Detecting Gender
Images of the Contemporary Woman in Crime Fiction by Patricia Cornwell and Peter Robinson

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Abstract

This study maintains a focus within the genre: crime fiction. There are two main strands. First, there is an exploration of what strategies are adopted by two female protagonists to achieve professional success in a male dominated setting. More specifically, it investigates Chief Medical Examiner Kay Scarpetta from the Scarpetta-series by Patricia Cornwell and D.S Annie Cabbot from the Inspector Banks series by Peter Robinson and their relationship to authority, power, marriage and children. The Fin-de-Siècle provides the basis for the underlying definition of gender through its skewed formulation of female norms. Women were to centre their existence within the domestic domain of life as perfect wives and mothers. Furthermore, they were considered unsuitable for professional commitments due to fragile health and domination of emotions over reason. In this essay it is argued that, in these novels, traces of these expectations regarding the nature of womanhood are still current and that the protagonists have to challenge these openly to reach success.

Secondly, in agreement with claims by Judith Halberstam in her work *Female Masculinity*, the study exemplifies how the selected protagonists are portrayed as punished because of their disobedience to the pre-established norm of womanhood. This punishment takes three forms: psychologically, by being devalued, criticised and ignored; professionally, by being legally questioned and accused of severe incompetence and physically by being victims of sexual assault.

The conclusion states that, in spite of a century having past since the establishment of the norms of womanhood referred to here, the female protagonists act accordingly which indicates that these norms are still current. Furthermore, the portrayal of Scarpetta and Cabbot is dependent on the genre in which they belong which limits the possible expression of gender. It is suggested that the gender categories: men and women are too narrow and that the definition of woman needs to be extended. Within the characterisation of the two protagonists in the study there is evidence that they are considered atypical women or homosexuals because of their opposing the traditional views of womanhood.

*Keywords:* Crime Fiction, gender roles, womanhood, Fin-de-Siècle, characterization, professional arena, Patricia Cornwell, Kay Scarpetta, Peter Robinson, Annie Cabbot, Judith Halberstam, punishment.
“Looks, not books, are the murderers of American women”

(Smith-Rosenberg 263)
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Introduction

Tracing the origin of the conception of gender as consisting of two separate entities appears impossible at first sight. Each epoch seems to depend critically on the preceding epoch, giving us no clear cut entry of the idea of gender in history. However, much of the dichotomised view of gender became manifested around the turn of last century. During this period, also known as Fin-de-Siècle, extensive time and research were invested in an exploration of the true nature of the sexes and a large body of literature was disseminated which recommended how women and men ought to behave to stay true to their natures.

The question is what has happened in the hundred years that have passed and how much evidence we can find of this distinction still being applied as a norm? In comparison to the Fin-de-Siècle we know that women have now gained access to higher education and positions within the professional arena. Their primary obligations are no longer automatically to look after children and to organise a decorative home as the perfect wife and the perfect mother. We are familiar with the concept of female liberation. But on what conditions do women of today enter the previously monosexual professional sphere and what strategies are used to manoeuvre under these conditions? Do these women arrive at the professional arena on their own terms, or do they have to play according to rules set up by a masculine tradition and even ‘become a man’ to reach success?1

If we see art as a mirror of reality one way of investigating changes in our conception of gender roles is to look at representations of gender in contemporary fiction. One of the reasons why ‘crime fiction’ then is interesting has to do with the masculinity of genre. Falling back on a strong literary tradition, more often than not we find the protagonist to be male in a setting that demands a character with an exceptional physical and mental strength and a crime plot which requires a mind with intellectual sharpness to be solved. In short, we have a genre emphasizing a number of qualities in the protagonists which have been used to signify men rather than women, such as stamina, courage, fortitude and the ability to reason.

Two female characters in contemporary ‘crime fiction’, Detective Sergeant Annie Cabbot in Peter Robinson’s series about Inspector Banks, and Dr Kay Scarpetta in Patricia Cornwell’s novels about a female Chief Medical Examiner, both work in a competitive male-

1 Amongst others, such a claim has been made by Anna Wahl et al. by referring to Kathy Ferguson’s research presented in *The Feminist Case against Bureaucracy* (1984). In focus of Ferguson’s research is the subordinate position of women in bureaucratic organizations and she states that in spite of an increasing number of women entering into masculine defined bureaucratic spheres, they will not change its internal structures since “women internalise the already existing masculine discourse” (Wahl et. al .74-75).
dominated environment. What I intend to do in this essay are two things. Firstly, I will examine to what extent these characters can be said to oppose traditional gender roles by symbolically challenging established norms and definitions of what it means to be a woman. Secondly, I will study whether they are punished in any way if they offer an alternative view of womanhood. For example, how are they treated by superiors, colleagues, parents and partners? Is there retribution for their uninvited entry into the world of men? Finally, are there any attempts made to correct their challenging behaviour?

Method

The way in which the selected characters by Robinson and Cornwell represent affirmation or opposition to traditional gender roles will be partly investigated in terms of ‘characterisation’. Moreover, I have chosen three main ‘themes’ where the definition and interpretation of gender roles have a chance of becoming particularly visible. Firstly, I will look into the relationship between women and power or authority. For example, what strategies do the protagonists use to attain and sustain power and are they questioned when succeeding? Secondly, what ability do these characters have to combine the demands of private and professional life? Are they able to prosper both professionally and privately? What expectations do they have to live up to according to norms from the last turn of century? Lastly, are these characters seen as emotional and weak rather than rational and strong? What indications do they give of one or the other? For example, as was suggested a hundred years ago, are they fulfilling a career at a price of a damaged health?

The analysis is focused on a selection of 7 or 8 novels by each author which portray significant points of development for the protagonists. These are:

By Peter Robinson:

*In a Dry Season* (1999)

*Cold is the Grave* (2000)

*Aftermath* (2001)

*The Summer that Never Was* (2003)


*All the Colours of Darkness* (2008)

By Patricia Cornwell:

*Postmortem* (1990)

*Cruel and Unusual* (1993)

*The Body Farm* (1994)

*Unnatural Exposure* (1997)

*The Last Precinct* (2000)


*Book of the Dead* (2007)

*Scarpetta* (2008)
The reasons for choosing Peter Robinson and Patricia Cornwell out of the extensive collections of ‘crime fiction’ on the market is partly because they both write in contemporary settings with novels published as late as 2009. Furthermore, they have both presented a series of novels portraying their characters, which enables an examination of the parallel development of character and career stretching over a longer period of time, in Cornwell’s case as much as twenty years.

However, apart from belonging to the field of ‘crime fiction’ and using female protagonists, there are few common denominators between the two authorships. For example, Robinsons’s series is located in picturesque small town Yorkshire, England, while Cornwell uses larger cities or their hinterlands, in the United States. There is also an apparent class difference between the two main characters with Robinson’s choice of a bohemian and modest country-side style of living, against Cornwell’s expensive trend world of materialism and designer housing in a modern city. Furthermore, the two authors write from either side of the Atlantic and both collections of novels could be said to be a product of the different culture in which they are set. One example of that is their relationship to weapons where Scarpetta is a proud owner and user of a .38 revolver in a culture where the right to be armed in private is taken for granted, while Annie according to British police regulations works unarmed.

The most significant distinction between Robinson and Cornwell however, may be that they represent authorship from both genders. This factor could lend itself to an interesting investigation of the way they portray female characters and womanhood but is here left without being given any further attention as the texts rather then the authors is the focal point of this study.
Theoretical Background

To give an account of ‘crime fiction’ as a genre, and gender issues within this principle of writing, in the first section of the essay I have consulted Karin Molander Danielsson’s PhD-thesis *The Dynamic Detective - Special Interest and Seriality in Contemporary Detective Series*, presented at Uppsala University in 2002. Furthermore, Maureen T. Reddy’s article: “Women Detectives” from *The Cambridge Companion to ‘crime fiction’* (2003) and Gill Plain’s work *Twentieth Century ‘crime fiction’ – Gender, Sexuality and the Body* (2001) have been used.

Secondly, some background to the concept of gender roles will be given. The starting point of my investigation is the book *The Dark Continent – Woman, Medicine and Fin-de-Siècle* (1994) written by Karin Johannisson who “identifi(ies) structures/.../ and /.../ a way of thinking that created the ‘female malady’” and women as “prisoners in their own biology” (Johannisson 7-9). My focus in this essay is not on illness as such, but her theories are used as a way of showing where the idea of women as less intellectually able than men has its origin. To further strengthen the understanding of the pressure and expectations enforced on women from this period in time, Caroll Smith-Rosenberg’s *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (1985) will be consulted.

Additionally, two theorist of relevance for my analysis are Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer. The former for his claims about women as located on a lower stage than men in evolutionary development expressed in his work *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to the Sexes* (1871) and the latter for his ‘principle of conservation of life-energy’ in *Education: Intellectual, Moral and Physical* (1888). According to Spencer, less of a woman’s energy can be spent on intellectual and social tasks, since a great deal of effort is given to reproduction.

For my final and conclusive section, I will additionally use Judith Halberstam’s “Female Masculinity” (1998). In her analysis of gender roles and structures in a contemporary society she suggests ways in which women deviating from a gender norm, such as acting as the ‘tomboy’, have been punished. Other texts of relevance here are Bobbie Robinson’s article on Cornwell’s portrayal of gender in the article “Playing like the Boys: Patricia Cornwell Writes Men” (2006) and Elaine Showalter’s *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at Fin-de-Siècle* (1992).
Genre and Gender

In the introduction ‘crime fiction’ was claimed to be what I call a masculine genre. In what sense is this true and how has this norm developed?

According to Karin Molander Danielsson in *The Dynamic Detective* (2002), detective fiction was established as a literary form in the late 1920’s “although /…/ the genre has never been totally conformist” (Molander Danielsson 2002:21). One of the reasons is the constant need to surprise and thereby to challenge established norms and expectations as suggested by another writer, Gill Plain, in her work *Twentieth-Century ‘crime fiction’: Gender, Sexuality and the Body* (2001). As a consequence, detective fiction has generated a number of different sub-genres such as ‘the thriller’, ‘the novel of suspense’ or so called ‘mystery stories’, and more recently, crime in particular professional or religious settings, or with a sexual or, alternatively, ethnic agenda. Focalizers have changed as well as point of view and other elements of narrative technique. The common denominator, however, is naturally a crime to be solved, someone trying to solve it and a culprit, sometimes in the background sometimes in the centre, but in someway present.

In giving a brief account of the gradual development of the genre, two early authors with a strong influence are Edgar Allen Poe and Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle. Poe is often suggested as the father of the detective story with his stories featuring Chevalier Dupin from the 1840’s, while Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle is the first writer to gain a world-wide reputation in the genre. Furthermore, in Sherlock Holmes, who first appeared in *A Study in Scarlet* in 1887, Conan-Doyle created an archetypical detective with followers to be found in our more recent characters: the hyper-rational, unmarried, loner dedicated to his mission and a lover of classical music.

