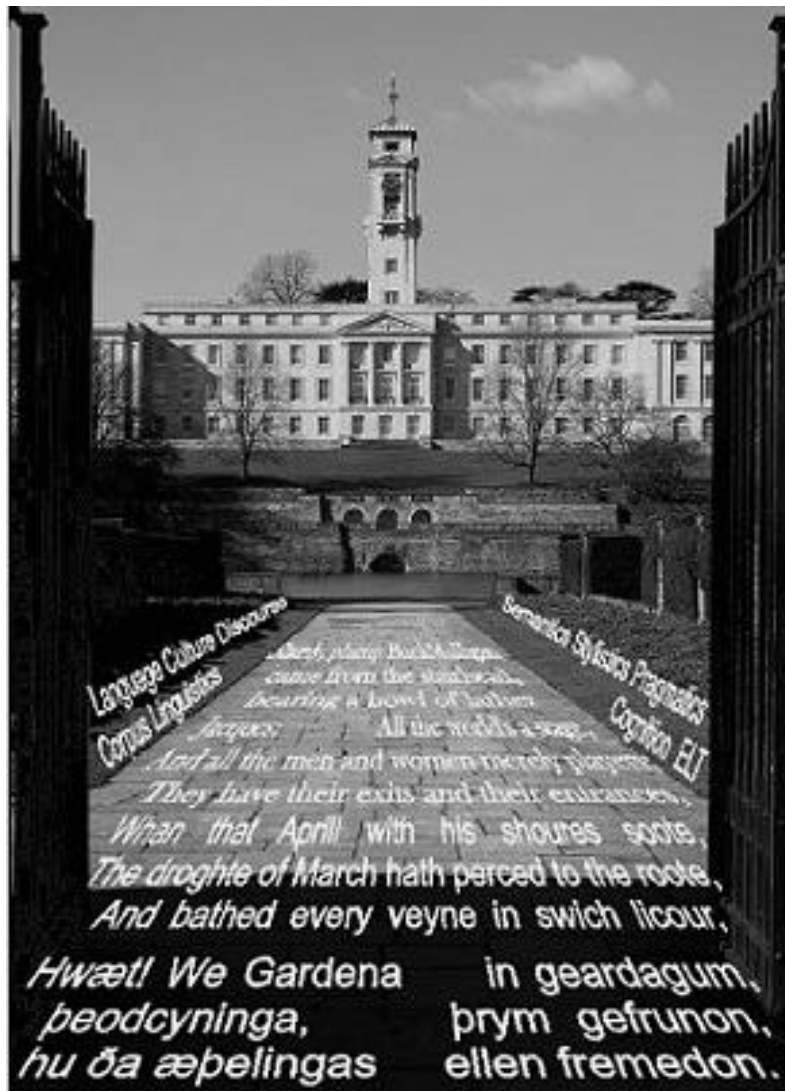


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Demystifying the Criminal Mind: Linguistic, Social and Generic Deviance in Contemporary American Crime Fiction

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Introduction

This paper is part of a study that aims to explore (a) the stylistic, (b) the generic and (c) the socially-situated nature of contemporary American Crime Fiction. The study directly explores the three aspects of deviation that this genre exploits: stylistic deviation (in constructing the mind style of criminals, in particular), literary deviation (in challenging the boundaries of the crime fiction genre), and social deviation (in defining the nature of criminal behaviour). In the paper, I conduct an investigation into contemporary crime novels by James Patterson, Patricia Cornwell and Michael Connelly, and explore the way in which these novelists correspondingly challenge the boundaries of (a) language, (b) the crime fiction genre itself, and (c) acceptable social behaviour.

Section 1 *Background to the Novelists and Theoretical Frameworks*, is firstly devoted to justifying my choice of these three specific novelists and each of their corresponding series for analysis. It establishes the connections between the three remaining sections of the piece, and goes on to define *deviation* linguistically, as well as in generic and social terms. It finally attempts to reveal the ways in which the three authors specifically can be used to illustrate the genre's use of *deviation* to exemplify themes in language, genre and society. Due to the word-limit, I will look at one author in terms of one type of *deviation* only, but will illustrate why each author has been correlated to each of these types of analysis.

Section 2, *Linguistic Deviation*, is devoted to the stylistic nature of those extracts of contemporary American Crime Fiction that allow access to the criminal's consciousness. This section primarily focuses on Gary Soneji's criminal mind, a serial killer that features in two contemporary novels by the celebrated crime writer James Patterson, namely *Along Came a Spider* (1993) and *Cat and Mouse* (1997). Both of these novels are part of the author's celebrated series featuring detective/psychologist Alex Cross in addition to sharing the same villain – Soneji – a psychopathic madman who engages in criminal actions that range from kidnapping to murder. *Cat and Mouse* (1997) further features Mr Smith, an equally dangerous madman terrorizing Europe, and his criminal mind is also portrayed through extracts that allow access to his viewpoint, and which will also be analysed.

I will directly investigate the nature of the figurative language employed in those extracts portraying the criminal consciousness, and argue that both criminals' figurative conceptualisations of experience appear to be motivated by underlying *metaphorical* schemes of thought that constrain, even define, the way they think, reason, argue, and carry out their criminal actions. More specifically, I shall be considering some of the "*sustained metaphors*" (see Werth) employed in these extracts, meaning ones that provide a sustained frame of reference, as well as means of thematic coherence.

