

CRIME STORIES AS CAUTIONARY TALES

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Abstract: *This article explores crime fiction within a world literature framework. It argues that the study of national traditions can blind us to the dialogue across borders and languages between texts and authors. It proposes a reading practice that aims to develop a more nuanced understanding of this truly global genre. Many of the finest works of detective fiction, especially in the mid of XXI centuries, were works of Scott Turow. Turow relies heavily on metaphorical language to define his characters. Typically, he draws on his own firsthand experiences of the courtroom, of police procedures, and of political maneuvering and corruption to create realistic and gripping characters and scenes. He tends to return to several compelling themes: the technical and moral intricacies of legal practice, the elusive quality of truth and how well truth can be revealed by the legal process, and the notions that anyone can be corrupted and that everyone has at least one dark secret. Heroes can be quite flawed, and even villains act because of understandable human motives. These ideas are central to all of Turow's fiction, although each work takes a different approach to exploring these themes. Moreover, the article shows how Turow's later novels introduce a greater range of characters, examine these characters' failures in greater depth, and address more convoluted aspects of courtroom tactics, crime, and criminal behavior. Each book features a corpse, but the mystery of "whodunit" has increasingly become secondary to Turow's delight in legal maneuvering and his concerns with larger questions of character.*

The general critical consensus is that the detective story begins with Edgar Allan Poe, the 'father' of the detective genre. Crime fiction, however, of which Poe's detective stories form a subset, has a much earlier provenance, and in order to understand contemporary attitudes to crime, and to narratives of crime, it is necessary to outline the origins of the genre. Dorothy L. Sayers, author of a series of novels featuring the much imitated, and frequently parodied, Lord Peter Wimsey, in her 1928 introduction to *Great Short Stories of Detection, Mystery, and Horror*, published in 1929 in the United States as the first Omnibus of Crime, identifies four stories as early ancestors of the genre: two Old Testament stories, dating from

the fourth to the first century BC, from the book of Daniel, one story from Herodotus, dating from the fifth century BC, and one story drawn from the Hercules myths.

The violent and bloody spectacle of public execution, as a form of revenge in which the sovereign restores order and stability, also served as a warning, and similar warnings were an integral part of the broadsheet accounts of the crimes and punishments of major criminals which were common throughout the eighteenth century. The Newgate Calendar stories were the most common of these, and although the title was frequently used, drawing on the image of Newgate prison in the popular imagination, the first large collection of these cautionary tales gathered together under the title appeared in 1773. These stories, and stories like them, were cautionary tales in which the perpetrator of a criminal deed is captured, tried, and a chronology of crime is punished. Such collections were a response to the popular demand for bloody and shocking accounts of violent crime that spawned the tragedies of revenge in the seventeenth century, and they paralleled a similar demand in France, and elsewhere (Mandel 1984: 6). Like the tragedies of revenge, in which the revenger was executed, or anticipated their inevitable fate by committing suicide, the execution of the villain was an integral part of the popular accounts of the eighteenth century. As Knight observes, the warnings these stories provided were intended as a way of maintaining social order and personal security under threat from rising crime rates (Knight 1980: 10–13), but what is significant, as Knight further observes, is the reliance on pure chance to apprehend the criminal in these stories, rather than on detection and organized police work.

In the twenty-one years between the publication of *The Moonstone* and Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), which was clearly influenced by Collins's novel, the pattern of the detective novel in English had begun to form. The first detective novel by a woman was Anna K. Green's *The Leavenworth Case* (1878), which developed the figure of the private detective established by another American, Edgar Allan Poe. Fergus Hume's *Mystery of a Hansom Cab* (1886) was enormously successful, and it was the popularity of the detective novel that prompted Arthur Conan Doyle (from 1903, *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*), an unsuccessful doctor writing freelance to earn more money, to turn to the detective story in search of increased sales. The result was *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), whose split structure, consisting of Holmes's investigations in the present, and an adventure story set in Utah which forms the back story to

these investigations, owes a clear debt to the novels of Gaboriau. While not an enormous success, it did sufficiently well for Doyle to be commissioned to write another book for *Lippincott's Magazine* in America. *The Sign of the Four* (in England, *The Sign of Four*, which has since become the accepted title) was published in 1890, and its treasure theme and Indian sub-plot are ample evidence of Doyle's debt to *The Moonstone*.

