says, How about this for a reason? The end of June’ll be five months, you’ll be starting to look pregnant, easy to spot; maybe it’ll be harder for you to move fast. And there’s me, too, Denah. My place in all this, what I think, my feelings – my law license! That’s not a reason?

Let’s see what happens. We don’t have to decide anything right this minute.

They are quiet again, driving along the lake. It’s maybe seven now, and the light on the water is turning to gold.

Then Eli says, Ok. Ok. So – was she wearing those earrings while she was sleeping? Those long earrings, at six-thirty in the morning? I mean, did she wear them to bed? Or did she put them on when you called, because we were coming over? Or what? What about that? I mean, you gotta wonder.

Later the same day, Lucy is standing at the checkout counter in a medical supply house. She’s got six dozen clear plastic vaginal specula in various sizes, packed in plastic bags. When her turn at the register comes, she pays cash. When the clerk asks the name of her company for the receipt, she says, North Side Women’s Clinic.

She heads home, stopping at the drug store on the way, leaving all the bags on the floor in the back of the car, her jacket tossed over them. Pushing hard on the revolving door – it’s got one of those wind-stopping rubber panels attached at the bottom – she flashes on yesterday afternoon, when she stopped at that day’s apartment to ask the working Janes what supplies they’d need.

She knew Betsy was working; she thought maybe they’d have lunch together and she’d return Betsy’s copy of Zelda. As Lucy walked down the hall, she heard a gasp from one of the bedrooms and looked in. The woman on the bed had blood pumping out of her vagina, hard. It hit the wall behind Jake before he could cover the open speculum with one hand and reach with the other for Kleenex, Kotex, a towel – whisper-shouting to Betsy, Ice trays! Fast!
Today, now, at the drug store, the cash register clerk says, Gosh, you buy so much alcohol every week! If this was Prohibition I’d think you were making bathtub gin! He smiles at her.

Lucy is startled out of her memory of the day before by his apt comparison, but makes herself smile back and laugh a little. She says, I make jewelry, and I clean the beads, the wires, and the backing of semi-precious stones with alcohol.

When she tells this story at home to Mary Jo – who, as usual these days, is not amused – she laughs and says, And while I’m saying this, I’m hoping the guy doesn’t know any more about making jewelry than I do, which is pretty much nothing. She hasn’t told Mary Jo about the day before, about Jake and the woman with the blood and the ice, even though everything turned out ok. The woman is fine, but that’s not the part Mary Jo would focus on.

Lucy and Mary Jo live rent-free in the Abortion Service northside midwife apartment, where women come to miscarry when they are too far along in their pregnancies for the Service to do a D&C.

Mary Jo says, I don’t see how you can think that’s funny. I don’t see why you don’t think that’s dangerous – and scary. You make a joke out of anything, even this.

Look, Mary Jo, this is how you can live here without paying rent; how else would we get to live in a place like this? In a neighborhood turning rundown crap into middle class heaven all around us? Besides, you knew what the deal was when you moved in.

I didn’t know what it would be like! I couldn’t imagine it in advance!

You’re an artist, for chrissake! You’ve got a rich imagination – a psychedelic imagination, in fact. You’re the first woman I ever met who had a tattoo – not counting Janis Joplin but ok, I haven’t really met her. That suggests creativity, even open-mindedness. Doesn’t it?

I mean it about this not being funny, Lucy. But look, it doesn’t matter what the reason is. Fact is, I can’t stand it. I probably shouldn’t stay here. I probably shouldn’t have moved here in the first place. And, I gotta say, I have trouble thinking you should. Shit, Lucy, I have trouble thinking you do this!
Ok, fine. We’ve been heading this way for a while, I know. This conversation is even a little overdue. If you can’t stay, you can’t stay. But I want you to tell me the truth – is this about being Catholic? Is this because you think it’s a sin? Do you think I’m bad, wrong? That all these women are bad and wrong?

I never go to church, certainly not to confession; I never pray – you know that.

Yeah, well, I eat bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwiches, but that doesn’t mean my rotten relationship with my sister won’t cross my mind on Yom Kippur. Just tell me. I need to know. Is it religion? Or is it just that these terrified women show up at our place in the middle of the night with contractions – and the cops could bust in here any time? That I can understand. Because that’s what I think – often.

Well, I think that over at St Bartholomew, even Father Sweeney, that shithead with his threats of hellfire, couldn’t possibly compete with this stuff! It’s all of what you said, Lucy; it’s all of that – and the fact you’re so exhausted most of the time. Even when you’re not on call, when we both have a break and could fool around, go to a movie, get high. I want you to be healthy, I want us to be happy – we’re young! Jesus, Lucy, we’re still kids! You shouldn’t have all this responsibility!

There’s a pause at this possibly offensive and probably ridiculous statement, a pause in which Lucy eyes her, waiting.

Mary Jo continues. Ok, yeah, I suppose sometimes I do think about what the nuns taught me. How could I not? They were so heavy, with their full-out habits, so intense, they left a big impression on me. To say the least. And even though I didn’t like them, what they said came in – it came in, and it’s still part of me.

What if we got Father Sweeney to join those guys in Concerned Chicago Clergy or whatever they call it – the ones who do abortion counseling. Think that’d help?

Everything’s a joke to you – or, if it isn’t to start with, you make it that way. Some things just aren’t funny, Lu.

That night on the phone, Lucy says, I guess Eli and Mary Jo are quitting the Jane Auxiliary. Is that what you think, Denah? ….. Right, right, I know he didn’t say it as clearly as she did, but isn’t that because he avoids making statements like that whenever he can? Good as he is – and he sure was great with that golf bag thing – isn’t it more his way to do it in his mind, unconsciously maybe, and then later his behavior shows where he’s gone with it? Haven’t we talked about this before? Isn’t that what
happened the time you had the big fight with throwing things? The grapefruit and tomato scene?

Oh, Lucy, maybe they’ll leave together and scandalize everybody, the whole spectrum. We’d be the sympathetic victims of a sex puzzle. That’d make my life simpler. How many times do I have to decide about this marriage? Is this the karma thing, where you’re faced with the same circumstances over and over until you learn your lesson? No – isn’t that supposed to be in different lifetimes? Not all in one, like this? ….. You think I’m kidding? I only sound like I’m kidding. Actually, I’m too serious to sound like what I really mean. ….. Oh, I’m sorry to mix my schtick with your scene, honey. I know you want Mary Jo to stay – your situation is different.

Yeah, but why? ….. I mean, why do I want her to stay if she doesn’t want to be here? Why do I want a girlfriend who disapproves of my work, my ideas, my politics? ….. Yeah, I do want a girlfriend. I wouldn’t be happy alone. I always get a kick out of the bar scene, but I hate the idea of “looking” – you know? I just wish she’d admit this is part of real life – part of the real world. ….. I don’t expect her to be like a Jane, you know, think like a Jane, talk like a Jane, make jokes like a Jane – I don’t need that stuff from Mary Jo. What I want is for her to understand we’re like everybody else. Undertakers tell death jokes; surgeons talk on the golf course about what they find when they cut you open; teachers gossip about students. It’s normal!

But Lucy, not even all the Janes think this way, so what do you want from Mary Jo? You think Mandy talks the way we do, you and me? You think Lola does? And she’s got the disadvantage of her upbringing. ….. Please, I know that. When Catholic women get going, they can be stupendous – those radical nuns! But that’s not who Mary Jo is. She was honest with you, you gotta give her that. ….. Well, you gotta give her something.

2. Jane’s Day Off

Sandy, MaryAnn and Rachel are sprawled in the grass near the Lincoln Park lagoon, close to the zoo. Sandy is inhaling, talking while sucking in smoke. She says, This is good weed.

Handing on the joint, MaryAnn says, My cousin brought it last weekend, gave me a nice fat little baggie. I couldn’t use it the whole week because I was working so much. Oh, hey, did Lucy tell you her idea about creating a new doll – called “Janie”? She thought up a whole set of pregnancy action figures with lotsa stuff, the way Barbie and her team have stuff. So there’s Abortion Janie, Pregnant Janie, and New Mommy Janie. There’s a tiny speculum, curettes, syringes, teensy antibiotic pills, teensy sanitary
napkins, and lots of gear for the New Mommy doll to take care of her teensy baby doll. Lucy is hilarious.

Rachel says, Do you notice we seem to be working a lot more now? Is that my imagination? I have this fantasy that somewhere there are commercials advertising the Abortion Service, on TV or radio or something, bringing in more women.

It’s because Allie and Paula are both NOT working – Allie’s in California and Paula’s sick. I think there’s not enough Janes; we need another orientation session, to get some more workers. Do you think our fearless leaders will notice this, or should we suggest it? Sandy laughs out her sarcasm.

You can suggest it, Sandy – they never pay attention to what I say. But, yeah, the numbers just keep going up. I thought since it got to be legal in New York, we’d have less work, but that’s not what’s happening. There’s more. Is that crazy?

No, think about it – New York going legal gave it more prominence, but only women with money can go to New York. Women who have to sell their stereos, sell their clothes, those women come to the Service. And I guess by now everybody here knows about us. So the volume is increasing. There must be some relevant principle of economics applicable here.