From around 1910 until the 1930’s, the detective novel had what has been called its Golden Age. In this period we find names such as Agatha Christie, H.C. Bailey, Anthony Berkeley and Dorothy L. Sayers. Their writing was based on a tacit agreement between author and reader which basically meant that the criminal was always caught and justice always done, which in contemporary novels as we know is not necessarily the case. A new line of writing in this period was to let the plot develop through an imaginative use of technology, both in committing and solving the cases. To surprise the reader further, authors also used new elements of narrative technique, such as making the narrator equal to the perpetrator or
all suspects equally guilty of the murder (See for example Christie’s *Murder on the Orient Express* from 1934).

After the Second World War, an American style of writing developed which deviated from the classical British writing in the way that it was “tougher” (*Oxford Companion to Literature*, “Detective Fiction”). In the eyes of the American writers, the majority of earlier expressions of the genre were seen as giving a nostalgic portrayal of the higher class full of country-side charm. Instead, the new authors expressed a more prominent social concern through their contributions. In addition, this ‘hard-boiled’ type of writing generated a stronger understanding for the felon and the circumstances behind the crime. In this period, there is also a development of a more realistic characterisation of professional investigators rather than amateurish ones with writers such as P.D James, Ellis Peters, H. R. F Keating, Michael Gilbert and Elizabeth Ferrars (*OCL* “Detective Fiction”).

To mention something about where the genre stands today, one recent development is the feature of seriality with strong links from one novel to the next, according to Molander Danielsson’s article “The Private life of the Series Detective”. This line of writing gives the reader more insight into the lives of the character and the author more space to develop them. In relation to that, we find a growing significance of secondary characters, and more recent detectives have partners and families, which were uncommon in earlier writing (Molander Danielsson, 2003:6).

Early detective fiction writers were not so interested in character development and the way the characters were portrayed, as more recent ones are, even if the characters were what drove the story forward to a large extent. According to Molander Danielsson the characters were then more present as a sort of trademark for the particular novels and what made them into a ‘Miss Marple’ or a ‘Marlowe’. In addition, the protagonists in the early detectives were "highly original figures" (Molander Danielsson 2002:21) but have since changed considerably. She writes “characters may not have been very developed, and most remained static, but they were drawn with a taste for originality, peculiarity, and quirks, to the extent that their originality became first expected, later satirized and soon formulaic” (Molander Danielsson 2002:23).

About Raymond Chandler’s main character, Philip Marlowe, Molander Danielsson provides a comment on his main features by referring to a quote made by Chandler himself: "He is the hero, he is everything. He must be a complete man and a common man and yet an unusual man. He must be the best man in the world and a good enough man for any world" (Molander Danielsson 2002:44). What Chandler clearly describes here is a plausible
character although someone above average in terms of intelligence and courage since he has to deal with complex cases. What is of particular interest, however, is the strong connection Chandler makes between detective and masculinity.

Kathleen Gregory Klein argues in her work *The Woman Detective: Gender and Genre* (1988) that "despite the important contributions of women to detective-story tradition, the sexist conventions of the genre drove most earlier women writers to create male detectives" although they did bring a feminist perspectives to the genre (ANQ Summer 1999 Vol. 12. No 3:47). If we attempt to establish when we first find a female equivalent to the rational Mr Holmes, Agatha Christie's Miss Marple comes to mind, first appearing in the form of short stories 1927 but fully present in *Murder in the Vicarage* from 1930. Like Holmes, she is clever and draws important conclusions out of seemingly trivial details. She is always a step ahead of the reader and she uses her auntly charm to find out the information she needs. In her case masculine rationality could be seen as mixed with female cunning although from a gender perspective it is significant that she is presented as rational, possibly at the cost of being unmarried: the asexual ‘odd woman’ or the rational spinster not wasted by engagement with family concerns.

In the 1970’s and 1980’s, a specific interest in the combination of ‘crime fiction’ and feminism was established and, according to Maureen T. Reddy, early pioneers in this field can actually be traced back to the later half of the 19th century. What is of interest in these early texts is the strong rejection of the use of female characters as protagonists and how the two traits of beauty and intelligence stand in opposition to each other already in these works. If a woman is portrayed as intelligent she cannot at the same time be beautiful. One example is Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman in White* from 1860, where a male and a female protagonist work on a case together. While the male detective finds “success and romantic love”, the female is “debarred from romantic fulfilment” as she lacks physical attractions which is “repeatedly contrasting (a) highly intelligent woman” according to Reddy (Reddy 192).

Reddy confirms the tradition of most writers to create male detectives in what she calls ‘mystery fiction’ stretching from the time of Sherlock Holmes to the 1970’s. She says that: “/t/he few series that did feature women sleuths in those decades tended to make their protagonists nosy spinsters or the helpmates of male detectives. Significantly, the very few writers who violated those norms created amateur detectives” (Reddy 193).

One of the female golden age writers, Dorothy L Sayers motivates her choice of a male protagonist in the introduction to her work *The Omnibus of Crime* from 1928. She claims that female main characters are inefficient in the way that they tend to get themselves
into danger and get in the way of men “engaged on the job”. Furthermore, they are “too concerned with marriage, too young and too beautiful” (Reddy 194).

However, 50 years later in the 1980’s, what Reddy calls “the heyday of feminist ‘crime fiction’”, the situation changed rapidly with the publishing of as many as 207 new crime series by female writers most featuring female protagonists. Here Reddy mentions Sara Paretsky, Sue Grafton and Liza Cody with works where “relationships with men are always possible threats to their hard-won autonomy and independence” (Reddy 198).

Furthermore, investigations in these series are linked to a wider social context through the way authors use literature to draw attention to the oppression of women and the need to fight for liberation, according to Reddy. One technique in particular Paretsky and Grafton use, is to let their characters manifest themselves through “adopting the sarcastic verbal style of the tough-talking male detectives” as a way of “projecting an image of mental and physical toughness” (Reddy 200). However, what seems to be the case is that in spite of these female authors “push(ing) the boundaries of what was acceptable in ‘crime fiction’” (Reddy 200), they do not get further than aspiring to the ‘hard-boiled’ masculine tradition. To be sure, they bring in female protagonists but limit their characterisations by making them copies of their earlier masculine predecessors.

While very little research has been done on Peter Robinson’s series on Alan Banks there is more on Patricia Cornwell. It is in terms of expression of gender that she has become significant within the genre of ‘crime fiction’. Karin Partick Knutsen sees Cornwell’s heroine Kay Scarpetta as being “exaggeratedly exceptional” due to her beauty in combination with her excessive professional competence. Cornwell was also the first to use a female forensic pathologist as her heroine and has been an inspiration for other writers in this sense. The reason behind Cornwell’s recognised success as the number one best-selling crime writer in the United States in the 1990’s is her feminist approach and how she exemplifies a gender role reversal by letting an “empowered woman leading the battle against evil” (Partick Knutsen 1). However, Patrick Knutsen claims further that although offering a new interpretation of the possibilities within ‘crime fiction’, Scarpetta remains “fully anchored within the conservative, patriarchal worldview of the classic crime genre” (Partick Knutsen 1).

To conclude, even if a change in attitude is detectable in ‘crime fiction’ and even if the genre in itself must be widely defined, contemporary writers still belong to a literary context and a genre tradition which is strongly masculine. Gill Plain summarizes the dilemma by claiming that: “Whether the detective is male or female, straight or gay, she or he always exists in negotiations with a series of long-established masculine codes. The extent to which a
detective conforms to or challenges these models is thus essential to an understanding of ‘crime fiction’” (Plain 11). Accordingly, what will become visible through this essay is that the characterization of the female protagonist is dependent on genre conventions and how these restrict the outcome of the authors exploration of gender.
Gender Roles and the Fin-de-Siècle

Attempts to define and fundamentally distinguish what is meant by the concept of man and woman goes back a long time. I say distinguish, because a great deal of gender theories have been centred on confirming differences rather than similarities between the sexes.

One of the ways in which we can find a clear distinction made between men and women were when women for a long time were refused access to the world of academia and education. Arguments to support such constraints were found in the well-known view that rationality and activity are characteristic of men, while emotionality and care naturally belong to the area of women. The theory finds its origin as far back as ancient Greece but was formulated in more modern terms by the French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (Johannisson 17). The implications of this distinction meant firstly that to try to educate women would be wasteful since their ability to reason was limited. Secondly, and as a consequence, it meant jeopardising a woman’s health to do so, since it would force her to act against her nature. Behind this assertion was the idea that women more than men were affected by their role in the procedure of reproduction. One English philosopher who argued in favour of that was Herbert Spencer who developed a theory on the ‘principle of conservation of life energy’ in the middle of the 19th century. According to Spencer, men and women have a finite level of energy to use during their life time and since more energy is used for reproduction for a woman, due to the fact that her womb was what generated her energy, she became socially and intellectually handicapped. The best for her was to live a life with reduced activity, in particular when menstruating or during pregnancy (Spencer 186-188 /Johannisson 31).

In addition, the view of women as the intellectually less able was also influentially argued by Charles Darwin. In his work The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex (1871) he explains how men by nature have gained presidency over women in terms of intellectual as well as physical evolution. Through competition and sexual and natural selection, men have developed their intellectual skills and “higher mental faculties”. On the other hand, women’s alleged characteristics such as intuition, rapid perception and imitation he claimed as recognizable in the lower races and from earlier stages in civilisation. A woman’s focus was instead on reproduction only which has the consequence that her own development is held back, but this is for the benefit of the development of the race as a whole, according to Darwin (Darwin 629).
When women finally gained access to higher education in America in the middle to late 19th century, great concerns were expressed for what impact studies would have on their health. For example, it was believed that it would “deprive the nation of robust mothers and healthy children by endangering their ovarian functions” (Smith-Rosenberg 23) and that for “/t/he woman who favoured her mind at the expense of her ovaries/…/ her overstimulated brain would become morbidly introspective” (Smith-Rosenberg 258). Further, it was argued that studying would make a woman less fit for marriage and that her presumed husband would find her body tormented by pain. What is known of the early professional women, such as teachers, is also that they had to leave their professions once they got married and were forced to make a choice between having a career and having a family.

Although women were seen as dominated by their emotional side, their emotions were not always deemed legitimate. In children’s books, child rearing manuals, marriage guides and etiquette books from the turn of the century the appropriateness of women’s emotions were thoroughly discussed. According to arguments found in these, women were discouraged from showing unfeminine and vulgar emotions such as anger or violence. Curiosity, intrusiveness and exploratory behaviour were advised to be ignored. Women were furthermore requested not to express “competitive inclinations or asserting mastery in such ‘masculine’ areas as physical skill, strength, and courage or in academic, scientific or commercial pursuits”. The higher female values were instead cleanliness, deportment, unobtrusiveness and obedience (Smith-Rosenberg 212-213).

