Hazell (1978-80) and the disappearing detective: 1970s British television, a genre literature, and the end of an era

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ABSTRACT

This article considers links between 1970s British television and male-oriented detective fiction. It takes as its focus the eponymous protagonist of Thames Television's Hazell *(1978-80), whose first incarnation, in the 'P.B. Yuill' novel* Hazell Plays Solomon*, dates back to 1974. During the 1970s the investigator figure was to British television what the espionage adventurer had been in the 1960s – all but ubiquitous. Contemporaneous genre literature, often influenced by the US 'hard-boiled' tradition, played a pivotal role in establishing such a presence. Yet its relationship with television remains obscure. Why should this be the case? And what might be gained from looking at the changing world of the 1970s through the eyes of an obsolete archetype? In response to these questions, the article retrieves one cultural history (literature) on the back of, and while augmenting, another (television).* Hazell, *with its distinct 'meta' quality and end-of-era proximity, proves useful to this exercise.*

KEYWORDS: 1970s detective fiction; 1970s British television; male; working class; cultural history

INTRODUCTION

My aim in this article is to consider the link between 1970s British television and the male-oriented detective fiction of the same era. The focus of my enquiry, gumshoe James Hazell, debuted in *Hazell Plays Solomon* (1974), the first of a three-novel series written by Gordon Williams and Terry Venables (pseudonymously as P.B. Yuill). On acquiring production rights in 1977, Thames Television built *Hazell* (1978-80) around a fair approximation of the Williams-Venables original – a 'hard-boiled' private eye pastiche with a soft cockney twist. In *Hazell: The Making of a TV Series*, Manuel Alvarardo and Ed Buscombe (1978) traced this transition from page to small screen, their in-depth examination the first and last word on process. My concern here, therefore, is not the minutiae of adaptation so much as the broader notion of *presence*.

During the 1970s the investigator figure was to British television what the espionage adventurer had been in the 1960s – all but ubiquitous. It is widely recognised that the rough 'n' ready personalities of characters like Tom Haggerty (*Special Branch* 1972-4) and Jack Regan (*The Sweeney* 1975-8) captured something of the wider cultural moment (Kiszely 2018). It is also acknowledged that they were aided in this respect by innovative location shooting and ground-breaking 'gritty' realism (Sexton 2013). But as I note below, many a celebrated sleuth was of a different stripe, and realism (gritty or otherwise) contributed little or nothing to his success.

The relationship between television and literature covers all types and subgenres, not least those influenced by the US hard-boiled tradition. Yet it remains obscure. Why should this be the case? Detective fiction in its various forms was so popular during the 1970s that it embarked on a second 'golden age' (Kim: 3 2014). The fact that practically all 'whodunnit' enthusiasts watched television begs a further question. I pose it in relation to *Hazell* because the show possesses a certain 'meta' quality – enhanced, I should add, by its end-of-era proximity. How, then, with reference to the eponymous James Hazell, might we understand the dynamic between the television investigator and his literary counterpart?

Before I tackle the above, I should perhaps anticipate another question. Why revisit this figure at all? The answer is straight forward enough. It is because something akin to cancellation is happening to 1970s culture (Knight 2022). The dominant strands of current historiography are selective and emancipatory (women, BIPOC, LGBTQI+); they function as yardsticks by which to measure identitarian definitions of societal progress – and they rate the 1970s low in achievement (Bebber 2013; Owen 2013; Roberts 2 April 2015). While there are anomalies,[1] much of the popular culture has fallen by the wayside. This is especially true of its socially conservative mainstream. And with blanket concepts like 'White Privilege' (McIntosh 1987) providing simplistic, convenient tools with which to do the work, this tidying exercise is gaining pace. When in years to come Millennials and Generation Zs look back on the late 20th century, their gaze will necessarily be blinkered, trained as it has been through the tunnel vision of identity. That is not to deny historical racism, sexism, or privilege, by the way. Nor is it to debase the currency of power discourse: post-modern 'micro' exploration uncovers hidden histories and offers fresh perspectives – outcomes which are measures of its value. But if they come at a cost that can be counted in the disappearance of other kinds of heritage (white, male, working-class, rooted), then any net gain is offset by loss.

The literary investigator figure of the 1970s is a potent symbol of the unremembered. The 'rescue' I mount on his behalf retrieves one cultural history (literature) on the back of, and while augmenting, another (television). More broadly, it offers a mode of enquiry that connects contemporaneous cultural artefacts with one another – on their own terms, via linked UK-US aesthetics, and in relation to sweeping cultural change. By *not* hand-picking texts from the past and measuring them against the newest current of identitarian orthodoxy (Murray 2019), by *not* plotting a linear history against temporary definitions of virtue or guilt (Bruckner 2010), the article reverses the current tendency to 'read history backwards' (Furedi 2020: 27). More ambitiously, it makes some attempt to check a burgeoning 'culture of repudiation' (Scruton 2014: 40). Investigator figures like Hazell are of use for my purposes because, due to their reflexivity, they make meaning across media and back through a rich genre heritage.

THE SCHEDULES: AN OVERVIEW

Hazell is last in a line of hard-hitting detective shows that began with the hybrid *Special Branch* and settled with *Van der Valk* (1972-92), *New Scotland Yard* (1972-4) and *The Sweeney* (1975-8). These series draw to varying extents on two well-established traditions. First is the 'kitchen

[1] Good examples are the disco and punk subcultures of mid- to late decade. One of my aims in co-founding the *Punk & Post-Punk* journal, back in 2010, was to look at the 1970s historical moment through the lens of its popular culture. Now in its 11th volume, the journal is thriving.

sink' aesthetic popularized by *Public Eye* (1965-75) in the latter half of the 1960s. The second stretches further back, almost to the beginning of that decade, and is handed down from *Z-Cars* (1962-78). This police procedural, which produced spin-offs *Softly Softly* (1966-9) and *Softly Softly: Taskforc*e (1969-76), established a serviceable brand of realism. It was an influence that would not only endure but grow, with an increase in location shooting, during the final years of the 1970s. At which time James Hazell opened for business in the 9pm Monday evening slot on ITV.