Principle of economics?!

Yeah! Come on! You know this! I mean, who are we talking about? Rich women have always been able to get abortions – and they always will. They pay their own doctors thousands of dollars and call it “therapeutic.” You can bet it is therapeutic. Or they fly to Puerto Rico, Japan. England. I mean, do rich women come through the Service? Our women never have chunks of money available fast; they’ve got no margin – since access to knowledge and access to money are, guess what, related, they have no resources, no information, they don’t know what’s possible and they couldn’t pay for it if they did.

What are you, Milton Friedman crossed with Betty Friedan? No, I’m kidding you. That was a good riff. Use it for the graduate school application.

Hey, did you see what Gert did to Mandy at the meeting Tuesday? That could be the most vicious cut yet. I can’t believe Mandy puts up with it, lets herself be talked to that way!
What’s really bizarre about it is, Mandy’s a good worker. She’s thorough, she’s skilled, she’s kind to the women, she puts them at ease. I’m not saying I want to go dancing with Mandy, she’s definitely not my type, but I mean, come on – what’s the fucking problem?

Oh, her work isn’t the problem – it’s irrelevant – that’s not what’s happening at all. Look, if we’re talking about the Service, I mean, the work, then, yeah, sure, Mandy’s just fine. But if we’re talking about the Service in terms of the people in it, the group dynamics, people’s relationships, then we’re talking about something else, right?

Yeah, then we’re talking about some people who – a very small number of people who – don’t know how to behave. Didn’t anybody ever tell them to make nice? We need little blinking signs, or messages tattooed on our foreheads: BE NICE.

Rachel says, Sometimes I’m shocked when Gert’s mean to Mandy, because she’s always sweet to me. I like her. And listen, Gert takes on so much responsibility in the Service.

That’s one way of seeing her power, sure. But it’s like when my grandma launches into her cliché-ridden routine about how even though Mussolini was a fascist who paired up with Hitler he was good for Italy because he got the country to shape up – the trains running on time and all that blah blah blah.

Lola told me Gert’s got trouble with her husband, even that he flirts with other Janes – is that true? Have you heard that? That could make her pretty unhappy, you know.

But is it Mandy he supposedly flirts with?

Who knows? What’s really amazing, and’s been true the whole year I’ve been a Jane, is this: that shit does not come out in a work day; it never happens in front of the women.

True, yeah, amazing in fact, but can that last? I’m always afraid it’s gonna happen, like if Gert is assisting when Mandy is, or they’re working the front together?

No, no, no. That pairing won’t come up. Everybody knows the deal. Everybody doing the scheduling knows – nobody would ever put them together. Look, do you think this isn’t what goes on everywhere, all the time, where people work? Clinics, hospitals, schools, stores, offices, supermarkets?

I can’t believe it’ll never happen – what about emergencies? What about sudden schedule changes? I can’t believe –
MaryAnn interrupts: Hey! Hey! I’ll tell you what I can’t believe: I can’t believe you two! I can’t believe I brought you this amazing dope on a day off and you are wasting it - talking about work! Talking about Gert, for chrissake! That manipulative bitch. Could we leave the world of unhappy women and their fetuses for a little while? It’s late April and almost warm as June! Come on – look at that gull, the one floating above the edge of the lagoon – it’s had its wings spread out like that for an hour, I swear, like it’s trying out for the role of Classic Gull. Floating on the air. Like an urban hawk. Like a bird-angel.

Sandy leans back, looks up, says, Yeah. It’s quintessential gull.

Rachel falls slowly backward onto the grass and says, Yeah. Iconic gull, gull qua gull – ah, ok. Uh huh. Ok.

Right about the time Sandy and Rachel succumb to the sky, the gull and the weed, Denah and Claudia are in Claudia’s kitchen with three children. Denah’s baby, Joey, is crawling on the floor, eating bits he picks up, grazing like a small chubby goat. The women are packing up to go to the park.

Denah says, Uh-oh, I smell something new in the air of the warm spring kitchen. Claudia, would you finish these sandwiches while I change Joey? They all have peanut butter, but only one has jelly so far.

Chloe responds instantly, jumping up from the table where she’s been fitting measuring cups and spoons together by size, calling out: I want to put jelly on. I want to put jelly on.

Sam, who’s sitting beside Chloe reading the funnies, says, I don’t.

Claudia helps Chloe onto a tall stool beside the counter, takes the end piece of a loaf of bread, swipes a butter knife through the jelly and hands it to her daughter, saying, You put jelly on this one. Then she turns to the slices already covered with peanut butter and slathers them rapidly with jelly.

Sam says, Is there something else? I want something else. His mother says, Yes! There are two something elses: carrot chunks and apple slices. We know who we’re with.

Ok, Mom. I just had to check. I had to be sure.
Denah’s voice comes in from the hall, as she changes the baby’s diaper: Claud, let’s be sure to stop at the drugstore on the corner near the playground – Arlene called to say we’re low on Kotex for tomorrow; she’s got to be at the college until late tonight, can’t pick it up. Let’s do that before anything else.

She lowers her voice, smiles at the baby and says, We’re going out, Joey, going out, going out, going out.

Ok, but I think we should go to another place – let’s get it at that big new supermarket; they have a grand opening sale and no Janes shop there yet. It’s not far.

Hold still one more second, Joey. Just one more second, this – pin – is – just – about – closed. Yes! All done! She lifts Joey to his feet, walks him along the hall and talks louder toward the kitchen. Ok, good idea.

They bundle Chloe, Sam, and the bag of food into Claudia’s old station wagon. Denah holds Joey on her lap.

As Claudia pulls away from the curb, she asks Denah, Are you still mad at Gert?

No. I’m not mad at her. It’s just that I realize I don’t like her, which is a different thing altogether. I thought I liked her when I first joined the Service, I thought we’d be friends, but now that I know her better, I can’t like her. I don’t know why you do – actually, I don’t know how you can, but I’ll try not to be obnoxious about it.

They laugh. They’ve discussed Gert before.

Sam says, I have to go.

Ah. We’ll be stopping very soon, can you hold it?

I’m trying. I’m trying to hold it.

Denah and Claudia look at each other – Claudia scans their position and says, Gas station. Just a few more seconds, Sam. She pulls in. As she turns off the ignition, Denah slides Joey across the front seat toward Claudia and gets out. She zips Sam into the restroom. When they come back, she leans into the back window and says to Chloe, How about you? Want to go?

No. Yes. Chloe starts to work the door handle, stops. No.
Claudia laughs. We’ll need just one of those – which one do you think it’ll be?

Chloe visibly considers, then says decisively, NO. I’m waiting. I want to go at the new place. Sam climbs back in and says, I’d have waited if I could.

Ok then. Denah gets into the car, takes Joey back onto her lap. Claudia turns and looks back over the seat, admonishes, You two sit down back there. And, in a voice like a recording: Everybody please remain seated while the vehicle is in motion.

Then she puts the car in gear and says, I don’t have the same reaction to her bossiness that you have.

Denah says, Oh, it’s not about bossiness – if bossiness bothered me, I couldn’t love you! She’s a phony, that’s the problem, she’s a phony. I know you think she’s being careful, thoughtful, helpful – taking care of people, but I think she’s manipulative and dishonest.

Ah. Now let’s talk about something else.

Fine with me. Have you seen Cabaret?

Please. Who do you think you’re talking to? Isn’t that a movie for grown-ups? I still haven’t seen Willie Wonka – I think that one came out about a year ago. Lucky for me, I read the book.

Some people said it was too scary for children, too weird, and the Gene Wilder character is sardonic and mean – have you heard that?

I’ve haven’t, but that’s foolish – first of all, it’s based on a story by Roald Dahl. Kids love his stories, and he’s always mean. Children understand mean – they can deal with mean. Children even understand sardonic, though I suppose I wish that weren’t true. I wish I didn’t understand sardonic – oops, here’s the new place. Almost overshot that drive. Good thing they’ve got balloons all over.

Chloe yells, Balloons! Balloons! Balloons! Joey, instantly filled with her excited energy, says Buh, buh, buh!

Chloe, come in with me – we’ll find the bathroom and the Kotex both. Claudia pushes the food bag under the seat to keep it out of the sun, and gets out of the car.
Then Sam says, I want to go in too.

Denah hoists the baby onto her shoulder and says, Let’s all go in. We’ll scope out our new Service resource, your community’s newest commercial enterprise.

3. Jane Sets Up A Full Service Service

Allie is at her gynecologist’s office, sitting on the table in an examining room, wearing one of those little gowns with fluttering ties that don’t keep it closed. She’s reading a tattered copy of *National Geographic*, dangling her bare legs while she waits.

A doctor enters, closes the door, says, Hello, Allie. How are you? I didn’t expect to see you here for at least – he looks into the manila folder in his hand – another six or seven months. What’s going on? You ok?

She puts down the magazine, smiles, says, Hello, Doc. Actually, I’m fine. I wanted to talk to you, so I made an appointment, to be sure I’d get at least fifteen minutes. I only put on the gown so I wouldn’t have to explain anything to your nurse.