Sherlock Holmes's nineteenth-century scientific approach has been reinvented for the twenty-first century in the figure of 'Gruesome' Gil Grissom in the television series *C.S.I.: Crime Scene Investigation*. Computers and technology in *C.S.I.* allow for the development of Holmes's nineteenth-century science of the accumulation and cataloguing of data to an exponential degree, with national computer databases of fingerprints, DNA, tyre- and shoe-treads, chemicals, ballistics, and more. *C.S.I.*'s use of extreme close ups and microscopic images, furthermore, echoes the attention to small details that is fundamental to mystery and detective fiction. It is Holmes's belief, as he expresses it in 'A Case of Identity', 'that the little things are infinitely the most important' (Doyle 1981: 194), and Doyle's stories, like *C.S.I.*, portray a material world of physical data. The Las Vegas setting of *C.S.I.* is crucial, for this reason, in relation to the overriding structural and thematic importance of materiality from Doyle, through the Golden Age, right up to contemporary manifestations of mystery and detective fiction. Las Vegas is the epitome of materialism. It is a gambling city, founded on the lure of easy money, and, in order to underline this, every episode of *C.S.I.* opens with an overhead shot of the city as a vast neon playground, and many of the crimes that the crime lab investigate have their motivation, like many of Christie's novels, in greed.

The end of the Cold War in 1989 did not put an end to the spy thriller, but rather, as Priestman notes, it gave rise to variations on the spy thriller that exploited its after-effects, such as 'small-state nationalism' and arms dealing (Priestman 1998: 48). In some ways, however, the legal thriller is a development of the spy thriller, and represents a shift from political and military espionage to corporate espionage. As Nick Heffernan notes, 'legal expertise [is] overwhelmingly dedicated to the protection and extension of corporate power' (Heffernan 1997: 191), and in the legal thriller proficiency and professionalism in espionage are replaced with legal professionalism, which represents a socially acceptable and palatably legal alternative to the modes of professionalism characteristic of the gangster thriller. However, the

paranoid reading that the conspiratorial world of the anti-conspiracy thriller promotes irrevocably yokes the two modes of professionalism together, as, for example, in John Grisham's *The Firm* (1991), in which Mitch McDeere, the lawyer hero, discovers that the law firm for which he works is, in fact, a money-laundering outfit owned by the Mafia.

The paranoid suspicion that any one of us might be hand in glove with the devil, and not know it, is made manifest in *The Firm* in the notion of a Mafia-owned law firm. In the film *The Devil's Advocate* (1997), another legal thriller, albeit a supernatural one, this is literally the case, as the young lawyer discovers that his employer, as with Johnny Angel's employer in *Angel Heart*, is Satan himself. *The Firm*, however, articulates a far more secular kind of paranoia, and McDeere's discovery forces him to choose between complicity, and the privileged lifestyle that the job offers, and 'his responsibilities as a professional and a citizen' (Heffernan 1997: 193). He chooses professional and civic responsibility, of course, which leads to him making an agreement with the FBI in order to bring the firm down. Significantly, the agreement is made against the backdrop of the Washington Monument and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, in this way linking McDeere's choice to 'the patriotic and martial ideas of honour, duty and sacrifice' (Heffernan 1997: 195), which in turn reinforces the legal thriller's direct lineage from the spy thriller with the end of the Cold War. Furthermore, that McDeere has been chosen for the task because he is identified by the FBI as 'self-reliant and independent' (Grisham 1991: 204–5), clearly identifies him as the direct heir of the hard-boiled hero, once more reinforcing the developmental links of crime fiction.

These developmental links reinforce the view of crime fiction as a repository of various themes, structures, and devices whose appropriation and re-appropriation over the history of the genre account for the broad diversity of crime fictions evident today. Historical crime fiction, in particular, often wears its heart on its sleeve in this respect, and clearly advertises its debt to the texts, characters, settings, plots, and devices that precede it, as the following chapter will demonstrate.

America's foremost legal-thriller writer Scott Turow puts his most renowned respondent back on preliminary... So Scott Turow draws the readers into *Innocent*, the continuation – over two decades really taking shape – to his raving success debut novel *Presumed Innocent*, the