Moreover, in conduct books from the time, a number of domestic duties expected of a woman as a wife are listed. It is argued that the domestic sphere was the only arena suitable for her and her only appropriate centre of attention. Everything else was (or ought to be) of lesser importance, even irrelevant. Included in the responsibilities was to be part of a decorative and pleasant home environment for a hard working man to enjoy. For example, a great deal of attention was given to dress codes and the setting up of principles according to which women were expected to wear different clothing for different times of the day as well as for different occasions, all with the intention to please without thought of her convenience. Another idea also presented in more detail in this literary tradition is a woman’s role as a mother. Her presence and influence was described as a child’s primary need and as a mother she was impossible to replace. If a woman ever felt captured by her duties when spending time with her children, she was marked as having “a perverted mother-sense”. Her children were to be her world, her society “which she will prefer above that of all others” (Culley 122-130).
However, if we go to North America at the turn of the century, we find a trend among the increasing number of educated women either to marry later in life or avoid marrying altogether and as a consequence avoid having children. In the years between 1870’s to the 1920’s, as much as 40-60% of women who graduated from college in the States remained unmarried compared to only about 10% in the rest of America. Instead, they founded single sex families and developed relationships to other women, some on sexual terms (Smith-Rosenberg 253). Their female love was celebrated as “/the best and truest love that the world can give/…/ without the degrading and disturbing influence of a man” (Shoewalter 23).

The whole idea of women structuring a world independently of men was difficult to accept and therefore met by extensive criticism from other parts of society. These women were blamed for abnormality and morbidity and for risking the well-being of the whole society by neglecting their duties as child bearers. As a result, propaganda with emphasis on women as primary mothers and the importance of them keeping a beautiful domestic sphere, were strengthened. In addition, the argument that there was an intimate connection between being a wife and being a woman came to imply that a choice to live without fulfilling the first part automatically excluded the other.

It is somewhat contradictory how women were expected to devote their lives to childbearing, while heavily restricting themselves sexually. In the 1820’s and 1830’s women as sexual agents were described as “naturally lusty and capable of multiple orga ms” but the view changed towards the middle of the 19th century. Instead, women were now seen as frigid by nature and interested in sex only to reproduce. Men, on the other hand, had stronger sexual desires than women and virtuous women therefore had to take responsibility for a man’s lust by being restrictive and not leading him into temptation (Smith-Rosenberg 23).

One way we can understand this restrained relationship to sex, from a woman’s own point of view, is to consider it as a strategy to avoid the risk of inconvenient, even life threatening pregnancies that sexual intercourse meant for these women. However, this was yet another area where women’s initiative to act was interfered with. It was claimed at the second half of the 19th century that if married women practised birth control they would be punished by God through cancer, insanity or even by death (Smith-Rosenberg 23). Female sexuality which of course existed contrary to these claims was redefined and seen as a mental and
immoral illness, something dirty that had to be controlled and medically treated (Johannisson 61-64)\textsuperscript{2}.

Hysteria was one of the commonly used diagnoses for a woman who, along with an expression of strong emotions, gave evidence of what was judged to be an excessive appetite for sex. Men, on the other hand, were unable to be given the same diagnosis because of the strong linguistic connection between the disease and the actual female genital\textsuperscript{3} (Johannisson 149-150). Around Fin-de Siècle, we find a large increase in poor mental as well as physical health among women although we suspect that some of the women, perhaps even the majority, where not actually ill. One theory is that illness was a way for a captivated woman to force her domestic responsibilities on to others. Through her illness she was unable to fulfil her duties or, to use Smith-Rosenberg’s expression, she ceased to “devote herself to the needs of others” or “acting as a self-sacrificing wife, mother or daughter” (Smith-Rosenberg 208). However, if this is the case it would be a strategy that backfired. In the sources referred to by Smith-Rosenberg ‘the hysterical female’ is described as a ‘child-woman’, someone dependent on others and in need of supervision. As a consequence, women were perceived as weak and their unpredictable health made them unreliable agents for professional commitment undermining their authority and credibility. As a weak woman, she was better protected in the safe environment of a home which thereby meant many lost opportunities for her, professionally.

To conclude, what we can see in this section is how many demands were made on women regarding their behaviour and preferences. In one sense, focusing on everything a woman was not; irrational as well as physically, socially and intellectually handicapped. In another sense, demanding of her what ‘she’ had to be, a caring, weak but obedient wife and mother, focused on her looks and on reproduction and devoted to the need of others – the emotional child-woman.

\textsuperscript{2} The inconsistency with previous claims, in the way that women in the area of sexuality represented rationality while men more got carried away by their emotions, is significant, although apparently not as strong enough to be used as an anomaly for changing the definitions of man and woman.

\textsuperscript{3} hystera- Greek for ovum
Analysis

If a woman wants to gain access to the world of professions on equal terms as men, the areas where she needs to prove herself able are many. As seen in the previous section, her intellectual abilities and her strengths have been questioned. Moreover, what she stereotypically represents in terms of behaviour – her submissiveness, her gentility, her avoidance of competition – are qualities generally not compatible with the development of a career.

In this section I will analyse how the traditional ideals from Fin-de-Siècle relate to a contemporary representations of gender, as found in the two series of ‘crime fiction’ by Peter Robinson and Patricia Cornwell. In the first part I will give a general characterisation of the main features of the protagonists and their antecedents. Secondly, I will investigate the characters’ relationship to authority and power and what methods they apply to achieving such. Thirdly, there will be an exploration of how the characters manage to combine a professional and private life, given the normative expectations on womanhood. Fourthly, I will examine in what way the two protagonists can be interpreted according to the relational concepts of rationality and emotion and strength versus weakness. Finally, I will provide a commentary on how and in what way the two female characters may be punished for achieving power and professional success and for leaving the traditional view of womanhood, if they do.

Presentation and Antecedents

Scarpetta

The protagonist Kay Scarpetta originates from poor conditions. She is presented as having grown up in Florida as the oldest daughter of two in a family of second generation Italian immigrants. When Kay was twelve, her father died of cancer after a long period of illness, an event portrayed as having a large impact on Kay’s life and her complex relationship to death as a medical examiner.

As a first born it is possible to say that already from the beginning of her life Kay plays the role of the son her parents never had. Cornwell describes how the father decided before Scarpetta was born that his first child would carry his name no matter what sex. From the mother’s point of view this factor generates some unease and instead of Kay
she calls her daughter Katie. The practical explanation she gives is to be able to distinguish father and daughter, although together with criticism she often levels at her daughter, it could be read as an indication of the mother-character’s refusal to accept a daughter without a clear female identity.

Like a traditional woman, one of Scarpetta’s strengths is given as her proficiency in the kitchen, although her speciality is in gourmet cooking. She uses the activity as a way of handling stress after hard days at work instead of the more classical late night drinking. Thereby, her culinary interests are more than a traditional woman’s everyday cooking and it is possible to say that the skill has been elevated from the level of necessary to that of the expert, which gives it status.

However, one of Scarpetta’s more prominent qualities as a character is a traditional masculine feature – her courage. For example, she is characterized as never hesitating when called to a crime scene, no matter how distressing. In Postmortem (1990), Scarpetta admits to getting a rush of adrenaline when requested to investigate a scene and in The Body Farm (1994) her response to performing an exhumation is a mixture of fear and excitement. Another example is when in Unnatural Exposure (1997) she is called to the city’s refuse dump to examine a human torso. Cornwell expresses Scarpetta’s awareness of how the scene will be awful, made worse by the repulsive smell, but as a professional she puts on the relevant equipment and enters the scene without hesitation.

In addition, Scarpetta is also portrayed as courageous since she is prepared to use violence if she has to, for example when she is twice attacked by suspected killers in her home. In the first case she defends herself by shooting the intruder, in the second she disarms the man by throwing a skin sample in a jar of formalin in his eyes. Furthermore, in a dramatic scene at the end of The Body Farm, it is described how Scarpetta saves her colleague Pete Marino’s life by shooting the murderess who keeps him hostage and how Scarpetta like a true ‘machismo’ uses a rifle and “pumped and fired and pumped and fired again and again” until there is “blood and brains everywhere” (The Body Farm 320-321), as Cornwell describes it.

This last scene has significance, not only for giving evidence of the protagonist’s heroic features, but also for its classical elements of dissolution at the end of a novel. However, in this case where the stereotypical gender roles have been reversed, it is Scarpetta who plays the role of the hero saving a helpless hostage and a man who is made into a vulnerable victim.

Annie
Annie Cabbot first appears as a character in Peter Robinson’s novel *In a Dry Season* from 1999, introduced through the illustrative statement “all they’ve got is a lowly DS”. She is then believed to be in her late 20’s to early 30’s and through the eyes of her superior Alan Banks as a focalizer she is described as not “conventionally good looking” or having “the kind of face you’d find on the pages of a magazine”. Instead she has looks that shows “intelligence and character” (*In a Dry Season* 26).

From the beginning it is made clear that Banks is impressed, or as Robinson puts it “intrigued” by Annie (*In a Dry Season* 26), although later in the same novel he states that she is “not a woman you necessarily feel comfortable with” (307). The meaning of this last comment is not further clarified but could refer to Annie’s high level of certainty, which Banks finds unsettling. Evidence of that can be found when Robinson on a few instances makes Banks comment on how he is surprised by the way Annie thinks and acts in comparison to another female character Banks previously had as a professional companion. In the following example the former partner could be seen as symbolizing a woman with more traditional behaviour and used as a character contrasting Annie. Banks states:

> Most junior police officers, when questioned about their actions by a senior, generally either let a little of the ‘Did I do the right thing, sir?’ creep into their tone, or they became defensive. Susan Gay/…/ had been like that. But there was none of this with DS Cabbot. She simply stated things as they had occurred, decisions as she had made them, and something about the way she did it made her sound completely self-assured and self-possessed without being at all arrogant or insubordinate. Banks found her disconcerting.  

(*In a Dry Season* 28)

Assertiveness and confidence, two traditionally male characteristics, are thereby emphasised as problematic when found in the female protagonist already here at the beginning of the series by Robinson.

Of Annie’s antecedents we find out that her childhood was spent in an artistic collective on a farm in St Ives, which she returns to from time to time for comfort and contemplation with her father. Like him, she paints and she is a vegetarian. Her mother died when Annie was six years old, and she admits that this loss together with the general state of
people coming and going at the farm is the source of her self-reliance and independence of other people, two traditionally masculine features.

Moreover, influenced by her background Annie is portrayed with strong anti-authoritarian beliefs far from the traditional view of women as obedient. In addition, her primary aim is never to please other people but to act independently of their view of her. This characteristic is for example visible through her explicitly admitting to be a feminist, although she is “the sort who just likes to get on with it rather than whine about what’s wrong with the system” (*In a Dry Season* 144). Furthermore, her reluctance to obey hierarchical structures is visible in the way she acts when in a discussion with her superiors. One example is found in *All the Colour of Darkness* (2008) in which Annie argues about a solution of a murder case and without a doubt talks back at her superior superintendent Catharine Gervaise.

Another way to describe Annie is to say that she is a courageous character - a far cry from the traditional image of women as weak and in line with her American counter-part Annie is not afraid of using violence. Nevertheless, in Annie’s case the examples are less crucial than the ones involving Scarpetta. At one point, Robinson makes Annie defend herself against verbal sexual harassment by physically attacking the man insulting her and at another she interferes in a fight between two male suspects at the cost of herself being injured.

Like Scarpetta, Annie is characterized as a good cook, and for both women, this ability is part of their independence and self-sufficiency. They can choose to cook if they like, or eat out if they like or, as in Annie’s case, get a ready-made from Mark’s and Spencer’s instead of depending on pub-meals like Annie’s superior Alan Banks. It is a traditional female skill given a new connotation through its elements of freedom – yet another skill the characters are mastering, and not only one of few things they can do as women.

