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Val McDermid's Lindsay Gordon: A Revolutionary Portrait in Tartan-Noir

Val McDermid'in Lindsay Gordon'ı: İskoç Suç Kurgusunda Devrimci Bir Portre

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Abstract

Considered as one of the most influential crime fiction writers of our time, Val McDermid combines her works with Scotland's city and town culture. Having the opportunity to closely observe the problems faced by the working class in the town of Fife, where she spent her childhood, McDermid enriches her fiction with these narratives. These experiences led her to be the voice of the forgotten, oppressed, and marginalised segments of society in her later writing life. Also challenging the male-dominated structure of traditional crime fiction, McDermid brings a new atmosphere to crime fiction by creating fictional characters such as Lindsay Gordon. Classic crime fiction, which spent its golden age under the hegemony of British writers in the 1930s, presents the reader with stories in which typical male detectives are the protagonists. By the 1970s, Scottish crime fiction, or Tartan-Noir writers, produced essential works in this field. McDermid, who took the title of the Queen of crime fiction, puts women at the centre of her narrative, and in this way, she differs from male Tartan-Noir writers. Drawing on Judith Butler's concept of 'performative gender', this study examines McDermid's challenge to the male-dominated structure of traditional detective fiction and her use of female solid detectives such as Lindsay Gordon. Additionally, McDermid's criticisms of the Margaret Thatcher era will be presented to the reader, supported by references from her novels.

Keywords: Val McDermid, Crime Fiction, Lindsay Gordon, Oppressed Women, Tartan-Noir

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Öz

Günümüzün en etkili polisiye yazarlarından biri olarak kabul edilen Val McDermid, eserlerini İskoçya'nın şehir ve kasaba kültürüyle birleştirir. Çocukluğunun geçtiği Fife kasabasında işçi sınıfının yaşadığı sorunları yakından gözlemleme fırsatı bulan McDermid, kurgusunu bu anlatılarla zenginleştirir. Bu deneyimler onu daha sonraki yazarlık hayatında, toplumun unutulmuş, ezilmiş, ötekileştirilmiş kesimlerinin sesi olmaya yöneltmiştir. Geleneksel polisiyenin erkek egemen yapısına da meydan okuyan McDermid, Lindsay Gordon gibi kurgusal karakterler yaratarak polisiyeye yeni bir hava getirir. 1930'larda İngiliz yazarların hegemonyası altında altın çağını yaşayan klasik polisiye, okuyucuya tipik erkek dedektiflerin başrolde olduğu hikâyeler sunar. 1970'lere gelindiğinde ise İskoç polisiye ya da Tartan-Noir yazarları bu alanda önemli eserler vermiştir. Polisiyenin kraliçesi unvanını alan McDermid, anlatısının merkezine kadınları koyar ve bu yönüyle erkek Tartan-Noir yazarlarından ayrılır. Bu çalışma Judith Butler'ın 'performatif cinsiyet' kavramından hareket ederek, geleneksel polisiye kurgudaki erkek egemen yapıya meydan okuyan ve Lindsay Gordon gibi güçlü kadın dedektifleri kurguya yerleştiren McDermid'i irdeleyecektir. Ayrıca, McDermid'in Margaret Thatcher dönemine yönelik eleştirileri de romanlarından alıntılarla desteklenerek okura sunulacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Val McDermid, Suç Kurgusu, Lindsay Gordon, Baskılanan Kadınlar, Tartan-Noir

Extended Summary

This article focuses on Val McDermid, a famous Scottish crime writer, and tries to show her portrayal of female detectives as protagonists. In this study, a definition of crime will be given, and a summary of the historical development of crime fiction as a male-dominated genre will be presented. This summary is critical in showing the revolution McDermid tries to realise. It is noteworthy that McDermid disrupts the structure of the genre by replacing the male characters used in traditional detective fiction with female characters. She gives voice to solid female characters to solve the crime and shape the plot. It is known that from the beginning of detective fiction until the second half of the twentieth century, male authors and heroes dominated the genre. Unlike modern male crime writers, she aims to transform female characters who are poor, helpless and always in the victim role. In doing so, she reflects on her period's social and political events through the female characters she transforms.

