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EDITOR’S INTRODUCTION
Interrogating the Idea of National Detective Fictions, or French Detective Fiction—What Other Type is there?

This book has its origins in a conference held at the University of Newcastle in July 2007. The conference was designed to bring together Australian academics working, within French Studies, on French detective fiction with French academics working, in France, on Australian detective fiction; it was also conceived within the organizational framework of the annual Australian Society for French Studies conference, whose theme in 2007 was *La France au pluriel* and which was co-hosted by the University of Newcastle and the University of Technology, Sydney. Ultimately, the concept of plurality intersected with the detective-fiction theme in at least two obvious ways: speakers were looking either at French detective fiction, which seems inevitably to entail—either explicitly or implicitly—an interrogation of what French detective fiction may be considered to be, or at instances of Frenchness or French motifs in Australian detective fiction. This led to the possibility of exposing nationalities of crime fiction to an interpenetration that was reflected, and this is the second intersection, in the disciplinary heritage of the conference participants themselves. Most were Australian citizens; many were also born in Australia, but others were French (or English) by birth. Again, most were based in the French disciplines of various Australian universities, but others were based in French universities and worked in the area of Australian Studies. Without wishing to labour what may seem an obvious point, the terms French or Australian lecturer are semantically plural: such a person is either being designated by his or her nationality or place of work, or his or her academic discipline area. And if I persist nonetheless in making this point, it is because it has been equally difficult, traditionally, to clarify what is being intended by terms such as ‘French detective fiction’. Whilst I shall not, as an editor, attempt to suggest that the presence of ‘French themes’ within a novel is sufficient to grant its access to such a grouping (as opposed to the nationality of the author, for example), I have tried as an author to question accepted thinking in this area and to extend the remit of French, or indeed Australian, detective fiction beyond the national and towards the disciplinary. As will be seen in Chapter One of this collection, the polysemy of our term ‘French lecturer’ and the national/professional diversity of the authors of the present volume are reflected in the corpus of French Detective and/or Crime Fiction and, perhaps especially, in that most famous of series, Marcel Duhamel’s Série Noire.

The collective impact of the essays contained within this book will, I hope, be to raise questions about the appropriateness of the ways in which these terms are used to identify books of detective fiction written by authors of French or Australian nationality. For, despite the constant revelation, and admission, by critics that the authors of these national traditions are not in fact French or Australian, as the case may be, this is still the criterion that most often—and again, implicitly if not explicitly—underpins our categorizations. This question of national ownership of creative works is universal, spanning literary and filmic genres. Evan Williams recently articulated it in a way that resonates clearly with our present concerns in his feature in the *Weekend Australian*, in which he selected his own favourite Australian films: “Some would argue that Baz Luhrmann’s *Australia* is a Hollywood film”, he
writes, “because the big money came from 20th Century Fox.”¹ He goes on to suggest that the nationality of the director is an inappropriate marker of a film’s Australianness because it, too, would simply rule out too many films that we, the viewing public, generally consider as Australian.

Mapping the Territory: French and Australian Detective Fiction

As my own background is in French Studies, by which it would be generally understood—throughout the Anglophone world or within the Anglo-Saxon Higher Education sector, at least—that I teach and/or conduct research into the French language and/or fiction written by authors of French nationality, the majority of my research for this book has been spent addressing this imbalance, even if I could only hope to get an impression of the approaches adopted towards Australian detective fiction. Michael Pollak and Margaret MacNabb’s work on Australian crime fiction certainly confirmed some of my naive—and profane—expectations.² In their introductory chapter they seek to counterbalance the fact that the early pioneers of Australian crime fiction, such as Fergus Hume, Francis Adams, Arthur Upfield and Carter Brown, were—necessarily, given the newness, in western terms, of the country—of British birth, by emphasizing the importance of place and setting in the novels, i.e. it is not important where the author came from, what counts is what his text describes, as if Australian crime fiction’s primary function is to explore and define Australian identity. Peter Corris’s prominent place in Pollak and MacNabb’s work is not a result of his Australian birth, therefore, but of the way in which he has made Sydney the principal character of his novels (the importance of this characterization of place to Pollak and MacNabb is confirmed by their efforts to redeem Fergus Hume, or to repatriate him into the Australian fold, which he himself fled as soon as he was able, on the basis of his internalization of Melbourne’s landmarks; they note, for example, that he mentions “the Burke and Wills Monument and the Melbourne Cup without a word of elaboration”³). Thus, Australian identity, in this creative sense, is something forged existentially, not something received as a birthright. After all, Peter Corris is, as they remind us, no more a native of Sydney than Raymond Chandler was an American.⁴