To summarise, Scarpetta and Annie are portrayed as two courageous, strong and independent characters which in itself represents an objection to the gender ideals from the turn of the previous century. It is also possible to see that Scarpetta is in fact associated with a masculine identity by being her father’s son when growing up. Furthermore there are indications of how Annie objects to traditional subordination of herself as a woman. Her independence, self-reliance and her disregard of hierarchal structures as well as her confident way of acting among people in general, but superiors in particular, all represent such challenges.

Worth noting is also how both protagonists experience a significant loss of a parent early on in their lives which has an impact on their development of gender. Firstly, it means that they have to continue their lives without one of their parents and thereby become
more independent. Secondly, Annie looses her mother which deprives her of the most significant role model for womanhood and instead she identifies closely with her father. This could be said to be true of Scarpetta as well although her father is the one who dies. Instead of identifying with her mother as the only parent still present, Scarpetta takes over her father’s responsibilities and becomes ‘the man of the house’. More on that will be discussed further down.

Aiming for Authority

Annie

Annie is part of a project with the intentions of bringing more women to advanced positions “and seeing that they are well treated” (In a Dry Season 62). She starts at a low rank as Detective Sergeant but gets promoted to Detective Inspector. At the beginning of the series, Robinson has made her gain status and recognition by her way of acting with confidence, assertiveness and ease and she does not worry about appearing weak or incompetent. However, some signs are given at the early stage which indicates a lack of experience. For example, in Cold is the Grave (2000) she vomits after having attended a postmortem, a common indication of inexperience within the genre. Her superior Alan Banks mentions this situation as the first sign of “real break in Annie’s on-the-job composure” but she recovers from what he calls “the embarrassment” sooner than he expects which indicates strength and impresses him (106).

In interview situations in the beginning of the series, Robinson ascribes Banks to the dominant position by letting him ask the sharp questions and telling Annie all the important conclusions, while she plays the more passive role of the ‘not-knowing-Watson’. Nevertheless, this condition changes gradually throughout the series, in particular after her promotion to Detective Inspector in Aftermath (2001). Technically this means that she is then in charge at crime scenes and responsible for judging what actions need to be taken. For example, she orders officers of a lower rank around, such as male patrol officers, giving them a hard time because of their unwillingness to listen to a plain clothed female superior.

Still, in spite of having gained increased status, on cases where they work independently, Annie is characterized as continuing to want to cooperate with Banks. In The Summer that Never Was her motivation for doing so is explained to be that she is not a person who is “all territorial and bureaucratic” or who goes “for pissing matches”. Instead she claims
to be “all for cooperation /.../ not competition” (The Summer that Never Was 179). This way of reasoning could be interpreted as an indication that she is unthreatened by Banks and that she sees the advantage in cooperation. On the other hand, it could also be seen as an example of the stereotypical view of women as cooperative rather than competitive, and a weakness on her behalf as if she still depends on him to solve her cases. However, what clarifies the situation and suggests that Annie is in a strong position, is that the wish to cooperate is described as mutual which confirms her status. Banks gives Annie his tacit approval by thinking how “he had come to value her near-telepathic communication skills and the way she could mix logic and intuition in her unique style of thinking” (Cold Is the Grave 91). Arguably, this last statement confirms a traditional way of dividing and categorizing thinking abilities according to gender although, as Annie possesses both the masculine and feminine traits it is seen as one of her enriching advantages.

One passage in Playing with Fire (2004) can in particular be read as the ‘peripethy’ for Annie achieving authority. Annie and Banks are examining a suspect, and here they come forward as one voice. Instead of dominating the interview, Robinson makes Banks refer explicitly to Annie for confirmation and a little later, Annie is the one who leads by providing significant information and pushing to confront the suspect in undermining his defence.

In the latest novel All the Colour of Darkness Annie and Banks are portrayed as working side by side without a clear distinction in rank, even if one exists formally. Here, he is suspended from an important case and officially sent on holiday he depends on Annie for help to continue the investigation unofficially. Moreover, when Banks presents his theories of the case to her, she is described as strongly disagreeing with his conclusions. Instead, she tells him straight to his face that she does not “swallow it” and that “it won’t wash” (71). Clearly, she is now characterized as self-confident and without fear of criticizing a superior. Conclusions that can be drawn from this is how Annie illustrates a revolt against traditional expectations of women by being disobedient and actively thinking for herself instead of quietly following demands made by a male authority.

Another interesting passage in this novel which exemplifies inversion of gender hierarchies is when the two characters find a memory stick at a crime scene. Here Annie becomes the expert while Banks is characterized as clearly insecure when it comes to mastering new technology. He asks the questions, she gives the confident answers.
She picked up the small silver object and carried it over to Banks.

‘So?’ said Banks

‘Don’t be such a Luddite,’ Annie said. ‘Can’t you see?’

‘Yes, I can see. Digital camera, memory card. I still say “So what?” and I’m not a bloody Luddite. I’ve got a digital camera of my own. I know what memory cards are for.’

Annie sighed. ‘This is a Canon camera,’ she said, as if explaining to a five-year-old. Though a five-year-old, Banks thought, would probably know what she was talking about already. ‘It takes a compact flash card.’

‘I know what you’re going to say,’ said Banks. ‘This thing here isn’t a compact flash card.’

‘Bingo. It’s a memory stick.’

(All the Colour of Darkness 98).

What is worth noting in this last example is also how Annie displays expertise about something technological, an area strongly connected to the masculine side of the gender distinction, which increases her authority further.

Evidence of Annie’s assertive attitude can be found also in her language. In general it can be characterised as informal; she swears and she commonly uses colloquial expressions like “cheeky bastard” (Playing with Fire 6) and, later in the same novel, “you’re bloody jealous” (200), or “there’s no point pissing about” (The Summer that Never Was 134). Another example is how she avoids code switching when speaking to a superior. With Banks she is outspoken as seen in the examples from All the Colours of Darkness above. She is portrayed as unafraid of using strong language with him, as in one noticeable example from Playing with Fire when she tells him to “pull the carrot out of your arse, Alan” (201).

One way of interpreting the characterization of Annie’s relaxed attitude when speaking to Banks, could be to relate it to her involvement with him also on private terms. However, when she speaks to her Superintendent, Catharine Gervaise, Annie not only speaks back at her as mentioned above, she also avoids to move linguistically into the territory of a superior, a sign of Annie’s resistance against conforming to her authority and refusing to admit to her power. One clear example of their differences in language can be found in the following quotation. Note how Annie addresses her superior on an informal level, while the superintendent responds much more formally.
‘What do you think about this Jackie Binns character?’

‘He’s a waste of space,’ Annie said. ‘Nicky Haskell is actually quite bright, once you get past the posturing and the imitation gangbanger-talk /…/ Binns is a lost cause.’

‘I’m not sure that it’s healthy to regard members of our community in such a negative way, DI Cabbot, particularly downtrodden members.’

‘I’m sure it’s not, ma’am, said Annie with a smile. ‘Just put it down to copper’s instinct’.

(All the Colours of Darkness 211)

As mentioned in the introduction to this essay, one of the strong gender norms a woman around Fin-de-Siècle had to follow to be considered as a ‘Woman Proper’ was to give great concern to her looks and her way of dressing. In contrast Robinson, describes Annie’s style of clothing as mostly informal and casual. She is most often drawn as wearing jeans and plain blouses or jumpers, and when she wears a skirt it is emphasized that she does so without tights, adding further to her informal appearance. On one occasion when Annie has to go to London, she wears a suit. Nevertheless, when she meets up with Banks later that same evening, she is described as still wearing her same clothes, giving an impression of how she is characterized as disobedient by avoiding the expectation on her as a woman to dress up when she goes to dinner with a man.

An overall impression when it comes to clothes is that Annie is characterized as unaffected by convention and, with few exceptions, she challenges the established norms of femininity as equal to showing a great concern for looks. Moreover, her way of dressing appears to be unplanned or even impulsive, and more than once she ends up in situations wearing clothes inappropriate for the occasion. One example is in Cold is the Grave where she goes to interview the parents of a missing boy. She realises “/s/he hadn’t dressed for upmarket when she climbed into her jeans and flung on a red role-neck jumper that morning” but in stead of making an effort to change her clothes, she simply states that “they’ll just have to take me as they find me” (274-275).

Nevertheless there are signs of her being aware of the impact a woman can make through her way of dressing, and that she uses clothes as a way of signalling power. For example, on one occasion when reluctantly going on a date, she consciously dresses down in unfashionable clothes to offend the man she is out to meet.
However, during the series of novels, Annie changes. She matures and she develops professionally. One way this change can be seen is through her attitudes towards her own appearance. In *All the Colour of Darkness* Robinson describes how she has her hair done and her “tumbling masses of auburn waves” is changed for a shorter style, which she thinks make her look more “professional and businesslike”. At this point she furthermore realises how she “would have to get rid of the jeans and red boots /…/ as they undermined her general air of competent authority” (163).

It is not without significance that her realisation occurs at a time when she is portrayed as considering taking a step forward in her career. A possible reading of this transformation in Annie’s character is therefore that as long as she is not aspiring for power it could be acceptable for her to defy established norms by neglecting a concern about her looks. On the other hand, as soon as she enters into a professional competition she has to play according to the rules of what is accepted from a woman and give her appearance a thought.

To conclude, it could be claimed that Annie gains power by ignoring other people’s power over her. She is characterized as acting self-sufficiently by refusing to demur to authority or to adjust to a situation which would prevent her from developing. In her cooperation with Banks these signs of independence are what give her both status and recognition and we can follow how she develops in competence and authority. Furthermore, Annie can be said to challenge traditional gender roles through her assertive attitude, her disobedience and her way of refusing to adapt to a socially accepted register and norms to do with appearance. However, she is not consistent in her revolt. As she gradually becomes more focused on power she seems to adjust herself more to a traditional gender convention.

**Scarpetta**

Kay Scarpetta has an established authority from the beginning through the characterization of her skill and competence, and already in the first novel it is emphasized how her medical bag is “scuffed and worn from years of use” (*Postmortem*) as a symbol of her experience. Throughout the series of novels she is drawn as an extraordinary expert who is called upon in cases from all over the country, by the FBI and even in investigations in other parts of the world. In addition, on a few instances in the series she re-examines autopsies or crime scenes of other examiners and finds new evidence. She has been given 17 years of higher education in her portfolio and she knows exactly what techniques to use when and how to bring out a specific piece of evidence. Furthermore, Cornwell lets her educate her audience by con-
fidently explaining how certain techniques works, such as DNA-analysis, fingerprinting, or like in the example below, features of dead bodies:

If a body remains in a certain position long enough after death, the blood will settle accordingly—a post-mortem artefact we call livor mortis/…/

Eventually, livor mortis becomes fixed, or set, turning that area of the body purplish-red, with patterns of blanching from surfaces pressing against or constricting it, such as tight clothing.

(Book of the Dead 15)

Moreover, when looking at Scarpetta’s usage of language, we can see that she is generally well-articulated and correct and, as in the example above, her confident expression via technical and medical terminology adds more depth to her credibility and expertise, found in traditionally masculine territory.

