

Border Noir: Crime Fiction and the Representation of Borders and Bodies

Manina Jones, Western University¹

A recent proliferation of crime novels, television series, and films highlights the grotesque figure of the mutilated border subject, an abjected body on the line. This extraordinarily condensed image of a dead body anatomized across national lines attests to exigent anxieties, conflicts, and desires around the permeability and security of bodies and borders. Detective fiction conceptualizes issues of morality, justice, and legality, performing a discursive “policing” of territories and bordered identities. Indeed since its inception it has been “intrinsically engaged with epistemological formations.... produced in encounters between nations” (Pearson and Singer 3; see also Reitz, Orr). As Newman and Paasi observe, “the construction of boundaries at all scales and dimensions takes place through narrativity.... [B]oundaries are... one part of the *discursive landscape* of social power, control and governance” (186, 196). “Border noir” explore this literal and figurative landscape in popular narrative forms. In them, boundary is a site of risk, the scene of the crime, a signifier of the potential or expressed violence of (trans)national governance. It represents the limits of citizenship and the volatility of economic and political networks, both legal and illegal. Crime narratives can thus provide evidence of “one of the most invisible elements of globalization, its penetration of and movement through bodies” (Davis 34).

Works Cited

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¹ Manina Jones, Professor of English at Western University, is the co-author of *Detective Agency: Women Re-Writing the Hard-Boiled Tradition* (Univ. of California Press, 1999), co-editor of *Carol Shields and the Extra-Ordinary* (McGill-Queen’s Univ. Press, 2007), and author of *That Art of Difference: Documentary-Collage and Canadian Writing* (Univ. of Toronto Press, 1993) as well as numerous articles on detective fiction and Canadian literature.