Her manner is not typical of women in these gowns, these offices. But he barely notices because he’s used to her; he’s been her doctor for ten years. He’s about that much older than she is, in his mid-forties.

He puts the folder down and says, OK, so this is a consultation, not an examination. What are we talking about?

Allie, in a slightly lower voice, says, I know you’re one of the more enlightened OBs in Chicago – she grins at him – that’s why I let you deliver my kids; you know that. Also, we’ve always been candid in our conversations, even about difficult subjects. And I think I can trust you to keep this conversation confidential.

Uh-oh. Difficult subjects. Confidentiality. He sighs. Is this political, Allie? He smiles, sits down on the little rolling stool. You’re such a pain in the ass. That’s a medical condition. Is this political?

He shoots a look at the closed door.

I’m not talking about the mob, the bad guys, the vultures. I wouldn’t waste our time and my husband’s hard-earned money talking about that. These are people doing skilled abortions in clean, supportive conditions, helping women who don’t have the kind of money it takes to go out of town, to travel. That’s most women, Doc, and you know it. I know you do. And I know that when it’s legal, you’ll do it yourself. But right now, it’s not, so what you can do, what you could do, is this: do what’s called for, by Hippocrates and your own conscience. You could agree to be a backup, a phone consultant, an emergency resource – for if and when such a thing is needed.

The doctor’s surprised – but not stunned; he knows who she is.

How is my helping criminals going to be legal?

You’re not helping the abortionist, you’re helping the woman. Maybe she’s running a fever, maybe she’s passing clots, maybe she had an induced miscarriage with a five month fetus and she needs a clean-up D&C. Maybe she’s hemorrhaging.

You said these people are “skilled”? Doesn’t sound like it.

I’m talking about the tiny number of emergency cases. Come on, you know the story; nobody has a perfect record. Plus: nobody in your business has control over what the patient does when she leaves the office – what her home life is like, whether she gets enough sleep, whether she’s getting punched around, all of that. And – what if your office had to be a motel room, had to be a bedroom in a different apartment every week? What if, because good medical practice has been made a crime, the practitioner can’t stick around to be the backup – like you can? This would be rare, Doc. Maybe one call a month, maybe two. And if you can recommend any pals you think would be equally trustworthy, there’d be more back-ups to share the responsibility.

Here’s how it would work: Let’s say a woman has a D&C, let’s say she was nine weeks, let’s say her health was borderline. Two days later she starts bleeding a lot – so she calls me, tells me all about it. I call you, tell you all about it. You tell me what to ask her, what to tell her; you prescribe something. Maybe – very very very rarely – you call your office or the hospital, tell them your patient is coming in and you’ll be there in thirty minutes. I bring her – or a friend of mine does. That’s how it’d work. I know it’s not ideal. We’re not talking about ideal here; we’re talking about real, the real lives of real women dealing with this stuff every real day. And you know that.
Jesus, Allie, this is heavy! How’d you get into this?

You don’t ask me that. You don’t ask me anything that’s not about the medical condition of a woman or girl who needs help – help you can give, if you want to. I have to protect people who are risking arrest and imprisonment to do this. I have to protect you, in fact, and you are definitely on a need-to-know basis. So. Do you want some time? Should we talk more, outside office hours? We can meet at the lake, at the park, or at my house. Come over for a sandwich, sit in the kitchen with Steve and me. Or come for a ride in the pickup with us – it’s pretty cool, you know, driving around in the truck bed, lying down and looking up at the sky.

Steve knows about this?

Of course he knows about this! He’s taking care of the kids while I’m doing it!

Oh, Allie. Can’t I just organize a march? A demonstration? Get signatures on petitions to make abortion legal? Couldn’t I just chain myself to the fence at the capitol building in Springfield?

You can do all of that – except the chain thing. We need you to be available.

That night she tells Gert about her recruiting success before the meeting starts, while everybody’s kibitzing, before they get down to business.

Mandy’s saying to Rachel, Last Thursday there was an epidemic of vomit! Seemed like everybody threw up! I’ve never seen that before – you know, there’s maybe one in a week – but this was memorable. One woman says, I had breakfast before I came. I know I wasn’t supposed to but I was so hungry I just ate everything in sight. Is that ok? And then, later, she says, I think I have to throw up. I wanted to smack her – it was not a sisterhood moment.

Mary Ann thinks Mandy’s wrong: Yes, it was! It was! If not for sisterhood, you would have smacked her.

Ok, good. I’m relieved. But she was just the beginning – less than an hour later, right in the middle of a D&C, another one says, I have to go to the bathroom right now. Stop. I just have to go to the bathroom, and then I’ll come right back.

Rachel says, No wonder the regulars like to put everybody to sleep.
Denah says, Yeah, then another one shows up at the place – she doesn’t say this at the front, or to the driver – waits until she gets to the place – and then she says, I don't feel so good, should I do it anyway? So naturally we say she should think it over and decide for herself, and we give her a little private corner to sit and think, and then she says she wants to do it, and when we’re done she throws up all over, and we have to slow down the whole schedule again, to clean up that room while she’s crying, moaning – I’m so sick, what a mess, oh I’m sorry, I’m so embarrassed – and all that. What a scene that was.

Allie raises her voice just enough and says, We have some really important business to discuss tonight, so let’s get started. Gert and I have some things we need to tell everybody.

Sandy says, in an undertone to Lucy, Well, that’s real different, isn’t it?

Gert stands up, as if to speak more formally, and says, You know we’ve always called the abortionists “Doctor,” whether they’re MDs or osteopaths or naprapaths – whatever they are. And we all know dentists and veterinarians do abortions, as well as curanderas in the barrio. And we know some are better than others.

Lucy calls out, Yeah, and some doctors are no good at all, including way too many gynecologists. We do know that.

MaryAnn says, Look, is there something going on here? Let’s hear it – get to it. C’mon, you two, get to the point.

Allie stands up. Ok, I will. Jake is not a doctor. He’s not a gynecologist or obstetrician; he’s not even a veterinarian. He was assigned to the medics in Korea and learned to do abortions from the docs in the army. He’s got no initials after his name. He never even went to college.

. Oh, shit.
. Well, that’s that.
. No way! He’s good! Too good to lose.
. That must be where he got that Asian-looking tattoo. When I asked him about it, he just said, Long ago and far away.
. Well, we can’t use him anymore. We can’t take women to a guy we know’s not a doctor. Bad enough it’s illegal to begin with!
. But lots of the women like him – he’s so nice to them.
And he’s good! He doesn’t fuck them up, he doesn’t come on to them, and we can count on him. We can trust him.

Yeah, right, we can trust him – call that trust? He tells us he’s a doctor when he isn’t?

Did he ever actually tell us he was a doctor? Or did we just assume it because that’s what he was called, introduced as?

Oh, who cares? Let’s think about it – our whole scene is illegal anyway – let’s remember that: we’re all criminals, so what difference does it make, if he’s good?

We’ve got a relationship with him now, and it’s working really well – I say we keep him.

If JANE keeps working with him, I quit. I can’t lie to the women.

Who says we have to lie? We tell them the truth.

They won’t want to come to people who aren’t doctors.

Yeah, right. They’ll decide to have babies they can’t afford to have, babies they’ve already decided they don’t want, because Jane’s guy doesn’t have a framed diploma hanging on the wall of a Michigan Avenue office. Are you kidding? Have you been paying attention to what goes on here?

What our guy has to be is competent – as well as safe, cheap and good to the women.

That’s what Jake is – well, ok, he’s not as cheap as we want, but we got him to come down some and we’re working on doing that again. From the women’s point of view, and given our set-up, it’s do-able.

Obviously. We have a full list every week.

MaryAnn waves her arms in the air. Hey! Wait! Here’s the thing, think about it, here’s what really matters about this: if he’s not a doctor and he can do it, that means we can do it. That means anybody who’s got brains and skill and training can do it – that’s what this means.

Oh my god! She’s right! Talk about your goddamn medical mystique! What have we been howling about for the past three years? The docs have all the knowledge, they don’t share it, they mystify their practice, they infantilize their patients – this cuts through all of that!

I bet lots – maybe most? – of the guys who do this aren’t docs. I never thought about it before – what a joke! I never doubted them, even though they’re all criminals.

Like us.

Stop saying that!

We can learn from Jake and do it all ourselves. We can do everything!

What makes you think he’ll teach us? He’s in it for the money, after all. Why would he train competition?

He’s taught us a lot already – half of us are doing longterms now.
. Look, I’m not saying it’s stupid or evil, I’m just saying that I won’t – I can’t – do it. If that happens in the Service, I’ll have to leave.
. Will we be able to keep getting new Janes if we do this?
. What will the women think if we’re the ones doing it? What’ll we say to them?
. We tell them we learned, just like you learn anything. We tell them they can learn too, if they want. We already tell them they can join up and counsel; this is just (laughter) – this is just more work!
. You know, I respect this, I respect you all, I see this is the way it’s going. But I don’t think this is right, and I’m not going to be part of it. I’m going to quit the Service.

