

CONCLUSION

Lord bless us! It was a Diamond! As large, or nearly, as a plover's egg! The light that streamed from it was like the light of the harvest moon. When you looked down into the stone, you looked into a yellow deep that drew your eyes into it so that they saw nothing else. It seemed unfathomable; this jewel, that you could hold between your finger and thumb, seemed unfathomable as the heavens themselves. We set it in the sun, and then shut the light out of the room, and it shone awfully out of the depths of its own brightness, with a moony gleam, in the dark.

-The Moonstone

“It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts.”

-A Scandal in Bohemia

This dissertation begins with the idea that more than any other literary form, detective fiction makes use of pleasure and power as ideological apparatuses. However, given that detective fiction has been allied to pleasure or entertainment, our first task is to establish that pleasure and power are not exclusive categories, and repeatedly enmeshed in narrative and ideology, particularly in the narrative ideology of detective fiction.

Freud's concept of pleasure and the idea that compensatory images result from socially convertible designs of anti- or unsocial wishes may be given a political reading in as much as every individual is politically located and politically interpreted. What we call pleasure is not therefore a product of an act or the result or effect of a performance. It could be the complex network of processing desire into socially acceptable categories.

Freud's description of pleasure and the projection of contrapuntality going into socially demarcated principles of pleasure and reality can be translated into a complex coding of

pleasure and power as allies, respectively, of instinct and conscience or of individual desire and social desire. The individual is trained to convert individual desire into social objectives through a process of ritual cleansing of self-interest from self-realized goals. What gives pleasure therefore is likely to give power. Foucault's theory of the overwhelming presence of power in all human activities helps us to give a social context to Freud's psychoanalytical explanations of pleasure. In other words, the putative power of entertainment of detective fiction can be refracted through narrative and ideology. To that end, power is not only reflected or refracted by pleasure but also upheld and subverted by it.

In detective fiction this relationship enters into a luminal world, a double bind—where power and pleasure operates as substitutes, supplements and opposites—that cannot always be historically explained or validated but can be related to ideologically grounded interpretive histories that produce or circulate the meanings of pleasure and power. In sum, pleasure is not what it is, it is also what it is said to be. To this end, literature not only plays a role in circulating pleasure but also in consolidating power and power structures.

The fulfilment of any desire whether in life or literature is therefore best seen as a transmutation of power. The idea that novels fulfil a social goal then gets implicated in power structures. It means that literary texts aesthetically transform social or governmental goals into individual achievements by ensuring that instruments of compliance are conflated with instances complicity. The end of a detective novel necessarily fulfils a textual prophesy by eliminating all the enemies of state or the system. The difficult but ultimately expected victory of the detective is almost like a divinely ordained end. Here the idea is that a good ending is an allegorical mirror image of the great ending where good and evil are given their due. It also means that endings are not simple narrative arrangements of closure. Rather they are mutant social functionaries—social equivalents—or ideological operatives. Endings often serve a certain power structure or a class or a race in that they uphold juridical-social-moral principles by punishing the guilty and rewarding the just.

What then needs confirmation at this point is whether the detective novel is a pliant agent, that is, a handmaiden of governance—either ideological or repressive state apparatuses—that use its own tools as ideological extensions of social or class

hierarchies. To this end the designation of criminals and the definition of criminality are matters of social convention and ideologically grounded social instruments of power. In other words, the representation of hegemony and deviance in detective fiction is a literary reflection of social needs or insecurities. Chapter 2 in a way establishes this connection between ideology and textual production of power and pleasure. It finds (a) that deviance is textual construction and (b) that the criminal is defined and understood through textual production and circulation of power as well as pleasure. The deviant, however, is not seen as a mere textual produce of the ideological apparatus by the time we come to the modernist text. Whereas the nineteenth century texts see criminality as an essential preoccupation of the lowest order, in the twentieth century we find texts more willing to give a more human position to the deviant than his pathetic, muted, déclassé predecessor.