Section 3, *Generic Deviation*, is devoted to the past and current literary nature of contemporary American Crime fiction. In addition to looking into changing definitions of the detective genre itself, the section will investigate the rules and constraints that have underlined its evolution, and discuss the formulaic regularities that contemporary American Crime Fiction has been argued to employ. This latter genre (or some may argue, this sub-genre) can be said to work under the constraint that there is a certain formula to be followed,

one which need consist of a set of structural constants, in combination with an indefinite number of variables, to make any such novel worth reading.

The section directly focuses on the work of Patricia Cornwell, and that series of hers featuring Dr Kay Scarpetta, the chief medical examiner of Richmond, Virginia. I shall be looking into defining the *police procedural* genre that this series can be said to belong to, and exposing some of the features that a reader of this series should expect to encounter.

Section 4, *Social deviation*, is finally devoted to defining the nature of criminal (abnormal) behaviour by looking into the rule breaking of the *social* perspective of abnormality. It explores the factors of norm violation and argues that an important function that may modify the reader or audience's reaction to the violation is the role or status of the rule-breaker. The section focuses on the work of Michael Connelly and the adventures of Los Angeles police detective Hieronymus ("Harry") Bosch who is the protagonist of the series, constantly unravelling mysteries and discovering killers. The detective will, additionally, be argued to take the position of the criminal's *double* in the series. He most often appears to sacrifice his individuality and personal life to his work, and does so in his attempts to "understand" the criminals he pursuits; by thinking on a similar mode as the criminals, Harry believes that he can predict their next move, and often succeeds in doing so.

The section further considers the ways in which contemporary American crime novelists come to challenge as much as possible their readers' expectations as to the so-called *normal* and *abnormal* aspects of behaviour. I investigate, for instance, the types of abnormality that are utilized in Michael Connelly's Harry Bosch series, since such authors constantly find themselves in the position of inventing new ways of conducting crime. In other words, I argue that old-fashioned definitions of *abnormality* have come to be challenged to a great extent, that most crimes conducted are sexually charged, and that murder especially is no longer as simple a matter as it used to be in the early decades of the genre.

1. Background to the Novelists and Theoretical Frameworks

I particularly chose to focus my area of analysis on those Crime Novels that are contemporary and American in origin firstly because I wanted to work with texts that are apt for comparison and analysis. In other words, I did not want to analyse novels that vary a great deal as to the time or context in which they were produced. I additionally acknowledge that American novels of this sort have a wide-reaching readership, perhaps even wider than their corresponding British ones, and chose these specific authors due to their international acclaim and worldwide success in both recognition and sales (though my analysis need not be misinterpreted as an attempt to value or criticize the works).

In an attempt to find a best-selling chart of Crime Novels for the specific period of early the year 2002, I came across an amazon.com chart (<http://www.crimsonbird.com/fiction/mystery.htm> - as on 18-01-02) of the top 200 or so novels sold over the Internet worldwide, and chose to focus on the paperback mystery chart as paperbacks are cheaper and easier to sell. I thereafter limited myself to American novels from the chart and, in choosing among the various American novelists, narrowed my analysis down to that of Patterson, Cornwell and Connelly on the basis that these three have at least three novels from each of their corresponding series attached to the list itself.

Even though other American novelists from the chart also shared the same criteria, I felt that the former three specific American writers' work fitted my definition of what constitutes a crime novel best; the genre that I have so far referred to as *crime fiction* is taken to include detective stories, and not spy narratives, comedy-crime or romance-crime stories, mafia novels or mysteries. The sort of stories I will be looking at, that is, are to do with the detection of a murderer, regardless of whether it is a police officer, a private detective, or someone else doing the detecting. Further more, the sort of definition I adopt for *crime fiction* narratives

coincides with that definition Priestman (2) adopted when defining the *detective thriller*; a past event of murder gets to be resolved, and yet a present action of events is followed (see section 3 for other definitions of the genre). I also define crime fiction as a text that combines two forms of suspense: the desire to know “whodunit” along with that suspense derived by the fear that whoever it was might repeat his/her crime (that is, there is a seriality to the killings in these authors’ work).

Finally, despite the similarities that the chosen novels exhibit (as to the nationality of their writers, the temporal context in which these were produced, the acclaim that these have attracted and the fact that these coincide with my definition of *crime novels*), they simultaneously exhibit a range of interesting differences the main of which is to do with the novelists’ choice of detective.

The protagonist of the James Patterson series is Alex Cross, a black homicide detective with a PhD in psychology that works and lives in the ghettos of D.C along with his grandmother and two children. He is a good family man whose wife Maria has been killed in a drive by-shooting, her killer not ever having been caught.

The protagonist of the Patricia Cornwell series is Dr Kay Scarpetta, the chief Medical Examiner of the Commonwealth of Virginia. As Bertens and D’haen put it, Scarpetta is an extraordinarily competent, high-ranking professional who values her independent state and is easily equal to the males that surround her (170). The novels could be read in terms of feminism (i.e. the criminal element and Medical Examiner’s co-workers are almost exclusively male), while Cornwell makes use of recent advances in forensic science so that we have an exciting mixture of private investigation, police procedural and medical clue-hunting to add to the nature of the investigations she undertakes.

Finally, Michael Connelly’s protagonist, Hieronymus (Harry) Bosch is a detective on the robbery and homicide table of the Hollywood branch of the L.A. police department. In an analysis of the same series, Bertens and D’haen argue that “Bosch is notorious for not fitting in, for disobeying rules and regulations”(105), while later on they claim that this, in fact, has been argued to contribute to Bosch coming across as “a contemporary reincarnation of the classic private eye dropped into a contemporary police procedural” (111). In other words, Connelly’s police procedural could be recast as private-eye novel through his maverick homicide detective Bosch.

