

OXFORD

ANDREW PEPPER

UNWILLING EXECUTIONER

*Crime Fiction
and the State*



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For the translators, the unacknowledged heroes
of the global book trade

Preface and Acknowledgements

There is a fascinating revelation in David Peace's new foreword to Jean-Patrick Manchette's 1977 crime masterpiece *Fatale*. In his diary, Manchette reveals how he added 'a completely crazy scene' and that 'the long quote from Hegel is likely to drive people at Série Noire totally bats'. He signs off with a phrase that is at once gleeful and dismissive—'Ah, well!'—as though he already knows the negative repercussions it will have. Later we learn that Série Noire turned down the novel and that it was picked up by the imprint's publisher Gallimard as a 'regular novel'—and that in the early years of its life as a book it never really found a sizeable audience, perhaps because Manchette, by his own admission, tried 'to desiccate the crime thriller as much as I could...by applying to my subject matter a very carefully crafted "Marxist" architecture'.¹

The anecdote and what it tells us about Manchette and crime fiction in general is significant for a number of reasons: it demonstrates Manchette's commitment to furthering some kind of political agenda through his crime stories and at the same time the difficulty of incorporating radical politics into his lean, pulsating tales of violence and revenge; it shows us the cost, to Manchette, of trying to do so and indicates that most readers did not react especially favourably to his Marxist inclinations. But most of all it underlines the struggle between commerce and politics that informs Manchette's own literary production and that has shaped, and continues to shape, the genre's character and development. To entertain *and* to provoke, to critique *and* perhaps also to reassure, have always been part of the genre's DNA but this small incident shows us how daunting the challenge is. The more you have to say, or the further you want to push, the harder is the challenge and the more you risk. For writers like Manchette the cost, in terms of commercial and hence financial success, was considerable.

This is not a story we hear very often these days. Instead, the relentless global march of best-selling crime novelists like Michael Connolly, Ian Rankin, and Lee Child, coupled with the idea that these same writers are using the genre as a vehicle for social and political criticism, suggests that contemporary practitioners can have their cake and eat it. I am not so sure. This is not to dismiss their novels outright or indeed to downplay the ongoing significance of drawing readers into crime novels by giving them what they want: excitement, suspense, tension, mystery, and a frisson of social and political engagement. But to do all this, and still find a way of properly exposing the ills of capitalism, the inadequacies of our liberal-democratic framework, the failures of the policing and justice system, the interconnectedness of the worlds of law, business, and crime, and even to tell us that everything won't be ok in the end, is a prodigiously difficult and perhaps nigh-on impossible task.

¹ Jean-Patrick Manchette qtd in David Peace, 'Foreword', in Manchette, *Fatale* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2015), pp. v–vii.

Dashiell Hammett did so, even if his novels were never wildly popular at the time of their publication; Georges Simenon—one of the best-selling crime novelists of all time and yet politically much more complex than he is often given credit for—remains, for me, the most influential figure in the global march of the genre in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; and Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö quickly found a sizeable international audience for their Marxist-inflected police procedural novels.

But even here, with these ostensible ‘successes’, the struggle to bring the disparate elements of the crime story, its assaults on the rottenness of the existing order, and its necessary defences of the law, into effective tension or conflagration would not be easily achieved; and would lead to accusations—self-accusations in Manchette’s case—of failure, even when success, defined in terms of remaining absolutely true to one’s political beliefs and also finding huge numbers of readers, was at best a distant hope rather than an expectation. In writing about figures like Simenon, Hammett, Manchette, and Sjöwall and Wahlöö who strived, and sometimes failed, to marry the commercial and political imperatives of the genre, because it could not be otherwise, I am hoping to tell a larger story about the genre. Too often, I think, we limit this narrative to a self-selecting group of American crime novels published between the 1920s and 1950s under the designation ‘noir’ or ‘hard-boiled’, and one of my main ambitions here in this book is to argue that the impetus to politicize and popularize the writing of crime as fiction has a much longer historical lineage and a much broader geographical trajectory than we sometimes seem to want to admit—and that this impetus should be seen as having an international dimension rather than as something confined to discrete national traditions.

I am not alone in this belief of course and my book is a small contribution in a much larger effort to unsettle some of the critical orthodoxies that have calcified around the genre. As such, I am deeply indebted to the excellent critical work that precedes and makes possible my book; and the following list of names, though by no means an exhaustive one, indicates the interventions I have found most helpful: Bill Alder, Clive Bloom, Chris Breu, Leonard Cassuto, Jonathan Eburne, Robin Truth Goodman, Claire Gorarra, Cynthia Hamilton, Dominique Kalifa, Martin Kayman, Stewart King, Stephen Knight, Sean McCann, Andrew Nestingen, Barbara Pezzotti, David Platten, Charles Rzepka, and Ronald Thomas.

I would particularly like to acknowledge my debt to Lee Horsley, both for her excellent work and the friendship and support she has shown me during the long gestation of this project, and to Pete Messent, who has written clearly and with genuine insight about the crime fiction genre and who first encouraged me down this path when I was an undergraduate student at the University of Nottingham. My own thinking about what crime fiction is and does is just as indebted to Paul Copley, and the friendship and many beer-themed conversations I have shared with him over the years, and to David Schmid, with whom I have greatly enjoyed collaborating on another project and from whom I have learned a great deal.

At Queen’s University Belfast, where I have taught since 2001, I have been supported by the sabbatical leave programme which remains the single most important

means of gaining the time and space to attempt large-scale academic projects. At Queen's, I have been fortunate enough to enjoy the support and friendship of colleagues in the School of English and elsewhere, notably Fran Brearton, Mark Burnett, Marilina Cesario, David Dwan, Catherine Gander, Gail McConnell, Philip McGowan, Paul Simpson, Bal Sokhi-Bulley, Adrian Streete, Caroline Sumpter, and Ramona Wray. Of these I would like to pick out David, whose typically challenging but always generous insights into the philosophical and political foundations of my book were key to shaping it at an early stage of the project. In addition to the numerous students I've taught on my many crime fiction modules over the years, I would especially like to acknowledge Clare Clarke whose doctoral thesis I was lucky enough to supervise and who has gone on to write an award-winning book on Victorian crime fiction. Last and certainly not least, one of the most important and helpful influences on my thinking about crime fiction, especially its international dimensions and its reception and circulation in France, has been Dominique Jeannerod, who teaches French at Queen's, with whom I have shared conversations and insights too numerous to mention and who has helped to shape the direction and scope of this book in more ways than I am sure he realizes.

