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‘There are times when an old rule should be abandoned, or a current rule should not be applied’: narration, innovation and hardboiled fiction in Sue Grafton’s “*T*” is for *Trespass*

Abstract:

This article advances the claim that Sue Grafton’s “*T*” is for *Trespass* (1994) is chiefly concerned with the violation of generic and ideological boundaries. This paper suggests that, from its opening lines, the novel appears markedly different than the 19 previously published books in Grafton’s alphabet series – most notably in the alternation between two narrative points-of-view – and thus offers interesting insights into creative writing practice within the field of hardboiled fiction. On one hand, the novel fulfils the reader’s ideological expectations of hardboiled fiction through the eventual exposure of and ‘punishment’ for the antagonist’s crimes. On the other, by supplying the reader with the antagonist’s point-of-view, even if the reader is not invited to empathise with her, Grafton crafts a richly layered and nuanced examination of criminality in twenty-first-century America – an examination that renders narrative closure problematic, if not impossible. In doing so, it is asserted here, Grafton suggests that storytelling within hardboiled fiction must evolve to accommodate ever-malleable notions of criminality and ‘justice’.

Biographical note:

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Introduction

“*K*” is for *Killer* (1994) (hereafter *Killer*) marks a point-of-no-return moment at which Sue Grafton’s series protagonist, Kinsey Millhone, makes a decisive, if impulsive, choice to ‘[stray] into the shadows’ (1994: 285) of both legality and morality and wonders if she will ever find her way back to lawfulness. By the climax of *Killer*, Kinsey has realised that the institutions of law and order will not be able to bring the eponymous killer to justice and is faced either with faithfully supporting the existing system of jurisprudence, thereby allowing the killer to avoid punishment, or with alerting the victim’s mobster boyfriend to the identity of her killer, thereby abetting in the killer’s murder. In a narrative twist that strays from Grafton’s traditional storytelling approach, Kinsey opts for the latter. In many ways, *Killer* remarks upon a preoccupation that repeatedly resurfaces over the 24 alphabet series books, but especially in the 13 that have been written since *Killer* was published: This novel generally, and its narrative climax specifically, concern themselves with the notion of ‘trespass’ – with the sometimes arbitrary, but always legally binding, lines that exist between lawfulness and criminality, as well as with the transgressions that Kinsey must undertake to bring about justice.

While Grafton’s alphabet series has, across its forty-plus-year publication history, engaged in myriad acts of trespass with respect to characterisation and theme, some of Grafton’s most thought-provoking transgressions have operated at the level of narrativity and generic tradition, as is the case in the twentieth instalment of the series. “*T*” is for *Trespass* (2008) (hereafter *Trespass*) follows two primary storylines. In one, Kinsey is hired by a lawyer to investigate a recent automobile accident in which the ‘victims’ are suspected of insurance fraud. The second storyline, which strikes much closer to home for Grafton’s private investigator, focuses on Kinsey’s elderly neighbour, Gus Vronsky, who has taken a fall in his home and suffered a serious injury. After Kinsey completes a cursory background check, Gus’s niece (who lives in New York City) hires a Licensed Practical Nurse named Solana Rojas to manage Gus’s care and rehabilitation. However, over the novel, Kinsey learns that Solana, whose given name is Cristina Tasinato, has, in the past, ‘usurped’ several women’s identities and is using those various covers to insinuate herself into the households of ailing elderly people. Once entrenched in the homes of the vulnerable she proceeds to pilfer everything of value before ‘mercifully’ murdering her charges.

This article advances the claim that Grafton’s *Trespass* is chiefly concerned with the violation of generic and ideological boundaries. Indeed, from its opening lines, the novel appears markedly different than the 19 previously published books in Grafton’s alphabet series – most notably in the alternation between two narrative points-of-view: a significant, though successful, shift in Grafton’s writing practice. On one hand, the novel fulfils the reader’s ideological expectations of hardboiled fiction through the eventual exposure of, and ‘punishment’ for, Solana’s crimes. On the other hand, by supplying the reader with Solana’s point-of-view, even if the reader is not invited to empathise with the criminal, Grafton crafts a richly layered and nuanced examination of criminality in twenty-first-century America – an examination that renders narrative closure problematic,

if not impossible. In doing so, Grafton suggests that hardboiled fiction must evolve to accommodate ever-malleable notions of criminality and ‘justice’.