The theme that connects my three types of analyses of the novels is that of *deviation*. Deviation is a term that means different things for different disciplines, and I wanted to explore the linguistic, generic and social manifestations of *deviation* in the genre at hand. In the context of this piece of work, I take *deviation* to refer to the difference between what we take to be normal or acceptable and that which is not. Although some writers (e.g. Leech and Short) have tried to make a distinction between *deviance* and *deviation* (preferring *deviance* for divergence in frequency from a *norm*), I shall be using the terms synonymously.

In linguistics, *deviance* refers to special language usage, which in turn becomes prominent and stands out in some way (Leech and Short 48). In terms of genre, *deviance* could be taken to refer to divergence from generic rules as to writing within a specific genre. Questions that arise include: how much variation or deviation is allowed in the context of a specific genre? How deviant need a crime novel be in order for it to develop a new genre or sub-genre of its own? Finally, in sociology, *deviance* refers to abnormality in behaviour, and in the context of the genre at hand, it is manifested in criminality. It is in fact rather conventional to view criminals as deviant (see Foucault), but I intend to challenge this social notion in the context of my analysis.

I chose to look at Patterson in terms of the linguistic deviation he exhibits when allowing readers access to the criminal’s consciousness in a way that the other two authors do not. In other words, Patterson uses language to evoke the criminal mind, and the relevant section will

be limited to the conceptual metaphors used within the context of the criminals' conceptualisation of their experiences. Cornwell will be analysed in terms of the generic deviation that her Dr Kay Scarpetta series manifests. It is a series that stretches the boundaries of the genre itself, and that is why Cornwell has been specifically chosen for this type of analysis. Finally, Connelly will be looked at in terms of *social deviance* mostly due to the eccentricity of his protagonist.

2. Linguistic Deviation

As Gibbs argues, recent advances in cognitive linguistics, philosophy, anthropology and psychology show that not only is much of our language metaphorically structured but so is much of our cognition:

People conceptualise their experiences in figurative terms via metaphor, metonymy, irony, oxymoron and so on, and these principles underlie the way we think, reason, and imagine. (5)

There is, he argues, considerable evidence for the inextricable link between the figurative nature of everyday thought and the ordinary use of language. There is now much research (Lakoff and Johnson; Turner and Fauconnier) showing that our linguistic system, even that responsible for what we often conceive of as literal language, is inextricably related to the rest of our physical and cognitive system (Gibbs 5).

Since language is not independent of the mind but reflects our perceptual and conceptual understanding of experience, then it may be argued that when novelists employ *deviant* linguistic structures to portray the criminal mind, they are in fact allowing readers access to the criminal's conceptualisation of reality, or *mind style* (for *mind style*, see Fowler; Leech and Short; Bockting; Semino and Swindlehurst). By allowing readers access to the criminal viewpoint, we are hence being put in a position where we understand the criminals, share their conceptual viewpoint and are even forced to sympathise with their behaviour and course of actions.

Since criminal behaviour is itself unusual and unconventional, it can be argued to be somewhat demystified via *linguistic deviation*, a term most commonly used to refer to divergence from the norms of everyday language. Leaving aside for the moment the problem of determining the norm, Short and Leech define *deviance* as a purely statistical notion, as the difference between the normal frequency of a feature, and its frequency in the text or corpus (48). Prominence is the related psychological notion, whereby some linguistic features stand out in some way via the effect of foregrounding.

The term *figurative language* is often used to refer to that language which is not to be taken literally. Leech considers *metaphor*, and also *synecdoche* and *metonymy* under this heading, whereas further cognitive linguists, such as Gibbs regard *slang metaphors*, *hyperbole* or *exaggeration*, *simile*, *idioms*, *proverbs*, and *irony* as figurative language aspects in addition to the ones that Leech considers. The term is here, however, simply taken to mean *metaphorical language*, *metaphor* being a very important or basic aspect of figurative language. (For a broader analysis of Patterson's *figurative language* in portraying the criminal mind, see Gregoriou). Besides, as Ortony argues, there is a tendency to view metaphors themselves as "deviant": they need be explained in terms of "normal" or "literal" uses of language, and their main function is to provide an alternative linguistic mechanism for expressing ideas – a communicative function (4).

According to Lakoff and Johnson, in metaphor there are two conceptual domains, and one is understood in terms of the other (e.g. love is understood as a kind of nutrient in "I'm drunk with love", "He's sustained by love", "I'm starved for your affection" and so on). Creative individuals will often provide unique artistic instantiations of conceptual metaphors

that partially structure our experiences. In the Patterson novels, there seem to be a number of such metaphors, which are “sustained” (see Werth) or “extended” (see Nowotny), that is, which work in even more extended ways across the whole of both novels and give rise to related metaphors as well. Werth refers to such sustained metaphorical undercurrents as *megametaphors* (323).

The first noticeable metaphor in the two novels of the Patterson series is the *Killers Are Spiders* metaphor. Sentences such as “He had spun his web perfectly” (*Cat and Mouse* 5), “Mr Smith had to bend low to talk into Derek Cabott’s ear, to be more intimate with his prey” (*Cat and Mouse* 7), “He had been *Mr Soneji – the Spider Man*” (*Cat and Mouse* 26), and “Then Sojeni was lost in his thoughts. His memories were his cocoon” (*Cat and Mouse* 30) are used to mark out the killer as an individual who is so disturbed that he even sees himself as a spider looking out for victims to catch in his web. Even though this metaphor is rather conventional, it is used to such a great extent (note especially the title of the first novel in the series-*Along came a spider*) that it may be said to be a “sustained metaphor”. The main *Killers Are Spiders* metaphor is elaborated across the novels; the criminal’s planning of the crimes is thought of as the web, victims are viewed as prey, and the criminal’s thoughts and memories are his cocoon, the protective silky thread to be found around insects.