The first episode, 'Hazell Plays Solomon', an adaptation of the Williams-Venables novel, was broadcast on 16 January 1978. It bore all the hallmarks of the original – the *Black Mask*[2] conventions, the wise-cracking 'shamus', the streets-of-London context. Over the next two years the series built a steady following, helped in no small measure by regular and prominent features in scheduling magazines. In 'Hazell vs. 007', an illustrated two-page spread, the *TV Times* (14-20 April 1978) set the drab existence of the cockney private eye against jet-setting glamour. The piece recalls a similar kind of James Bond comparison, albeit more serious in tone, from the middle years of the 1960s, in which fashionably mundane alternatives would always find critical favour.[3] The overall impression, then, for *Hazell* viewers old enough to make the connection, was one of kudos by association. Illustrated weeklies like *Target* (14 April 1978) served the younger demographic, selling the show through a potent mix of action, trivia and star power. As 'Hazell and the Maltese Vulture' (20 March 1978) brought Series 1 to a close, James Hazell was secure enough in public affection to warrant a further 12 outings. In spring 1979 he was back, with 'Hazell and the Baker St Sleuth' (19 April 1979), the first case of a new series.

The final instalment of Series 2, 'Hazell and the Public Enemy' (30 January 1980), drew a curtain across the 1970s detective drama. Some shows, such as *Shoestring* (1979-80) and *Bergerac* (1981-91), continued in a similar vein (at least superficially), proving the adage that the spirit of a decade can linger. Nevertheless, change was well underway. *The Chinese Detective* (1981-2) was one of several new offerings to signal something definite by way of departure. As the title suggests, Detective Sergeant John Ho is defined as much by his ethnicity as his profession. Another identity characteristic, gender, is placed front and centre of *The Gentle Touch* (1980-4) and *Juliet Bravo* (1980-5), which concern themselves with female involvement in aggressively masculine environments. By contrast, James Hazell is as quintessentially1970s as his Triumph Stag. And while his first-person voice-over speaks of a richer heritage through homage to Raymond Chandler, the nature of its execution only serves to root him firmly in his own world. The point is best illustrated by a comparison with *The Singing Detective* (1987), Dennis Potter's post-modern take on the same Chandler theme. Pastiche in one decade gives way to grotesque parody in the next: reconstruction becomes deconstruction. The protagonists of the 1980s no longer look on the world in the same way. Nor does their utterance mean quite the same thing.

That is not to claim, however, that the 1970s was a decade of uniformity when it came to detectives. Quite the reverse. They were the amateurs of the English School, their pedigree one of logic and refinement (*Lord Peter Wimsey* [1972-5], *Father Brown* [1974]); they were US

[2] The US pulp magazine that championed hard-boiled writers such as Carroll John Daly, Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler.

[3] For the best example of this tendency, see Malcom Muggeridge's interview with John le Carre. Series 1, Episode 10 of BBC's *Intimations* series (8 February 1966).

imports complete with buddies, fast talk and flash cars (*Kojak* [1973-8], *The Streets of San Francisco* [1972-6], *Starsky and Hutch* [1975-9]); they were freewheeling detective inspectors drinking lunch from a whisky bottle (*The Sweeney, Target* [1977-8]); they were the 'sons' of Sam Spade (*The View from Daniel Pike* [1971-3], *Hazell*). As some of these cross-media references would suggest, television investigators were much like their literary counterparts: all things for all occasions.

The relationship between page and small screen fostered a dynamic between representations of past and present. It also helped codify manifestations of the past *within* the present. This latter aspect, in its various guises, is a regular feature of both 1960s and 1970s television,[4] and a brief consideration of its uses will help position the investigator in cultural terms. It frames, for example, the familiar comic motif (*Steptoe and Son* [1962-74], *Til Death Us Do Part* [1965-75]) concerning a large and/or small 'c' conservative character whose distaste for the modern world signifies cultural obsolescence. Often elderly, these men represent the bad old days before post-war reconstruction. Treatments of the North-South Divide (*The Main Chance* [1969-75], *Man at the Top* [1970-2]) work in much the same way. The industrial North is associated with the past, which in turn equates with intractability. These series own to problems in the present – social, cultural, political – but one thing is clear: answers are to be found by looking ahead, not back. Stories with a detection element, no matter how peripheral, tend to reverse the equation. In *The Return of the Saint* (1978-9), Simon Templar rights the wrongs of the day with panache. An adventurer, he was created by novelist Leslie Charteris in 1928.

A Stronger investigative theme afforded greater potential for detailed elucidation. And by extension, an opportunity to rehearse a rebalancing of equilibrium. It offered, in other words, a small screen imitation of stability restored. Indeed, even maverick investigators only took rebellion so far. While *The Sweeney's* Jack Regan offers a challenge to one level of authority, the desk-based managerial class, dispute rarely finds its way to the 'top floor'. Conflict confines itself to method, especially that implementing change. It is a reaction to progressive ideas, conceptualization and theory; to the combined product of university-educated thinking**.** More broadly, it represents a rejection of the Gramscian Long March (Sidwell 2019), which had become a talking-point by mid-decade. There is an alignment here with the Burkean position: the contract between generations, the inheritance of tradition (Burke ([1790] 1929; Oakeshott 1983). The preservation of institutions.