My own research has certainly convinced me that this idea of the ‘primacy of setting’ has more critical mileage than that of the author’s nationality. This is only a rule of thumb, however, and one to be applied with caution as a recent test case shows. One contemporary author of Australian detective fiction—one of its most successful if not its most iconic—who has brought himself ‘back to the fold’ is Barry Maitland. This Scottish-born author who lives and writes in Maitland, New South Wales, is famous for his Brock and Kolla novels, which are based in and around south-east England, principally London and Essex. His latest novel not only breaks with his usual detective pairing but also with this setting: a first for a Maitland crime novel, Bright Air is set in Australia. Clearly, Maitland himself has not become more Australian this year than he was in 2006, when the last of his Brock and Kolla titles appeared; if anything, he has become a more global phenomenon: whereas in 2006 the latest of his UK-based series was advertised as the work of “one of Australia’s finest

³ Pollak and MacNabb, p. 16.
⁴ Pollak and MacNabb, p. 15.
crime writers”, in 2008 his first Australian-based novel saw him declared “one of the top five crime writers in the world”. It is a perverse Australian identity indeed that, having been forged in novels that eschew any apparent Australianess, dissolves into bright air the moment that it is applied to an Australian setting.

Primacy of setting is therefore only one factor, and as we have already suggested, the author’s nationality still weighs more heavily in the popular understanding of Australian detective, or crime, fiction. An obvious example of an author who is generally considered to be Australian but who set most of his novels outside Australia is Carter Brown, who is, incidentally, dismissed by Pollak and MacNabb for this reason. In Chapter Two Toni Johnson-Woods considers Brown’s work in terms of its reception. This seems to us to be a more meaningful approach, that is to say that it is an approach liable to generate meaning, to interrogate concepts of nationality and literary worth in a less dogmatic, less ‘traditional’ way. ‘Australian’ becomes a term to be negotiated and filled with meaning and not a meaning-filled term to be passively understood by the reader. Accordingly, Johnson-Woods’s essay is infused with the idea of sensibility, which operates at the interface of reader and text.

As will become clear in Chapter One, the task of opening up the terms French and Australian, in the context of detective fiction, lends itself to the basic principles of deconstructive criticism. What appeared more challenging was the task of uniting the two national categories in a single collection. Inspiration was drawn from the work of Fred Vargas, who is currently one of the major actors on the French detective-fiction scene. The following quote is taken from her novel of 1997, Sans feu ni lieu, which offers a neat example of Australia as Other:

À moins que le troisième violeur soit encore un autre type, un complice inconnu du Sécateur. Il participe au viol de la jeune femme, puis il la tue dans la nuit, ainsi que le jeune Rousselet, et prend peur, et il se tire au loin, mettons en Australie, et plus personne n’entend parler de ses crimes.

Were this quotation taken from an Anglo-Saxon author one would be tempted to suggest the presence here of a reference to Australia’s convict heritage. It is just as possible, of course, that Vargas’s use of Australia as a counterpoint to France draws more simply on the extreme distance that separates the two countries. Either way, we should not forget that otherness and extreme attitudes towards it begin at home, or at least have a direct impact on notions of self. In the case of Vargas’s self-styled