As with Annie, Scarpetta experiences a development within her career and Cornwell moves her from the already prestigious position of Chief Medical Examiner in Richmond, Virginia to having her own private practice in Charleston, South Carolina. In Scarpetta (2008), she has transferred to Massachusetts with Benton, her husband, and then further to New York where she becomes Chief Medical Examiner for the Commonwealth Northern District as well as giving special lectures at the prestigious John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Furthermore, she is described as something of a celebrity in that she appears regularly on CNN and as an ultimate sign of her prestige, her colleague agent Pete Marino, at one point draws a parallel between Scarpetta and Hilary Clinton. His line of thinking goes from Bill Clinton to Hillary Clinton to powerful women who could become presidents and further to Scarpetta. Thereby she is connected in thought to the most prestigious and powerful position in the country.

At the beginning of the series, when she is in her 40’s, Scarpetta is portrayed as having established herself financially as a truly self-made woman. She is set to live in a luxurious house of her own design and she says that she has “made enough smart investments to afford” it (Unnatural Exposure 85). Another symbol of her wealth and influence is her “machine of burled walnut, soft leather, and steel (The Body Farm 148), a Mercedes type A 500E which Cornwell mentions as one of only 600 running in the country at that time. On one occasion in Unnatural Exposure Scarpetta is in quarantine at a special FBI unit because of being at risk of carrying a lethal virus after an examination of a dead body. Under normal
circumstances patients are kept under strict surveillance and forbidden to leave their isolation. Scarpetta on the other hand, is drawn as allowed to partake in an autopsy as long as she keeps her protective suit on. A member of staff comments on this as: “a little out of the ordinary” (225) an understatement which shows how differently rules apply when it comes to Scarpetta due to her influential position.

Already from the beginning of Cornwell’s series the protagonist expresses a strong awareness of the importance for a woman to ‘power dress’. In the second novel in the sample, *Cruel and Unusual* (1993), Lucy, Scarpetta’s then seventeen year old niece, comments negatively on her aunt’s conservative wardrobe. She says: “/a/ll these lawyerly suits in midnight blue and black, gray silk with delicate pinstripes, khaki and cashmere, and white blouses. You must have twenty white blouses and just as many ties/.../do you own a pair of jeans?” (75).

However, when the niece appears in court with her aunt in *The Last Precinct* (2000) seven years later, the aunt declares proudly: “she is dressed in a sharp dark suit and looks like a gorgeous lawyer or doctor or whatever the hell she wants to be” (*The Last Precinct* 447-448). Firstly, what we can find here is an indication of how a woman can influence her position in the social hierarchy through the way she dresses. If she wants power, she has to dress for power. Secondly, Scarpetta’s air of maturity in this example indicates her superiority in comparison to other type of women, like Annie or her niece, since Scarpetta already masters the insightful knowledge of an appropriate dress code for a powerful woman. She is the master observing her novice giving evidence of having maintained significant wisdom.

Furthermore, a conscious way of dressing in critical situations in particular could be seen as equal to representing a shield and armour necessary for a powerful woman. One instance which would confirm the connection between power and authority, and way of dressing, is when Scarpetta in *Blow Fly* (2003) is asked by a serial killer to meet him in prison. Once there Scarpetta wishes she had dressed in a ‘power suit’ including white shirt and cufflinks, since “it would have made her feel less vulnerable to him” (*Blow Fly* 360).

In conclusion, it is possible to say that in the chosen novels of this study there is still a convention of a sense of appropriate dress-code for women although the two main characters no longer dress to please, but dress to gain authority. What is interesting is that this means dressing formally, and in particular in the case of Scarpetta where this means suits, ties and cuff-links, dressing like a man when she wants to emanate power.
To summarize this section, both of the selected characters can be said to have authority and power, one from the beginning, the other gradually through determination and a successful promotion, although the level of power and influence between the two women differs greatly. Scarpetta functions in a professional context of much higher prestige than Annie and therefore plays in a league with much higher demands on her as a female character to gain authority and success.

The Professional and the Private.

As we can see, both Annie and Kay are portrayed as ambitious and hard working professional female characters. Next question, therefore, is how they are portrayed in terms of success in their ability to combine their roles as women in a professional and a private context. Demands on gender from Fin-de-Siècle would in this sense create a conflict between the traditional and the professional woman. As shown in the introduction, women were seen as unsuitable for the professional arena for a number of reasons. Firstly, they should live a life devoted to their husbands and children. Secondly, women were considered as weak and as suffering from unreliable health which made them untrustworthy regarding professional commitments. Thirdly, they were seen as too intellectually and socially handicapped to be able to handle the difficulties of working life. Living in reduced activity, unselfishly devoted to the domestic sphere and to the need of others, the woman of Fin-de Siècle would work hard at fulfilling her duties as a mother and the asexual wife. A contemporary professional arena, on the other hand, would request the opposite of her – to be a sexual being without family duties to distract her.

Annie

In opposition to the ideals from Fin-de-Siècle, for Annie marriage is not a necessary condition for womanhood. However, her attitude towards private relationships is inconsistent. Firstly, she admits having professional ambitions excluding private commitments, yet she claims she is not prepared to sacrifice everything and end up as “a dried old spinster with no life other than work” (Cold is the Grave 116).

After having known her superior for only a few days, Annie and Banks become sexually involved. The relationship is drawn as complex already from the beginning due to the close connection between them professionally as well as the differences in rank and age.
After a second attempt, Annie ends their relationship by firstly referring to a general inability for emotional commitments, but secondly and more importantly that she has to prioritize her career. According to her “rediscovered ambition”, she claims wanting to become Chief Inspector or even Superintendent and that Banks would be “/distracting” her (Aftermath 368).

However, in spite of giving the impression of a self-reliant character who invests in herself rather than devotes her life to a man, and someone who is unwilling to let anyone get in the way of her ambition, Annie’s confidence turns out to be a façade. Instead, we gradually discover a portrayal of a woman in need of a man to confirm her value. For example, with the intention of keeping their private and professional relationships separate, Annie and Banks have decided to see each other only at weekends. When Banks then one evening is invited to the house of a male colleague Annie is described as filled with a sense of being rejected at the same time as being “pissed off at herself for letting him get to her /…/ like some sort of silly love-struck schoolgirl. Vulnerable. Hurt” (In a Dry Season 313). Moreover, she is apparently jealous when he sees another woman after they broke up, and in her mind she calls his new partner a “silly cow” (All the Colours of Darkness 320). Later on in the series, she even admits to be “afraid of the sudden intensity of her feelings for him” (Friend of the Devil 310) while she at the same time wants Banks in her life “/n/not just as a friend, but as a lover, as a companion…as…”(Friend of the Devil 311).

Over the course of the seven novels in the sample a few partners are mentioned but as with Banks, no relationship is depicted as sustainable and Annie admits struggling to achieve detachment in her relationships to men in general and not only to Banks. In In a Dry Season she states how she “thought she had conquered her feelings/…/ thought she had learned detachment, but perhaps she had only put her insecurity in mothballs” (In a Dry Season 320-321).

The number of failed relationships is also part of the reason why Annie experiences a deep personal crisis in Friend of the Devil (2007) which would not be the case if she was truly independent of men. She is here perceived as being ruled by emotions as she behaves irrationally and lacks in control. One sign is Annie’s escalating usage of foul language and a strong jargon: she swears and insults other people without particular concern. Another detectable indication of Annie’s change in behaviour is her drinking and more than once she loses control over the amount she consumes. In the introduction of the novel, Annie wakes up in the bed of a man about half her age and she suffers from a severe hang over from the previous nights smoking of cannabis and drinking. Other signs of her deterioration are how she has begun to neglect her painting and her yoga and she worries about having become
over-weight and to see a “bulge of fat where her flat belly used to be” (*Friend of the Devil* 18). Later on, Robinson makes Annie drive under influence and to desperately offer herself sexually to Banks when she pleads for him to confirm her physically. When he rejects her offer, she is upset which again points to the significance he has in her life:

Annie moved away and quickly tried to fasten up her buttons.
Her face was flushed and angry. ‘What do you mean, it doesn’t feel right? she said. ‘What’s wrong with me? Am I too fat?
Not pretty enough? Are my breasts not firm enough?
Am I not attractive enough? Not good enough for you?’”

(*Friends of the Devil* 144)

To make legitimate her own change in behaviour, she is set to explain to one of her female colleagues the necessity to “toughen up”, “to develop a thicker skin” and how you sometimes “have to play dirty” (*Friend of the Devil* 136). When her colleague reacts to Annie’s involvement with the young man, Annie refuses to listen and defends herself by trying to appear indifferent. She says: “/w/hat’s the big deal?/…/ his age or having a one-night stand or smoking a couple of joints, or whatever seems to have put that hair up your arse” (140). On the surface, she acts as if she believes herself to be fully in command and as if she is unaffected by the dubious features of her own behaviour. Nor does she admit to the implied criticism against her actions because of being a woman. However, through her internal monologue we see her self-doubt and sense of insufficiency and, through her actions, how she yearns for confirmation, a traditional sign of inferiority in a woman. Her behaviour then works as a self-fulfilling prophecy when through her hard attempts not to show any signs of weakness and by claiming her infallibility, she becomes weak.

Nevertheless, at the beginning of the following novel *All the Colours of Darkness* set a few months later, Annie has recovered and is back on duty after having spent some time with her father in St Ives “convalescing and recharging”. She has returned to painting and yoga, she has joined one of the local gym-centres and simply refers to the critical passage as “a traumatic period of her life” (4). What becomes clear is how behind her trauma is a sense of frustration and the reader is gradually guided to see why. Annie is illustrated as just having turned forty and in a conversation with one of her colleagues it is suggested that at the very bottom of her crisis is a sense of getting old, hence her involvement with the young
boy and her dismissive feelings towards her own body. Furthermore she then confirms a feeling of how her time is running out, in particular biological time when she confesses to think about having a family. Another factor increasing Annie’s feelings of inadequacy at this point in the series is through the characterization of her new Chief Superintendent Catharine Gervaise. This woman is portrayed as having what seems to be ‘the perfect life’ with a successful career as well as house, husband and children, and who seems to be able to prosper in all areas, building a stark contrast to Annie’s life and making it seem empty.

The issue of children is left without further comment but we know that Annie is characterized as influenced by the dilemma of having both a family and a career and of the role of a mother as an essential part of her womanhood, important enough to propel her to the brink of crisis. On the other hand, when interviewing a woman who claims to be happy without a man in her life, Robinson allows Annie to consider whether that could be a sustainable solution for her as well since “she’d hardly been happy with one” (*Friend of the Devil* 341). It seems she has come to the crossroads and answers might be given in the following novel.