One such institution was marriage. *Paul Temple* (1969-71) and *The Wilde Alliance* (1978) treat it in much the same way. Paul Temple and Rupert Wilde are best-selling thriller writers who, with the help of their quick-thinking wives, solve mysteries in their spare time. This is gentle, romance-inflected fare, with murder the delightful diversion. But it also presses an agenda. Everything points to a single advantage: partnership in marriage. It is only by association, in a Burkean sense of the word, that such an unfashionable message could resonate. Fortunately, the couples in question could boast an impressive pedigree. Created by Francis Durbridge (1938), Paul and 'Steve' Temple first appeared in a BBC radio serial, *Send for Paul Temple*. They retuned in many formats over the years, including a long-running daily newspaper strip. While *The Wilde Alliance* was a 1978 original, created for television by Ian MacIntosh, it did

[4] For a detailed examination see Philip Kiszely (2020), 'Joe Lampton's North-South Divide: Remembering place and space in *Man at the Top* (1970-2)', *Journal of Popular Television*, 8: 2 pp. 159–176.

draw direct inspiration from husband-and-wife sleuths Nick and Nora Charles, central characters in Dashiell Hammet's *The Thin Man* (*1932*). The Charles' influence extends further, via MGM's 1934 big screen adaptation of the Hammett 'whodunnit', to series like *Hart to Hart* (1979-84) and *McMillan and Wife* (1971-7).

These shows offered, to coin a phrase, novel familiarity. They presented recycled and reconceptualised stories – and in the case of *The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes* (1971-3), newly rediscovered gems. This anthology appeared in the wake of BBC favourites *Sherlock Holmes* (1964-5) and *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes* (1968). But a more direct lineage can be traced to popular literature. *The Rivals* was adapted from forgotten short stories republished by Sir Hugh Greene (1970). It show-cased 'new' Victorian and Edwardian sleuths. Originally mainstays of the late 19th century magazine boom, or presented in book form by publisher Ward Lock, figures like Martin Hewitt, Dr. Thorndyke, and Dorrington and Hicks fall neatly in line with 1970s television trends. They sit comfortably alongside costume/nostalgia dramas like *Upstairs, Downstairs* (1971-5) and prefigure the generically similar period piece *Raffles* (1975-7). But there is also something more complex at work. Greene (1970: 10) captures its essence:

> The setting of most of these stories is much closer to Raymond Chandler's 'mean streets' down which Philip Marlowe walked than to the unreal country house, ye olde English village, world of the English detective story in the years between the wars when Agatha Christie, Margery Allingham, Ngiao Marsh and Dorothy Sayers exercised their monstrous regiment of women.

The comparison between gas-lit Victorian London and the US literary tradition suggests a process of cross-fertilization. This relationship prompts a deeper engagement with the past-present dynamic. It points towards *Hazell*, too, and the development of what might be termed an identifiable ''70s style'. All of which the begs the question of presence. This is best broached in literary terms, via the detective fiction of the day. The next section will deal with that body of work.

THE LITERARY PRESENCE: A POPULAR GENRE[5]

The US matched the UK's twin enthusiasms, for the Great Detective and his ilk on the one hand, for hard-boiled private eyes on the other. Nicholas Meyer's Baker St continuation novels, *The Seven Per Cent Solution* (1974) and *The West End Horro*r (1976), met with commercial success and critical acclaim, as did (on more modest a scale) Andrew Bergman's two Chandler pastiches, *The Big Kiss-Off of 1944* (1974) and *Hollywood and LeVine* (1975). Rex Stout remained popular. His final outing, *A Family Affair* (1976), ended the long-running Nero Wolfe–Archie Goodwin series in much the same way it had started, by neatly combining elements from the US and UK traditions. Lawrence Block worked both styles too, albeit separately, in the two series that would make his name: the Matthew Scudder novels (*The Sins of the Father* [1976]) drunkenly brood in the New York night, while the light-hearted Bernie Rhodenbarr yarns [*Burglars Can't be Choosers* [1977]) feature a Raffles-esque burglar who just happens to solve Manhattan murder mysteries**.** It was the Hollywood version of the *Seven Per Cent Solution*, however, which premiered in October 1976, that brought US and UK

[5] Note on references: when referring to a particular author I cite one novel by way of illustration, often the first of a series, or the first written in the 1970s.

conventions together on practical terms, via the expedient of joint production. Meyer received an Oscar nomination for the adaptation of his own novel, which meant that the literature hit the screen with considerable fanfare.

In the UK, meanwhile, mystery novelists were also turning their hand to the screenplay. But their medium of choice was television, not film. Author of the influential Rex Carver private eye series (*The Whip Hand* [1965]), Victor Canning was prolific in a small screen output that included *Paul Temple* episode 'With friends Like You, Who Needs Enemies? (30 June 1971)'. Others enjoyed similar levels of success. G.F. Newman, for example, already infamous for his Terry Sneed novels (*Sir, You Bastard* [1970]), courted further controversy with *Law & Order* (1978), a series of thematically linked teleplays. Kenneth Royce and Simon Raven, to name but two, made their own journeys into television.[6]

The traffic moved in both directions. Screenwriters took to writing novels, if not in their droves, then certainly in noticeable number. George Markstein, N.J. Crisp and Donald James were all masters of their craft. And they proved themselves equally adept when it came to the manufacture of prose. *The Man from Yesterday* (Markstein 1976), *The Odd Job Man* (Crisp 1977) and *A Spy at Evening* (James 1977) make for compulsive reading. Driven by espionage-themed mystery, they are racy page-turners in the best popular tradition. They are also eminently serviceable literary vehicles. Each of their protagonists projects a feeling of loss, a sense of isolation – 'reminiscent,' according to one reviewer, 'of Graham Greene'.[7] If the books betray televisual roots – episodic storytelling, action-driven content – then these aspects detract from neither form nor content. Rather, they signal a symbiotic relationship between the two media.