‘T’ is for ‘*terra incognita*’

Women working within the hardboiled tradition have long been saddled with gender- and genre-based expectations, most particularly with respect to the hardboiled private investigator character, who is typically depicted as ‘an alienated loner, a man who lives by a code and carries a piece. He is tough-talking and good with his fists’ (Pearsall 1995: 38). Nearly nine decades after their debut, the figures of Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe loom large over the genre of hardboiled fiction, serving as the implied measuring stick against which iterations of that character trope (even those of the female sex) are evaluated. For some critics, then, the most formidable obstacle that women face is seamlessly integrating a believable female sleuth into a fictional world created by male writers, traditionally inhabited by male private dicks, and perpetually marked by misogyny. Indeed, Lewis D. Moore characterises ‘the early hard-boiled detective novel’ as ‘not so much male-oriented as *terra incognita* to women protagonists’ (2006: 270), a provocative claim that David Lehman explains further: ‘The recent emergence of ... female gumshoes ... is really quite startling when you consider the genre’s initial ambivalence at best and hostility at worst toward its women characters. Women in the world of Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe tended to be temptresses or villains’ (2001: 177–178). Far from merely an assertion that female characters and authors are underrepresented in a male-dominated genre, these critics point to some of the prevailing ideological underpinnings and creative expectations that have typified the hardboiled genre from its origins to the contemporary moment, most particularly with respect to sex role stereotypes. Later sections of this article contend that the violation of such expectations informs Grafton’s exploration of ‘justice’ in twenty-first-century hardboiled fiction.

For some critics, women writers can never scale successfully the formidable hurdle of misogyny that faces them and their female protagonists within the hardboiled genre. However, since the 1980s, most critics of the genre have lauded Grafton as a literary pioneer who has dramatically altered the genre of and generic expectations for hardboiled fiction. In fact, John G. Cawelti has suggested that ‘the hard-boiled story’s misogyny [has] prove[n] in the long run to be only a temporary aberration’ (2004: 279) and that ‘feminism has been the most striking inspiration of new developments in the detective story’ (280). Like Cawelti, Linda Mizejewski cites the work of Grafton, Marcia Muller and Sara Paretsky as heralding in ‘a new golden age of the detective genre’ that dramatically altered ‘the trade-book industry’s previous assumptions about crime and mystery fiction’ (2004: 19). Priscilla L. Walton takes her praise a step further, identifying Grafton as ‘an innovator of the Tough Gal Private Eye’ and ‘a re-vis(ion)er of crime writing’ practice (1995: 101). Like Walton, some critics have examined the ways that women are re-writing readerly expectations for the hardboiled genre. Although Maureen

T. Reddy suggests that women working within the hardboiled tradition are coerced into writing ‘within narrowly defined genre limitations’ (1988: 7), she acknowledges the possibility that writers like Grafton can, and do, write against the ideological and generic limitations of hardboiled fiction, ‘borrowing familiar features of detective fiction in order to turn them upside down and inside out, exposing the genre’s fundamental conservatism and challenging the reader to rethink his/her assumptions’ (1988: 2). This article builds on the work of these and other earlier critics, suggesting that, in *Trespass*, Grafton exposes the genre’s ‘fundamental conservatism’ (1988: 2) with respect to narrative resolution as a means of challenging her readers to consider their complicity in oversimplified notions of ‘justice’ both within and beyond the diegesis of a hardboiled novel. This challenge begins in Grafton’s representation of her protagonist, who, in *Trespass*, simultaneously borrows from and subverts ‘familiar features of detective fiction’ (1988: 2).

Her name is Kinsey Millhone ...