Parts of Chapter 1 were first published as 'Early Crime Writing and the State: Jonathan Wild, Daniel Defoe and Bernard Mandeville in 1720s London' in *Textual Practice*, 25:3 (June 2011), pp. 473–91; parts of Chapter 5 were published as "Hegemony Protected by the Armour of Coercion": Dashiell Hammett's *Red Harvest* and the State', in *Journal of American Studies*, 44:2 (May 2010), pp. 333–49. I would like to thank Routledge and Cambridge University Press for their permission to reproduce this material.

My greatest debt of gratitude goes to Debbie Lisle, my partner in crime and life, a brilliant scholar of International Relations in her own right who has read numerous parts of this book and who has brought her typical generosity, wisdom, insight, and disciplinary perspective (and red pen) to what I've written. She has also endured, with more grace and patience than I've been able to reciprocate, my teeth-gnashing despair and catastrophizing over the years when it seemed like this project was neither feasible nor possible. Without her love, friendship, and support, this book quite simply wouldn't have been started, let alone finished. I won't offer the patronizing and wholly untrue claim that my kids have also influenced the outcome of this book, except in the negative sense of depriving me of sleep and time, but this is exactly as it should be, and I like to think that their current "superheroes" and 'bad guys' predilections may one day blossom into a finer appreciation of the nuances and ambiguities of the crime genre. Or not—because these stories do also tell us 'bad guys' need to go to jail. This book is dedicated to the translators, the unlikely superheroes of the impetus to share and understand crime fiction across national and linguistic borders, and as a linguistic neophyte my debt to their trailblazing work should be self-evident but probably still needs to be acknowledged.

Table of Contents

Introduction: Crime Fiction as Unwilling Executioner	1
1. 'A Life of Horrid and Inimitable Wickedness': Crime, Law, and Punishment in Early Eighteenth-century London and Paris	19
2. 'Let Us Attack Injustice at Its Source': Crime Literature in an Era of Revolution and Reform	50
3. 'A Mysterious Power Whose Hand is Everywhere': Imagining the State and Codifying the Law in the Mid-nineteenth Century	77
4. Crime, Business, and Liberty at the Turn of the Century: The Individual, the State, and the Emergence of Modern Capitalism	104
5. 'No Good for Business': States of Crime in the 1920s and 1930s	131
6. 'On the Barricades': Crime Fiction and Commitment in an Era of Radical Politics	166
7. From Sovereignty to Neoliberalism: Crime Fiction in the Contemporary World	206
Conclusion	248
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	253
<i>Index</i>	265

Introduction

Crime Fiction as Unwilling Executioner

This book is founded upon a modest central proposition: that the development of crime fiction as a genre is bound up with the consolidation of the modern, bureaucratic state; that is to say, with the policing, governmental, and judicial apparatuses set up to enforce law, and with the new techniques and technologies of governing established to produce a more secure world.¹ The development of crime fiction as a genre is propelled by the contradictions that ensue when the state assumes control of the justice system. Crime fiction, then, explores the connections and the elisions between what Jean and John Comaroff aptly describe as ‘modernist state power’ on the one hand and ‘popular fantasies of law and order’² on the other. If the state is not easily seen and remains an oblique presence in much fiction, crime stories thematize and make visible the institutional bodies, policing practices, legal processes, and judicial norms that make up the criminal justice system. In doing so, they give tangible shape to the state’s labyrinthine operations and multiple institutional forms. Typically, the stories feature a figure directly appointed by the state or an auxiliary, a private individual for example, who performs a related function. Their enquiries, which give the narrative its archetypal shape and form, draw attention to the failures, flaws, and coercive capacities of the state’s crime control mechanisms, and in doing so are animated by popular or populist opposition to institutionalized power. But their investigations and the resolutions they bring about, perhaps partial or inadequate, also aim to create a more secure world, and ideally, though not always in practice, facilitate a move from disorder to order. As such they underscore the socio-political good of combatting crime—what Loader and Walker call security as a ‘thick public good’ and an ‘indispensable constituent of any good society’³—and draw attention to the ethical dimension of the state.

These stories, therefore, move from or between an account of the state as impartial or standing above society, and hence capable of acting in the general good, to one where the state acts to safeguard the interests of the wealthy and oversee the surrender of public interests to private concerns. Crime fiction—or rather the kind

¹ My deployment of Foucauldian language here to describe the operations of the state is deliberate. As will become apparent, the aim is to situate an understanding of the political dimension of crime fiction in a field of tension between Marxist and Foucauldian conceptions of power.

² Jean and John Comaroff, ‘Criminal Obsessions after Foucault: Postcoloniality, Policing and the Metaphysics of Disorder’, *Critical Inquiry*, 30:4 (Summer 2004), p. 805.

³ Ian Loader and Neil Walker, *Civilizing Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 4.

of crime fiction that comprises the field of study for this book—tends to produce a contradictory account of the state as both necessary for the creation and maintenance of collective life and central to the reproduction of entrenched socio-economic inequalities, to the point that this tension becomes the constitutive and foundational feature of the emerging genre.⁴

It is not my intention to suggest that the crime story willingly performs the role of state henchman or executioner, hence the title of the book. If there is a populist scepticism in crime fiction from its earliest incarnations towards traditional modes and figures of authority, any overt political radicalism is contained by the accommodations crime stories must make towards the articulation of law and the restitution of order. In the same way, this conservative impulse is itself undermined by the crime story's typical refusal to turn a blind eye to institutional failure and corruption. Lee Horsley puts this best when she writes: '[t]he genre is neither inherently conservative nor radical: rather, it is a form that can be co-opted for a variety of purposes'; or indeed that a 'dialogic' approach to reading and understanding the genre is preferable, one that emphasizes 'the ambiguity, or indeed contradictoriness, of individual texts'.⁵ Hence critical approaches that pay too much attention to the genre's capacities for imposing and advocating dominant ideologies or disciplinary norms,⁶ or, for that matter, those that overplay its political radicalism or deviancy or indeed its willingness to service politically progressive agendas,⁷ cannot do justice to the specificity of the genre's ambivalent relationship to the justice system, which in turn gives exemplary crime stories their particular shape and dramatic form.⁸

Despite this general thesis, my book is not seeking to offer a totalizing theory of crime fiction or make a series of sweeping generalizations about all crime stories. Rather my aim is to delineate the richness and complexity of a long tradition of crime writing in which crime, and indeed policing, is seen as rooted in the social

⁴ This builds on a claim made by Sean McCann, who argues that detective fiction articulates a 'more complex and plausible view of the problem of law'; namely that 'on the one hand... laws and norms are the basis of ethical claims and the grounds for any vision of social justice; and, on the other hand, that laws are nevertheless often rigidly bureaucratic and the means of abuse or exploitation'. *Gumshoe America: Hard-Boiled Crime Fiction and the Rise and Fall of New Deal Liberalism* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 310.