Novelization represents a more direct link between page and small screen (Baetens 2005). By the second half of the 1970s it accounted for hundreds of thousands of units, usually in trade paperback, and published by Pan, Sphere and Corgi, as well as a host of others. The sole selling-point was the television tie-in. This marketing arrangement benefitted both parties, not just the publisher. Indeed, it was of particular use at the television end, especially if the series in question was struggling. In the case of *The Wilde Alliance*, creator Ian MacIntosh wrote the novelization himself, so keen was he to bolster viewing figures. But such high-level involvement was unusual. More representative of this no-nonsense world was the journeyman professional – a John Burke, say, who often wrote as Robert Miall, or a Ken Blake. Another familiar presence was the writer of quality slumming pseudonymously, and strictly for the money. One such example was Alan White, whose Armstrong series (see below) was an innovation of sorts, but who as 'Joe Balham' wrote seven throwaways based on *The Sweeney*. Cover art would feature series stars, typically in portrait, and usually superimposed on an action backdrop. Their presence was felt everywhere from bookshops and newsagents to train stations and airports.

Aficionados paid little or no heed to novelization, of course. Tage la Cour and Harald Mogensen (1971), Eric Quayle (1972) and Julian Symons (1972), all experts in the field, confined themselves to quality as they saw it. They carried in their critiques a vestige of mid-

[6] Kenneth Royce was involved with the adaptation of his Spider Scott novels into Granada Television's *The XYY Man* (1976-7). Simon Raven had written teleplays since the mid-1960s. *Bring Forth the Body* (1974), the ninth entry of his *Alms for Oblivion* cycle, is one of the outstanding detection-themed novels of the decade.
[7] Dustjacket quote about Crisp's *The Odd Job Man* from *American Publishers Weekly.*

century sensibility, as expressed in seminal studies like *Murder for Pleasure* (Haycraft 1941) and *The Development of the Detective Novel* (Murch 1958). Theirs was an Old (English) School set of values; an aesthetic judgement rooted in tradition. The major reviewers of the day – H.R.F. Keating, Maurice Richardson, Edmund Crispin – were similarly inclined, although not wholly averse to change. Within the bounds of their shared taste, and occasionally beyond it, they championed innovation. These opinions mattered, not least because many reviewers were themselves high-profile mystery writers.[8] Such figures guaranteed review space, or presence, in prestigious publications ranging from *The Sunday Telegraph* and *The Spectator* to *The Guardian* and *The Observer*. If association, in this sense, profited mainly one element of the genre, the high-end commercial, then the genre itself took care of the rest – by the broad appeal of its make-up. Variety was evident across the board, from the biggest publishers to the smallest imprints.

Prestige houses, such as MacMillan, Barrie & Jenkins, and Hodder & Stoughton, offered styles ranging from the comfortably familiar to the decidedly fresh. At one end of the spectrum was old campaigner Lawrence Meynell (*Don't Stop for Hooky Hefferman* [1975]), whose career stretched way back to the mid-1920s. At the other was newer, state-of-the-art stylist Donald Mackenzie (*Raven in Flight* [1976]). Each created his own private eye. Meynell's Hooky Hefferman tales were curiously old-fashioned, a consequence perhaps of the author's age as well as temperament. Mackenzie's solitary Raven, by contrast, was as hard-boiled as they come. Another hardcover stalwart was the mystery writer of flair who, with a nod to the English School, would craft crossword-style whodunnits for an appreciative readership. Michael Gilbert (*The Body of a Girl* [1971]) is one such example.

Lesser concerns could boast quality, too, and in no small measure. And once again, the watchword was variety. Published by Milton House, Arthur Douglas's Mark Register stories represent a neat instance of appropriation. Poised somewhere between homage and parody, *The Noah's Ark Murders (*1973) recalls English School exponents like Cecil Freeman Gregg (*Inspector Higgins Hurries* [1932]), Anthony Gilbert (*Murder by Experts* [1936]) and Josephine Bell (*Murder in Hospital* [1937]). The Ibex Crime imprint, meanwhile, proffered a different kind of mystery. *You Can Always Blame the Rain* (1978), by Mike Fredman, is a wistful, almost sad affair. It features private eye Willie Halliday, a vegetarian teetotaller. Other writers produced efficient, if workmanlike, stories. Veteran *Scotland Yard* (1953-61) presenter Edgar Lustgarten found himself at Ibex Crime for his final novel, *Turn the Light Out as You Go* (1978); a quiet ending to an illustrious career. William Fennerman marked time in a similar fashion with *The Jensen Scenario* (1978). The imprint was tiny, lately arrived and destined to die with the decade. It was nevertheless a specialist, as identifiably a product of the 1970s as any other. And as such it was important.

Collins Crime Club was also a specialist – but of a different calibre. By far the longest serving publisher of detective fiction, and the largest, its roster was enviable. It ranged from traditional mainstays like Agatha Christie (*Curtain* [1975]) to modern favourite Dominic Devine (*Three Green Bottles* [1972]); it dealt in dark humour (Michael Kenyon's *Deep Pocket* [1978]) and ingenious plotting (Andrew Garve's *The Case of Robert Quarry* [1972]); it presented sleuthing duos (Harry Carmichael's *Death Trap* [1970]) and classic police procedurals (Roy Lewis's *A Part of Virtue* [1975]). Roger Busby, another Crime Club name, offered a different kind of

[8] Symons (*The Immaterial Murder Case* [1945]) and Crispin (*The Moving Toyshop* [1947]) are cases in point.

police procedural. *New Face in Hell* (1976) turns on a realism born of the author's experience, first as a crime correspondent, then as Head of Information Service for Devon and Cornwall Police. Along with some of his other novels, most notably *Garvey's Code* (1978), it has more in common with television shows like *Special Branch* and *The Sweeney* than the variants listed above.