book that sold a large number of duplicates the world over and set off a surge of legitimate falcon thrill rides onto the market (it was distributed in 1987, one year before John Grisham's presentation *An Opportunity to Execute*). Last time around, 39-year-old examiner Rusty Sabich was standing preliminary for the homicide of his associate and lover Carolyn. Today, at 60, he is a judge representing the incomparable court and back with his significant other, the troublesome, bipolar Barbara. In any case, in spite of his prosperity, joy evades Rusty; he has not "become an adult mollified". Attempting to place what's up, he is brought into an undertaking with Anna, a law representative 30 years his lesser, however the keep going time he undermined his significant other he wound up on preliminary for homicide. "How, my heart yells, how might I do this once more? In what manner can any individual commit some other time a similar error that everything except destroyed his life?" Rusty inquires. "In any case, the appropriate response is consistently the equivalent: Since what has lain among at that point and now – on the grounds that that time isn't completely meriting being called living." Poor Rusty: after eighteen months, he's back in the respondent's seat, this time blamed for harming his better half. In the wake of awakening with her body adjacent to him, he'd held up a day prior to revealing her passing, and a progression of revelations powers Tommy Molto – the examiner who neglected to nail the fault for Carolyn's homicide to Rusty 20 years back, and who has attempted to rise up out of that cloud from that point onward – to put him on preliminary once more. Here we see again the whip-sharp court trades that Turow exceeds expectations at, the wind and counter-curve and the very late disclosure that flips everything completely around. We likewise observe the arrival of old companions from *Presumed Innocent*: Rusty's resistance legal advisor, the virtuosic, uncertain Sandy Harsh, presently biting the dust from malignancy, Rusty's child Nat, a perfect, agonizing 28-year-old, and Molto himself. Forceful and over-excited two decades back, he is mellowed with age, a youthful spouse and another child. Turow's choice to recount to this story from numerous points of view – Nat's, Tommy's, Anna's, Rusty's – as opposed to having Rusty describe, as he did in *Presumed Innocent*, makes the reader warm to Rusty's old foe. *Innocent* opens on Sabich sitting next to Barbara's cadaver. She appears to have kicked the bucket normally in her rest. So for what reason did he hold up 24 hours before calling anybody? The course of events is so convoluted, it's indicated graphically at the highest point of every part: a flawless gadget that feels more like a civility than a need. Readers will be too held to see they are lost.

The years that have gone since Rusty was keep going on preliminary have given examiners DNA examination, moment unique mark matches, email and PC searches to bring to the table. Turow, himself an accomplice in a law office, adds them coolly to his arms stockpile to create a novel that slices through to the core of the untrustworthiness of the legitimate framework and its experts. So truly, it's poor Rusty Sabich, yet it's fortunate, fortunate readers. The productive Grisham may do it all the more regularly, yet Turow improves.

Since *Presumed Innocent* in 1987, Scott Turow has kept on delivering astute, attentive books set among the legal counselors of the anecdotal Kindle County. These books have pushed at the requirements of the class. *Ordinary Heroes*, his most recent book, impacts it fully open. A legal counselor is as yet a huge character, yet this time, he's pitched into the detestations of the Second World War. David Dubin, an associate judge advocate, is from the start an onlooker, at that point a hesitant soldier, at that point a warrior. His record of his wartime encounters is surrounded by his child Stewart's examination of the story. Stewart is confounded by the way that his 'indefatigably appropriate' father not just appeared to have had a more gutsy war than he at any point conceded however had likewise been court-martialed in its withering days. Part-mystery, part-thriller, this is a quietly powerful piece of fiction.

Turow depicts himself as "hypochondriac," headed to prevail by frailties that started in youth. Regardless of his achievements, he appears to share the assumptions that his better half, Annette, communicated in a 1990 magazine meet, that his astounding achievement "is all questionable . . . not to be trusted." To be sure, in any event, when Turow turned into a magnate after the production of *Presumed Innocent*, the couple did not move from the four-room house they had purchased when Turow was a \$60,000-per-year open investigator.

This equivalent driven quality and doubt of progress is extremely unmistakable both in Turow's proceeded with quest for requesting double professions as legal advisor and smash hit writer and in his compositions. Without a doubt, *One L* is declaration to Turow's drive and desire. Not content just to endure the primary year of Harvard Law School, Turow assumed the extra occupation of expounding on it—and himself. His self-made persona in his graduate school journal isn't not normal for first-year law understudies all over the place, however his

expertise at passing on apprehension about aspiration and moral issues is special. Turow's *One L* contemplations about institutional weaknesses and the ruining idea of desire are reverberated later in Rusty Sabich's considerations on legislative issues and the examiner's office in *Presumed Innocent* and in Sandy Stern's appearance on his fruitful brother by marriage propensity for debasement in *Burden of Proof*.

The Laws of Our Fathers includes a preliminary like that of *Presumed Innocent* wherein truth assumes a lower priority in relation to lawful wrangling and the quiet contending motivation of members. *Personal Injuries* contends that corruptibility can coincide with amiability, and even with excellent individual conduct. *Reversible Errors* shows how the eager quest for one's expert obligations can prompt a premature delivery of equity.