This work shows the reader that being a detective is not a profession reserved for men and that women can be successful detectives. Instead of the men with hats, cigarettes and doughnuts depicted in classic detective novels, McDermid presents the reader with emotionally strong female characters who have started to exist in working life. Val McDermid's first Lindsay Gordon novel, The Murder Report, was published in 1987. With the publication of the book, the reign of Scotland's heterosexual Tartan-Noir scene was seriously shaken. Initially, the inclusion of female protagonists in detective novels was frowned upon. In this way, McDermid shows the reader that the difficulties faced by women in real life are the same as the difficulties faced by writers. Under Margaret Thatcher, women faced the same dilemma in real life. She was hesitant to give women the social voice they deserved. Thatcher's administration created an isolated environment that made it difficult for women writers like McDermid to work. Although Thatcher was a woman, the difficulties she created for women in social and business life were criticised by writers like McDermid. The fact that Thatcher worked with only one female minister despite her long term in office was seen as one of the most significant proofs of this situation. McDermid allows female characters to overcome all difficulties by enabling them to adopt a male mentality when they need to fulfil their duties efficiently.

This study comprehensively discusses McDermid's creation of strong female protagonists who break out of oppressive environments and speak up for other oppressed people. In The Murder Report, Lindsay Gordon challenges typical gender stereotypes by acting as an investigative detective and questioning Thatcher's leadership and restrictive environment. The reader is shown Lindsay's capacity to cope with her difficulties and the changes she undergoes due to her experiences. This study also examines how McDermid's female narrators view social events and how these characters are used as a lens through which to explore fundamental issues of identity, feminism, and power. Through Gordon's experiences, McDermid provides readers and other oppressed groups with a fascinating story that exposes injustice and stereotypes while promoting change.

To sum up, in the historical development of crime fiction, we see that the first examples of the genre date back to Adam and Eve. As human history changes, the genre adapts to conditions and social events. This change is also reflected in the sub-branches of the genre; the subject, space, and time have changed, but the male-dominated structure has not. For this reason, the male-dominated structure could not be broken from the first examples until the 1960s. Classical detectives in this structure are usually tough characters specialised in solving crimes committed against female

victims and finding criminals. In the 1970s, women writers who began dominating the genre introduced readers to strong, confident female detectives instead of males. These successful female characters not only find criminals in the novels but also show a critical approach to the social and political events of the period. They started to speak out on every issue, especially during the Thatcher era, and women detectives became the voice of themselves and marginalized groups. McDermid presented this change and rebellion to the reader through the character of Lindsay Gordon.

1. Introduction

Crime is an illegal act for which the government can punish someone ("Definition of crime," 2023). If the culprit is caught, the law will impose the necessary punishment. According to the most recent World Prison Population List, issued in December 2021, there may be more than 11.5 million criminals globally. In parallel with this, the number of criminals is increasing every second. In addition, thousands of criminals who have not yet been caught are roaming the streets freely.

For this reason, the high number of unsolved crimes draws attention. Since the existence of the first human being, crime and criminals have been living in parallel with the development of humanity. The abundance of newspaper articles and novels written about crime also draws attention. Crime fiction dealing with these issues is divided into different sub-genres within itself. Detective, hard-boiled, and thrillers are famous and attract readers and writers' attention. These sub-genres generally focus on covering criminal activities and their final resolution. The protagonist in crime fiction is often a detective or an amateur investigator who either solves the crime independently or assists. In his book *Crime Fiction*, John Scaggs (2005) states that "various titles have been used to define the genre from Edgar Allen Poe's tales or ratiocination; to the mystery and detective fiction of the turn of the twentieth century and the whodunnit of the period between the First World War and the Second World War" (p.1). Therefore, the starting point for this study is to touch on the brief historical development of crime fiction, which is a historically male-dominated genre, and to present to the reader the efforts of Val McDermid, one of the critical names in Scottish women's crime fiction, to transform this genre and give a voice to oppressed women in the society. In addition, the injustices and marginalisation of women during Margaret Thatcher's prime ministership, which marked the political life of the 1980s, will be explained with examples from McDermid's novels *Report for Murder* 1987 and *Common Murder* 1989.