Busby's output represents a signal, of sorts, unreadable on its own, or in the context of the Crime Club catalogue, but easily deciphered when placed within the correct grouping. As already indicated, the smaller sets-ups were key drivers of variety and proliferation; yet they served another, diametrically opposing purpose in that they helped consolidate the era's signature style. Constable Crime, the *enfant terrible* of specialist imprints, provides a useful illustration. It published James Quartermain's *Diamond* series (1970-5), which featured Raven (not to be confused with Donald McKenzie's character of the same name). A hard-boiled lone-wolf ala Philip Marlowe, he is in many ways the archetypical 1970s private eye antihero. Other Constable Crime authors created characters in much the same mould. Like Raven, Dan Lees' Jeff Plummer (*Rape of a Quiet Town* [1973]) and J.F. Burke's Sam Kelly (*Location Shots* [1974]) are literary equivalents of the toughest investigators on television. And the same energy bubbled elsewhere, most notably at Robert Hale. Hugh Munro's long-running 'Clutha' series is of interest there, as are one-offs by Elliott Cannon (*A Piece of Action* [1973]) and Jack S. Scott (*The Poor Old Lady's Dead* [1976]).

This is the grouping to which Busby belongs. And of course it includes bigger name publishers. At Hutchinson, for example, John Fredman produced three novels featuring lone-wolf Charles Dexter (*The False Joanna* [1970]); at Barrie & Jenkins, Alan White's Armstrong series revolved around a Regan-esque detective inspector; and at MacMillan, 'P.B. Yuill' was writing about Hazell. It was the Hazell character, not Armstrong, that ended up on television. It was the private eye, moreover, who closed out the decade on screen, dissolving a presence that had all but dominated. So, it is to that subgenre, and *Hazell* specifically, that the next section will turn.

THE SMALL SCREEN: TELEVSION IS MY BUSINESS

To all intents and purposes, *Hazell* was just one more detective show. Indeed, for some viewers, if not most, it was one too many – at least at the outset. *The Daily Telegraph's* Sean Day-Lewis (17 January 1978) suggests as much in his review of the first episode, which begins with the following vignette:

> When he ventured into London's East End at the weekend, Bill Cotton, the BBC1 Controller, was challenged on the question of why there were so many police and detective series on television and answered again that a drama about an architect would soon become boring.

James Murray (17 January 1978) ran with the same theme of overkill in *The Daily Express*. 'We've had cops who suck lollipops,' he intoned, 'wear dirty raincoats, chase crooks from wheelchairs. We've even had a blind cop.' Yet he concludes with admiration for James Hazell: 'He's one of the most attractive characters to come out of the old instant telly detective kit since Regan in *The Sweeney* […]'

The series held another, rather unexpected attraction: it came complete with an academic book. Alvarado and Buscombe's *Hazell: The Making of a TV Series* was, in television theorist Phillip Drummond's words, '[T]he most studious and thorough account of TV drama production yet available' (1980). It accelerated a scholarly interest in the medium, and a version of this television studies zeal found its way into the reviews. Charlie Catchpole in the *Evening Standard* (9 March 1978): 'How Hazell of the popular novels by ex-journalist Gordon Williams and Crystal Palace FC manager Terry Venables changed into Hazell of the small screen is just part of a fascinating new book […]' The rest of the piece is given over to details. According to Sean Day-Lewis (*Daily Telegraph* [7 March 1978]), the book shows 'how [Hazell] was constructed as a reaction against other television detective heroes, the main requirement being that he should be different from his rivals.' In 'The Making of a TV Series,' a review for the *Morning Star*, Stewart Lane (22 March 1978) covers similar ground. *Hazell* was important, then, not least because it afforded insight into processes of development.

The series had a long walk-up. It was heralded by Bronwen Balmforth in *The Sun* (25 September 1976) with a catchline asking who would play Hazell. But Balmforth's main preoccupation is with literature. She quotes Venables as saying, 'Hazell is probably the first London detective with charm and a sense of humour since Sherlock Holmes (ibid).' The following year, in *The Guardian* (9 September 1977), Richard Yallop offers a reminder about the forthcoming show with a feature titled 'Hazell is bursting out all over'. Here the books are properly brought to account: the Penguin trade paperback re-issue of the second and third novels is used as a hook on which to hang the Williams-Venables story – and to sell the character. 'It was his personality,' remarks Yallop, 'which led McMillans [sic] to order a second book (ibid.).' The Marlowe connection offers the standard reference point:

> Hazel has his feeling, care-worn side as well. 'We wanted him to be more human than Philip Marlowe,' says Williams. 'I'd like to think he's the type of guy who would help old ladies across the road and kick them in the deg if they didn't thank him (ibid.).