Claudia says, Look, we all know, in the history of this group, how every time something shifts – policy, I mean, or action, some people quit – they decide they don’t want to do whatever the new thing is, and they leave, like when the Service changed from only referral to counseling & referral, and when we added Janes as drivers, started using places and fronts that we arranged instead of the abortionists. Handholding and assisting, once Jake let us in. Longterms. So some women quit – they quit because that change, that new thing, whatever it was, was not ok for them.

She stops talking, looks around, thinks about those who want to leave, stop now, quit.

She goes on: But isn’t it also true when new Janes come in, at the next orientation after the change, it’s not an issue? I mean, the new women come in on whatever terms we have then; they make their decision based on what we tell them we do, whatever we – the Service – is in that new version. Most of them don’t even know it was ever different, they just come in at that moment in time, accepting it as given – that’s what the Service is to them, and they want to do it or they don’t. That’s how I came in – I learned the Service “was” what it was when I joined. That will always be true.

Denah says, I say we do it.

All right, Denah. Yeah. What Claudia says is true, but I think a lot fewer women will come in for this – this is really radical, really criminal.

Denah looks at this Jane, a woman she is fond of, a woman she has laughed with. She says, Kathy. Kathy. If you think what we’ve been doing all along isn’t really radical, isn’t really criminal, you’re deluding yourself – if you think the reason cops stay away from us is we’re not “really criminal,” you are on some other planet.

Allie, who is smiling at Gert with secret-knowledge eyes, says, I like this idea.
And Gert replies, Yes, I think we should do it.

At these words from Allie and Gert, most of the Janes exchange looks. They know the two leaders have now decreed what will happen. Some of them wonder if it’s already happening. Wouldn’t be the first time Allie and Gert have taken action and brought it to the others afterwards. In fact, some Janes think there’s stuff they never bring to the group at all. That would not surprise Denah, or Claudia. They look at each other intently.

Gert pivots the conversation: Also, we need more doctor contacts. Anybody seeing a new ob-gyn, I mean, one you feel good about?

Mandy says, I met a doctor at a party last week, and we actually talked about the possibility of abortion becoming legal soon; he thought everybody would learn how to do it if that happens – which I took as a good sign. But I don’t know his last name – he was just John at the party. You know how that is: Mandy and Fred, this is John and Lisa, blah blah blah.

Gert says, Oh, great, Mandy. That’s not too much less than helpful; thanks.

Allie leans in front of Gert to tell about her doctor, his reluctance trumped by his politics – and his trust in her. Everybody cheers.

I’ve got a friend who’s in medical school – he may be meeting some good people – and I can ask him tomorrow night, MaryAnn says.

Sandy says, I go to a GP I love – what about that? Do we have to care what their specialty is?

Allie says, No – but then it gets tricky. He’s gonna look suspicious if he starts admitting gyn patients to his hospital – one in a year, maybe’d be ok, but a few, even a couple, could get him in trouble.

Lucy remembers the guy she met at Mary Jo’s cousin’s birthday party – she liked him; he was really funny. His name surfaces in her memory and she says, Anybody here know Lance Malley? He’s been around a few years – oh! wait, he’s at a Catholic hospital. Shit.

Arlene says, What about Charak Sharma? The guy who started doing abortions when he was an intern – he’d meet the women at that pink motel out by the airport? He’s a
sweetheart. By the time the Service really got going he had his own practice – did his own patients and a few of our women too. You know who I mean? I saw him at the big peace march last year; he was walking with that medical contingent – they all wore scrubs, remember? They’re the guys who palled around with Concerned Clergy at the Take Back the Night march. They were cute: the men’s auxiliary to the women’s liberation movement. I’ll find him.

Allie says, Be careful! Do it carefully, that finding.

Arlene puts her hands up as if she were being stopped by the sheriff in a cowboy movie and says, Yes! Yes, carefully, of course! Very carefully.

Gert says, This sounds good. All of this sounds good.
Targets

Carl Palmer

The sign at the end of Old Mill Road is a victim, riddled with rifle, pistol and several shotgun blasts. None of the wounds fatal since the sign is still standing, octagon and red, though the “O” is completely obliterated.

Mailboxes and newspaper tubes, targets, too, along this same lane, none shot, but battered by bats or bricks or brickbats or used for busting beer bottles. They are seldom replaced, only beat back so the door closes enough to keep letters and newspapers dry. If repaired too well they’ll just get assaulted again on a future drive-by bashing.

My brother, Matt says it’s just some redneck’s 15 minutes of fame, letting off steam, usually on a Friday or Saturday night after payday. Many times they’ll return to the scene of their crime the next day to assess their daring damages. He placidly asserts this and more while serenely replacing his mangled mailbox after last night’s spree.

Matt calmly goes on to say that he has four more identical boxes in the basement. That he just likes to picture their faces, dumbfounded and confused when they drive back later, circle around and come by again, wondering how they had missed their mark or were on the wrong road.

We used to get into a lot of mischief when we were that age, just as long as we weren’t hurting anybody. We may have even busted a box a time or two ourselves.

It occurs to me that Matt has a wise viewpoint on life as we look back from the porch, view a car slowing down.
Michael Connelly Interview:
9/11, City of Bones, and Lost Light

Christopher J. Davies

An Alum of the University of Florida, Michael Connelly’s writing career began as a ‘Crime Beat’ reporter, writing for the Daytona Beach News Journal, before moving on to the Fort Lauderdale News and Sun Sentinel and Los Angeles Times respectively. Connelly’s first crime novel, The Black Echo, was published in 1992, and to date Connelly has written 27 further novels, including the forthcoming The Crossing. Many of Connelly’s novels feature The Black Echo’s main protagonist, LAPD Detective, Hieronymus (Harry) Bosch.

In early 2014 I interviewed Connelly about the extent to which 9/11, and the ensuing political upheaval that cohered under the rubric of the war on terror, had affected his work as an author of popular crime novels. In a frank and considered discussion Connelly shared his thoughts on the impact that 9/11 politics had on the crime narratives he wanted to write; how the personal worldview of his central detective character, Harry Bosch, absolutely had to change in response to an event that touched everyone in the country to some degree; the challenges of writing politically engaged genre fiction without sacrificing the core appeal of a compelling crime mystery; and the relative strengths of crime genre, as opposed to the more high-art literary establishment, in responding critically to large scale national events. Furthermore, Connelly offered specific insights into the development of the Harry Bosch novels City of Bones (2002) and Lost Light (2003), and the motivating factors behind their respective threads of post 9/11 commentary.

The following interview content is published with the knowledge and consent of Michael Connelly.

Writing After 9/11 and Writing Crime

CJD: To kick things off, I wondered if you recall where you were on 9/11 and what you were doing, and what your initial thoughts were on what 9/11 could mean for the future direction of the US politically?
MC: On September 10 I flew with my wife, daughter, mother and stepfather to Cincinnati where we were supposed to connect with an overnight flight to London. I was taking my mother to London and Paris for her 70th birthday because she had never been to either place. Our flight from Cincinnati to Heathrow was cancelled because of a mechanical problem so we had to spend the night in a hotel in downtown Cincinnati with the plan to fly the next day. I was awakened that morning by a call from my mother in another hotel room. She said to turn on the television. We then spent the day watching the news with an awful dread for what it meant. So many unanswered questions, so many people killed. The only good thing was that none of us had anybody in that vicinity that we needed to check on. So that wasn’t part of the dread. I think the dread came from knowing that everything would change now. How we looked at ourselves as Americans, how we felt about being secure in the world, this sort of foolish they-won’t-dare-come-at-us-here mentality. All that changed in less than an hour that morning while we sat in a hotel in Cincinnati.

Our daughter was only three at the time and didn’t understand what was going on. My wife and I had to take turns occupying her while the other watched the TV. The next day I managed to rent a mini-van and we drove back to Florida over the next two days. Oddly, we passed through Paris, Kentucky and I took a picture of my mother in front of the Welcome to Paris sign. She passed away a few years later and never got to London or the real Paris.

CJD: British novelist Martin Amis was quoted as saying that:

I think every writer on earth was considering a change of occupation on September 12 because what you had to say seemed so dwarfed by events.

Is this something that rings true for you? Did 9/11 exert any particular effect on your approach to writing or what you wanted to write about? Could you identify a shift in tone between your pre and post 9/11 works that was directly relational to that event?

MC: I think that was a good way of describing it. Even when you are writing crime novels you are always reaching for some sort of relevancy in your work. It’s not just about a who-did-it puzzle. It is an entertainment, sure, but you try to hold the mirror up from time to time in the pages and show a little reflection of the human condition and the human situation. I think writers in my genre who pull that off are at the top of the game. I have always tried to do that with varying degrees of success. With 9/11 you had this catastrophic event that touched every person in the country at least psychologically. It changed me and therefore it had to change the characters I was writing about. And it came down to relevancy. People, no matter what they do in life, want to feel that what they do matters. But when 3,000 innocent people are wiped out in a matter of minutes and on live television it really leaves you with the sense of what
does it matter. I felt that and the way I worked through it was to put it into my characters, especially Harry Bosch.