⁵ Lee Horsley, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 158, 2.

⁶ Here I am deliberately conflating Marxist and Foucauldian positions because both underscore, albeit in different ways, the repressive logic of the genre. Examples of the latter include Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1991), pp. 67–9; D.A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988); Marie-Christine Leps, *Apprehending the Criminal: The Production of Deviance in Nineteenth-Century Discourse* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1992). Examples of the former include Ernest Mandel, *Delightful Murder: A Social History of the Crime Story* (London: Pluto, 1984); Dennis Porter, *The Pursuit of Crime: Art and Ideology in Detective Fiction* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981).

⁷ Examples of works that, I think, slightly overplay the genre's radicalism and deviancy include Jim Collins's *Uncommon Culture: Popular Culture and Post-Modernism* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 1992) and Tony Hilfer's *The Crime Novel: A Deviant Genre* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1992).

⁸ I am not staking out entirely new ground here but rather building on work that similarly emphasizes the genre's ambivalent status as, to quote Ronald Thomas, an 'enforcer of legitimate cultural authority and a force of resistance too'. See *Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

and economic conditions of its time. Not every crime story will be amenable to this kind of analysis. Those resolutely focused on disruptions to the ordered surfaces of the domestic realm tend to feature less prominently than those which trace and interrogate the complex workings of power in the public *and* private domains. I suspect that those who see the crime story solely as a form of popular entertainment will bridle at the claims of my book and its preoccupation with the political underpinnings of the crime story. I do not dispute that crime fiction is a form of popular writing that in part operates according to long-established codes and archetypes, e.g. detective and criminal. But it is precisely by unsettling and moving beyond these archetypes and the assumptions that underpin them that the crime story—the crime story under investigation here—assumes its exemplary form. For example, by moving beyond an individualist focus on detective and criminal to provide what David Schmid calls ‘politically-engaged critiques of capitalist, racist and patriarchal spatializations of power’,⁹ this kind of crime fiction cannot help but explore how individual action is always socially and economically situated. And precisely because of their engagement with the complex workings of power, these stories necessarily move beyond straightforward accounts of sovereignty, i.e. as the legal expression of the state’s authority. Even as the genre establishes the state’s legitimacy and exceptionality, it also shows how intimately this authority is intertwined with capital and the logic of the productive forces, how sovereignty is as much about projection or performance as it is about power, or indeed how the state, as Gramsci implies, must encompass not just the realm of politics and government but also of civil society as well.¹⁰

The ongoing transfer of public power to private interests might reach a crescendo in the contemporary era but even here the passage between sovereignty and what we might call ‘neoliberalism’ is never straightforward and draws attention to the inadequacy of both in what Lauren Berlant calls ‘world-homogenizing’ systems ‘with coherent intentions’ that in turn produce ‘subjects’ who serve their interests¹¹ (see Chapter 7). In any case, as the rest of the book demonstrates, the intertwining of public and private interests, of state institutions and commercial businesses, has a long and complicated history: Jonathan Wild’s role as thief-taker in early eighteenth-century London, and his self-conscious usurping of a policing mandate for personal enrichment, is an early example of this move (see Chapter 1).

THIS IS NOT A HISTORY

It is perhaps easier to say what this book is not, than to set out exactly what it is. For a start, this is not an authoritative and comprehensive history of crime fiction:

⁹ David Schmid, ‘Imagining Safe Urban Space: The Contribution of Detective Fiction to Radical Geography’, *Antipode*, 27:3 (1995), p. 243.

¹⁰ Antonio Gramsci famously asserted: ‘the state = political society + civil society’. See *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), p. 263.

¹¹ Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 15.

a seamless narrative that explains how the different stories we understand as crime fiction link together and move from a single point of origin to the multiplication of the genre in the twentieth century. Such works do exist. Stephen Knight's *Crime Fiction 1800–2000* (2004) offers the best narrative history of the Anglo-American tradition, while Lee Horsley's (2005) *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction* is the most incisive account of the diversity of the genre in what she calls the long twentieth century.

Instead, the book's foundational claim—that the emergence of crime fiction is linked to consolidation of the modern state—produces its own historical framework. All points of origin are to some extent arbitrary but there are good reasons for tracing the crime story, with its ties to the state, back to, say, the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) and the establishment of the modern state system or to the publication of Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1653) and certainly to the stories of crime and punishment that were regularly circulated in London and Paris from the late seventeenth century onwards. My own decision to start the book in London and Paris in the 1720s is not without foundation because, as I show in Chapter 1, this is the moment when writers like Daniel Defoe began to approach for the first time the subject of crime and punishment in a self-conscious manner. In other words, they demonstrated an awareness of the tensions between the right and need to punish, and inadequacies and failures of the bodies charged with this task—and hence, as Mary Evans outlines in her book *The Imagination of Evil: Detective Fiction in the Modern World* (2009), the complex 'relationship of morality to the law'.¹² This is not to suggest that Defoe and others ever identified themselves as crime writers or at least as writers working according to a set of predetermined formal and thematic patterns. Rather it is to argue that their engagement with the subject of crime and the law's response to crime gradually and perhaps organically established literary conventions that would over time come to characterize what we now understand as crime fiction (i.e. a popular genre with a self-consciously ambivalent stance towards the exercising of state power and the subtle intertwining of public office and private enterprise).

This is not a history of crime fiction, then, but it does have a historical chronology: it offers an account of crime writing's transformation into what Peter Messent calls 'an ongoing serial enquiry into the state of the nation, its power structures and its social concerns'¹³ at various junctures in this process. Rather than providing a coherent and comprehensive account of this transformation, my aim is to build on excellent work already undertaken by Maurizio Ascari, Martin Kayman, and Charles Rzepka to disrupt the typical narrative of the genre's origins and development, i.e. moving seamlessly from Poe to Doyle to Christie, as though the genre, to quote Paul Cobley, is to be seen as 'a gift of its "brand leaders"'.¹⁴ Kayman, for

¹² Mary Evans, *The Imagination of Evil: Detective Fiction and the Modern World* (London and New York, NY: Continuum, 2009), p. 2.

¹³ Peter Messent, 'The Police Novel', in Charles J. Rzepka and Lee Horsley (eds) *A Companion to Crime Fiction* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 178.