Chandler references abound. 'Up these mean tower block stairs a man must limp,' wrote Shaun Usher of the first episode. (*Daily Mail* [17 January 1978]). Richard Last (27 March 1979), at the beginning of Series 2, reminded *Daily Telegraph* readers that 'Hazell (ITV) is probably the nearest thing on British television to Philip Marlowe'. For Martin Jackson (27 April 1979) of the *Daily Mail,* Hazell is a 'Cockneyfied' […] Philip Marlowe in blow-waved curls, dropping his aitches and pulling the birds'. But he is 'an engaging character,' for all that, 'particularly so portrayed by Nicholas Ball as the baby tough with the soft marshmallow centre'. Stanley Reynolds (7 February 1978) of the *Times* makes much the same point: 'Inside the outer wrapper of Chandler's Philip Marlowe there is a much more familiar and English character.' The older US hard-boiled tradition frames the modern English context, then: it is a familiar set of conventions, serviceable as a means of interpreting content.

I have noted elsewhere, when discussing the US literature, that

> The private eye is a localised urban everyman: wisecracking Marlowe is a personification of the tough, laid back LA of the war years and beyond, while Hammer is every bit as brash and psychotic as his native McCarthy era New York City. […] Each private eye is an agent of the city, acting for it as much as he acts for his client (Kiszely 2006: 26).

The same can be said for the cops and private eyes of 1970s Britain. As with *film noir* adaptations of the 1940s-1950s, city life as described in the novels lent itself to representation on screen. The seamier sides of London – deserted docklands, traditional pubs, threadbare dwellings – take on a character of their own. In 'Hazell Pays a Debt' (23 January 1978), 'Hazell Works for Nothing' (13 March 1978) and 'Hazell and the Public Enemy', such places offer more than mere local colour.

To consider these locations along biographical lines, as in the older traditions of urban historiography, is to meet them on something like their own terms. Theirs is a London with a long memory drawn from class-based social histories such as *Life and Labour of the People in London* (Booth 1902); it recalls gambling 'hells' and mother's ruin, and the depravations of *Oliver Twist* (1838). It is a city, as the next section will detail, steeped in the traditions of music hall: the tavern songs of Charles Rice (Selenick 1997), the gallows humour of W.G. Ross's 'Sam Hall', the pantomime fun of Dan Leno. Many of the pub regulars, with whom Hazell joins in hearty singalongs ('Hazell and Hyde' [7 June 1979]), are of an age to remember Marie Lloyd. This is a night-time world, English to the core. And although it is fast disappearing at the end of the 1970s, it still carries traces of the old atmosphere – the menace of Walter Sickert, the romance of Atkinson Grimshaw, the despair of Gustave Doré.

Yet at the same time, Hazell's London is a city with little or no memory. A world away from 19th century hells and halls, this version is best navigated via the sociological concerns of its day: the worlds of constructed systems (Parsons 1971) and social equality (Young 1972), of power dynamics (Goldberg 1973; Foucault 1970) and sexual liberation (Greer 1970), in which increasingly convoluted demographics are at play. It is the product of a post-war reconstruction and consensus (Keynes 1936; Crosland 1956) in which social policy, ironically enough, has the knock-on effect of deconstruction. The breaking up of traditional communities (Young: 24 May 1974; Dunleavy 1978), the changing and contested nature of family life (Willmott and Young 1973), all are depicted in detail. 'Hazell Plays Solomon,' a straight adaptation of the source novel, lingers longest in these respects, and has the most impact.

Immigration serves as an adjunct to class. A driver of change, it is broached in several ways throughout the decade, but most comprehensively in terms of race and racism (Rex 1970; Studlar 1977; Ward 1978). While Hazell is aligned with the old world, he is sympathetic to the inhabitants of the new. He is quick, for example, to act against racial prejudice ('Hazell and the Greasy Gunners' [28 June 1979]), just as he is prepared to intercede on behalf of clients concerned with exploitation on grounds of immigration status ('Hazell Bangs the Drum' [3 May 1979]). In its pro-active display of solidarity, the series joins some illustrious forerunners, most notably *New Scotland Yard* and *Special Branch*.

If the cutting-edge detective novels of the 1970s often describe a place rooted in tradition yet removed from it, a society clinging to vestiges of stability yet agitating for change, then television provided the visual illustration. *Hazell*, with its Chandleresque voice-over, offered the best of both worlds. The next section, a case study of an episode, considers how place and identity come under attack.

'HAZELL AND HYDE'

An establishing shot charts the slow progress of Hazell's blue Triumph Stag as it turns a street corner. We are deep in the heart of London's squat-land. After parking and locking the car, Hazell pauses for a moment to take in his surroundings: he looks across neglected, litter-strewn gardens; he reads multi-coloured graffiti railing at 'cuts' and demanding 'rights'. This is the end of the post-war consensus (Addison 1975); the aftermath of the Winter of Discontent.

Eventually he makes his way towards a road of ruined Georgian villas. Standing facing it, back to camera, he reflects on the ragged splendour of the buildings. Putting thoughts into words, the voiceover introduces this week's case:

> To think that once upon a time this street was full of elegant birds swanning round shops and climbing into carriages. Two hundred years on – and now look at it. Electricity has come and gone; the drainage is non-existent. And a Mr Clive of Dorking has asked me to find his 20-year-old daughter who's busy squatting here somewhere.

Transmitted on 7 June 1979, 'Hazell and Hyde' is the eighteenth episode in the series. Like 'Hazell and the Maltese Vulture' (20 March 1978), it conforms to the 'wandering daughter' formula first introduced by Dashiell Hammett in 'The Gatewood Caper' ([1923] 1969). It calls on other 'hard-boiled' story conventions, too. 'Hazell and Hyde' owes much to Chandler's first two novels, *The Big Sleep* (1939) and *Farewell, My Lovely* (1940), in that the female character in question, Claudine Clive, is on the loose and dangerous. A further similarity extends to the triangular relationship of the principals – Claudine, her father Mr Clive, and Hazell himself. Mr Clive is an ineffectual older male, reminiscent in some respects of Chandler patriarchs General Sternwood and Mr Lewin Lockridge Grayle. By the same token, Claudine is a Carmen Sternwood, a Mrs Lockridge Grayle/Velma Valento. Initially, Mr Clive hires Hazell to find the seemingly vulnerable Claudine; but it eventually transpires he wishes to know her whereabouts only so he can maintain a distance, because she is psychotic. Like Marlowe, Hazell must play the surrogate father to meet the threat she represents – and to restore order.