I had just turned my book *City of Bones* into my editor a few days before 9/11. The publishing house shut down for a few days after the attack. When they opened back up I called my editor and said I needed to take the book back and infiltrate it with 9/11. The book was set to be published in early 2002 and my books are always chronologically set in the year they are published. So I didn’t want to publish a book set in 2002 that had no mention and no feeling of the changes from 2001. My editor readily agreed and so I spent the rest of September 2001 and October going through the book and putting small changes in. I think the biggest change was in Harry Bosch’s outlook and how the events of 9/11 left him questioning whether what he did mattered. He solves murders and when 3,000 people can me murdered in a few minutes, what’s it matter that he is plugging away trying to solve one murder of a long forgotten child whose bones are found buried in the woods.

CJD: You’ve said previously that first and foremost your novels are crime novels, and that it isn’t a case of the crime element being happenstance because the novel is really about something else. While *City of Bones* for me has a number of subtle (or implicit) threads of post 9/11 commentary, *Lost Light*, for me, offers a much more overt level of commentary. How much of the plots, narrative threads and formal flourishes were driven by a desire to react and respond to the evolving socio-political conditions in the US, both at street level for the ordinary citizen and at the macro level of political gamesmanship?

MC: I think it’s interesting when I look back at these two books. The 9/11 threads in *City of Bones* were put in within days and weeks of the attack so they, to me at least, offer a more emotional response as exhibited by Harry Bosch’s feelings of what-the-use? This is carried all the way to the end when he actually quits his job and turns in his badge. In the manuscript completed before 9/11 he also quit his job but with the emotional underpinnings of 9/11 I think his decision to quit is better supported and understood.

*Lost Light* was written during the year that followed 9/11 and I think it has a view from at least a few steps back and therefore it includes more of a political view. I would say that it is easily my most political novel because it is a story that by design takes Harry Bosch – no longer a cop but a private citizen – across the newly empowered government in the form of the FBI with all it new authority to circumvent rights and freedoms of those they suspect of just about anything.
As a U.S. citizen I objected to how quickly the government moved to expand the reach, intrusion and authority of federal law enforcement agencies to dip into citizens lives. I wanted to write a story that would have a citizen – Harry Bosch – get run over by this new machinery.

CJD: Bearing in mind that crime genre works have historically been sites for navigating the predominant anxieties of a society at specific historic moments, as a crime/thriller writer, do you feel any sense of responsibility to acknowledge and work through large scale traumatic events like 9/11? How important is a social commentary strand to you?

MC: To me social commentary is a very important part of the process. To me the crime novel is simply a framework for that social commentary. I think it is what gives every work undertaken the chance of jumping from something that is simply entertainment to something that can also be seen as art. And let’s face it; we all want to be considered artists. We want our stories to be read and told and heard and seen for generations to come. A good thriller is a good thriller. But if it is a thriller that very subtly holds up a mirror to what is actually going on in the world and maybe throws in a question or two – This is where we are, is this what we want? – Then you are traveling on a different level, a level of relevancy and relevancy leads to art. If you achieve that then your books are going to stay on shelves for a long time and you have a shot at immortality.

CJD: Part of my research is arguing for the crime narrative as having been the overlooked site of concerted political engagement and critique with 9/11 and terror war politics that literary critics have found lacking in significant high art novels of 9/11. Several critics have talked about 9/11 novels like Don DeLillo’s Falling Man as interiorised, narcissistic narratives, pre-occupied with the personal sphere of trauma, where 9/11 and everything that followed was just a backdrop to romantic and emotional entanglements and could be interchanged with any other national tragedy; the politics of 9/11 virtually unrepresented.

What are your feelings on what genre fiction, specifically the crime narrative, can bring to the table, or indeed has brought to the table, in terms of rectifying that disengagement?

MC: I think the word is immediacy. Most practitioners of the crime novel write contemporaneously with history. Crime novels examining aspects of 9/11 and the changes it wrought in terms of self-examination, politics, spywork, law, national pride and isolation were coming out within months of the event. It was mostly unnoticed by the critical establishment but not by readers. My view is that the literary take on 9/11
came much later. It came after the dust had settled and of course it was much more reviewed and examined but ultimately less gripping because it examined things we had already worked through. There is no doubt in my mind that crime novels were more timely and therefore more significant in the process of self-examination and healing. City of Bones was published in April 2002, seven months after 9/11. It is a crime novel and therefore an entertainment and a puzzle. It is also about a guy trying to find the meaning in what he does in a time when many core truths about his country and his time have been changed dramatically. It may be highly egotistical for me to put this forth, but I think that that was what many people were working through seven months after 9/11 and it is the reason I am most proud of this book. It was in the moment and it was relevant. If I had published it 2005 or 2008 then I am not so sure the relevancy would have been there.

CJD: As a novelist, writing and publishing crime narratives predominantly set in the US, did you feel any sense of restriction about how critical of the political status quo you could be, particularly during Bush’s first term when nationalism and patriotism where getting conflated and the “with us or against us” vibe of Bush’s rhetoric was at its most rampant?

MC: I am not sure I would call it restriction but I think any writer would know that if you take a political stand on anything then you certainly run the risk of offending readers. But this is not a 9/11 specific issue. It comes up whenever you give a character a point of view. For example, in crime novels you deal with crime and consequences. You write about characters – detectives, lawyers, judges – who have an opinion on the death penalty. That is a political and religious question almost every reader has an opinion about. So the 9/11 inspired political themes and issues were not new but perhaps more prevalent or ramped up than others. I think Harry Bosch is used as a vehicle in Lost Light to ask are we going to far with this? Is this what we want, this erosion of long held and even fought for checks and balances on government? Another book I wrote called The Overlook has these same questions at the core of its story. I knew that as I wrote these books there would be objections from some readers but that’s the way it goes with every book. The truth is I don’t write for my readers. I write for an audience of one – me. I have to please myself and I have to be true to myself so I write it the way I see it and I hope I am never in a position where I hold something back out of fear of offending or even losing readers.

I used to have a commentary section on my website where readers could ask me questions and make comments, etc. I remember after Lost Light came out I got a comment from a reader that accused me of infusing the book with anti-Bush politics and that it would be the last book of mine this person would ever read. The person who
manages my website asked me if I wanted her to remove the post and I said no, leave it there and see if others join in support. I also added my own post in response and that was to say I was glad this reader was abandoning my work because I write these stories for people who are open-minded and interested in all sides of an issue or debate. Nobody ever added another post to the string.

CJD: Crime genre has always been self-referential, pulling formal and literary motifs out of its own back catalogue and redeploying them in new settings or within new contexts to advance the genre into a new iteration – a kind of progression through regression. Have you noticed any specific trends in the post 9/11 US crime/thriller works your familiar with, in terms of recycling or adapting old motifs?

MC: I’m not qualified to answer this one. I can’t say I am well enough read in the genre at this point. In the last few years I have read less and less crime fiction as it becomes more and more distracting and intrusive to my own work.

CJD: Do you think there was a noticeable shift in the way that 9/11, and latterly the war on terror, changed the way readers responded to trauma / violence in entertainment forms, and indeed responded to crime genre in terms of how they might identify with the protagonists and what they might be searching for from a crime novel?

MC: 9/11 made the world a more complicated and scary place. I think that only serves to increase the relevancy of crime novels and though I have no data supporting this, I think it brought more readers into the fold. While crime novels can seek to understand and explain things, they also entertain and they almost always take a disordered world and bring a sense of order to it. This is the reassuring side of the genre and I think that reassurance – that things get solved, that justice prevails – drew people to the genre during this period, especially when it took nearly ten years to locate and kill the man responsible for 9/11.

CJD: In an interview you did for ‘Indiebound’, you mentioned that when you got to writing A Darkness More Than Night, you’d hit upon the physics principle of every action having an equal and opposite reaction as a guiding totem that allowed you to explore what regular exposure to death, and I guess violent, criminal led death, does to a person, particularly one charged with bringing both closure to the victims’ families and justice to the perpetrator. Essentially you said that an individual required to go into the darkness inevitably has that darkness pass, in some form, back into them. Bearing in mind where you took
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Bosch over the next three novels, and the dramatically upturned socio-political context of post 9/11 where we were suddenly confronted head on with a very particular kind of darkness, I wondered if you could perhaps give me an idea of how 9/11 and the unfolding politics of the war on terror might have influenced your exploration of this process?