¹⁴ Paul Cobley, *The American Thriller: Generic Innovation and Social Change in the 1970s* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), p. 55.

example, is rightly suspicious of 'a retrospective theory which situates every event in its appropriate place in an orderly and totalizing narrative... [and] which presents Conan Doyle as the model of the genre and in consequence treats earlier writing as a simple anticipation of his "classic"'.¹⁵

As I argue in Chapter 4, the centrality of Doyle to a particular account of crime fiction would take the genre, at least in England, down something of a political dead end: the Sherlock Holmes stories secure, rather than unsettle, the public/private dichotomy, and therefore the assumption that the free market, with small adjustments by Holmes, is capable of creating a fair society *without* the intervention of the official police and that the police play a neural, if slightly incompetent role in the ongoing quest for public order. Rather than putting Doyle at the centre of a familiar story of the genre's panoptic capacities, my approach here is more closely aligned to what Foucault calls a 'genealogy': not the 'flow of causally connected events, each of which has a discrete significance and forms part of an overall pattern or meaning of history' but a 'method of analysis which traces the uneven and haphazard process of dispersion, accumulation and overlapping that are constitutive of the event'.¹⁶

What links Dashiell Hammett's Personville of the 1920s, Eugène-François Vidocq's Paris of the 1820s, and Defoe's London of the 1720s is a desire to assimilate complex, ambivalent critiques of state power, and society as it is organized under capitalism, into narratives which imaginatively weigh up the competing and overlapping claims of the individual, morality, community, justice, and the law. The point is not to diminish the radically different contexts and stages of development which in turn produce narratives that are as distinctive from one another as they are similar. Rather it is to draw attention to the multiple influences and constituent parts and indeed elasticity of the form, something that encourages variety and allows writers to inflect their narratives in different ways and in relation to different political ends and different historical contexts.

If one point of departure for this book is the efforts of writers like Defoe to self-consciously think about crime and punishment as a way of reflecting upon the claims of morality, justice, and the law, another is the instrumentalizing of policing away from 'the art of managing life and the well-being of populations' towards the more specific goal of preventing disorder, which Foucault sees as symptomatic of the modern era.¹⁷ This, in turn, meant that the functioning of the institutions responsible for policing, in this narrower sense, became, arguably for the first time, a subject for wider discussion. For Foucault such a move produces a more standardized crime literature: the complex articulations of, and struggles between, narratives of popular rebellion and official power yielding, at some point in the

¹⁵ Martin A. Kayman, *From Bow Street to Baker Street: Mystery, Detection and Narrative* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), p. 3. Also see Maurizio Ascari, *A Counter-History of Crime Fiction: Supernatural, Gothic, Sensational* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) and Charles Rzepka, *Detective Fiction* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005).

¹⁶ Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', in Paul Rabinow (ed.) *The Foucault Reader* (New York, NY: Penguin, 1991), pp. 88, 89.

¹⁷ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977–1978*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 354.

nineteenth century, to a less fractious, more mannered form, exhibiting the disciplinary tendencies of society and culture more generally.¹⁸

Foucault's influence on the study of crime fiction has been significant and has produced a body of work that has tended to problematically characterize the crime story as 'too singular and monolithic an ideological force'.¹⁹ My aim is to bring to bear Foucault's more nuanced and interesting assessment of Vidocq's *Memoirs*—'the direct, institutional coupling of police and delinquency...the disturbing moment when criminality became one of the mechanisms of power'²⁰—on other examples of the genre, and to focus on those crime stories which do indeed unsettle the distinction between policing and criminality and require us to think about the rootedness of both in the same socio-economic reality. In a larger sense, while Foucault's insistence upon studying power 'outside the field delineated by judicial sovereignty and the institution of the State'²¹ may limit his usefulness to a study which seeks to do precisely what he cautions against, my attempt to explore the complex intersections between the state and capitalism permits a reading of power where, as Antonio Negri puts it, 'government is unified in the will of capital' and where 'the unity of power is diluted'—i.e. where Foucauldian and Marxist accounts of the operations of power and the implications for subjects or citizens are perhaps not as far apart as some might think.²²

CRIME FICTION AS WORLD LITERATURE

When staking out the territory for a critical account of crime fiction's development over a three hundred year period, the general problem of historical teleology and the specific one of imposing an overly-schematic reading upon the genre (e.g. eighteenth-century, subversive; nineteenth-century, conservative) are both exacerbated by a tendency to draw conclusions from a limited corpus of self-selecting crime fiction 'classics' (e.g. Poe, Doyle, etc.). In this sense, the genre's inherent complexities, its capacities for confronting and buttressing power, can only be fully appreciated if it is grasped as a trans-Atlantic circuit connecting Britain, the United States and continental Europe, primarily France.²³ A narrow Anglo-American frame, especially one that insists upon pursuing the development from 'classic'

¹⁸ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, pp. 68–9.

¹⁹ Thomas, *Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science*, p. 14.

²⁰ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 283.

²¹ Foucault, *Society Must be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76*, trans. David Macey (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 34.

²² In looking for areas of commonality as well as difference between Marx and Foucault, Negri also states: 'it is possible to assume that Marx's concept of capital, especially when it is in its historical development from "manufacture" to "large scale industry", from "social capital" to "financial capitalism", is strictly connected to the concept of power that Foucault defined as the result of a relation of forces'. See Antonio Negri, 'A Marxist Experience of Foucault', trans. Arianne Bove, http://www.generation-online.org/p/fp_negri25.htm, accessed 18 August 2015.

²³ Pim Higginson, for example, makes the excellent point that, following Poe, 'the genre follows a circuit connecting the United States, Great Britain and France'. See 'Mayhem at the Crossroads: Francophone African Fiction and the Rise of the Crime Novel', *Yale French Studies*, 108 (2005), p. 162.

writers like Poe and Doyle to hard-boiled writers like Hammett and Raymond Chandler, produces an inadequate, lop-sided understanding of the ways in which the genre has challenged social and political norms: what Horsley describes as 'existing social and racial hierarchies, the assumed power structure, establishment values'.²⁴

An expanded historical and geographical frame puts to the sword some of the lazier critical orthodoxies that have coalesced around the genre and that have proved surprisingly hard to dislodge. Just as the notion that Poe immaculately conceived the crime story with the publication in 1841 of 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' will not do, the idea that the genre's development can be described in terms of a move from the 'classical' crime story of the nineteenth century (characterized as 'conservative') to the 'radical' hard-boiled crime novel of the twentieth century falls apart if a wider historical and geographical lens is deployed.²⁵ John Gay's account in *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) of the interpenetration of business and policing is just as far-reaching as Bertolt Brecht's in *The Threepenny Opera* (1928), hardly a surprise given that Brecht used Gay's play as his source material; Arthur Morrison's short story 'The Affair of the Avalanche Bicycle and Tyre Co., Limited' (1897) offers in many ways a more pointed and bleaker assessment of the effects of finance capital than Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* (1930); William Godwin's condemnation of state violence in *Caleb Williams* (1794) is as forceful as Chester Himes's in *The Heat's On* (1966); the account of the absurdity of reason is as developed in Marcel Allain and Pierre Souvestre's *Fantômas* (1911) as in Friedrich Dürrenmatt's *The Pledge* (1958) and Vidocq's thematization of bureaucratic intransigence and the limits of political reform in *Memoirs* (1828) looks ahead to the treatment of these same subjects in the police novels of Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö.