This metaphor is very closely connected to the larger *Killers Are Animals/Insects to be Fed* metaphor, which further underlies the two novels under analysis. Examples from the first novel in the series, *Along Came A Spider*, include “[H]e moved closer and closer to his first moment of real glory, his first kill” (3), “Here comes Mr Fox” (5), “He watched the blubbery blob the way a lizard watches an insect – just before mealtime” (100), “As he walked outside to the car, he felt like an animal, suddenly on the loose” (157), all of which present the criminal as an animal/insect out for search of food. The combination of similes and metaphors somewhat justify the killings as necessities; the killer is presented to kill out of need for survival, just like an animal/insect kills to feed. Note especially the title of the second novel under analysis, *Cat and Mouse* which, as noted, raises the question of “who is chasing whom”; though it is Cross who is once again in pursuit of Soneji, Soneji’s attempts at killing Cross offer the impression that it is Soneji who is metaphorically conceived of as the hunter (cat), and Cross the hunted (mouse). Similar occurrences of the same metaphorical mapping are further evident in this novel, as well: “The Cross house was twenty paces away and the proximity and sight of it made Gary Soneji’s skin prickle” (3), and “Cats were such little ghouls. Cats were like him” (49). According to this mapping, the killer is conceived of as the hunter on the loose, the (potential) victim as the hunted - the (potential) kill under observation, the killing as the feeding, and the anticipation of the crime as the physical reaction the animals get to the killing; the growing of a small sharp point on the animal’s skin (“prickle”).

Another *megametaphor* that is evident in both novels in the series is that of *Criminal Behaviour Is Play-Acting* or *Criminals Are Actors*. There are many good examples of the use of this metaphor in the first novel in the series, *Along Came a Spider*: “He thought of his nickname at the school. Mr Smith! What a lovely, lovely bit of play-acting he’d done. Real Academy Award stuff” (49), “And that performance was a classic. De Niro himself had to be a psychopath in real life” (49), “This was his movie” (52), “He still had work to do tonight. Masterpiece Theatre continued” (54), “Gary lied, and he knew it was a pretty good one. Extremely well told, well acted” (145), “He was another De Niro – no doubt about that – only he was an even better actor” (183), “A special performance for all the kiddies and mummies” (183), “He had another big part to act out” (370).

Similarly, such metaphors are evident throughout *Cat and Mouse*; “What a handsome couple they made, and what a tragedy this was going to be, what a damn shame” (19), “he knew every single move from this point until the end” (19), “The scene of the crime-to-be, the

scene of the masterpiece theatre” (20), “they would be safely on board on their little commuter trains by the time the ‘light and sound’ show began in just a few minutes” (27) and so on. As can be seen from these examples, the narrator appears to adopt and elaborate on the *Criminal Behaviour Is Play-Acting* megametaphor. The criminals and victims are viewed as actors, the crime-scene is viewed as the stage for play acting, the crime a tragedy, and the by-passers or people who learn of and are terrified by the crimes as the audience to be amused/entertained.

Once again, this megametaphor appears to be closely connected to yet another metaphor in the series, that of *Crimes Are Games*. Examples of this metaphor evident in *Along Came A Spider* include “Let’s Play Make Believe” (1), “It’s time for more fun, more games” (171), “This was the most daring part of the whole adventure” (180), and “He was playing policeman and it was kind of neat” (394), and examples from *Cat and Mouse* include “You, Derek, are a piece of the puzzle” (8), “He had outdone the legendary Charles Whitman, and this was only the beginning” (48), “Victory belongs to the player who makes the next-to-last mistake” (48), “Make no mistake about it. I will win” (55). According to this metaphorical mapping, the criminals and detectives are thought of as players, the pursuit of the criminal as an adventure/game, the criminal who gets away with it a winner, the completion of a crime a victory, and the criminal behaviour as plain childish fun.

One final extended metaphor to be here analysed is that of *Criminals Are Machines*. Patterson elaborates on this metaphor to once again bring out inhuman undertones to the criminal course of action in the two novels. Examples from *Along Came A Spider* include “Gary was like a programmed machine from the moment he spotted the police” (170), “He was completely wired” (180), “real high-wire stuff” (180), and ones from *Cat and Mouse* include “Just to look around, ... to fuel his hatred, if that was possible” (4), and “His murder would electrify the town” (7). According to this metaphorical mapping, criminals are viewed as machines that carry out their vicious intentions, the criminals’ hatred is thought of as the fuel, the pre-planning of the crimes as the machine’s programming, their criminal behaviour as the electricity generated by the machine.

The use of such conceptual metaphors in the Patterson series overall establishes the criminals as a special kind of human species, one that is driven to criminality because they feel it is *necessary* for them. Just like animals hunting to be fed, criminals are “justified” as a species that cannot help but kill in order to survive. At the same time, criminal behaviour is presented as “viewed” by an audience of common people who seek entertainment; in this sense, criminal behaviour forms part of the social structure, and is *wanted* rather than not. Finally, criminals are players like children engaged in games, and are ones who act on “instinct”, like programmed pieces of machinery, lacking common human logic and morals.

In the next section, I will be looking at a different type of deviation, that which I refer to as generic, in order to establish the formulaic regularities exhibited in the Patricia Cornwell crime series.