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5 Barry Maitland, Spider Trap (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2006); the tribute from the Sunday Tasmanian appears on the inside cover.
6 Barry Maitland, Bright Air (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2008); in this case, the description is from the Australian and adorns the front cover.
7 It should be noted that Maitland’s novels do bear certain traces of their author’s adopted Australianess. Brock’s partner leaves their troubled relationship to seek solace in Australia, and an extreme awareness of space permeates the Brock and Kolla novels: In No Trace (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2004), for example, the panoptical introspection of a crime committed in and affecting the neighbours of a London square is only solved once the plot is consciously decentralized and moved into suburbia; similarly in Silvermeadow (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2000) the plot is reduced to a play on the tension between inside and outside space on which the modern shopping centre is predicated. In purely biographical terms, that famously Australian awareness of space is not the only possible explanation for such dynamics in Maitland’s novels, however: before giving himself over entirely to crime fiction he was Professor of Architecture at the University of Newcastle in New South Wales.
rompols, the action is generally split between Paris and the provinces, as if her novels are always referencing themselves as problematically ‘French’, or typically, self-reflexively French since Frenchness has long been predicated on an uneasy relationship between the national capital and the many other centres of (non-national) identity. As Vargas’s popular success has grown, so the parameters of her novels have both closed and opened: the winning formula of her Adamsberg novels has meant a narrowing of character base, with the loss of colourful characters such as retired detective Louis Kehlweiler (the protagonist of Sans feu ni lieu), and the expansion of the polarities of setting, which include Paris-Quebec (Sous les vents de Neptune, 2004, although Adamsberg’s nemesis is problematically peripatetic) and Paris-London-Serbia (Un lieu incertain, 2008). In short, far as Australia may seem from French soil, the changing space of Vargas’s fiction reflects the uncertainties of French identity; that is to say that the unchanging core of ‘Frenchness’ is its polarized attitude towards its own notions of selfhood. In this way, Australia represents not only a polar opposite to France but also the ultimate extent of its self-alterity.

As has already been intimated, the first two essays of this collection will develop this problematization of national detective fictions and the troubled relationships with self via the story of French Detective Fiction and, in particular, the Série Noire. It will be seen how publication in Duhamel’s series has been used as a legitimating standard for authors of French nationality whilst non-French authors published in the same series are often subject to ridicule in their countries of origin and rejected as authors of French fiction on the basis of their nationality. In short, you know you’ve made it as a crime writer when you’re published in the Série Noire, as long as you’re French. Such inconsistencies and double standards will be the starting point in Chapter One for a deliberately perverse parallel reading of Frenchness and Australianness in detective fiction, which paradoxically seeks to break from the use of national descriptors by enlarging their remit. It is suggested, for example, that French Detective Fiction be broadened as a term to include not only fiction written by non-French authors but also critical studies of detective fiction employing ‘French’ theories of critical reading and textual analysis (and, again, such terms are used broadly and perversely).

Chapter Two continues this analysis of the double-edged power of the Série Noire. Johnson-Woods focuses on Carter Brown, whose enormous success as an author of detective fiction in France sits problematically with his status as an author of ‘Australian’ detective fiction. He finds himself on the same shelf as British author Peter Cheyney, whose greatest success has arguably been in France via his famous publication in the Série Noire (two books by Cheyney, translated by Marcel Duhamel, were used to launch the series in 1945); except that in Brown’s case, the disparity between his success in France and in his country of residence is far greater—as Johnson-Woods shows, Brown was the most popular author of the Série Noire, and this by some way. Given the legitimating power of the series, it is certainly possible to make a case for his inclusion amongst the all-time greats of French detective fiction.

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9 For example, this theme underpins such works as Julia Kristeva’s Étrangers à nous-mêmes (Paris: Fayard, 1985).
10 Murray Pratt and I have written elsewhere of the nature of French identity as an always already plural construct and the tendency of France, and Frenchness, to be forever projected beyond its own national borders. For a more detailed reading of what we refer to as ‘hexagonality’, see “Variations on the Hexagon: Getting the Measure of Culture Change in Contemporary France” in Jo McCormack, Murray Pratt and Alistair Rolls (eds) Hexagonal Variations: Difference, Plurality and Cultural Change in Contemporary France (Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, forthcoming).
Indeed, Johnson-Woods’s argument suggests that Brown’s international success (which, she suggests, gives him “a universality not normally associated with pulp fiction”) makes him an exemplar of the universalized, and universalizing, model of French/French Detective Fiction that is proposed in Chapter One. For, whilst Johnson-Woods is reluctant to rule out the presence in Brown’s work of an innate quality (a certain quelque chose, one might say)—in much the same way that such qualities are rarely denied in Agatha Christie’s work, for example—she demonstrates quite clearly how Brown’s successful, almost immeasurable, propagation across international crime-fiction markets depends on ruthlessly single-minded marketing practices at Signet and Gallimard. Indeed, to the extent that Brown was writing to the strictest parameters and deadlines for his American publishers, and that these defined the English version equally as much as did the French translations, which had their own parallel, market-driven constraints and expectations, it becomes almost impossible to talk about an ‘original’ version, with all that such a term appears to imply about the author’s special link to the creation and his or her mother tongue. In fact, the story of Carter Brown’s beginnings with Horwitz Publications in Sydney reveals some striking similarities with the inception of the Série Noire six years earlier (Horwitz “cash[ed] in” on crime fiction, as Johnson-Woods puts it, in 1951 in much the same way that Gallimard did in 1945, and Carter Brown is to Horwitz what Peter Cheyney and James Hadley Chase were to the Série Noire). Again, then, the pursuit of a definition of Frenchness or Australianness in the crime-fiction context leads ineluctably to universality, and authorial originality to mass (global) markets. It is the capacity of France (and Frenchness) to coincide with the universal that is of most interest to us here.