There are dangers of course in seeking to make connections between writers and national traditions across time and space, and in a book that sets out to explore the genre's inherent transnationality over a three hundred year period it is inevitable that much of the valuable contextualization carried out by studies of particular writers or periods or national traditions will be lost. Still my overarching claim remains a pressing one: i.e. that the crime story has a much richer, longer, and more radical lineage that some critics are prepared to cede.

At stake here is the very real issue of the genre's intrinsic transnationality. As such, a focus just on the relationship between English and American archetypes overlooks the extent to which the production and circulation of crime fiction has always been a transnational phenomenon. For example, the coincidental but synonymous

²⁴ Lee Horsley, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 102.

²⁵ The critical move to address the first problem has been successfully negotiated by studies such as Kayman's *From Bow Street to Baker Street* (1992), Knight's *Crime Fiction 1800–2000* (2004), and Ascarì's *A Counter-History of Crime Fiction* (2007). But the tendency to see US hard-boiled crime writing as a moment of rupture in the genre's emergence has weakened otherwise excellent books such as Christopher Breu's *Hard-Boiled Masculinities* (2005) and Sean McCann's *Gumshoe America* (2000). Studies that successfully, and rightly in my opinion, resist this temptation include Knight's *Crime Fiction 1800–2000* (2004) and Clare Clarke's *Late Victorian Crime Fiction in the Shadows of Sherlock* (2014).

rise and fall of Wild in London and Louis-Dominique Cartouche in Paris was simultaneously documented by Daniel Defoe; Godwin's *Caleb Williams* was, in part, a response to continental debates about penal reform; Vidocq's *Memoirs* were simultaneously translated into English and circulated in London, influencing writers on both sides of the Channel; Poe read Vidocq, Emile Gaboriau read Poe, and Doyle read Gaboriau; Simenon and Hammett read each other's work and both were championed by André Gide; Brecht and Walter Benjamin, avid readers of crime fiction, admired Simenon's early crime novels; Himes only wrote his Harlem crime stories once he emigrated to France and only then at the urging of his Parisian editor; and works by Jean-Patrick Manchette, Sjöwall and Wahlöö, and David Peace owe a debt to Hammett. Despite this reality, the critical tendency has been to overlook connections between Anglo-American crime fiction and other national crime fiction traditions, especially in continental Europe.²⁶ As Claire Gorrara astutely notes: 'European crime fiction in languages other than English has received relatively little critical attention in the Anglophone critical world', and that most companions to crime fiction

tend either to treat European crime fiction as an umbrella term, providing short generalized surveys of different national traditions, or to view the whole notion of crime writing traditions outside the 'big two' of Britain and America as minor tributaries whose interest derives mainly from a select group of iconic figures.²⁷

The most useful intervention in this emerging field of study, to explore the international dimensions of crime fiction, both historically and as a contemporary phenomenon, has come from Stewart King and it is worth pausing on his (2014) essay 'Crime Fiction as World Literature' for a moment to think over his main claims. King points to the growing number of works exploring the emergence and significance of 'nonmainstream' and 'non-Anglophone' crime fiction but insists that 'these studies have not been able to break the monopoly of the Anglo-American canon'.²⁸ More pointedly, King claims that these works, which ostensibly want to break up this monopoly, in fact 'contribute to their own marginalization in crime fiction criticism by tending to limit their object of analysis to specific national or regional literary tradition'.²⁹ Instead, he proposes 'we read crime fiction as an example of world literature to gain greater insights into the global reach of the genre' or at the very least to explore 'international connections between works'.³⁰ Usefully too King marshals arguments made by David Damrosch's *What is World Literature* (2003) in order to limit the potential field of study: not simply every crime novel published anywhere in the world but those works that 'circulate

²⁶ This point is made very well by Vincenzo Ruggiero in a review of Martin Priestman's edited collection, *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*. See Vincenzo Ruggiero, 'Review of *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*', *Modernism/modernity*, 11:4 (November 2004), pp. 851–3.

²⁷ Claire Gorrara, 'Introduction', in Gorrara (ed.) *French Crime Fiction* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), p. 2.

²⁸ Stewart King, 'Crime Fiction as World Literature', *Clues: A Journal of Detection*, 32:2 (Fall 2014), p. 9.

²⁹ King, 'Crime Fiction as World Literature', p. 9.

³⁰ King, 'Crime Fiction as World Literature', p. 10.

beyond their culture of origin' and make direct interventions in literary systems and cultures 'beyond that of [their] original culture'.³¹ King's insights are so useful for my own study for a number of reasons: they draw attention to the need to dislodge the Anglo-American tradition from its typically dominant position in most accounts of the genre's development; they argue for the opening up of this account to other, non-Anglophone crime fiction traditions; and they encourage comparative and transnational studies of the crime novel's production, circulation, and reception within and across national boundaries. If there is something disappointingly 'first world' about my focus here on works produced in England, the United States, and continental Europe, I am happy to accept the resultant criticisms and claim this book as a small step in the direction that King rightly urges us to go.

There are obvious impediments to this kind of move, notably the thorny question of linguistic difference, and in terms of the international circulation of crime fiction criticism in English, I am indebted to colleagues in French studies such as Gorrara, Margaret Attack, David Platten, and Dominique Jeannerod who have written about French crime fiction in English; or Dominique Kalifa whose work has been translated into English, and to critics in Italian and Scandinavian studies (e.g. Barbara Pezzotti and Andrew Nestingen) who similarly develop their critiques of Italian and Swedish crime fiction traditions in English. Another impediment has been the unavailability of translated crime novels, but the success of publishing imprints like Europa and Bitter Lemon in translating and circulating French and Italian crime fiction in the UK and the US and the phenomenal popularity of Scandinavian crime fiction internationally (following Henning Mankell and of course Stieg Larsson) has prompted much greater critical reflection on categories like international or global crime fiction and on the historical roots of the genre's transnational circulations.³²

My book is part of this new critical move to map and interrogate the historical roots of crime fiction's transnationality, initially focusing on France and England and then on links between continental Europe and the US, and finally on this transnationality in an era of globalization. To even attempt this kind of work, I am indebted to the excellent translations of the French, Italian, Swedish, German, and Japanese crime novels on which I have offered assessments. This, of course, raises other, thornier issues related to translation in general—i.e. the appropriateness of using translated texts in the first place. One approach here would be to emphasize

³¹ King, 'Crime Fiction as World Literature', p. 9.