Hardboiled fiction has long been distinguished by the presence of a tough-talking, lone wolf private investigator protagonist; indeed, Kimberly J. Dilley dates this common character trope to the Golden Age of hardboiled fiction, noting: ‘In the traditional hardboiled private eye genre, ‘justice’ includes components of vigilantism ... The male PI hurtles through the landscape to exact a punishment of his own determining’ (1988: 50). Much of Grafton’s alphabet series narratively aligns with this tradition of hardboiled fiction. For example, the initial lines of “A” *is for Alibi* (1982) read: ‘My name is Kinsey Millhone. I’m a private investigator, licensed by the state of California. I’m thirty-two years old, twice divorced, no kids. The day before yesterday I killed someone and the fact weighs heavily on my mind (1982: 1). Like Spade and Marlowe, Kinsey is immediately identified as a lone wolf nonconformist who acts seemingly without recourse to law and order. Although readers later learn that Kinsey commits the act of murder in self-defence, at this early point in the series, Grafton sets readers up to see Kinsey as someone who stands outside the known and trusted boundaries of institutionalised jurisprudence, in a place from which she executes her own brand of law and order, even going so far as to commit murder presumably in pursuit of ‘justice’. This type of first-person confessional is so deeply intertwined with Grafton’s brand of storytelling, as well as the genre of hardboiled fiction, that Kinsey mocks the familiarity of this trope in “B” *is for Burglar* (1985): ‘My name is Kinsey Millhone and most of my reports begin the same way. I start by asserting who I am and what I do, as though by stating the same few basic facts I can make sense out of everything that comes afterward’ (1985: 1).

From its opening lines, *Trespass* appears to set up a text that is identical to its predecessors in terms of narrative voice and point-of-view, beginning with a Prologue in which Kinsey, in first-person point-of-view, laments the presence of ‘predators in this world’, noting that ‘I know there will always be someone poised to take advantage of the vulnerable: the very young, the very old, and the innocent of any age’ (2008: 1).

Narratively this Prologue situates the novel in familiar territory, at least for faithful readers of the series or/and the genre. Topically this Prologue frames the action of the novel, foreshadowing the primary and secondary storylines, both of which focus on acts of fraud that prey on ‘the innocent’.

But this Prologue also serves to transition into the first numbered chapter of the novel, which, uncharacteristically, is narrated from a limited third-person point-of-view focalised on the ‘predator’ that Kinsey identifies in the final sentence of the Prologue: Solana Rojas. It is in the first chapter of the novel that *Trespass* begins to diverge creatively from the formal conventions and expectations of the Grafton corpus and of the hardboiled tradition. Chapter One begins with the following: ‘She had a real name, of course – the one she’d been given at birth and had used for much of her life – but now she had a new name. She was Solana Rojas, whose personhood she’d usurped’ (2008: 3).

For faithful readers of the series, this shift from Kinsey’s first-person point-of-view to the limited third of an unnamed narrator is disorienting. Kinsey remains the primary narrator in *Trespass*, with her chapters more than doubling Solana’s, both in quantity and in total number of pages. Yet the interplay between the two narrative voices challenges the generic expectations of hardboiled fiction, in this way offering an innovation to the storytelling formula of hardboiled fiction and also serving to change the stakes of the reading experience.

The reader as rival

In the first place, that the reader knows the identity of the antagonist from Chapter One of the novel dramatically alters the relationship between protagonist and reader. Janice Marion Shaw suggests that while ‘detective fiction exploits the [reader’s] interest ... to enter a world in which seemingly unreadable clues can be interpreted by the detective,’ simultaneously ‘the reader competes with the detective to find both the solution and the motive for the crime’ (2016: 100). The rivalry between sleuth and reader is built into the very narrative structure of hardboiled fiction; indeed, the storytelling patterns often depend upon this creative competition. Such narratives gain their momentum and interest through the methodical dissemination of clues during the rising action of the story. Some clues, also known as red herrings, are ‘deliberately designed to tempt incautious investigators (and astute readers) down dead-end roads and up blind alleys’ (Dubose 2000: 82), but most clues, although initially enigmatic because presented out of context, are nonetheless revealed to be integral to understanding who committed the crime, as well as how and why.

