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Ruth McElroy (ed), *Contemporary British Television Crime Drama: Cops on the Box* (London & New York: Routledge, 2017), pp.210, ISBN 978-1-4724-5493-5 (hb), £110.

In her introduction to *Contemporary British Television Crime Drama: Cops on the Box*, McElroy 'makes a claim for the significance and distinctiveness of British television crime drama', and the essays that she goes on to present offer an excellent, wide-ranging, dynamic and discursive approach to the topic. This collection examines and seeks to critically reflect upon the contemporary British crime drama. Looking at and beyond the textual examples, contributors engage with issues of industry, of production, aesthetics, generic elasticity, global reach, stardom, branding and audience expectations. Split into three key sections and containing twelve chapters, the collection works through issues pertaining to the development of the crime genre, the role of the police in these contemporary texts and the industrial and global nature of television crime genre.

Managing to balance the demands of a strong intellectual focus, quality chapter contributions and an editorial deftness that weaves the two together ensuring a clarity of focus while still allowing authors to express their individual arguments, McElroy's collection is highly efficacious. The chapters are well paced, display a keen flow and an impressive cerebral coherence in speaking to the ways in which key texts - such as *Ripper Street* (2012-2016), *Accused* (2014), *Scott & Bailey* (2011-2016), *Line of Duty* (2012-) and *Broadchurch* (2013-2017) - shape and are shaped by the multiple discourses of television history, quality television and domestic and international industry demands. Moreover, McElroy's collection engages with other pertinent issues and themes such as the centrality of emotion in contemporary British crime drama, the significance of style, the prominence of British landscapes in, and the cultural value of, these contemporary texts.

Each chapter offers original insights into texts and contexts and Charlotte Brunsdon's opening chapter somewhat provocatively sets the bar by suggesting that the 2010 cancellation of *The Bill* (1984-2010) indicates that 'despite appearances, the British television police series is in difficulty' (p.27). Noting both the move away from an insistence on 'law and order' and a move toward police series that focus on 'target culture' (explored through questions of budget and the imposition of targets) and 'bad sex' (characterised by 'perverts' and 'paedos'), Brunsdon argues that contemporary British crime drama has lost its social impulse (in the sense of 'bringing the realities of excluded lives into the living rooms of its audiences' (p.29)) and instead, proffers representations of policing as part of 'the anti-terror state' (p.34). Using *Line of Duty* and *Scott & Bailey* to illustrate her arguments, Brunsdon successfully poses a broader question about British television's move away from questions of social justice toward a focus on more sensationalist topics. Martin Willis, in his chapter, considers the link between crime and medicine, focusing on *Silent Witness* (1996-) and *Waking the Dead* (2000-2011). Differing from American TV texts such as *CSI* (2000-), Willis argues that these British texts offer up 'the conflict between forensic and human stories', labelling the trend 'forensic humanism'. Adeptly, he notes that 'British crime dramas maintain a sense of forensic evidence as only ever partial and always liable to contestation' (p.43).

Focusing on dialogue and the 'subjugating of forensic data to alternative means' (p.50), Willis convincingly argues for a recognition of difference between UK and US forensic drama suggesting, albeit hopefully, that such texts 'illuminate the important role that human narratives - and humanities scholarship - play in balancing scientific interpretations of the world' (p.51). Rebecca Williams and Steve Blandford's chapters assess the significance of place in the gothic crime drama and the role of 'crime and punishment' in the work of Jimmy McGovern. Both authors convincingly state the case for a deeper detection and understanding of space with Williams focusing on ways in which fictional texts can 'exploit the value of a tangible location [...] as a marker of authenticity' (p.59) and Blandford considering the ways in which British television has historically made a space for non-complex male sleuths in British crime drama. McGovern, Blandford argues, has in his recent texts *Accused* (2014) and *Common* (2014), reacted against such a tendency.