To summarize, in comparison to a woman a hundred years her predecessor Annie shows resistance to gender ideals which require a deep devotion to family-life as wife and mother. Instead, she indicates how she wants to invest in herself before investing in others. Through Annie’s excessive behaviour during her state of crisis, one possible interpretation is that Annie then tries on a masculine expression taking her across the borderline between masculinity and femininity. The drinking, the liberal attitude to sex and the rude or even aggressive jargon she exemplifies are to a greater extent associated with masculinity. As suggested in the quote by Margaret T. Reddy in the introduction, the adaptation of “the sarcastic verbal style of the tough-talking male detectives” is a way of “projecting an image of mental and physical toughness” (Reddy 200), a way for Annie attempting to usurp male authority by acting ‘like a man’. One way this could be interpreted further is to say that Annie’s response to being caught in between professional and private success as a woman is to avoid the emotional pressure by ‘becoming a man’.

**Scarpetta**

Scarpetta’s main focus in life is admittedly her career and her professional duties are portrayed as her first priority. Yet, her occupational devotion results in a number of statements of her as emotionally inadequate. This is found both from professional competitors’ points of view but also through accusations from her mother and sister. The mother tries hard
to make her daughter fit into the traditional role of a woman as family oriented and subdued. In one of their phone calls, as usually coloured by accusations and guilt, the mother is portrayed as blaming her daughter for “being wedded to her work” (*Cruel and Unusual* 263) and of being competitive and generally indifferent. In clear accordance to beliefs from Fin-de-Siècle she says “/a/ll work and ambition. It’s not natural for a woman. You’ll dry like a chink bug” (*Postmortem* 33-34).

Like Annie, Scarpetta remains childless but she has a niece, Lucy, who depends on her aunt for security and support. Lucy’s father is dead and her biological mother, Dorothy, fails in her parental responsibilities by focusing more on her career and the succession of new partners than on her daughter. According to ideals from the Fin-de-Siècle, the mother as the core of the family had a duty to guarantee a harmonious home. One possible interpretation of the feature of neglect in the sister character could be to read it as emphasizing the price a woman has to pay when ignoring her family obligations on the behalf of a successful career – a disharmonious family.

The level of responsibility Scarpetta is characterized as having for her niece is less than she would have if she was the girl’s mother. For example, she is in charge of the duration of the niece’s stay and she can decide when to send her back to her mother. Still, in her relationship to Lucy, Scarpetta exemplifies the problematic situation of being caught in between private and professional obligations. Typically, her arrangements with Lucy are depicted as cancelled because of factors to do with professional engagements resulting in Scarpetta’s bad conscience. The first of many examples is in *Postmortem* when Cornwell illustrates how a visit to the museum has been cancelled because of Scarpetta’s having to work.

From Dorothy’s point of view, the close connection between her sister and her daughter is a negative one and she accuses Kay of having led Lucy astray by making her the “spitting image” of her. When Lucy later on is confirmed as a homosexual, the sister blames Scarpetta for having influenced her through her non-feminine independence and what the sister defines as masculine behaviour.
I mean, goddam. Cooking, fixing things, taking care of the car, paying the bills. You were just a regular man of the house when we were growing up. And then you became my daughter's father-if that doesn't take the cake. /.../ And I can't compete with that. I certainly can't be her father. I will concede that you're more of a man than I am. /.../ You win the hell out of that one hands down, Dr Scarpetta, Esquire.

(\textit{The Body Farm} 249-250)

The sister sees independence and femininity as polar opposites, a view compatible with ideals from the Fin-de-Siècle. Worth noticing is the sister’s solution to the problem of Scarpetta appearing to be female but with traditional male characteristics. She handles the contradiction by interpreting her behaviour as evidence of homosexuality.

On many occasions in her relationship to Lucy, Scarpetta is given the opportunity to act out a more humble side of herself. Moreover, she expresses an awareness of how her niece awakes emotions in her that no one else has been able to do, resembling those of maternal love. One example when these feelings of compassion and responsibility towards her niece are expressed is later on in the series when Lucy is portrayed as choosing a similar professional route as her aunt. With a sense of pride in combination with sadness and concern Scarpetta considers how:

\begin{quote}
/\textit{the}/ clean pages my young niece was showing me in her pristine computer would soon carry names and physical descriptions that would make violence real. She would build a data base that would become a landfill of bodyparts, tortures, weapons, and wounds. And one day she would hear the silent screams. She would imagine the faces of victims in crowds she passed.
\end{quote}

(\textit{The Body Farm} 35)

What we can see here are examples of firstly, how Scarpetta is drawn as more deeply affected and worried when something happens to Lucy than when it happens to herself. Secondly, her rational side is blended in with emotionality and she protects and defends her ‘offspring’ from plausible dangers like a mother would of her own child. Although not being a biological mother, Scarpetta illustrates maternity.
Looking at Scarpetta’s love relationships, throughout the eight novels in the sample, she has four relationships with an exception of a one-night stand, all with prestigious men. In the first novel, *Postmortem*, she is already divorced from Tony after six years of an unsatisfying marriage. She is seeing another man, but the relationship is characterized as complex due to the involvement between them professionally as well as privately and at the end it is sacrificed on the behalf of both of their careers.

The next partner, Mark James, seems to be the love of Scarpetta’s life, although Cornwell allows them to have only a few years together before he is accidentally killed in a bombing attack in the London underground. This leaves a deep scar in Scarpetta and her continued attachment to Mark is one of the reasons why also the latest of her relationships, to one of Mark’s friends FBI profiler Benton Weasley, is unsuccessful. For someone who is portrayed as finding attachment to others complicated in general, the relationship to Benton is made even more problematic because he appears to be dead in *The Last Precinct* and Scarpetta is depicted as on her own again after yet another person has been dramatically taken away from her. However, years later in *Blowfly*, Cornwell makes Benton re-appear and his death is explained to be arranged to protect him from actually being killed. Although the two characters are re-united, Scarpetta’s feelings are portrayed as different from before he disappeared since she has already accepted him as dead. In an argument in the beginning of *Book of the Dead* (2007) she says about the effect his death has had on her: “You ruined me. You fucking ruined me Benton” (*Book of the Dead* 50), a statement which clearly marks her distance to her partner.

In the latest novel, Kay and Benton are characterized as married after having been together for nearly 20 years. Their relationship is described as disharmonious and even if Lucy claims that: “her aunt probably couldn’t be with anybody else” (*Scarpetta* 277), Kay gives evidence of disengagement. Benton, for his part, describes for one of his colleagues, a female psychologist, how he has become uninterested in sex. Her response is that his problem emanates from his making a distinction between the professional and the private, that his attraction is directed to a successful and powerful woman, “and not to a wife” (*Scarpetta* 22). This suggests, in accordance to the ideals from the Fin-de-Siècle, that the role of a wife stands in contradiction to firstly sexuality, and, secondly, profession and power. However, already years earlier, Scarpetta emphasized her defence against fulfilling the role of a wife as if it implies exactly that, just playing a role and excluding her from being herself. In one of her arguments with Benton, she says in anger: “I’m a middle-aged woman set in her ways/…/ All I have is what I’ve built /…/I can’t be what you want, the good wife. I don’t even know
what the hell that is. I only know how to be Kay” (Unnatural Exposure 86). Therefore, Scarpetta could be seen as rejecting the stereotypical definition of herself and the role playing involved in gender performance in this sense.

Sexually, Scarpetta claims in the earlier part of the series that her lovers have met an equal partner in her, due to their acceptance of her as “a woman who was not a woman” someone with “the body and sensibilities of a woman with the power and drive of a man” (The Body Farm 298). For them, taking something from her sexually therefore has been like taking from themselves, she reasons, which has made them “give me the best they had”. In her eyes, the sexual act with these men are given as “erotic competition” and “like two creatures of equal strength who had found each other in the jungle” they “tumbled and took as much as we gave” (The Body Farm 298). When she first meets Benton, she is depicted as being deeply attracted to him and his way of making love to her as if he knows a woman’s body “as well as a woman did” (The Body Farm 298). However, because of her fear of being left again by someone she loves and due to the number of close deaths she has experienced on a private level, she is portrayed as withdrawing emotionally and sexually.

In comparison to women’s relationship to sexuality at the Fin-de-siècle, Scarpetta illustrates a rejection of traditional norms and conventions of women as asexual and she comments explicitly on the pleasure she experiences when having sexual intercourse. On the other hand, since Scarpetta’s sense of pleasure is expressed in terms of her acting like a man, it could be interpreted as women as such are then still excluded from actively pursuing sexual pleasure.

Even though Scarpetta is married twice in the series, it is without a sustainable engagement in her commitments. Partly, this is motivated by the close deaths she has experienced which have made her afraid of attachment. However, she seems uninterested in her men, in particular her first husband Tony, and the relationships give her more discomfort than comfort. It might be difficult to understand why she accepts their proposals if it is not to do with expectations on her as a woman to follow the traditional gender roles to get married, for her to be seen as human and feminine, in spite of her traditionally male characteristics as competitive, courageous and rational.

To conclude this section, it could be said that in spite of working hard at demanding jobs neither of the female protagonists is portrayed as prepared to sacrifice everything for their professional careers and live a life on their own. However, while both of them seek a harmonious and satisfying relationship with a man, both of them fail at finding it. Therefore, the attempt to combine the private and the professional is unsuccessful for both characters.
Regarding the issue of motherhood, the characters do not oppose normative gender roles to a full extent. Both our protagonists are drawn without biological children but Scarpetta takes on the responsibility to look after her niece and she expresses concern and compassionate emotions towards her as if Lucy was her own child. The difference is that Scarpetta does so without including motherhood as an essential part of her definition as a woman. Besides, the very existence of Lucy is nothing Scarpetta personally has chosen, and to have a child in her life has never been her ultimate wish. Therefore, motherhood in Scarpetta’s case does not include the idea of total fulfilment or self-sacrifice as was the ideal at the Fin-de-Siècle.

Annie, on the other hand, is more explicitly indecisive in her attitude towards the role of maternity in her life as a woman. For example, one way of interpreting her negative attitude expressed towards the existence of Banks’ children is to see it as an articulation of jealousy, although she states at one occasion that she is “not the mothering kind” (Playing with Fire 330). To have children never seems to be a significant aim of hers and in All the Colours of Darkness when she considers the possibility of having a family the topic is dealt with in only a few lines before there is a change in subject. At the same time Annie claims to be aware of her “biological clock running out” (All the Colour of Darkness 200) and as a consequence experiences an age crisis. Still, as in the case of Scarpetta, Annie is portrayed as clearly not prepared to reject a professional existence to have a family. In that sense both characters challenge the traditional view of womanhood as firmly based in biological motherhood.

Women Ruled by Emotions?

In the 19th century women were seen as weak and unsuitable for professional obligations and as lacking in intellectual development. What traces of this view are still detectable in the portrayal of Annie Cabbot and Kay Scarpetta?

Annie

Annie is characterised as a non-intellectual pragmatist without being highly educated or well read and the only area where she is given some insight apart from her job, yoga and vegetarian cooking, is art. She is temperamental and, in the distinction between emotional-
rational, Annie’s strongest features belong to the emotional side. It is possible to say that she represents traditional womanhood in this sense and, in comparison to the Banks character, her ability to reason towards a conclusion is described as based more on intuitive thinking. Her method of investigation is often direct confrontation rather than more subtle strategic actions and, on more than one occasion, she acts impulsively which jeopardise her career.