The rivalry between sleuth and reader is foregrounded throughout Grafton’s series by way of Kinsey’s signature note-taking method. In *Alibi*, Kinsey explains her methodology as follows:

I have a system of consigning data to three-by-five index cards. Most of my notes have to do with witnesses: who they are, how they’re related to the investigation, dates of

interviews, follow-up. Some cards are background information I need to check out and some are notes about legal technicalities. The cards are an efficient way of storing facts for my written reports. I tack them up on a large bulletin board above my desk and stare at them, telling myself the story as I perceive it. Amazing contradictions will come to light, sudden gaps, questions I've overlooked (1982: 19–20).

While, for Kinsey, the index cards serve as an 'efficient way of storing facts', for Grafton, the index cards (which have appeared in every instalment of the series since its debut in 1982) function as a clever narrative device that 'ensur[es] fair play among the competitors' (Rzepka 2005: 14). Throughout an alphabet novel, details are presented and recorded on index cards at regular intervals, thereby ensuring that the reader has access to the information that s/he needs to solve the crime. However, because the details are not necessarily presented in context or in a logical order, they are initially, for both Kinsey and the reader, unreadable. The ritual recording of these details reinforces for the reader that the reading experience is principally a competition. Each time that Kinsey shuffles the index cards, seeing the details in a different order and/or context, not only does Grafton's sleuth learn more about the crime, bringing her closer to solving the mystery, but Grafton also poses a challenge to readers to try to solve the crime before Kinsey does.

The reader as uneasy ally

It is telling that, in *Trespass*, Kinsey's signature index cards are referenced only once, very late in the novel, and then only with respect to the secondary storyline about insurance fraud. The cards, which for Grafton's readers have become a familiar storytelling device, are never referenced in relation to the primary storyline about Solana (2008: 280), and the divergence from this creative technique reinforces the difference of this novel from its predecessors in the series. In *Trespass*, Kinsey does not require the index cards – which enable her to answer the traditional hardboiled private investigator's questions of *Whodunit?* and *Why?* – because here her investigation is driven by a simpler question: namely, *What is happening under Gus's roof?* Certain of the 'Who' from relatively early in the novel, and less concerned about the 'Why', Kinsey commits many acts of trespass to arrive finally at an answer to the question of 'What'.

To be sure, the pursuit of an answer to the question of 'What' still could fuel a healthy rivalry between Kinsey and reader; yet, it does not do so because Grafton's use of limited third-person point-of-view places the reader at an advantage over Kinsey, consistently providing the reader with more information about Solana's clandestine activities than is available to Grafton's detective. Creatively, this approach reinforces how this novel is different from Grafton's previous novels through the privileging of the experiences of voyeurism over participation. Stated differently, in *Trespass*, Grafton places the reader in a knowledgeable but passive position vis-à-vis the narrative, forcing them to witness the action, but also stripping them of the ability to solve the crime or even assist Kinsey in her efforts to do so. Through this technique, Grafton underlines the impotence that

readers (and citizens) can feel in the face of inexplicable criminality and ineffectual jurisprudence.

For example, although much of the rising action in *Trespass* turns on Kinsey's earlier agreement to vet Solana's credentials, the reader is clued into Solana's untrustworthiness well before Kinsey is even offered the job (2008: 96–99). In the first Solana chapter of the novel, the narrator explains that no one, not even those closest (biologically) to Solana, 'understood how wily she was' (4). The narrator continues: 'She operated as a creature apart, without empathy ... She was largely unseen – a mirage or a ghost – watching for little ways to take advantage of [others]' (4). Later in the novel, the reader learns about Solana's abuse and murder of Henrietta Sparrow (94, 160) long before Kinsey does (339). And there are many instances when, immediately following a chapter in which Kinsey voices (either to the reader in first-person narration or to another character in dialogue) a vague suspicion about Solana, the reader is offered irrefutable evidence to substantiate what Kinsey feels 'in [her] bones' (196).