³² New studies exploring the international or global dimensions of the contemporary genre include Marieke Krajenbrink and Kate Quinn (eds), *Investigating Identities: Questions of Identity in Contemporary International Crime Fiction* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009) and Christine Matzke and Susanne Mühleiser, *Postcolonial Perspectives: Crime Fiction from a Transcultural Perspective* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006). It should be noted that scholars in French studies have been quicker to appreciate these transnational dimensions than their Anglophone counterparts. See, for example, Higginson, *The Noir Atlantic: Chester Himes and the Birth of the Francophile Crime Novel* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011); Alasdair Rolls and Deborah Walker, *French and American Noir: Dark Crossings* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Jonathan Eburne, *Surrealism and the Art of Crime* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2008).

what is lost in translation. Or, to put this another way, since I cannot provide my own translations, and since the translations provided by, among others, Donald Nicholson-Smith, Lawrence Venuti, and others are so successful on their own terms, all I can do is acknowledge that I am not basing my analysis solely on the original work but a hybrid creation of novelist and translator—and that something essential is lost in the translation and circulation of the original work in another language.

Another approach, following Damrosch's *What is World Literature*, is to point out what is gained by translation: the reinvigoration of formerly discrete national literatures as they are brought into contact with counterparts from elsewhere so that literature, or for the purposes of this book, crime fiction 'not only survives in translation but gains new meanings and relevance every time it crosses geographical, cultural, and linguistic borders'.³³ If my own approach favours the latter over the former, I am wary about wholeheartedly embracing Franco Moretti's concept of 'the global atlas of the novel' as a 'complex, centreless map in which difference reigns'.³⁴ The point is not to deny or overlook national particularities, local contexts, and historical framing or indeed to see the transnational as what Berlant calls a 'world-homogenizing' system 'whose forces are played out to the same effect, or affect, everywhere'.³⁵ Rather it is to combine a sustained focus on individual texts and their particular local and national contexts with a broader, comparative approach that explores the ways in which the translation, circulation, and reception of crime fiction in, and between, Britain and France in the first instance, then including the US and continental Europe, and finally incorporating the globe, produces a richer, more complex and indeed nuanced portrait of the genre than would be possible if one just focused on, let's say, British or French or American crime fiction as a discrete entity; or worse still excluded works by crime writers from France, Ireland, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland, and Japan altogether.³⁶

Drilling down into the detail, producing this kind of portrait of the genre, or particular examples of the genre, requires more than simply looking at crime stories by US, British, French, and Italian authors in separation from one another. Perhaps the designation of 'crime fiction as world literature', as set out by King, or 'the global atlas of the novel'³⁷ as used by Moretti, is too broad for my purposes, at least insofar as my field of study is for two-thirds of the book limited to French, English, and to a lesser extent American examples. Nonetheless as a method or an approach, which requires or presupposes the circulation and translation of ideas,

³³ Karen-Margrethe Simonsen and Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen (eds), *World Literature, World Culture: History, Theory, Analysis* (Aarhus, DNK: Aarhus University Press, 2008), p. 15. Also see David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton, NJ and London: Princeton University Press, 2003); Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M.B. DeBevoise (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

³⁴ Simonsen and Stougaard-Nielsen (eds), *World Literature, World Culture*, p. 11.

³⁵ Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, p. 9.

³⁶ This approach broadly dovetails with Damrosch's preference for 'close' as opposed to what Moretti calls 'distant' reading: described by Simonsen and Stougaard-Nielsen as 'a reading of world literature through the study of heterogeneously combined microcanons' (see *World Literature, World Culture*, p. 13).

³⁷ Franco Moretti, 'Conjectures on World literature', *New Left Review*, 1 (2000), pp. 55–68.

themes, and concerns about crime and policing across and between national traditions, while trying to pay due attention to specific sociocultural and institutional contexts, it speaks very well to my intention here: a thoroughgoing, sustained, *comparative* analysis, whereby the preoccupations of crime novelists from different national traditions are brought to bear on each other, in the hope of arriving at synthesized positions. For example, in Chapter 5, the move to consider Hammett, typically viewed as a leftist radical, in light of Simenon, often perceived as a social conservative, and vice versa, and both in light of the consolidation and transformation of the state and capitalism in the first three decades of the twentieth century, produces a more nuanced and entangled understanding—formally *and* politically—of both writers and their works, and indeed of the national traditions they belong to and emerge out of.

THE POLITICS OF CRIME

All of the figures addressed in this book, whatever their nationality, could be considered to be political crime writers—and this ambition or preoccupation, in turn, gives dramatic shape and structure to their work, albeit not in a uniform or prescriptive manner. By political, I do not mean that their work propagandizes for any particular cause or that they necessarily espouse a left or right political orthodoxy. Nor even should we think of the crime writers examined in the book as politically ‘committed’, though many are exactly this; committed to confronting the injustices of state power; committed to revealing the exploitation of capitalism; committed to furthering social and economic equality or simply revealing what is rotten in the society they belong to.³⁸ For as I have already argued, the anger that such commitment produces must, and is, weighed up against a realization, typically from an insider’s perspective, that the state cannot simply be dismantled and that the law performs a necessary and fundamentally important social function. Moreover, despite this political commitment, where and when it is expressed, there is no expectation or indeed hope, in most works considered, that it will directly affect social or political change, i.e. that its effects will be so explicitly felt. As Jacques Rancière nicely puts it, ‘literature... does not perform political action, it does not create collective forms of action, it contributes to the reframing of forms of experience’.³⁹

In terms of the crime novel, and indeed the political crime novel, one of the ways it reframes experience is to ask, though without any compunction to answer, some of the most pressing questions about the character of society (i.e. of individual and collective existence) as it is governed by the state and organized under

³⁸ While right-wing crime novelists are by no means unheard of—James Ellroy often describes himself as a Tory for example, even if his work demonstrates the corrosive effects of capitalist business practices—the majority of crime writers considered here, at least in the twentieth century, would identify with the left, albeit in complicated and often disaffected ways (see Chapter 6).

³⁹ Jacques Rancière, ‘A Few Remarks on the Method of Jacques Rancière’, *Parallax*, 15 (2009), p. 122.

capitalism. How is society ruled and for whose benefit? Is the justice system fair? Does the pursuit of self-interest lead to the betterment of society as a whole? What can the individual do in the face of injustice and exploitation? Can the needs of security and the desire for liberty ever be reconciled? Can crime ever be seen as a legitimate form of political protest? To what extent should we see the distinctive realms of crime, business, and politics as linked? If so, linked how? And what might the implications of this be?