Through a change in focalizers the reader has access to the difference between how Annie appears on the outside and what goes on in her mind. In spite of a confident appearance the internal monologue communicates feelings of insufficiency and self-doubt. Through the direct characterisation with Banks as a focalizer she is described as a character who keeps at a distance covered by a “hard impenetrable shell” (*The Summer that Never Was* 181). In *Friend of the Devil* when she suffers through her crisis she struggles to keep in control, meaning keeping her emotions of doubt and self-criticism hidden. She admits having created an inner world already in her childhood where she returns also as an adult, to withdraw and protect herself, “when the real one (world) was too tough to handle” (*Friend of the Devil* 309).

Below the surface of these statements we can detect a level of criticism against Annie. It is as if a woman needs to live close to her emotions to be considered as female and that to imprison her emotions is to deny them which is against her true nature. Furthermore, the existence of Annie’s imaginary room implies a way of avoiding reality which can be seen as a sign of weakness. On the other hand, a man who maintains solid defences around his emotions would be considered as strong since he is then seen to be in control. In the case of Annie this articulates the dilemma women are confronted with in their relationship to their feelings. Either, like Annie, they hide their emotions from view in an attempt to be strong but are then considered to be inauthentic and weak since emotionality is regarded as a necessary condition for womanhood or they express their emotions which also indicate weakness. It seems like they will lose, no matter what.

Still, in the case of Annie it is possible to detect a development. The portrayal of her character can be divided into three phases. At first, she is described as young, inexperienced and rebellious. In the second phase during her crises, she is bitter, aggressive and somewhat anarchistic before she settles in the third phase as more “middle-aged and comfortable” possibly at the cost of being less devoted. After her promotion and her mid-life crisis her impulsiveness is turned down. In the last novel, her confrontational methods are replaced by Millais. In *Playing with Fire* she states that she lacks any training in art on a historical or theoretical level but has only practical knowledge in the area. Yet, in *Aftermath*, it is claimed that she has a degree in Art History.

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by her acting strategically and by her being modest, gentle and convincing rather than forceful.

Already in the opening sentence of the last novel it becomes clear how Annie has ‘hardened’ meaning being less affected by her feelings. She thinks laconically how it is “a great shame that she had to spend one of the most beautiful days of the year so far at a crime scene, especially a hanging” (All the Colour of Darkness 1). Another example is when, in the same novel, a young male constable is sick at a crime scene while Annie is only “pale and trembling” (30) still acting rather than reacting which indicates how she has developed more experience and a thicker skin. However, the description does not give her a strong sense of rationality which would challenge the traditional view of female nature to a greater extent.

**Scarpetta**

In many ways it is possible to say that Kay Scarpetta is drawn as the direct opposite of Annie in terms of the distinction between reason and emotion. She is characterised as a scientist above all and like a modern Robinson Crusoe, she is a rational, utilitarian thinker who finds necessities out of raw material. One example is when a colleague cuts himself severely when they are investigating a crime scene, “I quickly stepped out of my shoes and hiked up my skirt. In seconds I had my panty hose off” to be used as first aid (The Body Farm 66).

Moreover, Scarpetta’s method of investigation is, to a large extent, based on Sherlockian deduction. She is observant of minute details and Cornwell allows her to draw important conclusions adding together analytical skills of interpretation her knowledge in medicine and science with her extensive experience. In the general murder investigations, she is the one who thinks more critically, asks more direct questions and draws more complex conclusions, all indications of traditional masculinity.

Furthermore, as a forensic pathologist, Scarpetta is portrayed as having a calm and accepting relationship to death which is rationally motivated by a belief that she helps the living by finding out as much as possible about the dead. She also states how “the dead never bothered” her and that “It is the living I fear” (Postmortem 24). That her rational mind is something she has possessed all her life is also emphasised through the role she played in her childhood as a replacement of her father: “the rational one who made A's and knew how to cook and handle money /…/ the one who rarely cried and whose reaction to the volatility in my disintegrating home was to cool down and disperse like vapour” (Cruel and Unusual 323). Her reactions in emergency situations are fast and rational. For example, when a man falls to
the floor, she immediately tells the diagnosis of heart attack and orders someone to get “the squad” (The Body Farm 53).

Nevertheless, Scarpetta’s rationality is not always referred to in a positive sense. With echoes from Fin-de-Siècle there is a recurring tendency to describe her as emotionally inadequate because of her strong rationality, not only by her mother and sister but also by her colleagues and indeed enemies. One example is in Cruel and Unusual where the media portrays her as “a cold ambitious woman, an empire builder” (339). Another example is found in Scarpetta where she receives an email from a web article where she “looked like a she-devil in bloody scrubs/…/ mouth open mid-sentence, her bloody gloved hand pointing a scalpel, as if she was threatening someone” (Scarpetta 26). Voicing traditional expectations of gender, these negative views are to make her out as a woman with a perverted and disrespectful relationship to death. Instead of being acknowledged as strength, Scarpetta’s rationality is turned against her. It seems to imply that a woman with such a strong sense of rationality cannot at the same time possess her traditional sense of emotionality and therefore is equal to a maladjusted monster, or a ‘she-devil’.

However, what we have seen is that Scarpetta is more than a hyper-rational machine. It becomes clear in her relationship to Lucy where she has the chance of acting out a softer side of herself. This continues even after Lucy has become an adult and developed into Special Agent Farinelli – technical analyst in charge of a special database at FBI. Scarpetta is characterized as worrying about Lucy and experiencing a great deal of stress when she gets into trouble. At the same time, she also plays the role of the wise and experienced aunt which emphasises the rational side of her also in her relationship to her niece.

In addition, even though Scarpetta is portrayed as being excited by autopsies and investigations that constitute her work, there are indications of her also possessing an emotional side beyond cold logic. One clear example is when she admits how much she is affected by her profession through everyday experiences triggering unpleasant associations. At one point she states:
I never drink tomato juice or V8 or Bloody Mary on the rocks because when the ice begins to melt, it looks like coagulating blood separating from serum. I stopped eating liver in medical school, and the idea of considering any sort of organ as something for my plate is impossible...areas of crinkled sand...looked remarkably like the lining of the stomach

The Last Precinct 59.

In addition, in the last novel she admits how “she hadn’t fared quite as well” working as a forensic pathologist after 9/11 for six months and how she feels “physically poisoned by it” (Scarpetta 253).

Like Annie, in The Last Precinct Scarpetta suffers through a crisis where she experiences a collision between her rational and her emotional side. At the beginning of the novel we meet Kay in the aftermath of an attack in her home by a notorious serial killer whose victims she has been responsible for examining. She is physically hurt as well as emotionally affected and her rationality reaches its limit and ceases to give her protection. Since her home is portrayed as turned into a crime scene, she moves in temporarily with Anna, an acquaintance and a psychiatrist. Scarpetta is then offered consultation which she emphasizes to the reader as never having been the case before in her life. On the first night after the attack she describes how “/t/alking to Anna has begun to unsettle me around the edges, like the earth about to cave in” and she has “phantom pains in parts of me that are past, gone” (The Last Precinct 97) which indicates how she has neglected her feelings for a long time.

As the plot develops the situation is made worse because of a suspicion that Scarpetta actually is responsible for the killing of one of the victims she herself has been investigating. Since her reason no longer seems to defend her she is characterised as suffering badly from stress and depression because of the attack and the accusations. Her instability is made visible through quick mood swings between tears and anger and that she starts to smoke again as she has expressed on a number of occasions throughout the series how easy it is to avoid doing so.

Anna suggests that at the very bottom of Scarpetta’s state of disorder is that she avoids recognising the loss of her father and she is recommended not to disregard her grief. Scarpetta claims to her own defence that ”sometimes it’s survival to do that” (The Last Precinct 35), without explicitly denying the correctness in Anna’s diagnosis. Furthermore, when Anna asks questions about Scarpetta’s relationship to Benton, Scarpetta says hesitantly:
“I need to think about this for a minute. I’m not sure of the answer”. In a very demanding manner Anna is characterized as pushing Scarpetta not to think but to feel but Scarpetta replies that: “I have to think. I’ve gotten where I am in life by thinking” (The Last Precinct 60), a claim which indicates how much she is drawn as depending on her rational side.

What seems to be suggested about Scarpetta through the dialogue between the two female characters is that, by concentrating on thinking rationally rather than acclaiming to her emotions, Scarpetta neglects parts of herself as a woman. Furthermore, she is under pressure to change her strategy to neglect her emotions. However, the conflicting relationship between reason and emotion is put in perspective later on in the same novel when Scarpetta’s case is looked at by Jamie Berger, a female prestigious lawyer. She suggests that the meaning of being thick-skinned is not equal to avoiding feeling, but rather to admit the feelings and stand up without defences, a redefinition of the concept of strength.

To summarize, neither of the female characters of this study can be claimed as belonging fully to one side or the other of the distinction rationality- emotionality since both of them have features from both sides. However, as a scientist and a doctor, Scarpetta comes across as more strongly ruled by reason than the intuitive and impulsive Annie although this is not necessarily always to Scarpetta’s advantage. On the other hand, in the case of Scarpetta it is primarily through her strong rationality, by providing evidence and presenting reliable arguments, that in the end she manages to win against the accusations of her incompetence or even as a murderer. It seems as if the problem does not actually concerns allowing or denying emotionality as such in relation to the distinction between strength and weakness, but rather to redefine the definition of what is meant by strength. According to the suggestion above made by the character Jamie Berger, strength is not to ignore the presence of your emotions but rather to acknowledge them.

To conclude this section, it is possible to say that in comparison to the ideal qualities of a woman expressed from around Fin-de-Siècle both Annie and Kay offer a challenge to such traditional definitions of a woman. As professionals they have managed to gain positions within public life. In disregard of former ideals of women as subordinate and dependent, they are competitive, they have ambition and they want power. In addition, they are educated, financially self-sufficient and they do not reject sexual pleasure. Furthermore, to gain power and authority, both Annie and Scarpetta rely on experience and by demonstrating their competence, strength and courage. They act with determination and they do not avoid what is requested of them on a professional basis not even in situations which require them to use violence. Still, both characters exist in a gendered context of which they cannot be
immediately independent and there are a few situations were their actions oppose the traditional gender roles in a less distinct way. The first example is in their attitude to marriage, the second in their attitudes to having children.

Having advanced to the status of professional women, Annie and Scarpetta are both unable to successfully combine love and career since the condition of success within one of the areas is a sacrifice of the other. This is also the conclusion Annie reaches when she finishes her relationship with Banks the second time and instead focuses on her career.

Both characters Annie Cabbot and Kay Scarpetta can thereby be said to challenge the traditional roles of womanhood in general, although they are not entirely consistent in their opposition. Part of the reason could be because of the risk of being punished for disobedience by colleagues, family members and enemies or even by representatives in leading positions of the society.

**Disobedience and Punishment**

As the writer Judith Halberstam argues in her book *Female Masculinity* (1998), people who do not signify an obvious gender belonging generate uncertainty since “one has to be readable at a glance” (Ryan/Rivkin 950). In particular, this happens to women with androgenic features and as an example she describes how on entering a public bathroom for women she has been met by suspicion and anger. In some cases she has even been asked by the security guards to leave the facilities. The reason – she does not clearly look like a woman.