Unmapping or Deterritorializing: Frenchness in Australian Detective Fiction

Kerry Greenwood’s choice of the name for the heroine of her famous Phryne Fisher series is born of a love of Ancient Greek history and a love of things French: “Then I wanted a really symbolic last name; Fisher for the Roi Pécheoneur, the sinner/fisher King from the Grail legend; and also for a notorious street in 1920s Paris, the Rue du Chat-qui-Pêche, the Street of the Fishing Cat.” Such combined Francophilia and passion for history makes for typical (and classic) French Detective Fiction. In addition to encapsulating the essential Modernism of the detective-fiction genre, which is located at the troubled intersection of the modern and the bygone, and whose plots are forged in a dual and apparently mutually exclusive push forwards into the production of truth (or le vrai in the writerly sense) and backwards to the act of the crime (and the revelation of la vérité in the readerly sense), Greenwood’s Phryne Fisher novels add that Frenchness which is always fading, if not faded, from memory in such novels as Simenon’s Maigret series, where the virtues of lost France are mourned as powerfully as in any poem by Baudelaire. The loss of the past is typical, then, of detective fiction in general (Miss Marple is a prime example), modern French fiction in general (from the mid-nineteenth century through the Surrealists and into the fiction and cinema of the Cold War era and beyond) and, a fortiori, of French

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12 Deleuze sees le vrai as being a more useful term for reading the narrative drives of the Série Noire novels than la vérité, which smacks of the classic whodunit mode; but ultimately, it is in terms of le faux that he understands the power of Duhamel’s series. Gilles Deleuze, “Philosophie de la Série Noire”, Roman, 24 (1988), 43-7 (45).
Detective Fiction in particular. Sue Ryan-Fazilleau’s objective in Chapter Three is to investigate the Frenchness of one of Australia’s best-selling contemporary crime authors via the stereotypes on which not only Greenwood’s own novels but so much of the genre are predicated. In this way, Murder in Montparnasse can, at the least, be considered a classic test case for the principles driving this collection and a powerful metonym for the essential Frenchness of all detective fiction; to take our perverse reading to its furthest extent, the novel’s profound hybridity is a highly reflexive and indiscreet example of French Detective Fiction, where French is the only kind there is.

Chapter Three begins by dealing explicitly with a work whose own title has slipped (not quite unconsciously) into our own: Sarah Turnbull’s Almost French: A New Life in Paris, through which Ryan-Fazilleau demonstrates the tendency of France as globalized product to map itself onto extra-national space. This intentionality of Frenchness is facilitated and actualized by the same popular sensibility that approaches (and devours) all detective fiction. It is in this way, therefore, that the particular exportability of Frenchness results in the implicit insertion of ‘French’ into all detective fiction(s). The character of Phryne Fisher embodies—and is a flagship, and again an indiscreet one, for—the erotics of this mapping (of France outside itself and of Frenchness into other cultures and fictions): by vacillating between the opposed modes of representation (in the form of Paris remembered) and presentation (of Paris lived and French crime transported), she displays both aspects of the dynamics of textual pleasure. On the one hand, she indulges in readerly plaisir, seducing, but also and particularly being seduced by, avatars of the abstract French Lover; and on the other hand, she operates the writerly jouissance of deconstruction and resistance. This, too, not only in her own actions but also in her advice to others, in which she encourages the pleasurable enjoyment of romance fiction whilst suggesting that more blissful activity be left to those with the necessary qualifications (an implicit reminder to the reader that crime fiction has the (French) légèreté of romance with the (French) rigour of more canonical literature).

As Ryan-Fazilleau suggests, icons of French culture take on a more highly charged value once they have been deterritorialized (i.e. once they are transplanted from their ‘original’ context and where any chance of contamination with their real-world counterpart has been eliminated). In this way, strangely, Frenchness is only more powerful outside France; and Australia’s new-world context serves as a wholly suitable canvas for the evolution (or reterritorialisation) of a new French detective fiction.