One of the first examples of this clever use of dramatic irony occurs shortly after what Kinsey describes as a 'skewed exchange' with Solana that leaves Kinsey feeling as if she was 'in the presence of a snake, first hissing its presence and then coiled in readiness' (143). In the final lines of that chapter, Kinsey ambiguously admits to her landlord, Henry Pitts, 'it feels like there's something more going on [at Gus's house] ... There's something creepy about [Solana]' (158). In the opening lines of the next chapter, the third-person narrator reveals: 'She was drugging [Gus] regularly, crushing the over-the-counter sleeping medications and adding them to his evening meal' (159).

In these and other instances, Grafton uses dramatic irony works first and foremost to build suspense within the narrative of *Trespass*. By making readers privy to the clandestine world of the sociopath-antagonist, Grafton heightens the emotions that readers experience every time Kinsey is outpaced by Solana and/or falls short of rescuing Gus from Solana's efforts to defraud and murder him. That Grafton as author spoon-feeds her readers with answers to the central narrative dilemma, while Kinsey as narrator often struggles against being perceived as 'the villain of the piece' thanks to Solana's machinations (266), places the reader in the unlikely position of uneasy ally, instead of rival.

More specifically, the reader spends much of the novel not simply wondering *when* Kinsey will unmask Solana and bring her to justice, but wondering *whether* Kinsey will do so and *if* she will do so *before* Gus becomes her next victim. By encouraging her readers to consider these types of questions, which are atypical within the genre of hardboiled fiction, Grafton also forces her readers to confront their most deep-seated assumptions regarding law enforcement agencies and systems of jurisprudence. In particular, she challenges readers to consider the blind faith that they often place in the ability of such institutions to execute justice, to ensure individual and collective security, and to facilitate order.

The reader as complicit witness

At the same time that the reader is allied with Kinsey, they are invited into Solana's world, but actively discouraged from empathising with her – a narrative choice that is reinforced by Grafton's opting to narrate all of the Solana chapters from a limited third-person point-of-view. Third-person narration places the reader at one remove both from the narrator (who operates as a detached observer) and from the narrative action, which, in the Solana chapters, 'transcends the limited perspectives of characters in the story' (Thatcher 2008: 12). From the initial pages of *Trespass*, then, the reader is distanced from Solana with the unnamed third-person narrator somewhat forcefully interjected as liaison between reader and character. Neither rival nor ally, the reader is again forced to passively witness Solana's myriad acts of criminality without the possibility of recourse – a powerful narrative means of reminding readers of the many ways in which extra-diegetic institutions of law and order constrain the agency of individual citizens and systematically obstruct (rather than facilitate) the execution of justice. But this narrative mode of address also has the capacity to render the reader complicit in Solana's actions through the very silence and passivity that characterises the reading experience.

Readers also are, at times, and then only briefly, permitted to view Grafton's fictional world *as* Solana, such as late in the novel when Solana begins to regard Kinsey as a worthy opponent and as a 'kindred spirit' (241):

These loathsome creatures could disguise themselves so cunningly that it was sometimes hard to spot them in the foliage where they hid. Tarantulas were the worst. The display case would appear empty and Solana would wonder if the spider had escaped. She'd lean toward the glass, searching uneasily, and suddenly discover the thing was close enough to touch. [Kinsey] was like that (240).

Yet even when the reader enters momentarily into Solana's thoughts, she remains an unknowable and loathsome variable without remorse or motive. In contrast both to the generic expectations of hardboiled fiction and to prevailing psychological theories regarding criminality, Solana suggests that sometimes crimes are committed without reason or justification and sometimes individuals act in criminal ways merely because they can. In fact, Solana's description of the tarantula seems more appropriately applied to herself than to Kinsey, since readers are informed from the initial pages of the novel that she, like the tarantula, is a master of disguise: a woman who navigates the landscapes of Grafton's fictional Santa Teresa 'largely unseen – a mirage or a ghost' (4). Far from producing awe and wonder in the reader (or in other characters), Solana's talent for subterfuge casts her as abjection personified – 'a bad one' (311) in the words of her former landlord, a 'sociopath' (277) in the words of Kinsey's friend/landlord, Henry, and, in Kinsey's own voice, an abnormality (226) and a contaminant (374).