In the golden age classics of the detective novel, the fight between the good and the bad that informs the formulaic ending of the great detective novel is marked by inconsistencies with legal and juridical requirements. However, the criminal, once identified by narrative design or intention and confirmed as such by the detective, is not spared as if prompted by divine justice. So accidents are arranged, or disappearances are recorded. Now we see why and how novels like *The Moonstone* or the Great Holmes *Adventures* finish off the suspect. However, what is even more remarkable is that the suspect pays a social price of belonging to a certain class section—either the colonial underbelly of the great Empire or to a lower or marginalized class—not to a confirmed morally depraved category as a matter of fact. Endings that conclude the fight of good with evil are in most cases endings that serve the rich and the powerful well.

As if this was not enough, criminals in certain novels of Agatha Christie are simply forgotten if they have the right skin colour or can pull the right political strings. There is a recurring pattern of getting social justice by way of narrative intention and design. Chapter 3 establishes this. It finds (a) that the attempts to create a utopian state disguise the imposition of hegemonic and hierarchical structures and (b) that the production of codes that transmit equivalents of pleasure owes substantially to the narrative's espousal of judgment and power of the law-keepers. Pleasure and power are circulated as interchangeable good in such merger of narrative and ideology.

Detective narratives, it is seen, circulate pleasure not only by fulfilling heuristic goals, but also redistributing heuristic codes. So instead of securing individual pleasure/fulfilment of desire, narratives make considerable investments in transforming goals of pleasure into equivalent codes. So novels like *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, while preserving the innocence and harmony of community life, ensure that any social requirement is predicated by giving the absolute power of surveillance to the watching eye of the detective/investigator. But postmodernist texts like *The Erasers* transform the investigator into a narrative scapegoat. It is as if the narrative intends to confirm that the power of watching and surveillance no longer remains the autonomous apparatus of authority and social order.

To this end, chapter 4 establishes a disjunction in power-pleasure linkages. Here it is found (a) that the narrative questions the notion of established power and order by admitting and foregrounding irrationality into the process of investigation and proliferation of disorder with several loose ends and (b) that narrative pleasure is produced by investing in a body-secret that does not exist. In a way detective fiction takes away the power of watching by often converting it into pleasure and fear, that is, into the narrator's voyeurism and vulnerability. In a classic reversal of the power of ending, a certain cluster of the detective novel defies historical classification by having the formal or formulaic closure of the novel to end with the effacement or disappointment of the narrator. The narrative subversion of power and authority of surveillance is suggested through the criminal and detective emerging as mirror images of one another. It can thus be suggested that in changed circumstances, narrative pleasure lies in the exploration of crime rather than in its end or prevention, in a way signalling the problematization of the pleasure-power continuum seen in detective fiction.

A last point that needs to be reiterated is how and why the dark detective novel or the metaphysical murder mystery challenges the endorsement or problematization of the pleasure-power continuum seen earlier. Chapter 5 shows how it is a natural human desire to resist power and power relations. To this extent detective texts mutate to create resistance to the power, both of society and the genre. For, if the genre is to be resisted as an ideological formation, any structure that circulates pleasure in detective texts must be subverted. Thus, the formal devices of producing pleasure and maintaining power need to be dismantled by thwarting the tools of social control. To this end, the narrative

upholds pleasure and power as antithetical sites. In *The Name of the Rose*, pleasure is generated by admitting a power struggle between the criminal and established forms of power—the good church and the dark church, for example—where the narrative thwarts power of surveillance and any socially sanctioned power. It is therefore found (a) that narratives that appear to move towards the undoing of conflicts circulate pleasure by actually opening up issues of resistance to power and (b) that narrative frame of the detective novel seem to disintegrate through the inaction of the protagonist, the loss of sequentiality of the investigation and the eventual non-resolution of the problem.

In the detective novel, two simultaneously paradoxical events happen regularly. On the one hand, the narrative seeks to mark order from disorder for pleasure and power to operate as allies. But, often, the latent ideological frame of the text does not support the disorder-order opposition. Hence, narrative pleasure is made to depend on a series of events that suggest a layered shadow-boxing between legitimate and illegitimate sources of power that sanction pleasure. The key to this struggle is not necessarily a direct complicity between agents of pleasure production and power production but their mutant imaginaries. To this end, while admitting literature as a social formation it must be said that the relation between narrative and ideology in detective fiction is more layered and refracted than is usually held or illustrated. Narratives, as Jameson suggests, are socially symbolic acts, but the contours of the symbolism keep mutating. So Father Knox and his commandments perhaps need mutants for a change.