The quest takes him, as usual, to a variety of locations. A formal scheme soon becomes apparent: contrasting interiors represent, figuratively or literally, homes of some kind. It is between sets of implied binaries – belonging and incongruity, permanence and loss – that the episode makes meaning. In so doing, it sets the instinct to conserve and against the impulse to destroy. Hazel slips in and out of the symbolic interiors, playing a kind of hide and seek. But when Claudine, the 'Mr Hyde' figure of the title, comes out of hiding, the game is turned on its head. 'She's after you,' explains Mr Clive. And when Hazell asks Inspector 'Choc' Minty, with whom he is loosely affiliated, why he finds this reversal funny, the reply is caustic: 'You, Flyboy! First time I've seen you scared of a bit of tail.'

At the outset, however, Hazell is blissfully unaware of impending danger. Realization dawns, if only partially, as he reconnoitres one of the squalid Georgian villas. This is a netherworld of unpleasant surprises. In lethal parody of funhouse novelty, a door flings open onto a floorless second storey room. Another room, another near miss: this time it is a gang of vagrants wielding a clawhammer, threatening life and limb. Calling on his road-tested attributes of diffidence and boyish good humour, Hazell manages to defuse the situation, and the meth-addled crew, mollified for the moment, returns to the task of stripping the room of its junk. A shot of Hazell watching them lurch down the road, dragging their spoils on a piece of old carpet, closes the scene. Fleetingly, the snap-shot image takes on greater significance: it is the end of 1970s in

tableau; a wasteland worthy of Samuel Beckett, with the shabby players trudging their way off stage. But the show is not yet over – as Hazell is to find out to his cost.

'Little Miss Claudine Clive,' he says in voiceover, 'or whoever was using that room as a squat, had tried to make a go of it – for what it was worth.' The observation proves ironic, given what is to follow. Hazell acts on the thought, though, and strikes out in the wrong direction, drawing his audience into a world reminiscent of *Cathy Come Home* (1966). By effectively casting Claudine as Cathy, he characterises her as victim, with the villain of the piece the post-war housing crisis. Hers is a familiar plight, after all, of the type documented by the scholars of the day, such as Ron Bailey (1973), John Pollard (1973) and Caroline Lewin et al (1976). And while this misunderstanding functions neatly as a red herring, it is anything but in the wider scheme of the episode. The thematic concern of home, and by extension homelessness, is brought into sharp relief through the sociological.

Hazell enters a second, almost identical building immediately upon leaving the first, although here the interior differs. It is a squat, certainly, but its rooms are intact. And the inhabitants, it transpires – men, women, children – lead an orderly communal life. This is a 'hippy' community of radicals. While infinitely more sophisticated than that of the vagrants, the hostility of 'The House' (as the leader of the squat terms it) is no less marked. And again, ironies abound. This bastion of counterculture freedom is bound up in petty rules and regulations, which are minutely observed. The collective identity is drawn along straight ideological lines, with no allowance for individuality. It is the realm of Michel Foucault (1968) and other post-modernists, in which freewill ceases to exist**.** Accordingly, Hazell is barred because of what he 'represents', even though, as he points out: 'I *represent* a man trying to find his daughter […] I *represent* love.' It is only as Hazell and The Leader exchange final fruitless words, at the foot of a grand but dilapidated staircase, that this scene connects with the former, and the two combine to make sense. The villas symbolize the country at the end of the decade, hollowed out and falling apart; and the 'communities' within, the irretrievably fractured society that Britian has become.

Hazell's own home, by contrast, is a haven. 'I really fancy this room.' he tells Cousin Tel:

> It's got a touch of the old Raj, touch of the Sidney Greenstreets. A good room to think in, even with the rain belting down. Monsoon weather.

This world revolves around an element of classic hard-boiled detection, as indicated by the reference to *The Maltese Falcon* (1941). And it includes another kind of nostalgia – that for Empire. The sentiment has echoes of Jan Morris (1978), whose memories infuse *Farewell the Trumpets: An Imperial Retreat,* the final instalment of her *Pax Britanica* trilogy. Morris harbours no desire for a return to colonialism, it must be noted, and nor does Hazell – he is too young to remember. But real-life historian and fictional private eye each reject a present they neither like nor understand. This melancholia is a trait of the era, and it is caught most poetically, in literature and on television, in the figure of Geroge Smiley.[9]

It is fitting, then, in terms of conflict, that the fiction Hazell has woven around Claudine should unravel in the calm of his own home. But not before it has been reenforced, with vigour, for one last time. Hazell meets Minty in a traditional old pub where they sit among old punters,

[9] In John le Carre's *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (1974) original especially, but also to good effect in the 1979 BBC television version. Alec Guinness plays Smiley in the latter.

happy in their proxy parlour, singing along to 'Trafalgar Square' (1902). A 'Burlington Bertie'-style exercise in irony, the lyrics are revealing:

> My last digs were on the Embankment
>
> The third seat from Waterloo Bridge
>
> [Chorus]
>
> I live in Trafalgar Square
>
> With four lions to guard me
>
> Fountains and statues all over the place
>
> And the Metropole staring me right in the face

This is an antique culture, temporarily housed in snugs and saloon bars awaiting the wrecking ball. Nevertheless, the mood is jovial, and it lightens Hazell's own, if not Minty's. Dialogue draws attention to the surroundings, remarking its Englishness. Shortly afterwards Hazell, at the piano, leads a chorus of 'Pretty Polly Perkins of Paddington Green'. The lyrics voice his romantic image of Claudine, cultivated in sentimental response to her subterfuge. The spell lingers until the two investigators return from the morgue (another temporary home), in order to question Glaswegian Annie. A bedraggled member of that other burgeoning squatter community, heroin addicts, she inadvertently shatters Hazell's illusions by calling Claudine, with whom she once shared a dwelling, 'a heeder!'. Hazell promptly acknowledges the depth of his misunderstanding, marking the realization with an ironic reference with to Polly Perkins. In the knowledge that Claudine is a murderer, he prepares for confrontation.