Part Two, focusing broadly on 'The Police', sees chapters from McElroy herself, Manel Jimenez-Morales, Stephen Lacey and Jonathan Bignell. Erudite in its clarity, McElroy focuses on police procedural *Scott & Bailey*, discussing questions of realism from a critical feminist perspective to 'explore the links between claims to verisimilitude at the level of policing with much broader televisual and social concerns about how professional women are represented on screen' (p. 83). She does so with nuance, providing thoughtful and persuasive arguments around the texts 'narrative and character-based emphasis on emotion and empathy' (p. 83), focusing on the emergence of pleasure within this intimate melodrama. Aligned with Williams, McElroy also speaks of the significance of space - noting the female dominated and indeed feminist agency that spatial control affords the primary characters. Jimenez-Morales follows on by considering 'unfettered bureaucracy' and 'narrative collapse' in *Line of Duty*. Assessing the ways in which the text questions its own construction, the author considers the '*lieu comum* of the mole' and the visibility of absurd bureaucratic structures - which in turn, allow individuals to operate in opposition to the law and open up new narrative perspectives. Lacey's chapter continues this consideration of alternative perspectives looking at *Foyle's War* (2002-2015) as a text in which viewers are engaged with and concerned for 'aliens' - potential enemies of the state in 1940s war-torn Britain, rather than with the British soldiers enacting the orders of the British state. Utilising the 'familiar narrative of the hero detective' (p.111), Lacey, drawing on the work of Brett Mills (2010), argues, that *Foyle's War* can be understood as 'invisible television' - television that is 'simply not seen by the critical discourses of television studies because it is neither viewed nor discussed by academics' (p.112). Lacey's chapter also draws out the important issue of performance making a case for both the excellence of Michael Kitchen and pointing to the need for academics to engage with 'television acting' more seriously. Jonathan Bignell's chapter moves on from performance to think about the significance of cars in British and American police dramas, suggesting that such an approach 'can link and reconfigure critical approaches to stylistic, formal and institutional aspects of the genre' (p.123). He does so successfully using *Z Cars* (1962-1978), *Midsomer Murders* (1997-), *Vera* (2011-) and *Inspector George Gently* (2007-) to point to connections between the texts themselves and the 'industrial history in which changing production circumstances affect how cars

can appear on screen' (134).

The final part of the book considers 'Exporting and Adapting Crime'. Ross P. Garner's chapter engages with channel branding using ITV and *Broadchurch* as key case-studies. Drawing on the scholarship of Catherine Johnson (2012), Garner skilfully discusses the cultural meanings associated with the crime drama and goes on to think through the rich melodramatic modes of *Broadchurch*, noting the need for an understanding of the 'quality melodrama' as well as the 'use of the crime drama for constructing [ITV's] current brand identity. Janet McCabe's work in the next chapter considers the contemporary prevalence of Euro-crime dramas on British television. Using the Danish thriller *The Killing* (2011-2012) and the Swedish-Danish co-production *The Bridge* (2012-) as examples, McCabe argues that such stories 'speak openly to the ever-increasing interconnectedness of the world' (p.155). Looking at the work that these texts do, McCabe argues that these texts make visible new challenges such as migration, trafficking, ethnic and racial segregation, pollution and environmental damage that 'confront supposedly stable Western democracies as a result of neoliberal, transnational market forces and global communication systems' (p.155). Mary F. Brewer's chapter on 'Exporting Englishness' follows and takes as its point of focus ITV's *Poirot* (1989-2013). Discussing the reasons why *Poirot* is understood as a 'safe bet' (p.169) for international buyers, Brewer goes on to consider the ways in which the text 'helped ITV to open up new territory in Europe when it was sold to an Italian network' (p.170), as well as *Poirot*'s nostalgic appeal in America. Deborah Jermyn's chapter is the final contribution in this collection and works to discuss TV remakes, focusing specifically on the transatlantic failure of *Prime Suspect USA* (2011-2012). Drawing on the work of Albert Moran (2011), Elke Weissman (2012) and Carlen Lavigne (2014), Jermyn plots a tight and convincing narrative concerning the 'reboot', noting, for example, issues with temporalities, 'NBC's [failed] tactic of trying to build audience momentum by scheduling additional repeats' (p.189), changes in production context and the problem of the venue.

In all, this collection is excellent and makes an essential contribution to scholarship on the television crime series. The only problematic aspect of the book is its title in that while it suggests an entirely British focus, the collection itself is much broader, considering both European and American television. It builds on ground-breaking scholarship from the 1990s such as Julie D'Acci's 1994 work on *Cagney and Lacey* (1981-1988) as well as Brunsdon's 1998 critical insights regarding 'a structure of anxiety' in British 1980s and 1990s police series. In addition, the collection also works in effective dialogue with more recent scholarship such as that of Jonathan Nichols-Pathick (2012), Sue Turnbull (2014) and Helen Piper (2015). Though Brunsdon's initial provocation that the 'British television police series is in difficulty' is convincing, this collection suggests that scholarship in the area is most certainly not.

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