If this runs the risk of making the crime novels themselves seem dull—or too concerned with the ‘big’ questions—it should be made clear that these preoccupations are not imposed on the novels from above, so to speak, but emerge organically from the unfolding of the plot and the unravelling of mystery. Dominique Manotti’s claim about *Lorraine Connection* (2006)—that she ‘wanted to make a novel about the links between factory and finance’⁴⁰—is not plonked down on the narrative but is teased out via her intricate portrait of a strike at a Daewoo factory in eastern France and its implications both for those men and women caught up in the action and for the context of global corporate malpractice (see Chapter 7). Regarding terminology, I prefer crime fiction to detective fiction not because I agree with Ascari that the former is the more ‘comprehensive’ and in turn should be differentiated from the more ‘conservative’ subcategory or designation of detective fiction,⁴¹ but in the sense that Kayman conjoins the terms: ‘the links between modern detection and its corollaries are, to my mind, best established through the prior object that each presupposes, a *mystery*.’⁴² If this brings us closer to Umberto Eco’s account of the appeal or fascination of the crime novel as ‘a kind of conjecture’—i.e. that ‘the fundamental question of philosophy... is the same as the question of the detective novel: who is guilty?’⁴³—my point is that the mystery to be unravelled in what I am calling political crime fiction is not simply the question of who is guilty, for sometimes we know this from the start or the question is irrelevant in plot terms, but more pertinently *what* is to blame: what has caused this problem called ‘crime’ in the first place? Why is justice such an elusive and even problematic concept? As such, the systemic is always privileged over the subjective: there may be a specific crime to solve or a problem to unravel, where a specific figure may be culpable; but the *mystery*, what keeps us reading, typically opens out to interrogate the nature of society itself, and of the systems—of state power and capitalism—which simultaneously envelop and govern us, and those in the stories, as subjects.

Of course not all crime fiction is interested in pursuing this kind of expansive and politicized line of enquiry and my decisions about what to include and what to exclude are based on how incisively and persuasively the novels speak to, and

⁴⁰ Dominique Manotti qtd in Anissa Belhadjin, ‘From Politics to Roman Noir’, *South Central Review*, 27:1&2 (Spring, Summer 2010), p. 75.

⁴¹ Ascari, *A Counter-History of Crime Fiction*, p. xiv.

⁴² Kayman, *From Bow Street to Baker Street*, p. 4.

⁴³ Umberto Eco, *Postscript to The Name of the Rose*, trans. William Weaver (New York, NY: Harcourt, 1984), p. 54.

about, this question of who and what is to blame.⁴⁴ There may be notable absences, and eyebrow-raising inclusions, but since this is not seeking to be an authoritative history of the genre's development, there should be no need for me to justify my crime fiction corpus beyond this. Nor am I much interested in exhausted and banal debates about high and low, serious and popular, which seem to do nothing more than calcify the terms that are apparently being scrutinized. In another sense, of course, the choice of what to look at was determined by the structure and frame of the book itself: a genealogy of crime fiction's complex relationship with power, whereby comprehensiveness is sacrificed for specificity—i.e. this is not a comprehensive account of the genre's development from the 1720s to the contemporary, which in Foucault's terms aims to capture the 'essence of things' but rather a genealogy which traces 'the uneven and haphazard process' of the genre's emergence vis-à-vis 'particular stages of force'.⁴⁵ Hence my focus is on the consolidation of the justice system in the 1720s, reforms to the penal code before, during, and after the French Revolution, the rise of state bureaucracy in the nineteenth century, the ever closer interpenetration of government and capitalism in the 1920s and 1930s, the radical protests against the state and capitalism in the 1960s and 1970s, and the simultaneous intensification and waning of sovereignty in relation to the challenges of neoliberalism in the contemporary era.⁴⁶ The extent to which the crime stories I have chosen to look at are able to offer critical reflection on these processes (and their own historical moment of production) and on corresponding thematizations of power by political theorists, themselves responding to similar circumstances, constitutes one of the major jumping-off points for the book.

There are of course inevitable and necessary limits (i.e. temporal, geographical, and conceptual) to the scope and reach of my book. If my historical frame is quite expansive, this means I've had to think very carefully about how widely I can set my geographical lens, without losing or sacrificing all specificity, or rather the specificity that emerges from 'close reading'. While writers from Switzerland, Germany, Ireland, South Africa, Japan, and Italy are considered here, the touchstone for my developing account of crime fiction remains the 'big three' of France, England, and the United States. This of course runs the risk of replicating the problem of over-identifying crime fiction in general with the authors working in these same countries (even if it doesn't preclude the move to examine the circulation and translation of crime stories across national borders); but there are, of course, important historical precedents, tied to compelling questions of significance or value, that require or produce such a focus. As the genre becomes more and more international and transnational in the contemporary era, meanwhile, the move to push beyond the crime novels produced in France, the UK, continental Europe,

⁴⁴ I am not necessarily making a value judgement about the writers I have chosen to look at and those I have chosen to omit, i.e. that the former are somehow better, either in terms of style or the artfulness of their character studies or the excitement generated by their stories.

⁴⁵ Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', pp. 89, 83.

⁴⁶ I couldn't find the space to include a chapter on the 1940s and 1950s which meant there was no place for crime writers such as Raymond Chandler, Patricia Highsmith, Jim Thompson, and Josephine Tey, whose work very much opens itself out to the central preoccupations of my book.

and the US will inevitably gather pace—something I wholeheartedly welcome. And—thinking about the conceptual frame of the book—while the gendered and racial implications of state and capitalist power relations, and of public and private spheres, are explored vis-à-vis specific writers (e.g. Braddon, Green, Himes, Orford, Beukes, Kirino, Manotti) mostly in the twentieth century, I would be the first to admit that much more work is needed than I have been able to manage here.⁴⁷

THE STATE OF SOVEREIGNTY

My book's main concern—how crime fiction at different times and places and under different historical conditions negotiates and interrogates the complex relationship between capital and the state—requires a conceptual framework which draws upon a range of theories of the state and of the state's relationship to civil society. As the book unfolds, a debate between what we might call liberal and Marxist accounts of the state and of power emerges; but crucially it isn't one that is anachronistically and arbitrarily imposed on the novels themselves. Hence Hobbes and Mandeville are deployed to interrogate almost contemporaneous work by Defoe and Gay; Mill's elucidations on individual liberty shed important light on Conan Doyle's crime fiction; and Gramsci's claim that 'the state = political society + civil society'⁴⁸ allows us to see how deeply entwined public power and private enterprise, or the state and civil society, are for writers such as Hammett, Brecht, and even Simenon. What emerges on the one hand is, I hope, an account of modern liberalism as a variegated stream of competing and overlapping ideas, whereby the differences between, for example, Hobbes, Mandeville, Beccaria, Bentham, and Mill become as important as their commonalities. On the other hand, the Marxism I predominantly draw on owes less to Marx himself, though Marx's insights into civil society, the relative autonomy of the political classes, and the nature of fictitious capital, shed important light on certain aspects of the nineteenth-century crime story. Rather Engels's *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1843), and contemporary works of Marxist historiography and criminology by E.P. Thompson and Peter Linebaugh that are informed by Engels's insights, are more helpful in showing how crime should be treated not as the product of individual deviancy but rather as a symptom of prevailing social and economic conditions—and that crime control is never a politically neutral activity.⁴⁹

Yet we perhaps need to be careful about how we talk about the relationship between liberal and Marxist conceptions of the state (either as, to quote Weber's

⁴⁷ The best example of a critical study of the contemporary genre that has successfully brought together race, gender, sovereignty, and globalization into a single field of analysis is Robin Truth Goodman's excellent *Policing Narratives and the State of Terror* (Albany, NY: State University Press of New York, 2009).