As a genre, French detective fiction can be seen to be represented metonymically within Greenwood’s novel by Phryne’s trans- and inter-cultural/textual sleuthing, and metaphorically by the Paris Sapphics and their “appropriation of city space”. Quoting Joan Winning, Ryan-Fazilleau calls to mind the Sapphic’s creation of “cultural space […] beyond national boundaries” and extends this principle, via Phryne, to a broader Franco-Australian permeability, in which new sexualities, new freedoms and a new justice can all be articulated under the broad banner of a devolved French detective fiction.

In Chapter Four John Ramsland and Marie Ramsland continue this search for French detective fiction amongst ‘Australian’ writers. Although the subject of their essay does not feature in the Série Noire, his classic status seeming to be more logically ‘at home’ in Australia than in France, his translated works have had huge

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success overseas, and the translation of these works can be seen to re-direct a reflection of France that is already there in the original English. The author in question is Arthur Upfield, and more specifically the hugely successful career in France of his Bony series and the French themes that permeate it. The inclusion of this essay serves as a timely reminder of Upfield’s importance nationally and internationally, and it is perhaps in his novels’ treatment of alterity that he is most closely aligned with the concepts of French Detective Fiction expounded in previous chapters. The adoption of an iconically French name for this sleuth suggests a hybrid identity that is both French and Australian, and in both cases doubly so. Firstly, as a transplanted Napoleon Bonaparte, Bony is doubly unFrench, or not really French: in abstract terms—in terms of his nationality, for example—he is non-French; and in existential terms, his Frenchness is a translation of a representation, a myth at one remove. And on the other hand, his Australianness (or Otherness in Australia) is similarly double: he is exotic and different by virtue of his name and profession; he is also a perverse incarnation of so many Australian myths (master bushman, etc.) whilst failing, at the time when the novels were being written, to meet the standards of Australian identity. Bony is therefore polymorphously auto-antonymic: indigenous and foreign, Australian and non-Australian, Australian and French. As Ramsland and Ramsland demonstrate, this diversity of identity is reflected linguistically in the ‘original English’ with all that this entails for the French translator.

**Changing Territories: Translation and Reterritorialization**

The theme of translation is again taken up in Chapter Five, in which John West-Sooby develops the case for re-evaluating the Série Noire as a significant literary project. To consider the series as a simple outlet for foreign pot-boilers or an efficient way of giving sorely needed opium to the French masses at the end of the Second World War is to underestimate and misrepresent the role played by Duhamel’s series in the story of (French) Detective Fiction and, indeed, the cultural history of France in the second half of the twentieth century. As West-Sooby showcases, the translation at the heart of the Série Noire project was both sophisticated and critical. ‘Critical’ in the sense of being deliberate, focused and agenda-driven, and in the sense of being productive of a discourse: in this case, the discourse of French Detective Fiction. The translation process, by which Australian detective fiction becomes Frenchified, is shown to be at once an exploitation of language, and linguistic flexibility, and a product of it. French translations then take on a double-life, embodying and giving life to the meeting-point of detective fiction (in all its definitions, restrictions and ambitions) and language.

Whilst in Chapter Five we begin to see patterns emerging to suggest that the translation of Australian novels into French detective fiction depends on factors other than purely linguistic ones (with the popularity of certain key Australian authors integrating the French detective canon in waves that do not always reflect the contemporaneity of the ‘original’), Chapter Six looks directly at the publication strategies on which the translation phenomenon depends. Interestingly, Jean Fornasiero’s study of the Wakefield Queens of Crime, which focuses on the rekindling of public interest in the works of Australian authors Patricia Carlon and Charlotte Jay both “home and away”, suggests that the translation of Australian novels into French can in fact be less revealing in terms of the forging a new French identity than in terms of de- or re-constructing their Australianness. Indeed, in the case of Carlon and Jay, both their initial success and what Fornasiero calls their “homecoming” depended as much on their international success as their renown in
Australia itself. And yet, Fornasiero argues that the international success of these two authors is due more to the intrinsic value of their works than was the case for writers like Peter Cheyney, for example, whose ostensible lack of literary quality made his work an ideal vehicle for the allegorical function of French noir. Out of tune with the angst-ridden mood that inspired and was, in turn, fuelled by noir fiction in the post-war era, Carlon and Jay’s novels were less obviously ‘French’. In addition, as seen previously in the case of Barry Maitland, the recognition of a work’s quality tends to overshadow an author’s origins (a successful Australian author necessarily undergoes internationalization), and Carlon and Jay’s identity as ‘good authors’ was generically Anglo-Saxon. As the story of their translation into French is told, it becomes clear that this process, far from denaturing or undoing their Australian identity, reflects upon it and makes it emerge from the background. In particular, the word ‘Australian’ is given renewed currency, more especially still in its negative form, ‘Un-Australian’, whose overuse (and in recent years, abuse) has led to a compromise in meaning. In French translation, Australian texts are forced to confront their Un-Australianness with the result that Australian terms, images and, ultimately, literature are invested with a new, greater value.