Whether the reader is seeing her through the detached lens of a third-person narrator, or momentarily seeing her world from her vantage point, Solana remains an enigma whose motivations are at best partially revealed and whose behaviours are, from the outside, charming, even charismatic, but from within, revealed to be a well-honed charade

masking a more deep-seated parasitism. When acts of criminality can be explained by way of a discernible motive, as is typical in hardboiled fiction, then those acts of criminality become markedly less frightening precisely because future, similar acts potentially are avoidable through the careful study and documentation of behavioural patterns and personality types. Predictability, in this respect, breeds a sense of control and security, both within the world of hardboiled fiction (where the private investigator typically prevails over the criminal element) and in the larger, extra-diegetic world (where citizens are encouraged to place their faith in institutions of law *and order*). By contrast, Solana breeds fear and anxiety within Grafton's readers, alluding to the inability of law enforcement agencies to protect and serve their citizenry and the very real possibility that such agencies can and do fail in the face of criminal elements who are so radically different from the lay reader/citizen.

The difference between Solana and Grafton's reader perhaps is most powerfully reinforced during the scene in which she rapes Gus. At the outset of the scene, Solana advances a factual claim as a means of reminding Gus how his convalescence has deprived him of autonomy and dignity, even within his own home: 'Without me, you'd have to go into a nursing home' (243). Here, Solana's statement is less an expression of genuine concern for her charge than an ambiguously foreboding threat to inflict harm upon Gus unless he consents to Solana's demands: 'No complaints. You must never talk to anyone but me.' But Solana's threats extend beyond Gus, implicating Kinsey as potential residual damage if he ignores her veiled threats: 'That young woman who comes over ... If you complain to her – if you communicate in any way – [my son] will hurt her badly and the fault will be yours' (243). That Solana threatens Gus with violence against Kinsey at the hands of a younger, more physically intimidating man underscores the degradation that Gus has endured as a result of age and physical infirmity. Incapable of defending his estate from predators, and unable to protect his true advocate from physical harm, Gus finally is intimidated into both silence and sexual acquiescence. As Solana 'fondle[s Gus] in a way that would help him relax' (243), she not-so-implicitly reminds him that he is her 'possession', and that this act of 'physical violation' constitutes, in the oft-quoted words of Susan Brownmiller, 'nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation' by which she keeps Gus 'in a state of fear' (1975: 15).

Since the 1975 publication of Brownmiller's seminal study of rape culture, the act of rape has been understood as 'a deliberate violation of emotional, physical and rational integrity' (376). As Brownmiller writes, rape is 'not a crime of irrational, impulsive, uncontrollable lust, but is a deliberate, hostile, violent act of degradation and possession on the part of a would-be conqueror, designed to intimidate and inspire fear' (391). Although Solana frames the rape as an act of tenderness between two people who need each other, praising Gus (albeit through infantilising rhetoric) for being a 'good boy' whose silence has earned him this 'kindness' (Grafton 2008: 243), the intimacy of this act repeatedly is belied. Indeed, this scene is principally focused on the unequal distribution of power between Solana and Gus, and the former's exploitation of the latter's convalescence and familial estrangement as a means of further ingratiating herself into

Gus's home and estate. Of particular interest here is the way in which Solana unselfconsciously recapitulates common, even stereotypical, rape scenarios, behaviours, and roles, albeit with the sex of the participants swapped. Within a nation in which rape culture historically has been omnipresent, Solana's appropriation of these stereotypical behaviours that systematically have been used to victimise women is particularly heinous and creates a further rupture between character and reader.