Halberstam continues by bringing our attention to the treatment of women who persist in indicating signs of masculinity after pre-adolescence in the form of the ‘tomboy’. In short, this concept could be described as a gender role among girls or young women who avoid prescribed femininity and instead indicate a more masculine identification. Halbertstam describes it as a role “associated with a ‘natural’ desire for greater freedoms and mobilities enjoyed by boys/…/ a sign of independence” (Rivkin/Ryan 938). However, she points further to the fact that “/t/omboyism is punished/…/when it appears to be the sign of extreme male identification (taking a boy’s name or refusing girl clothing of any type)” (Rivkin/Ryan 938). It seems as if we are able to accept an unspecified gender belonging but only up to a certain age point. As adults we have to be either men or women.

In the case of Scarpetta, these so called signs of ‘extreme male identification’ are hinted at both in her first name Kay and in her way of dressing. In the case of Annie this type of identification is a great deal less prominent. However, Annie aspires to masculinity in
the adjustment of her language and during her crisis when she tries to solve her internal conflicts by taking on a masculine role of expression. As suggested in the introduction, punishment could occur to compel these female characters to correct their behaviour. Firstly, the reason could be the uncertainty in gender identity which Halberstam mentions, but secondly and perhaps more importantly, it is to prevent these female characters to gain too extensive access to power.

To begin with, a number of accusations are formulated against the two protagonists in our study. In Annie’s case one accusation of failing competence appears after she has acted according to her own judgement in the kidnap case in *The Summer that Never Was*. The victim of the kidnaping, a young boy, is later found murdered, and Annie is accused of having caused his death because of her unsanctioned act. Seen by her superiors as irrational and unprofessionally impulsive, she is summoned to explain her actions. However, she comments on the injustice of the questioning by stating her awareness of being “a damn good detective” and that “everything she had done in all those instances had been right; it was just the spin” (214). The fact that Annie discovered the actual extent of the case by acting independently is ignored and her action is only seen from a negative point of view. Furthermore, due to the boy’s celebrity status the press has shown a great interest in the case which has generated some bad publicity for the police because they fail to find him in time. What becomes clear is how her superiors use Annie as a scapegoat for their own failures.

Like Annie, in a few instances throughout the series, Scarpetta is portrayed as extensively questioned and criticised for professional incompetence. It happens in *Postmortem*, in *Cruel and Unusual* and in *The Last Precinct*. In the last two examples, she is accused of actually having committed the crimes she is investigating and for manipulating and losing important pieces of evidence. As a consequence she is relinquished from her duties – an action intended to ruin her career – which her colleague Pete Marion confirms: “there’s a lot of people who’ve been waiting for years to see you bleed” (*Cruel and Unusual* 212). Another of the accusations against Scarpetta is to label her as cold and indifferent in instances when she is clearly dominated by reason rather than emotion. Such accusations are found in *Cruel and Unusual, The Last Precinct* and in *Scarpetta* when the extent of her involvement in cases is officially questioned.

Previously, we saw that the norm for a woman at the century before last was to be married and to have a family. Scarpetta is portrayed as receiving criticism from her mother for not having biological children in words reminiscent of the Fin-de-Siècle: “All work and ambition. It is not natural for a woman” (*Postmortem* 33-34). In an interrogation by the
Governor in *Cruel and Unusual*, where Scarpetta is accused of having murdered one of her colleagues, she refuses to answer his questions if not asked in a closed hearing with the motivation to protect her private life from public view. The Governor, who does not know about Lucy or any other relationships in Scarpetta’s life, then says: “Husband, children, lover? It is my understanding you have none of these, that you live alone and are /…/wedded to your work” (*Cruel and Unusual* 265). Underlying this last statement is the notion that there is something unnatural about a woman without a family and in line with ideals from the earlier time period a woman without a family indicates abnormality. Accordingly, there is no need to treat her seriously.

The motive behind Scarpetta’s assumed killing in *The Last Precinct* is formulated as springing from jealousy and is based on the characterization of her as competitive with other professional women. She is taken to court to answer. Naturally, she reacts with stress when she is under pressure which leads to an accusation of her as mentally unstable and weak. The earlier criticism against her strong rationality is then over-ruled by the view of her as an ambitious woman prepared to kill to reach her goals, that she is someone who allows herself to be ruled by her emotions. Therefore, Scarpetta’s is punished no matter how she acts.

Since women are claimed to be of a weaker kind than men, another type of punishment in connection to this treatment of Scarpetta covers how professional obligations could weigh heavily on women’s health. In connection to the Fin-de-Siècle this might be seen as a way for nature to punish a woman who overstretches her limitations. In Annie’s case this is mostly visible in her extensive drinking habits in *Friends of the Devil*. Scarpetta, on the other hand, suffers sleep deprivation and nightmares and she explains how her ulcers “unlike former lovers/…/always came back” (*The Body Farm* 229). How her health is affected by her professional engagement becomes particularly clear in the last novel where she talks about the effects of being part of the forensic team after 9/11 for six months, and she admits that: “she didn’t like to talk about it, having felt physically poisoned by it in a way that was unlike anything she had ever felt before” (*Scarpetta* 253).

Both female characters also express an awareness of how they are punished through being separated out, or even ignored, because of the fact that they are women in a male-dominated context. During her time at university, Scarpetta admits having come to the realisation that “I was something less than human because I wasn’t a man”, and how she as one of four women in her class “was a small insect faced with a formidable male network web in which I might be ensnared but never part” (*Postmortem* 60).
At the beginning of her career Annie tries hard to be “one of the boys” (*In a Dry Season* 417) although as a woman she remains an outsider. Instead she is seen as “weird” because, as she expresses it, “I did yoga and meditation and I didn’t eat meat and watch sport on the telly and talk about sex all the time” (420). Furthermore, because she does not respond to the invites from her male colleagues she is thought of as a lesbian, something impossible for them to accept. They have the idea that by having sex with proper men like themselves she will turn heterosexual, so one evening after a party three of them rape her in what they call “an initiation rite” (*In a Dry Season* 416). To defend herself Annie kicks one of the rapists so hard his testicles are destroyed. When she the day after explains to her superior what happened he believes the version already given by the men, of her being unreasonably violent and acting unjustly as she is ruled by her emotions. Echoing demands from the Fin-de-Siècle to put her own needs after the needs of others she is asked by her superior to “put the good of the force as a whole above (her) own selfish concerns” and she is punished by being transferred from the district (*In a Dry Season* 420).

Oppression through sexual violence is something that also affects Scarpetta when she becomes a victim of attempted rape by her colleague Pete Marino. The explanation given is that she happens to be getting in the way of a sexually frustrated man on a potency increaseing medication, although at the bottom of it is a man who challenges her position of power over him. Both these instances of sexual violence as well as other types of punishment and accusations against competent and provocative women could thereby be read as a warning signal that the two characters have got too close to the fire, too close to achieving patriarchal power.
Discussion

To conclude, instead of reaffirming the old definition from the Fin-de-Siècle, Annie and Scarpetta are portrayed as representing alternative ways of being a woman. Openly opposing expectations such as ‘the hysterical’, ‘the ideal mother’ or the ’perfect wife’, ‘the weak’, ‘the emotional’ or ‘the decorative’, Annie is “a bit of a free spirit” (In a Dry Season 307) and Scarpetta a “woman who was not a woman” (The Body Farm 298). As a consequence both are criticised and accused of incompetence; Annie for being impulsive and too emotional and Scarpetta for being too cold and acting unnaturally when choosing her work before family. Since Scarpetta is set in a more professionally demanding environment than Annie, Scarpetta is portrayed as receiving stronger and harder criticism. Her life is even threatened because of her competence and she is illustrated as defending a position in a much more competitive and therefore more dangerous environment than in the case of Annie.

The problem both characters represent through the novels is what happens when a current definition of womanhood is found too narrow. As seen in the analysis one way is to try to force the characters to fit into the definition at any cost. One solution to the problem could be to expand the definition and include another way of being woman where traditional female connotations, like emotionality, are given new content. In the analysis this is exemplified in The Last Precinct by the lawyer Jamie Berger in her redefinition of emotionality equal strength. However, as we have seen in the last section on punishment there is a resistance against accepting deviations from the gender norm. Even though a hundred years have past since the Fin-de-Siècle there are still traces of women being viewed and viewing themselves with the same pair of eyes as then. It is as if certain features remain necessarily included in the definition of womanhood.

One final question is what Annie, and Scarpetta perhaps even more, become when they cease to fit into the traditional view of a woman. Their method is to challenge the previous norm of womanhood both through being courageous and strong and refusing to absorb female connotations but also by acting masculinity. In Scarpetta we find this most prominently in her strong rationality and the way she is described when having sexual intercourse but to an extent also through the way she replaces her father, the way she dresses and through her name. In the portrayal of Annie masculinity is found in her dismissal of hierarchical structures, in her language and behaviour during her state of crisis.
However, is to act like a man equal to becoming a man in a socially constructed sense? Bobbie Robinson suggests in her article “Playing like the Boys: Patricia Cornwell Writes Men” that Scarpetta actually “occupies gray space” where Cornwell “blends, bends, bursts, and beguiles assumptions about gender construction and gender difference” and that what we find in Scarpetta is “transgendered or sexually indeterminate behaviours” (B. Robinson 96). In the two series of novels the attempts to bring the characters back into a traditional definition of gender and the punishment of them when they fail to do so indicate difficulty in ability to deal with anomalies. This means that instead of expanding the definition to include another way of being a woman, the woman is either excluded from the old definition or offered another definition all together. B. Robinson agrees with the difficulties in finding a suitable category in which Scarpetta is entirely comfortable. The best she can offer is the androgynous which takes us back to Halberstam and the punishment of a non-specified member of our species.

Another interpretation of the deviant behaviour of the protagonists is to read it as indications of homosexuality. In Annie’s case this is brought to her through her colleagues when raping her. In Cornwell’s writing Scarpetta is accused of being a lesbian by her sister. Cornwell, more than Robinson, explores this theme further. As the series develops, Lucy is portrayed as homosexual and she is characterised through a number of traditionally male attributes like a preference for guns, helicopters and fast cars. She is a master of self-defence and she works as a technical analyst specially appointed by the FBI. If Cornwell had made the niece possess the same attributes without the homosexuality it would have taken the challenges of the gender norms as well as the exploration of ‘crime fiction’ as a genre further. As it now stands, the niece functions only as an extension of the Scarpetta-character or a Scarpetta in the next generation, since Cornwell allows the untraditional behaviour of a female character to be explored but without involving the protagonist specifically. Exemplifying deviations from the gender norm by using someone who already stands on the outside makes a weaker statement.

A final claim of this essay would be that some development has taken place in the tradition of ‘crime fiction’. For example, it is now possible to find female protagonists exemplifying power, authority, courage, and thinking, rather than pleasant looks and subordination. Our modern heroine can be described in words of expertise, like in the case of Scarpetta, or unpredictable and disconcerting as in the case of Annie. However, contemporary ‘crime fiction’ as exemplified in Patricia Cornwell and Peter Robinson still belongs to a tradition where a female character has a limited room to manoeuvre and where she is
portrayed as punished if she deviates from old gender norms and traditional conceptions of womanhood.
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