MC: A key thing in a crime novel is this sense that anything can happen. These are stories that function best on a level where the protagonist and by proxy the reader has to look over his shoulder. This happens best in darkness. The title of my book A Darkness More Than Night is taken from the Raymond Chandler essay about crime novels and what instigated the rise in their popularity. Paraphrasing, he said they came from a time when the streets were alive with a darkness that was more than night. He was talking about disorder and mistrust of our police departments and government agencies. I think the events of 9/11 shrouded the world in a darkness that was certainly more than night. It became an anything can happen world. No one was safe. We became people looking over our shoulders at what might be coming up behind us. They didn’t find Osama bin Laden for ten years. Where was he? What was he planning? Terrorist cells were forming all over the world. We were filling a prison in Guantanamo with people we thought might be terrorists. We were water-boarding people to get information. All of this made the aura of darkness found in the crime novel something palpable in the real world. We as a country went into this dark world and did dark things in the name of justice and protection and vengeance. We now have to deal with it – from soldiers coming home with PTSD to the next generation of terrorists we manufactured with our own acts. So all of this cannot be excluded from the creative process. It’s in me so it comes out in what I write. Is it a carefully crafted and conscious process? No, not at all. I never sit at my computer and think about how do I do this or reflect this or create allegorical references and metaphors reflecting this. I just write. I use no outlines. It is all improvisational. I just write but I can’t help but think that what goes into me as a person comes out of me as a writer and is in these stories.

City of Bones

CJD: You mentioned to me previously, and had said words to this effect in another interview, that when your publisher wanted to hold back the release of City of Bones after 9/11, you asked to have time to revise parts of the manuscript so as to be able to reference 9/11 – to take account of it as a real world event in a narrative universe that you consider roughly follows our own real world chronology. How much of the novel did you alter in order to do this? What effect, if any, did it have on the direction of
MC: I did not alter it plot wise at all. At least I don’t recall do that. What I wanted to do and what I felt was my duty to do was alter the interior landscape of Harry Bosch. This is a man who has been through war and had many other experiences that would give him a certain take on what had happened in New York City. He was three-thousand miles away but the attack was not only on New Yorkers. It was against us all and we all had after affects and a changed view of the world. My Bosch books are about one man’s view of the world and how he thinks things should be ordered. These views would have changed after 9/11 so it was my duty to take the book back and revisit every viewpoint he espoused and every thought he had. I additionally wanted to include in the story the struggle everyone had to find meaning after such a catastrophic event, literally witnessed first hand through television.

CJD: In City of Bones, there is an ongoing tension between reality as perceived by individuals, and reality as agents of the state and the media wish it to be portrayed (e.g. Trent’s suicide, Trent’s identity, the circumstances of Brasher’s death, and the death itself). I couldn’t help but extrapolate an allegory from this to the role of mainstream media working complicity with the Bush administration after 9/11 to ratify a “favoured” narrative of the attacks and the government’s response. Although you had written this pre-9/11, I wondered if this was one of those occasions where a strand of commentary takes on a whole new meaning when read in the contemporary context it is released into. What are your thoughts on how this narrative thread would be received and translated by a post 9/11 audience? Have you found yourself revisiting City of Bones in light of the context into which it was published, and having to compare your initial intentions against how different aspects of the novel might be interpreted in light of 9/11?

MC: You give me too much credit! Most, if not all, of the media exploration and commentary in the novel was written pre-9/11 and was purely my viewpoint on the media, having been a member of the circus, so to speak, for 14 years of my life. Most journalists go into the business with a lot of idealism and that gets eroded by the reality of the work. I have often used the media as a component in my storytelling and it’s almost never and good and righteous portrayal. It’s usually about deal-making and ulterior motives, competition trumping thoughtfulness and fairness. It’s a cynical view of the media (In one book I made a reporter a serial killer!) and it was in City of Bones before 9/11. I do find it interesting to see how quite by accident the book could now be read as something larger than that and full of post 9/11 commentary on the media but I have to admit that was not the intention.
CJD: Reading *City of Bones*, one of the lasting and evocative images is the initial burial site of Arthur Delacroix, where the bones have been born up through the earth, leaving a jagged wound with the protruding bones. You get this real sense of crimes of the past invading the present to revisit trauma in new ways indelibly anchored to the past. Was this an image you intended to use as establishing an underlying tone for the novel of the inescapability of the traumas of the past?

MC: Absolutely. I love the idea and imagery of the past informing the present, that it reaches up out of the ground and grabs you by the ankle. I think *City of Bones* is the best title I’ve ever put on a book because it gets at that idea that the present is built on the bones of the past.

CJD: You said previously:

“I grew up loving private eye novels, but the reality was that in fourteen years as a reporter, I never wrote an article about a private eye solving a murder. So I decided to write about a detective, somebody who would legitimately encounter murders and solve murders.”

By the end of *City of Bones* you’ve got Bosch leaving the LAPD for what will become a spell as a PI. When did you make the decision to have Bosch work as PI? What motivated you to make the choice to take Bosch out of police world and into civilian life? (And moreover, for you to further explore the non PD settings via *Chasing the Dime* and *Lincoln Lawyer*)

MC: It simply seemed like the right thing to do at that time in terms of the evolution of the character. My number one priority as a writer is to keep Harry Bosch alive. To do that, you have to keep him changing. He cannot have him static from one book to the next. At the time I wrote *City of Bones* was leaving Los Angeles after 14 years and things going on in my own life were coming out in the writing. I was making a big change and so I thought I would make a big change with Harry. I liked the idea of him being an outsider looking in. Until that point I viewed him as an outsider with an insider’s job. Now I wanted to take a look at him without a badge and as an outsider looking in.

I have to say, though, that this ended up being a mistake. I had Harry leave his badge behind and I wrote *Lost Light* about him being a private operator. What I quickly learned as I wrote this book was that I was missing a key ingredient in what I think made the earlier books work. And that was Harry’s rebellion against bureaucracy and government management. This was a key thing that created empathic connections between Harry and readers, all of whom have had their bouts with bureaucracy. So
Harry as a free agent was not going to work in the long haul. And I wanted the long haul. So after *Lost Light* I looked for and found a legitimate path for him back into the police department.

CJD: As you have recently been revisiting *City of Bones* to transition the novel to television, has that post 9/11 reading context affected how you and the development team have translated the narrative to the small screen?

MC: We decided to go with a contemporary show. So this entails taking the *City of Bones* story and placing it in 2014 Los Angeles. Subsequently the dimensions of the book related to 9/11 are largely excised. It’s now 13 years later and the wounds are not as fresh. We do not depict Bosch with any ambivalence about his mission in life.

CJD: Do you think it is fair to say that *City of Bones* is one of those pieces of popular culture, like Bob Dylan’s ‘Love and Theft’, that becomes ever more greatly severed from your authorial intent? Has it become, to a more significant extent than your other novels, “owned” by the readers and beholden to the context within which it is a) read, and b) the context that the novel deliberately anchors itself to with its 9/11 references and setting of January 2002?

MC: I would definitely go with B. As you noted above I have spent a lot of time with the book in the last year or so as we have adapted it for television. I have really come to view it in the context of being a reflection of that time. I rarely go back and re-read my books, especially after so many years. I go into writing each one of them with the idea that they are very contemporary and reflecting of life in the year they are published. Re-reading *City of Bones* after ten years left me feeling that I accomplished that. It’s filled with a post 9/11 angst that is very much of that moment but not this moment. This is not to say that I believe it is dated or irrelevant. I think quite the opposite and I am proud of it. I have the advantage of being able to write at least a book a year and I have done that for more than twenty years. So *City of Bones* is just one story in a mosaic that if taken as a whole reflects a quarter century of life in Los Angeles. *City of Bones* is just one tile in the mosaic but the mosaic would be incomplete without that tile in its place.

Lost Light:

CJD: Where *City of Bones* is subtle in its critique of post 9/11 politics, *Lost Light* is overt in the commentary it makes on the encroachment of the war on terror into everyday policing. Could you give me some background as to what was motivating you to pursue that line of critique and commentary?
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MC: I just found myself personally disagreeing with what I considered an overreaching response to the attack. I started writing as a journalist and I think I will always feel that I am a journalist at heart. So I viewed the Patriot Act as something that gave the government too much leeway and too much power. In my books I touch on the adage the absolute power corrupts absolutely and I thought we were heading in that direction. So I set out to write a story in which Harry Bosch as a private citizen would be thrown into a situation where this idea could be examined. I hope it wasn’t too overt. I think that whatever theme you are working with, it is always better to be subtle.

CJD: Lost Light is narrated in the first person. Could give me some insight into why you choose to shift to this narrative mode at this time and to tell this story? How much of that decision is relatable to Bosch’s new position as an outsider from Law Enforcement, shorn of its protections and privileges, and losing the sense of “speaking” with a whole (the LAPD, and by association the Government) that the badge represents?

MC: This was a choice that I made to go with the idea of Harry Bosch being an outsider with no badge and no standing. I became a writer because I loved the private detective novels of writers like Raymond Chandler and Ross MacDonald. Their protagonists were classic outsiders looking in on an establishment that they were suspicious of and certainly cynical about. By having Harry turn in his badge at the end of City of Bones I now had the opportunity to write my own private eye novel. This to me dictated that I shift to first person and tell the story in the manner of the classic PI novels that drew me to the table in the first place. I found the transition very difficult. I feel in first person you can not hold anything back or you are cheating the reader. In third person you do not have to present all that is known by the protagonist to the reader. And that mystery was part of the reason readers connected to Bosch. They were trying to figure out what he was up to and what he was thinking. In first person I had to tell the reader what Bosch was thinking and what he was up to. It was difficult and I think that explains why it’s the only Bosch book in first person.