Remapping the Territory: Seeing French Woods through the Trees

As Tana French’s narrator reminds us in a passage from her debut detective novel of 2007, *In the Woods*, to enter into the woods is to give up the rules of human civilization and to submit oneself to the (at times quite disabling) changeability of the textual realm:

> What I warn you to remember is that I am a detective. Our relationship with truth is fundamental but cracked, refracting confusingly like fragmented glass. It is the core of our careers, the endgame of every move we make, and we pursue it with strategies painstakingly constructed of lies and concealment and every variation on deception. The truth is the most desirable woman in the world and we are the most jealous lovers, reflexively denying anyone else the slightest glimpse of her. We betray her routinely, spending hours and days stupor-deep in lies, and then turn back to her holding out the lover’s ultimate Möbius strip: But then I only did it because I love you so much.14

In this last line in particular, where the text/narrative voice protests its love for us readers, we are reminded of other such admissions of the book as seducing consciousness, especially the concluding lines of Toni Morrison’s *Jazz*.15 In admissions of this kind, love expresses the way that a text draws in the reader, forcing him or her to read actively. Textuality of this kind is a game of cat and mouse, a series of snares whose ultimate end is the deployment of the reader’s consciousness in an effort to produce meaning. Thus, the book as consciousness (what we might call the intentional text) and reader as consciousness (the product of which for Barthes is the writerly text) interact at the locus of textual erotics. There is give and take on both sides, perhaps in the same way that the eeriness of the woods in French’s novel is

constructed at the intersection of the movement of the trees and the popular imaginary with its long history of fairy tales and childhood nightmares. In this way, the act of entering the woods has a double metonymic function: it is a model for textuality and detective work. The result, inevitably, is to remind us that fiction, or at least the writerly production of text, is an act of detection, and that detective fiction is necessarily reflexive in nature. In the final section of this book two works of French detective fiction with woods in their titles reveal themselves to be very much of the woods in this deconstructive sense. In this light, Brigitte Aubert’s *La mort des bois* (1996) and Fred Vargas’s *Dans les bois éternels* (2006) are analyzed in order to reveal the overlap between this tradition and that of ‘French criticism’, or perhaps more generally the French tradition of merging literature and criticism.

In Chapter Seven, Francoise Grauby reveals how the body of the text is mapped onto the body of the detective, with both being shown to be fundamentally defective. Indeed, Brigitte Aubert’s disabled detective, Élise, becomes a metaphor for textuality, an always already imperfect entity whose identity simultaneously coincides with and eludes or detaches from its own literary form. As such the novel, too, is fundamentally undermined by its own reality; its potential for meaning is disabled at the level of the textual body even as ‘other’ possibilities (or possibilities for otherness) are enabled. Similarly, in Chapter Eight, Fred Vargas’s detective, Jean-Baptiste Adamsberg, occupies a mobile and paradoxical position; where Élise (dis)embodies a liminal space between body and mind, the living and the dead, Adamsberg oscillates between poetry and prose, myth and reality, forging a solution that is predicated on the imperfect, subjective nature of text. As Grauby suggests, such novels are at once faithful to and parodic of the detective-novel tradition of which they are contemporary exemplars. They are defective, then, without being pastiches of the genre. Or rather, the genre is so reliant on pastiche that their flawed detectives and self-referentiality align them very much with the mainstream of French detective fiction. In the way that modernist techniques—of combined attraction and repulsion—are incorporated into its code of practice, detective fiction always already lies inside and outside itself: it exists itself, as Sartre might say, in a way that is particularly French, or that plays deliberately on certain notions and stereotypes of Frenchness. As a genre it is, quite simply, clever and proud of it.

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