⁴⁸ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 263.

⁴⁹ See, especially, E.P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act* (London: Allen Lane, 1975); Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Verso, 2003); David Greenberg (ed.), *Crime and Capitalism: Readings in Marxist Criminology* (Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield, 1981).

seminal definition, 'a human community that [successfully] claims monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory'⁵⁰ or, drawing on Marx's throwaway remark in *The Communist Manifesto*, as 'a committee for managing the affairs of the whole bourgeoisie'⁵¹) and sovereignty, typically understood as the legal expression of the state's authority within its territorial and jurisdictional limits. If the liberal state, as Wendy Brown points out, is 'necessarily legitimated through the language of sovereignty' so that sovereignty becomes the foundation of individual autonomy, and the state, as interpreted by Marx, is understood in terms of both bureaucratic consolidation and 'the organization of the social order by capital'⁵² so that sovereignty and capitalism become hard to disaggregate as forces that determine and subjugate individual bodies, the crime stories under consideration here pose some difficult questions against both conceptions of sovereignty. To the former, they question what individual freedom means in the context of the massive consolidations of governmental power in the modern era and how far this power in fact limits, rather than produces, this freedom. To the latter, they ask whether or to what extent the effects of power, conceived of as impersonal and totalizing, are really so determining and if not what implications this has for our understanding of sovereignty. In both cases sovereignty as a kind of gleaming monolith, either to be defended or dismantled, begins to yield and we start to see its contingent, anxious, performative, dimensions—what Berlant calls 'a fantasy misrecognized as an objective state'.⁵³

In the face of the messy, complicated, ambivalent, unruly lives of those tasked with upholding the law or those determined or compelled to transgress its authority, or those who do both, willingly or unwillingly, sovereignty becomes less about the projection of absolutes, or the overcoming of these absolutes, than a set of practices, some effective, others not, aimed at creating some degree of order.⁵⁴ Not un-coincidentally, as we will see, this is also the account of the everyday experiences of crime and policing that we find in many of the crime stories under consideration in this book.

As such, crime fiction performs more than a passive, illustrative role, e.g. illustrating Marxian or indeed liberal ideas, and stakes out its own intellectual and political positions, at times *contra* Mill, Hobbes, Marx, and others. To McCann's claim that the 'detective story has always been a liberal genre, centrally concerned with a fundamental premise of liberal theory—the rule of law—and with the tensions fundamental to democratic societies that constantly threw that principle into

⁵⁰ Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, eds H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 78.

⁵¹ Karl Marx, *Essential Writings of Karl Marx* (St Petersburg, FL: Red and Black, 2010), p. 163.

⁵² Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 17, 16.

⁵³ Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, p. 97.

⁵⁴ Brown argues that while 'the liberal state is necessarily legitimated through the language of sovereignty its primary function has never been sovereignty'. Rather, as I think I'm suggesting here and she puts it, 'the state rises in importance with liberalism precisely through its provision of essential social repairs, economic problem solving, and the management of a mass population' (see *States of Injury*, p. 17).

it',⁵⁵ the crime stories examined here, or at least most of them, would agree and disagree. Most strive again and again to delineate the procedural and juridical rules and norms by which the state seeks to govern, and to see the law, ideally, as an unqualified human good, a potential check on the interests of the powerful, while at the same time posing far-reaching questions about the interpenetration of public and private and the flimsiness of the state–civil society separation, moves that would undermine the very basis of liberalism's account, from Hobbes onwards, of the autonomy or separateness of the state. The idea that the state's justice system might be in hock to those with the deepest pockets, or that the laws of organized crime might also be the laws of capitalism, and vice versa, or even that crime might be 'viewed as a creative act of protest against oppression'⁵⁶ would steer these novels into Marxist territory; but at the same time a residual commitment to the rule of law and individual freedom, and an uneasiness about reducing the entire justice system to a claim about class power, would always make this affinity an awkward one.⁵⁷ Moreover, these crime stories, in whatever form, would never embrace the teleological certainty of classic Marxism, with its faith in the emancipatory potential of the downtrodden, and time and time again would find ways of reimposing the law and returning society to what it had been before, even if this ended up being an unremittingly bleak statement about the failure of individuals and institutions to reform the system for good from within or indeed via intervention from the outside.

If this account of the crime story's ambivalence in the face of different forms and modalities of power (institutional, economic, class, etc.), and its willingness to portray the political and economic realms as both autonomous and complicit, runs the risk of imposing a uniformity on the multiple and highly distinctive examples of what I am calling crime writing, one needs to remember a couple of things. First, I am *not* making a generalized claim about the genre as a whole; just those examples, as already stated, that explicitly situate their individual dramas in relation to larger questions about how society is ruled and about what crime means in this context. Second, insofar as we are talking about 'political' crime fiction where ambivalence, compromise, and at times failure are emphasized over individual heroism and uncomplicated struggles of good against evil, the stories considered here may not even be that popular, i.e. in the sense of attracting a large readership. Or indeed that their popularity owes itself to factors extrinsic to their political 'message': for example the bawdy humour, catchy songs, and the energetic debunking of officialdom in all of its guises made John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* a runaway success when it was first staged in London in 1728 but

⁵⁵ McCann, *Gumshoe America*, p. 6.

⁵⁶ Greenberg, 'Crime and Revolution' in Greenberg (ed.), *Crime and Capitalism*, p. 414.

⁵⁷ Perhaps surprisingly the Marxist historian E.P. Thompson comes closest to articulating this ambivalence, stating about the justice system in eighteenth-century England: 'We reach, then, not a simple conclusion (law = class power) but a complex and contradictory one. On the one hand, it's true that the law did mediate existent class relations to the advantage of the rulers... On the other hand, the law mediated these class relations through legal forms, which imposed, again and again, inhibitions upon the actions of the rulers' (see *Whigs and Hunters*, p. 264).