CJD: In terms of the first person narration; on the one hand we are guided by the first person style to align ourselves with Bosch, because we are restricted from “hearing “ any viewpoint other than his, and yet the events of the novel conspire to leave us with an uncertainty about the absolute validity or ethicality of Bosch’s philosophy. The ending is a violent and bloody one, and in terms of the means by which Bosch arrives in this scenario routes us back to his activities in A Darkness More Than Night. There seems to be a tension between what Harry’s narrative voice tells the reader about Harry and
his actions, and what the actions themselves tell the reader. Can the novel as a discrete
entity be separated from the politics of its chief protagonist?

MC: I think it can be – as long as you stay in third person. This is what I was trying to
get at before. There is a buffer in a third person narrative that is useful in building
mystery around the protagonist. What is he up to? What is he thinking? He believes in a
code of fairness, that everybody counts or nobody counts. But does he practice what he
preaches? There are contradictions here.
I think these contradictions and grey areas build a fuller character for the reader to be
intrigued by. First person does not allow that to a great extent. To me, first person
narratives are whispered confessions. The protagonist is taking the reader on a ride and
while he doesn’t have to reveal the destination he can’t lie about things along the way.
My personal take is that when you get into the territory of the unreliable narrator then
you risk losing the reader.

CJD: Sticking with Formal techniques – you made the decision not just to have Bosch
comment on having access to documents only in highly redacted form, but to actually
place that redaction, and that sense of having information kept from you, right there on
the page. Could you give me some insight into that decision? Because it made for me, a
very personal connection between reader and Bosch – almost breaking down the fourth
wall, as if Bosch is turning to the audience and saying “see, even you don’t get to know
what is in it, or what the truth is”.

MC: I think you give me too much credit for this. I just thought it would be interesting
to present these redacted documents to the readers and let them try to fill in the missing
words and meanings. I am always aware while writing these stories that on some basic
level these books are entertainments and puzzles. I was just offering a puzzle within the
puzzle.

CJD: At the end of Lost Light, Harry seems to believe that he has he’s has been pulled
back (or has pulled himself back) from the edge of the abyss, avoiding becoming like
the BAM squad and Linus Simonson. But in many ways we have already witnessed
Harry fall into the abyss, both metaphorically and physically, allowing one to associate
Harry with that dark space and viewing him as already in it or part of it. Is Harry
deluding himself?

MC: Harry probably deludes himself about many things but I think he has an innate
understanding about redemption. Sure, he has splashed through the waters of the abyss
but if you are lucky you get to live a long time and in that span there will be moral
highs and lows. It’s a very basic idea about climbing out of the abyss. In a book like A
Darkness More Than Night you have Harry way down in the abyss. He makes decisions that are very dark and costly. So in the books that follow he finds dimensions of redemption that allow him to climb up and keep going.

I reached a point somewhere around my fifth or sixth book where I knew I could do this the rest of my life. Not just that I would be able to come up with stories and continue the Harry Bosch series, but also that I would be paid well and have a comfortable life. The freedom this understanding gave me was amazing and it infiltrated the work. I knew that I could have Harry drop into the abyss for a while because I knew there would come a time where I could write about him climbing out. I went from thinking book to book to thinking about the overall story – the 25 year mosaic. This is why Lost Light ends with Harry realizing he was a father. I was turning the series in a slightly new direction and setting up the next 10 years. The first 10 years were about Harry being bulletproof. He was a man on a mission and to carry that mission out he had to be heavily armored so that no one could get to him and compromise him. When he sees the child at the end and realizes that it is his daughter, he also realizes that he is no longer bulletproof. That he has a responsibility to someone else in the world and by virtue of that he can be gotten to.

CJD: Do you think it’s fair to say that Harry Bosch has always been something of an insider/outsider, but that Lost Light’s channelling of the post 9/11 terrorism paranoia and infatuation exaggerates this aspect of Bosch’s character?

MC: Yes. When he was a cop I always felt that he was an outsider with an insider’s job. I never wanted him to feel comfortable with the weight of the badge. I wanted him to be a feral cat, the kid who sits alone at the lunch table. I made him left-handed. I made him a smoker so he would physically have to stand outside. In many small and big ways I made him an outsider but he always had that badge. Until Lost Light. And now in this book he is the complete outsider.

CJD: After 9/11, a substantial tract of the Bush administration’s 9/11 narrative was the characterisation of victimhood as a near-exclusively American preserve, one chronologically rooted to the incident of 9/11, and one which would be used to obscure the victimisations that the political and military response to 9/11 would herald. To what extent do you think Lost Light can be read as a novel that tries to account for the complexity of victim status after 9/11 that the Bush narrative occluded?

MC: To be honest, I never thought about that while writing the book. I agree with that take on post 9/11 politics and the Bush theme, but that is a viewpoint with some distance on it. I didn’t have that as I wrote this book in 2002 so I did what I think was the smart thing. I kept it simple. I made it a story about one man and his encounter with
this new government and bureaucracy. That’s the trick, to try to make one individual’s story transcend the national experience. I don’t know if I did that but I tried.

CJD: Bosch has a distinct moral code that he adheres to throughout the series, and the violence that Bosch is called upon to administer is generally justified for the situations Bosch is in. However, with Bosch taking an active role in engineering scenarios that terminate in violence, or as described in The Concrete Blond when he kills the Dollmaker, stemming from a gung-ho individualism predicated on acting in the interests of victims, is there is something of a “war on terror” sensibility about Bosch in his willingness to descend into those dark spaces in pursuit of what he believes is justice?

MC: I think you could make that argument but it’s not something I consciously consider. I think that would entail starting with the bigger picture and chipping it down to the individual. I create in an opposite direction. I start with the individual and build out. Not sure if that makes sense.

CJD: If we were to flip that on its head, with Bosch, one could argue that by the end of Lost Light we have a guy who represents aspects of Neocon terror war ideology as he strives to use any means necessary to get justice for Angela Benton, but within the world of the novels has become just as much a representative of the targets of that policy – he is renditioned to the 9th floor of the FBI building after all. Was developing this duality part of a deliberate tactic to allow Bosch to occupy a space after 9/11 that was neither pro nor anti-government – a third state of being that ultimately opposes the application of brute force, manipulation and terror by any agency, US government or otherwise and therefore a much more subversive proposition than it might appear on the surface?

MC: Man, you keep giving me too much credit and brainpower! These kinds of ideas were not even present when I was thinking about and writing this book. I didn’t even know the word rendition back then. I wish I did. Yes, I consciously wanted to tell a story that would draw in elements of the Patriot Act and this growing national fervor of victimhood leading to entitlement when it comes to invading lands outside and restricting long held freedoms inside. But I had no ideas about finding space for Bosch to occupy after 9/11. This genre has a long tradition of introducing protagonists willing to act when other men and governments will not. It’s what draws people to crime novels. They are about men and women that step up when others step back. The stories are intoxicating because we all want to be the person who steps up but in our heart of hearts we don’t know if we are. People want to ride with Harry because he does what they hope they would do in similar circumstances. So in this story, as with every Bosch story, I wanted him to step up and be undaunted by the corruption of power he faced. I
wanted him to stand for Angela Benton because nobody else would. So it was not any sort of subversive proposition on a conscious level.

CJD: To what extent did introducing 9/11 and terror war into Bosch’s world provide a new angle for the development of the Bosch character? Lost Light certainly feels like a novel in which 9/11 as a public historic event is inextricable, and that the narrative wouldn’t hold together so well without it. You couldn’t simply swap it out for another public trauma – it isn’t a window dressing like it is in some of the recognised 9/11 novels.

MC: I think it provided an opening to go into Bosch’s history and character in this story. He has been to war and that experience is always something I like to filter the stories through. I don’t know if an angle opened up for continuing development of the character in future books. It obviously was something I grabbed hold of in this book.

CJD: What was the driving force behind returning Bosch to the LAPD?
MC: To be honest I realized I had made a mistake in taking Bosch out of the police force and by doing so I had doomed the series. I didn’t want that. I wanted to keep writing about Harry Bosch so I found a way to bring him back into the police department. By the way, it was a totally legitimate way to do it, not a novelistic device. What happened was that by the time I came to the end of writing Lost Light I realized that Bosch could not realistically survive on the page much longer as a private eye. I want to right about a real world and it simply would not be real for Harry to be solving murders every year as a private operator. So I knew I would not be able to keep doing that and would need to end the series. This was a very depressing realization. But then I got lucky. A real life LAPD detective I knew of was going through the same experience. He had retired, took a private security job, and suddenly realized he had made a mistake. He went through the process of re-applying for his LAPD job and was accepted back. He was placed on the cold case squad. This happened at the exact same time I was going through my own disenchantment with Harry in retirement. So I piggybacked on the real detective’s story and brought Harry back into the department and put him on the cold case squad.

CJD: Thank you for your time Michael.
Contributors
(in alphabetical order)

Alexis Quinlan

Alexis Quinlan is a teacher, clerk and occasional travel writer living in New York City. Her poems have appeared in The Paris Review and Drunken Boat, and she once won the Spoon River Poetry Prize. Her 2013 chapbook, *an admission, as a warning against the value of our conclusions*, via Exit Strata: Print!, is from an ongoing series of interventions on and responses to Sigmund Freud’s “Mourning and Melancholia.”