3. Generic Deviation

During the Golden Age of detective fiction (usually claimed to be the 1920s and 1930s), several authors published more or less humorous rules on how to write detective stories (Bonnemark 46). A good example is given by Knox (1739), who offered “Ten Rules for a Good Detective Story”:

1. The criminal must be someone mentioned in the early part of the story, but must not be anyone whose thoughts the reader has been allowed to follow.
2. All supernatural or preternatural agencies are ruled out as a matter of course.
3. Not more than one secret room or passage is allowable.

4. No hitherto undiscovered poisons may be used, nor any appliance which will need a long scientific explanation at the end.
5. No Chinaman must figure in the story.
6. No accident must ever help the detective, nor must he ever have an unaccountable intuition which proves to be right.
7. The detective must not himself commit the crime.
8. The detective must not light on any clues which are not instantly produced for the inspection of the reader.
9. The stupid friend of the detective, the Watson, must not conceal any thoughts which pass through his mind; his intelligence must be slightly, but very slightly, below that of the average reader.
10. Twin brothers, and doubles, generally, must not appear unless we have been duly prepared for them.

Though these rules are intended to be rather humorous, they, in fact, can be said to be prohibitions, or rules of an exclusive nature. That is, in the 1920s, only those stories that adhered to these so-called rules would qualify as “good” detective stories. These rules, in other words, represent a summary of the generic features of detective stories, in the form that these were produced during that period of time.

Other sets of rules have been put forth by Van Dine which, though fundamentally the same as Knox’s, clearly make a distinction between obligatory and optional elements, and, according to Bonnemark (46), stress the necessity for concentration in that there must not be several detectives. As Van Dine (192) puts it, there must also be no “literary dallying with side-issues, no subtly worked-out character analyses, no “atmospheric preoccupations”.”

More recently, Ball argued that a mystery novel must accord to the following fewer rules: (a) every clue discovered by the detective has to be made available to the reader, (b) early introduction of the murderer, (c) the crime must be significant, (d) there must be detection, and (e) the number of suspects must be known and the murderer must be among them (67). What, however, Ball fails to mention, is whether all these so-called rules are prescriptive, descriptive, core, comprehensive, inclusive or exclusive ones. He, for instance, fails to explain whether the rules he outlines are ones that a novel need adhere to in order to be defined as a detective novel (*exclusive rules*), or whether a novel adhering to a collection of these would still qualify (*inclusive rules*).

According to Roth, the challenge of the genre is covered by a rule that supposedly governs the analytic or puzzle-solving branch of crime fiction:

It was only by slow degrees that the most important principle of the modern detective story was isolated and generally accepted: the principle which we know as the “Fair-Play Rule”. (Sayers 225)

According to Roth, this rule – that the reader must have as much information relevant to the solution of the crime as the detective has – is played out according to a fantastic scenario by which various triumphant readers solve the mystery as they read page 64, 91, or 113, respectively, at which point the rest of the book becomes redundant to them (xi). He, however, does confess to not be in the belief that detective fiction works this way, as even if this is a deluded or overidealised view of the genre, it implies a kind of reading that is both highly gratifying and diminished – and a work not worth reading in itself.

Mandel, on the other hand, defines this so-called fair-play rule as a “battle of wits”, simultaneously unfolding at two levels: between the great detective and the criminal, and between the author and the reader (16). According to him,

[i]n both battles, the mystery is the identity of the culprit, to which the detective and reader alike are to be led by a systematic examination of the clues. But while the story’s hero always succeeds, the reader ought not succeed in outwitting the author. Otherwise the psychological need to which the detective story is supposed to respond is not assuaged: there is no tension, suspense, surprising solution or catharsis. (Ibid.)

In other words, Mandel argues that the detective story need achieve the reader’s surprise when the murderer’s identity is revealed, and with no violation of the “fair-play” rule, meaning without cheap tricks such as the withholding of clues. And that is the case, since he claims that “to surprise without cheating is to manifest genuine mastery of the genre”. Mandel himself, however, comes to admit that reading such stories is - in fact - not fair play, but fake play under the guise of fair play (48). Classical detective writing, he admits, is more of “a game with loaded dice”, since the winner is predetermined by the author and, like the hunted fox, neither the criminal ever wins, nor the reader ever outwits the author.

In any case, the rules presented above have certainly been violated, e.g. by the novels belonging to the “Had-I-But-Known” school, so named by Nash, for instance whereby the authors consistently conceal clues from the reader. What, however, one need keep in mind is that, as a matter of fact, the flowering of the most successful period of detective fiction, the Golden Age, developed as a revolt against the rules presented above (Bonnemark 47).

Bonnemark proceeds to outline certain *content* constraints to the genre, which are to do with the *theme, plot, characters* and *setting* of detective novels (48). In short, she argues that murder is the crime that is usually investigated under the genre at hand, and that it is two stories that are told - that of the crime and that of its investigation. She adds that *thinking* as opposed to *action* is the main type of subject, and insofar as characters are concerned, there need be a detective, a victim, and a perpetrator, and yet it is most usually the detective or “commentator” (Dr Watson type) who focalizes events. Finally, Bonnemark claims that though there are no constraints on the setting of detective stories, certain settings are preferred.

Having said that, even though crime fiction has moved astonishingly little in the past 100 years, it would be fair to say that the crime fiction genre has shown an infinite capacity to reinvent itself:

It has added new categories, discovered new versions of saying the same thing, created exciting new characters. It has kept up with the times, yet it still remains true to its roots and aims. (Berlins 2)

In other words, the genre’s rules and constraints have come to change with the times. Crime fiction, in its present form, no longer adheres to the rules or generic features of the prototypical detective novel that started it all, and may be argued to have *evolved* (Swales, *Genre Analysis* 35), as a necessary response to a changing world. The so-called rules that were on offer at the time, and most of which were exclusive rather than inclusive, came to be violated to such an extent that it is, nowadays, no longer possible to come up with a set of features that all contemporary crime novels adhere to. There is, however, a set of *formulaic regularities* that crime novels may be said to feature.