The episode holds one more surprise, however – and that is Claudine herself. Far from the hideous parody of Polly Perkins the audience has perhaps come to expect, she is short-haired and smart. She has the look of a radical, certainly, but of the academic type. Speaking softly to Hazell, from a shadowy corner of his kitchen, she makes her presence felt. There follows an exchange in which he adopts an understanding, paternalistic approach – and suddenly Jekyll turns into Hyde. Screaming, she goes for him, aiming at his eyes with a pair of scissors. It is a shocking scene. But the tension breaks quickly. In the aftermath, as Hazell subdues her, Cousin Tel enters and mistakes the tableau for a minor domestic skirmish. 'You don't half pick 'em, Jim-jim,' he says with a leer.

The scene mirrors a domestic invasion, earlier in the series, by psychopath Keith O'Rourke ('Hazell Pays a Debt'). A phantom from the past, O'Rourke rears into the present, wreaking havoc, and Hazell exorcizes him with a bullet. But there is no such catharsis with Claudine, because she represents the future – and not only the peak of its gender politics trajectory. She symbolises all of it. The radicals. The squatters. The broken society. Everything.

A final scene features a reprise of 'Pretty Polly Perkins'. It is the last of the episode's dreadful ironies. Scratched and bloodied, Hazell just sits there, in the same traditional pub, looking on for a last time at an old world that now seems older. Like the morgue, this is a melancholy place; a temporary stop-off for the old punters *en route* to their permanent rest. It is only Cousin Tel, oblivious to meaning, who sings along. Hazell and Minty just stare.

CONCLUSION

The small screen investigators of the 1970s owe debts of gratitude, direct and oblique, to detectives of the genre literature. While the culture tends to remember some television series, because of a residual presence on heritage channels, it tends to forget the second element in the equation. Certainly, the US hard-boiled tradition retains something of a footing in the culture, as does Sherlock Holmes; and Colin Dexter (*Last Bus to Woodstock* [1975]), Reginald Hill (*A Clubbable Woman* [1970]) and R.G. Wingfield[10] (*Frost at Christmas* [1984]) have enjoyed extended tenure thanks to high-profile adaptations in the 1980s, 1990s and beyond (*Inspector Morse* [1987-2000]); *A Touch of Frost* [1992-2010]; *Dalziel and Pascoe* (1996-2007]). But by every other measure the literature of the era itself has all but vanished. Who remembers James Quartermain? Or any of the Constable Crime authors. Who reads Alan White or Roger Busby? Such authors sold well, and, as this article has demonstrated, captured something of the spirit of the era. But they are absent from the academic literature. Because: who wants to write about straight, white, working-class male protagonists from 1970s detective fiction – right? Who indeed.

The class concerns of the Hazell novels transfer to the screen. 'Hazell Meets the First Eleven' (13 February 1978) deals with the snakes and ladders of snobbery and social climbing. If 'Hazell and the Baker St Sleuth' stirs a similarly poisonous brew, then it also adds a pinch of pathos. But it is in 'Hazell and the Weekend Man' (6 March 1978) that real tragedy presents itself, as memories of an old order – structures, standards, relationships – are swept aside in the everyday struggle to get ahead. A middle-aged bank clerk and a lonely widow, both innocents in their own ways, are left to pick up the pieces of their lives. The series tells a story of change and crisis in equal measure. But, as this article has shown, it offers no easy solutions. Community and continuity and tradition, the building blocks of development and diversity, are being torn down. And the foundation itself is unsound, if not rotten. 'Old School' upper-class Englishness is represented as faulty, false or obsolete. Indeed, the jewel thief in 'Hazell and the Big Sleep' (24 May 1979), it transpires, is the *faux* snob working in hotel reception.

But what of my rescue? And the reasons for mounting it. The argument *against* would seem strong: while it might be useful to deconstruct 'toxic' oppressors like Hazell and Raven in terms of gender, or to view them afresh through lenses of privilege or prejudice, there is little else to recommend them to scholarship. My counter to this position is that history is at best a semi-legible scrawl, impossible to read along straightforward lines of virtue and villainy. If power is the only mechanism through which to interpret the past, then the victim-oppressor binary itself becomes a tyrant. And a capricious one at that. What is acceptable today may well constitute an expression of hate tomorrow, and, like 'white' images of Christ and 'TERFs', be disappeared amid next week's frenzy of indignation. The fictional male detective is an important feature of the 1970s cultural landscape, yet a scenario in which he has been removed completely, like an 'offensive' statue from a public square, is not difficult to envisage. I posit this idea of possible cancellation, not because I think it points to a future in which such a dramatic gesture *will* happen, but because it might – which is justification enough for my purposes here.

[10] Although Frost made his published debut in 1984, the character first appeared in a radio play, *Three Days of Frost,* transmitted on BBC Radio 4 on 12 February 1977.

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