Amanda C. Seaman

Amanda C. Seaman is an Associate Professor of Japanese Language and Literature at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She has written extensively on women's detective fiction in Japan, publishing a book, *Bodies of Evidence: Women, Society, and Detective Fiction in 1990s Japan*, from the University of Hawai'i Press in 2004. Her forthcoming book on representations of pregnancy and childbirth in modern Japanese literature will also be published by the University of Hawai'i Press. This article charts the intersection of her two research interests, pregnancy and detective fiction.

Catherine Bull

Catherine Bull's poetry can be found in *FIELD, Bellingham Review, Literary Bohemian, The Operating System,* and other journals. She holds degrees in Poetry and English/Creative Writing from Oberlin College and U.C. Davis, and writes about contemporary poetry and poetics at catherinebull.com. She grew up in the Pacific Northwest, and lives in Seattle, Washington.

Charlotte Beyer

Dr Charlotte Beyer is Senior Lecturer in English Studies at the University of Gloucestershire, UK. She has published widely on contemporary literature, including a number of articles and book chapters on crime and spy fiction examining works by a range of contemporary authors. She has also published on black British and postcolonial writing, and on children's literature. She is on the Steering Committee for the Crime Studies Network, and on the editorial board for the journal *American, British and Canadian Studies.*
Christopher J. Davies

Christopher J. Davies is a doctoral student at the University of Derby in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences. His research interests are oriented toward crime narratives and the role of the crime narrative in popular culture as concomitant agitator and upholder of dominant social conventions and politics. Drawing on contemporary theories of trauma and mourning, his doctoral thesis explores the role of American Crime narratives as sites of concerted critical engagement with the ideological hijacking of America's 9/11 trauma by the George W. Bush administration, both as a means to solicit support for (and then execute) neoconservative policy aims of expanded U.S. hegemony through unilateralism and preemptive war, and contain the contextualising pre-history of American foreign policy against which 9/11 had unfolded. Alongside his research, Chris works in Academic Quality Assurance within the University’s Learning Enhancement Department.

Cindy Veach

Cindy Veach received an MFA in Poetry from the University of Oregon. Her work has most recently appeared in Michigan Quarterly Review, North American Review and Poet Lore and is forthcoming in The Journal and others. For the past twenty years she has managed fundraising programs for nonprofit organizations. She is an active member of the Salem Writer’s Group and a volunteer for Mass Poetry. She lives in Manchester, Massachusetts.

İ. Murat Öner

A doctoral candidate in the English Literature programme, İ. Murat Öner is a teaching assistant at the International Burch University in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. His research interests are geocriticism, literary geography and spatiality, transgressivity in literary forms, transnational literature, short story, and Caryl Phillips. His dissertation engages in transgressive spatiality in Caryl Phillips's fiction and non-fiction.

Jean Fitzgerald

Jean Fitzgerald received her master’s degree from Long Island University and has taught at Pace University for many years. She is currently teaching at Southern Connecticut State University in the writing and literature program. She has published on crime writing and children’s literature. She currently serves as Chairman of the Board of Education in Madison, Connecticut, and is involved with curriculum development in the schools there.
Judith Arcana

Judith Arcana writes poems, stories, essays and books; her work appears in journals and anthologies online and on paper. Her books include *Grace Paley's Life Stories, A Literary Biography*; the poetry collection *What if your mother*; and the poetry chapbook *4th Period English*. Her most recent publications are a chapbook of poems, *The Parachute Jump Effect* (2012); a prose fiction zine, *Keesha and Joanie and JANE* (2013); and a set of three broadsides, *The Water Portfolio* (2014). Forthcoming in 2015 is *Soon To Be A Major Motion Picture*, winner of the first Minerva Rising Fiction Chapbook Prize. You can hear Judith read poems on SoundCloud (https://soundcloud.com/judith-arcana) and tell a story at KBOO (http://kboo.fm/content/bearwitnessjuditharcana); for more info, visit http://www.juditharcana.com/

Merja Makinen

Merja Makinen is Associate Professor in English Literature at Middlesex University and Director for the Culture and Communication programmes. She has a dual focus to her research, looking at feminist theory, gender, and women’s writing in the twentieth century, particularly Angela Carter and Jeanette Winterson, alongside research on popular genre fictions. Recently most of her research has been on Agatha Christie and gender. She has also examined feminist appropriation of romance, fairy tale and detective fiction. In both spheres of her research, she is interested in the textual formulations of feminine desire, the erotic, and violence.

Mustafa Bal

Mustafa Bal is currently an assistant professor and the chairman of the department of English language and literature at the TOBB University of Economics and Technology, Ankara, Turkey. He specializes in contemporary British drama and drama/theatre theory. Comparative literary and cultural studies that cover subjects on British and Turkish literatures and cultures are among his academic interests. Dr. Bal is also the editor-in-chief of *The Human* journal and the editor of *Granada Literary Magazine* and *Epiphany*. Apart from his poems, article and poetry translations, papers, and essays that appeared in national and international journals, Dr. Bal is also the Turkish translator of J. Joyce’s *Dubliners* (as *Dublinliler*), N. Gogol’s *The Overcoat* (as *Palto*), and Daniela Sacerdoti’s best-seller *Dreams* (as *Rüya lar*).

Rebecca Martin

Rebecca E. Martin has published widely on crime writing and detective fiction, as well as on the Gothic novel. She holds a PhD (English) from City University of New York Graduate Center where her specialization was the 18th century English Gothic novel; she also completed requirements for the graduate certificate in Film Studies from that institution.
She is professor of literature and film studies at Pace University on its Pleasantville, NY, campus. In 2014 she edited a volume of essays on crime writing and detective fiction in the Critical Insights series published by Salem Press. Currently, she is editing a book of essays on American director Arthur Penn’s important and controversial 1967 film, *Bonnie and Clyde*.

**Reyyan Bal**

Reyyan Bal is currently working as lecturer at the Department of English Language and Literature of TOBB University of Economics and Technology, Ankara. She has been teaching at various universities since 2002 and has contributed to the foundation of English Language and Literature departments in two of these universities, including her present department. She took her PhD degree at the English Literature Program of Middle East Technical University in 2014, with her thesis entitled “The Revival of Romantic Utopianism in the Popular Poetry of the Sixties”. She specialises in Romanticism and popular poetry and is also interested in detective novels, fantasy, popular culture and children's literature. She is also a translator and especially enjoys taking part in literary translation projects.

**Russell Jones**

Russell Jones is an Edinburgh-based (Scotland) writer. He has published 4 collections of poetry and is currently writing novels for young adults. He is also the editor of *Where Rockets Burn Through: Contemporary Science Fiction Poems from the UK*. He can be followed at www.poetrusselljones.blogspot.com

**Ruth Anne Thompson**

Ruth Anne Thompson received her doctorate in the Victorian novel from Fordham University where she was a member of the faculty. She has co-authored two volumes on nineteenth century children's literature and served as past president of the Children's Literature Association. She has also published in the field of nineteenth century American magazines and crime writing. She is currently Professor Emerita of English at Pace where she continues to teach literature and writing.

**Sam Naidu**

Sam Naidu is an Associate Professor in the Department of English, Rhodes University, South Africa. She holds a B. Journ degree, a joint Honours in English and Classical Civilisation, an MA on English transcriptions of Xhosa folktales in the colonial Eastern Cape, a PhD on transnational feminist aesthetics in diasporic literature, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education. She was the recipient of a Commonwealth Split Site Doctoral Scholarship.
in 2004 and completed her PhD at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London in 2006. Between 2007 and 2010 she taught Postcolonial literature at Brunel University in London, UK. Her main research and teaching areas are: South African crime/detective fiction; Transnational literature; the poetry of Emily Dickinson; Monstrous, Grotesque and Abject Bodies in literature; and the oral-written interface in colonial South Africa.

**Siobhan Lyons**

Siobhan Lyons is currently a PhD candidate and tutor in the Department of Media, Music, Communication and Cultural Studies at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia, researching a history of literary celebrity. She is also an associate member of the Centre for Media History at Macquarie University. Her research focuses on the relationship between celebrity, authorship, literature, and the media, from Romanticism to the twenty-first century. She has written on a wide range of subjects and has been published in a number of journals and magazines, including *The Conversation, The Washington Post, Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies, Celebrity Studies, PopMatters, Philosophy Now*, and various others. She has also presented at a number of international conferences including *Derrida Today, Celebrity Studies*, and the *Crossroads Cultural Studies* conference. She graduated with a first class honours in Media in 2012 from Macquarie University.

**Walter Raubicheck**

Walter Raubicheck teaches English and American literature at Pace University in New York. He has co-authored a book on Alfred Hitchcock's films and co-edited volumes on the cultural impact of Bing Crosby and the relationship of Christianity and Detective Fiction. He has also published articles on the novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald as well as essays on G. K. Chesterton, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Dorothy Sayers.