Porter argues that almost all novels demand a form of “retrospective repatterning” as a reader advances through a text constructing and reconstructing hypotheses concerning a work’s meanings, and yet “nowhere does it occur with such formulaic regularity as in a detective story” (87). In fact, this concept seems to be similar to what Emmott refers to as *frame repairing* in her study of narrative comprehension and *frame theory* (225). Emmott uses

the term *frame repair* to refer to instances where a reader becomes aware that they have misread the text either through lack of attention or because the text itself is potentially ambiguous. She in fact draws on detective fiction extracts herself to stress that this function does appear with extreme formulaic regularity in this genre specifically. Similarly, Porter's use of "retrospective repatterning" seems to refer to this sort of repairing that readers engage in when the hypotheses they formed as to the work's meanings come to be challenged. And, Porter adds, it is that desire of the reader to know which of these hypotheses is the right one, that is stipulated by the author so that it functions as a "structuring force" (86).

Moretti argues that detective fiction is a genre that is not only distinct from novelistic works, but even more so, is *anti-novelistic* or *anti-literary* (137). He claims that detective fiction's objective is to *return to the beginning*, and that is so, as the individual initiates the narration not because he lives – but because he *dies*. He goes on to argue that detective fiction's ending is its end indeed: its solution in the true sense, and further states that, in the terms of the Russian Formalists, it is the criminal that produces the *sjuzet* whereas the detective the *fabula* (146). Whereas the former term, attributed to the criminal, refers to the story as shaped and edited by the story-teller, the latter, attributed to the detective, refers to the story as a mere chronology of events. Since it is the detective who reinstates the relationship between the clues and their meaning, Moretti further argues that the criminal embodies the literary pole, and the detective the scientific.

On a similar note, Todorov opposed the *story of the crime* to the *story of the investigation*: the first ends as the actual book begins; the second element is largely what we read (44). Between the beginning and the end of the narration – between the absence and the presence of the *fabula* – Moretti argues that there is no "voyage", only a long *wait*, and therefore detective fiction declares narration a mere deviation; since the *fabula* narrated by the detective in his reconstruction of the facts brings us back to the beginning, Moretti claims that "it abolishes narration" (148). The validity of this point of his, however, would depend on what it is that he means by "narration" and "story", terms which he inadequately defines.

Oates seems to be arguing on the same line, when claiming that "in this genre, more than in any other, anticipation is all, revelation, virtually nothing" (38). Similarly, Moretti claims that detective fiction's scientific loftiness *needs* literary "deviation", even if it is only to destroy it: a solution without a mystery, a *fabula* without a *sjuzet*, would be of no interest (147).

Overall, there has been a critical mass of commentary that relished the cultural inferiority of detective fiction; for example, according to Roth, some (such as Jameson 647) argued that it was "formulaic", by which they meant mechanical, or it was "conventional", by which they meant inert or dead (8-9). According to the same source, detective fiction was also said to be abjectly repetitive in that it consisted of the same few stories written over and over, therefore adhering to the same regularities, or somewhat constituting variations of the same pattern.

To use Porter's terms, one can argue that whereas much of the serious fiction of our time, often by means of a more or less explicit parody of the detective genre, has been committed to the task of "defamiliarisation", the detective story has pursued the goal of "perceptual re-familiarisation" (245). In other words, the crime novel, whether English or American, can be identified as an essentially conservative form. One, however, need keep in mind that it is this formulaic property of such popular literary types that constitutes them as such.

As Porter points out, formulaic popular literature is so readable because the limited number of story types it contains is already familiar to the average reader (99). Even more so, he argues that both folk fairy tales and detective novels confirm that the reading of fiction invariably has something of the character of a rereading. And yet an important point to make at this stage is the fact that this sort of "loyalty" Porter assigns adults to have towards certain authors of popular literature is not necessarily limited to crime fiction. Readers of other

literary (science and romance fiction) or even non-literary forms (cookery, self-help books etc.) can be said to also share this sort of loyalty to preferred authors.

In any case, Porter goes on to argue that if reading detective novels is always a rereading, it is a rereading in which a limited number of structural constants are combined with an indefinite number of decorative variables in order to make the familiar view:

As in the equally formulaic minor genre of joke telling, the audience's pleasure depends both on being familiar with the structure of the whole and on not knowing the specific outcome. The final solution of a crime, like a punch line of a joke, is recognized as the predictable formal term whose actual content is appreciated most when it comes as a surprise. (99)

Porter here draws on yet another analogy, that of crime fiction and jokes. He claims that both genres work under the constraint that there is a certain formula to be followed, one which need consist of a set of structural constants, in combination with a so-called "indefinite number of decorative variables". Not only does Porter, however, fail to define the nature of these decorative variables, but he seems to imply that these are as simplistic as those encountered in the minor genre of joke-telling. It appears to be the case that both genres share the feature of surprise at the very end, one that is a definitive aspect of the genres, a so-called "predictable formal term", and yet the nature of which we are not to have access to until the story's very end.

Patricia Cornwell's work can certainly be used to pull these ideas together, as it in fact exhibits a set of formulaic regularities. Her work can be classified under the *police-procedural* genre which, Priestman argues, is one that usually expresses almost as much interest in the way a team of professionals, with various problems of their own, work together as in the solutions of crime (29-30). Not only does Priestman claim that the crimes presented in procedurals tend to be multiple rather than single - for the investigators, several major investigations are on the go concurrently -, but also the adopted "win some, lose some" formula does in fact allow a welcome new level of realism into the genre (30).