Although all of Turow's works, even *One L*, are fraught with mystery, it is his fictional heroes' moral dilemmas and especially the competing demands of family and the law that make his books so memorable. For his anecdotal heroes, one dilemma always involves the competing demands of family and the law. In part, competition between home and court derives from the demands of a legal career. Rusty Sabich's wife, Barbara, is alienated and bitter, not only about her husband's affair with a coworker but also about his single-minded loyalty to his boss and to his job. Clara Stern is undone by the benign neglect with which she is treated while her litigator husband is developing his practice. In *Pleading Guilty*, Mack Malloy's home life is a disaster, as are the marriages of the characters in *The Laws of Our Fathers*. The lawyers and court officers in *Personal Injuries* and *Reversible Errors* all suffer from misshapen domestic lives. These domestic-versus-professional quandaries that the legal protagonists confront—forcing them to choose between their obligation as officers of the court and their responsibilities toward their families or even themselves—lend Turow's novels their resonance.

By method for clarifying his wonderful notoriety, Turow has brought up that the duality that describes his books additionally portrays American culture in the mid twenty-first century. The court has supplanted the congregation as the discussion for managing the incredible sociological and philosophical issues of the day, for example, premature birthrights and surrogate parenthood. Enormous corporate firms have covered individual legal advisor

customer connections and individual trustworthiness under the heaviness of institutional methodology and the efficiencies of specialization. Simultaneously, Americans are careful about legal advisors, who, with their insight into "the enchantment and sacrosanct words," have built up the capacity to justify the shameless. Such information, in the hands of reluctant and upright...

Scott Turow's seventh novel, *Reversible Errors*, shows why he remains head-and-shoulders above others in the lawful spine chiller class he made with his 1987 blockbuster *Presumed Innocent*. Lawyers had figured in mystery fiction for years before then. But - Perry Mason and one or two others aside - mostly they were peripheral characters, the butt of jokes, their moral integrity set at the level of politicians and journalists.

Turow's prosperity sired John Grisham, whose first novel, *A Time To Kill*, came out in 1989, and suddenly you couldn't move on the bestseller lists for lawyer-turned-writer creations presenting heroic attorneys in all sorts of courtroom dramas.

Grisham is a phenomenal storyteller however Turow, who despite everything specializes in legal matters in Chicago, remains the one to beat. Maybe this is on the grounds that he's taken more consideration with his books. He decides to distribute just at regular intervals instead of moving on board the one-a-year transport line even Grisham, effective as he seems to be, rides.

Reversible Errors shows where Turow's inclinations lie. He helps readers to remember the late, great George V Higgins who, in books, for example, *The Friends of Eddie Coyle*, wrote compassionately about minor crooks and losers. Turow is interested not in the Hollywood heroism of hotshot lawyers, but in the day-to-day bravery of 'ordinary' people.

As one character in *Reversible Errors*, considering his dad's life, says: 'Individuals don't ponder the valor of standard lives. You know, of people who are simply expected to be ordinary. In any case, the more established he got... the more I perceived how gallant my dad was.'

That character, Arthur Raven, is the hero of *Reversible Errors*. He's plain, paunchy and dull, moderately aged before his time, a man who wishes he were attractive and longs to shine. He's a triumph as a corporate legal counselor not on the grounds that he's splendid but since of hounded constancy.

That diligence is tried when he hesitantly takes on a criminal case - the intrigue of a death row detainee, triple killer Rommy 'Squirrel' Gandolph, against his pending execution. Raven's examination concerning Gandolph's case that he didn't submit the 10-year-old killings carries him into struggle with an imposing indicting lawyer, Muriel Wynn, and with police analyst Larry Starczek. Wynn, with Starczek's assistance, made her name with her fruitful indictment of the first case.

Raven's improbable - and from the outset reluctant - partner is Gillian Sullivan, the judge who attempted the case yet not long after went wrong when she was imprisoned for defilement.

The epic is, as much as anything, two romantic tales - a developing connection among Raven and Sullivan and the resonations of an old issue among Wynn and Starczek. Be that as it may, don't think the attention on these connections eases back the secret story one scribble: *Reversible Mistakes* is a novel with enough turns to make it a delightful riddle. It additionally has some substantial and sensational court duels.

Its extraordinary quality, nonetheless, is that it's established in this bundle of totally authentic characters. Indeed, even minor characters are drawn with care. There are various little contacts that give them genuineness -, for example, an old-stager cop who had griped when cooling was first presented in squad cars since it was at that point sufficiently troublesome to get a few hoodlums out of the vehicle.

As with Turow's other novels, this is set in the fictional Kindle County, in a community inhabited by small-time crooks, compromised cops, ambitious lawyers and people just struggling to get by. Turow describes the petty corruptions of most of his characters matter-of-factly, but he is not particularly cynical.

He portrays individuals crossing the separation from great to awful by passing slips, some brief instant loss of control that changes their lives until the end of time. He sees the plausibility of a reclamation for even the blackest heart.

Reversible Errors is an astute outline of the communication among law and life, an altruistic assessment of imperfect individuals and an immersing secret.

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