The virtuous vs the parasitic

Despite the innovative point-of-view with which Grafton experiments in *Trespass*, the novel remains fairly conventional in terms of both its narrative trajectory and its polemics. John Douthwaite explains that detective fiction:

Performs a conservative ideological function: it consists of a closed story with a *happy* ending that ... provides reassuring security to the reader that society will continue in the form the reader knows and likes, for the detective hero is always there to protect society from the subversive attacks perpetrated by evil-doers of every possible kind (2013).

In most ways, *Trespass* fulfils the generic expectations outlined by Douthwaite. To the end, the central narrative conflict is poised between a virtuous protagonist and a parasitic antagonist. Throughout the text, Kinsey and Solana remain evenly matched: 'This woman was relentless. She came after me again and this time grabbed me around the arms, pinning my elbows to my sides. We were in such close contact I couldn't shake her off' (384). Kinsey's ability to better her opponent is also placed in genuine question: 'I was gasping for breath and so was she ... I knew I'd hurt her. She'd hurt me ... For the moment, I was tired, and not altogether certain I could take her on again' (385). Although this brief climactic scene is nail-biting to its resolution, ultimately Kinsey prevails over Solana, who, amidst the din of approaching police sirens, either falls or jumps from the hotel balcony, 'landing facedown, [and] hitting her head on the edge of the pool before she slid[es] into the water' (385). Solana's final fatal plunge, whether accidental or self-inflicted, reinforces the traditional morality that typifies hardboiled fiction, serving as a clear and definitive form of punishment for the many acts of criminal trespass that Solana has perpetrated. Both diegetically and extra-diegetically, the plunge serves as a reinforcement of clearly demarcated lines between good and evil actions, as well as an indictment of those who stray from the former into the latter. In short, on the surface, *Trespass* fulfils the basic generic expectations of hardboiled fiction in the narrative closure achieved through the prevailing of the protagonist and in the punishment of the antagonist.

At the same time, the ideological implications of this scene are more complicated – and this is where the novel deviates quite markedly and creatively from the generic expectations outlined by Douthwaite. While Solana's death superficially might appear to provide the story with a *happy* ending that reassures 'the reader that society will continue in the form the reader knows and likes' (Douthwaite 2013), several key elements of the

scene actually complicate this reading. First, Grafton refuses to cast Kinsey as the agent responsible for the moral justice enacted against Solana. In *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, Cawelti explains that the hardboiled novel differentiates itself from the classic whodunit in ‘the subordination of the drama of solution to the detective’s quest for the discovery and accomplishment of justice’ (1976: 142). Cawelti goes on to explain that in hardboiled fiction, readers ‘find the detective forced to define his own concept of morality and justice, frequently in conflict with the social authority of the police’ (143). Cawelti’s word choice is significant here, most particularly his use of the active verb phrase ‘forced to define’, which attributes to the hardboiled private investigator the responsibility of asserting the prevailing framework of morality and justice operative in the narrative resolution. When, in *Killer*, Kinsey abets the mob to punish the killer, she not only acknowledges the failures of what Cawelti terms ‘the social authority of the police’, but also exercises agency to ‘define [her] own concept of morality and justice’ (143) – one that trespasses on the boundaries of traditional jurisprudence because those forms of law and order can no longer make good on their promises to protect and serve.