Across the whole range of the author's Dr Kay Scarpetta series, we expect the medical examiner's post-mortem to reveal both the cause of death and identification, if not at an early stage of each novel, then certainly by the end of it. We expect her to go on a hunt for information, which would eventually lead her to the killer. At first, the information she gathers would seem rather disjointed, only to eventually fall into place, and readers may also be expecting to find the examiner herself and those she holds most dear directly in harm's way, if not at mortal risk.

Readers also expect that primary suspects are unlikely to turn out to be the killers, and it is most likely to be the case that it is someone close to the doctor herself that would be the perpetrator (such as a colleague or a lover). Another evident regularity is that of the *seriality of the killings*, which has come to be inseparable from the excitement of the police procedural series. According to Swales, seriality engenders a sense of pattern while withholding the explanation of that pattern: "what seems random to the quotidian mind probably has coherence for the pathological mind" (*The Art of Detective Fiction* xiii). Swales argues that seriality has come to be fashionable not only because it brings an urgency to the chasing of the murderer at hand, but also in that it brings out the issue of there being a pattern, one whose justification remains withheld up until the story's end.

Finally, regardless of the vast number of structural constants evident in the Cornwell series, it is the combination of these constants with an indefinite number of variables that make the series so popular. Like the genre of jokes, the series features surprise at the very end, a definitive aspect of the genre of crime fiction as a whole, the previously so-called

“predictable formal term”, and yet the nature of which we are not to have access to until the story’s very end.

In the next section, I will be looking at the social deviation exhibited in Connelly’s Harry Bosch series, in an attempt to establish whether labelling criminals as deviant or abnormal, in a social sense, is justifiable.

4. Social Deviation

As commonly defined, abnormal behaviour is almost always regarded as undesirable and as something to be changed or modified, if at all possible (Miller and Morley 4). According to the same source, studies published on abnormality are inversely related to the frequency with which that abnormality or condition is encountered in the general population (known as the *reverse utility law*). In fact, one important reason that has underlined recent studies in abnormal behaviour was the idea that abnormality can assist in the understanding of normal behaviour and the processes that govern it: “potentially, at least, the study of the abnormal can test and improve our concept of normality” (Cole 15). It therefore seems appropriate to consider this notion under the heading of *deviation*, as the term has so far been defined as a purely statistical phenomenon.

According to Miller and Morley, studies of *abnormality* can be considered under three main headings which constitute the *statistical*, the *departure from cultural norms* and *subjective definitions* (8). Types of abnormality have also been divided into those that are *psychological* and those that are *social* in nature. In this section, I will be concentrating on the social perspective of the condition, and the rule breaking that comes with it. According to Price, *crime* is just one example of abnormal behaviour that clearly violates agreed-upon rules of any one group within a particular social environment (others being perversion, drunkenness or bad manners), while it is worth pointing out that Price regards *deviance* as the *response* of other people to the rule-breaker:

Deviance is a quality of people’s response to an act and not a characteristic of the act itself. **Primary deviance** and **secondary deviance** are distinguished from each other to refer to the fact that abnormal behaviour can arise in response to being labelled, or hospitalised (secondary), or as a response of some internal (primary) cause, such as brain damage. (146)

One interesting consequence of adopting the social perspective is that considerably more attention will be given to the *social context* in which the abnormal behaviour occurs, which is a claim that has interesting applications especially in the context of the genre at hand. Since an important function that may modify the reaction to norm violation is additionally the role or status of the rule-breaker, it is easy to see that the norm-violation any detective engages in would be far less damaging than that which the corresponding criminal would carry out.

For instance, in the context of Connelly’s Harry Bosch series, the protagonist, though a hero maverick, is also a loner, a drinker, a smoker, and an insomniac. He has fought and killed in Vietnam, and is often motivated by vengeance. Harry is often romantically involved with criminals (in *Trunk Music*, 1997, he gets married to ex-FBI agent Eleanor Wish, who in the novel makes her living as a card sharp), is hauled into court as the chief defendant in a civil suit against the LAPD (in *Concrete Blonde*, 1994, the family of the “Dollmaker”, a notorious serial killer who Bosch shot during an arrest three years ago, take him to court under the allegation that Bosch killed the wrong man – an accusation that becomes horrifying plausible when a new body turns up that has all the hallmarks of a Dollmaker slaying), and even appears as the prime suspect in a complex case Terry McCaleb, a fellow detective, investigates (*A Darkness More Than Night*, 2000). Despite this, the readers of the series can be assumed to be far more tolerating of Bosch’s rule-breaking than any of that of the killers he

pursuits, regardless of the seriousness of the crimes and rule-breaking the detective engages in, or is accused of engaging in. Readers are, therefore, somewhat forced to be in sympathy with the detective, and can thus be accused of a certain bias.

This seems to be in accordance to what Holdaway argues, when he claims that

strangely, crime and criminals, deviants and deviance are phenomena we often feel able to define clearly, despite the equally unclear boundaries that border legality and illegality, normality and deviance. (Holdaway 1)

Up until the late 1960s, criminologists were attempting to explain crime and deviance in terms of the differences between those who break the law and those who don't, whereas sociologists have criticised this narrow view of the law and the inadequate or sole dividing line between deviant and normal behaviour (Holdaway 2-3). As Holdaway argues, deviants are not by nature intrinsically "different" from normal people, but are created by being brought within a scope of law or some other rule applied to their actions. In other words, it would be fair to argue that judgement of abnormal behaviour indeed depends on context, biography and purpose, not to mention political convictions, and the genre does in fact expose these issues extensively.

To some other extent, the genre can be said to alter the social roles of the detective and the criminal so that the detective *becomes* the criminal's double. Connelly's detective figure, for instance, like a psychoanalyst, often engages in transference with the criminal, since he must identify with the latter in order to trace the path back to the original trauma. To this extent, the detectives are seen as somewhat taking up the role of *artists* in that, like poets, they surrender themselves wholly to the work to be done (Moretti 142-3), whatever the sacrifice may be. It might be for this reason that Bosch is most often presented to exude a kind of tragic aura; he appears to suffer via this association he shares with those who are criminally-minded.

Overall, and as Roth put it, this notion of equating the detective with the criminal is by now a commonplace (152):

In fact, the literary figure of the detective typically was and continues to be an extraordinary, marginal figure who frequently bears a closer resemblance to the criminal he pursues than to the police officers with whom he supposedly collaborates. (Black 43)

That is, detectives come to understand their criminals to such an extent, that they are enabled to predict their next move, but also end up resembling criminals in character even more than they resemble their own fellow officers.

I will devote the rest of this section to an analysis of the *nature* of the abnormal behaviour Connelly's criminals engage in. It seems that familiar motivations for murder - such as greed, ambition and jealousy - no longer prove adequate to account for the generic form, and according to Swales, reason is, in every sense, brought to its limits - and to its knees - by the force of unregenerate, frequently sexual, obsession (*The Art of Detective Fiction* xiii). In other words, Swales claims that the sexual charge that seems to lie behind much recent detective story writing has come to make it not longer possible for the detectives to rely on traditional motivations for murder leading them to the murderers. The investigators come to deal with criminal minds with no reason, ones who are psychologically imbalanced and sexually obsessed, and therefore ones who are more difficult to trace than the old-fashioned criminals of the genre.

For instance, in the context of Connelly's *Angels Flight* (1999), the real murderer of a twelve-year old girl turns out to be her father who has been sexually abusing her, while Bosch's fellow police officers appear to have tortured the girl's wrongly suspected rapist and murderer when under police custody. Similarly, in *Concrete Blonde* (1994), the "Dollmaker"

slayings are horrific, while Mora, Bosch's fellow police officer who specialises in the porn industry, turns out to be a twisted man who is in fact involved in child pornography.

Conclusions

In this article, I have attempted to show that Contemporary American Crime Fiction exhibits a number of features that could be classified under various types of *deviation*. I examined the *linguistic*, *generic*, and *social deviation* of novels by Patterson, Cornwell, and Connelly and therefore illustrated the way in which the novelists challenge the boundaries of language, the crime fiction genre, and acceptable social behaviour.

I analysed a number of extracts from Patterson's Alex Cross series and specifically concentrated on the linguistic representation of Soneji and Mr Smith's frame of mind. I found that both criminals' figurative conceptualisations of experience appear to be motivated by underlying metaphorical schemes of thought that constrain, even define, the way they think, reason, argue, and carry out their criminal actions. In other words, restricting myself to megametaphorical mappings, I found that the figurative aspects of the language of extracts portraying the criminal consciousness revealed the poetic structure of the criminal mind.

I thereafter looked into the past and current literary nature of crime novels and traced the genre's evolution from the earlier decades of the Golden Age until now. I argued that the crime fiction genre has shown an infinite capacity to re-invent itself, and pointed out the set of *formulaic regularities* that crime novels may be said to nowadays feature. I also considered the generic nature of novels by Cornwell, which can be classified under the *police-procedural* sub-genre, and argued that in addition to the number of formulaic constants the novels exhibit, there is also number of variables, such as that concerning the nature of the "predictable formal surprise ending".

Finally, I devoted the last section to defining the various senses of *abnormality*, and considered the rule-breaking attached to the social perspective of the term. I discussed the factors of the rule-breaking encountered in the genre, and argued that not only would the status/role of the rule-breaker determine the reader's reaction to the violation, but also that the detective often takes the position of the criminal's *double* in such novels. I ended by considering the nature of the abnormal behaviour encountered in Michael Connelly's Harry Bosch series, and illustrated that it is far more complicated than that of the older novels of the Golden Age. Contemporary works exhibit crimes that are most usually sexually charged, while the criminals who carry them out are presented as psychologically imbalanced, if not monstrous.

Overall, I found that *deviance* is a term that, in addition to meaning different things for different disciplines, remains difficult to define in the context of any one discipline as well. In fiction, the language of the criminal mind becomes noticeable not only because of the extent to which it differs or deviates from the language of say, the detecting mind. It *becomes* deviant due to the fact that it is attached to individuals which readers *take* to be deviant and abnormal. *Abnormals* (i.e. criminals) are expected to conceptualise the world *abnormally*, and in real-life criminals' labelling as such may even contribute to their course of actions and behaviour. Readers tend to tolerate, for instance, the detective's social abnormalities only because these are attached to individuals we take to be *normal*.

Finally, the generic principles of Contemporary American Crime Fiction have come to differ so much from those of prototypical crime novels that it is no longer possible to define a contemporary crime novel (this was also illustrated by the great variety of novels I encountered in the amazon.com chart), hence a novel which at one time is classified under one genre may, within a different context, be classified under a sub-genre or another genre altogether. By en large, I found that deviating from a genre can be a lot more subjective than

deviating from societal norms and normal language usage. Further research need be undertaken in order to establish connections between the three types of deviation, and arrive at a definition for the term *deviance* that would be applicable to a whole range of disciplines.

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