By contrast, the dénouement and resolution of *Trespass* happen while Kinsey makes her ‘way to the [hotel suite] door and remove[s] the burglar chain’ (2008: 385), literally while her back is turned to the action on the balcony. With police officers only just arriving at the scene, and with Kinsey’s back turned, Solana is brought to justice in arguably one of the most anticlimactic climaxes that Grafton has ever written. Not exactly a *deus ex machina* because the triumph of ‘good’ over ‘evil’ stands as an ideological and narrative precondition of hardboiled fiction, but not a particularly satisfying resolution, the ending of *Trespass* asserts from outside of the diegesis a set of consequences that are both moral and mortal, but that in no way reassure the reader that ‘society will continue in the form the reader knows and likes’ (Douthwaite 2013). Here, Kinsey fails to bring the perpetrator to justice just as, throughout the novel, bureaucracies like the Tri-Counties Agency for the Prevention of Elder Abuse fail to protect Gus and his estate from the exploitative machinations of Solana. And, in the end, the Santa Teresa of *Trespass* is a world that, while almost unrecognisable both within Grafton’s own corpus and within the tradition of hardboiled fiction, is nonetheless familiar to twenty-first-century readers. This is a world within which goodness might prevail, and readers might experience a kind of happy ending, but that such goodness might only ever prevail by accident, thereby revealing how frighteningly ineffectual institutions of jurisprudence can be at protecting citizens from ‘subversive attacks perpetrated by evil-doers of every possible kind’ (Douthwaite 2013). In this respect, what the ending of *Trespass* alludes to are the many failures in the contemporary justice system – failures that allow the predators among us not simply to evade capture and avoid consequence, but sometimes to prey upon and benefit from the very bureaucracies that are designed to safeguard the vulnerable from exploitation. Here, the predator-antagonist has been vanquished and a certain kind of order has been restored. But in the final pages of *Trespass*, Grafton presents a world in which endings are arbitrarily achieved and therefore arguably more unsettling than happy, both from a narrative and from an ideological standpoint. The uncertain nature of

Solana's fall defiles the typical ideological cleanliness of the hardboiled tradition (i.e., good triumphs over evil, justice is served) and complicates the genre's understanding of justice.

Conclusion

What, then, does Grafton's novel, *Trespass*, lead the reader to conclude about the nature of "justice" in a fundamentally unjust world? At the close of the novel, in Kinsey's case report, Grafton as author offers a provocative response to this question, one that is posed as a challenge to her readers: 'There will always be someone poised to take advantage of the vulnerable ... Though I know this from long experience, I refuse to feel discouraged. In my own unassuming way, I know I can make a difference. You can as well' (387). Here, Grafton blurs the line between the diegetic and the extra-diegetic – an act of both creative and ideological trespass – in an effort to challenge readers to examine the changing nature of criminality in twenty-first-century American culture and to encourage them to consider what role the average citizen plays in the execution of that justice. I am not suggesting that Grafton's objective is to rally her readers to vigilantism. At most, this novel encourages readers to rethink their assumptions regarding the nature of criminality, the scope of institutionalised protection, and the responsibilities of private citizenship. It also stands as an indictment of the 'secure and knowable world of the mystery novel' (Shaw 2016: 100), suggesting that its 'safe ... and reasoned universe' is as antiquated as the misogynistic rhetoric uncritically espoused by classic private dicks like Spade and Marlowe.

Finally, *Trespass* serves as a powerful reminder that, in our 'own unassuming way[s]', we, like Grafton, 'can make a difference' (374). In its ideologically complicated dénouement, this novel reminds the reader of the deceptively simple and ultimately erroneous distinction often drawn between hardboiled fiction and the extra-diegetic world that it purports to represent faithfully. Hardboiled fiction typically is viewed as an escape from everyday life in which morality is easy to discern, actions are easily classified as 'good' or 'bad', and the law is always applied in just and equitable ways, even if those just and equitable ways require a bit of vigilantism on the part of the private investigator. In this novel, Grafton encourages her readers not to lose themselves within a piece of escapist fiction, but rather to discern carefully the likenesses between Kinsey's everyday realities and their own. In forcing the reader out of his/her traditional (and contrived) role as the protagonist's rival, Grafton wants her readers to acknowledge that just as readership is predicated on a set of generic expectations conferred upon individuals who opt to read particular types of literature, so, too, is citizenship contingent upon the individual's fulfilment of responsibilities to the social contract. The moral of this narrative is as simple as it is haunting. When the reader is impotent (or, in this case, rendered impotent) within the reading experience, justice may (or may not) be served, order may (or may not) be restored, and good may (or may not) triumph. And the result of Grafton's creative explorations into the form of hardboiled fiction is that readers are

left actively contemplating the social contract that binds them to a world in which ‘there will always be someone poised to take advantage of the vulnerable’ (387) and there will always be bureaucracies too willing to turn a blind eye to such trespasses.

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