2. A Brief History of Crime Fiction

Edgar Allen Poe is one of the pioneers of this genre and is regarded as the modern father of crime fiction. Nevertheless, crime fiction has a much earlier history; therefore, it is essential to discuss the genre's origin and development briefly. In her book *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction* (2005), Lee Horsley and John Scaggs' *Crime Fiction* underlined the importance of four stories accepted as the genre's predecessors. These are "two Old Testament tales from the book of Daniel, which originates from the fourth to the first century B.C., and one derived from the Hercules myths (Scaggs, 2005, pp. 7- 8). Although crime fiction dates back to Old Testament stories, it gained popularity in the twentieth century.

Edgar Allen Poe is undoubtedly one of the most influential mystery writers of the nineteenth century. His short stories contributed to this genre immensely. 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue,'

'The Mystery of Marie Roget,' 'The Purloined Letter,' 'The Gold Bug,' and 'Thou Art the Man' marked the birth of mystery and detective stories for contemporary crime fiction. As Sally Munt (1994) stated, "He invented the first fictional detective, C.Auguste Dupin, first appearing in the 'Murders in the Rue Morgue' (1841) as a man of supreme intellect and arrogance" (p. 2). Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* appeared in 1891. The reader encounters the brilliant detective Sherlock Holmes in London's foggy, dark, and muddy streets. By the twentieth century, whodunnit detective stories had become popular. This period is also known as the 'golden age' of crime fiction. The 'golden age' covers the period between the First and Second World Wars and includes many important writers. Whodunnit? Or who admitted the crime is always the question that hangs over the beginning of the story of those writers (Scaggs 2005, p. 35). Agatha Christie, Raymond Chandler, Daphne du Maurier, Nagaro Marsh, Truman Capote, Dorothy L. Sayers, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Margery Allingham, and Josephine Tay are accepted as the forerunners of whodunnit stories of the twentieth century. In her book Twentieth Century Crime Fiction, Lee Horsley (2005) informs the readers that "classic detection is in important respects a very 'English' tradition. As Stephen King has demonstrated, it is misleading to see the development of detective fiction in terms of a strict British-American bifurcation" (p. 14). This genre developed under the dynasty of English writers and turned into a genre in which women writers were also felt to be dominated towards the end of the 1930s. However, the classic and hard-boiled subgenres took particular shape in numerous nations, which will be discussed in Scottish Tartan-Noir later in this study (Knight, 2004, p. 132).

In the inter-war period, the 'golden age' of detective novels flourished in England, led by women writers such as Agatha Christie and D. L. Sayers. While in the first half of the twentieth century, the influence of these writers was felt strongly in England, a similar development in the north of Britain remained to be seen for some time. By the 1970s, the golden age of detective fiction was over. However, British detective writers still followed Agatha Christie's footsteps and produced complicated 'Whodunit' (who-did-why-how) style stories.

Moreover, it was only towards the end of the 1970s that Scotland developed its distinctive Tartan-noir fiction. Matthew Wickman, in his article "Tartan Noir, or, Hard-Boiled Heidegger," defines the origin of the term as "the name accorded by James Ellroy to the most robust industry of crime fiction that has come of age in Scotland over the past thirty years, and whose exponents include Ian Rankin, Val McDermid, Denise Misa, and Kate Atkinson" (Wickman, 2011, p. 87). Although these names are the famous authors of Tartan-Noir, it is firstly necessary to mention William McIlvanney, who is considered the father of the genre at this point. William McIlvanney (1936-2015), considered the father of the 'Tartan detective fiction' movement and called the Camus of Scotland, is one of the most respected writers of his country. In 1966, he was awarded the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize for his first book, Remedy is None, and the Whitbread Novel Prize for his second novel, *Docherty* (1975), about miners. In addition, he unofficially inaugurated Tartan-Noir with 'Laidlaw stories' in 1977.

Unlike Agatha Christie, the main aim for Tartan-Noir writers is to dwell fearlessly on the social context of crime without ignoring the narrative and to focus on life's gloomy and even dark side. Another striking feature of almost all of the 'Tartan-Noir is the protagonists' defiance of authority, which, according to the Scots, is the cornerstone of their national identity. In Scotland, women writers took later to dominate the genre. In the late 1970s, Scotland's social and political problems

offered the ideal atmosphere for Scottish crime writers to give a glimpse into the long-forgotten genre of crime. With the publication of Knot and Crosses in 1987 by Ian Rankin, the story of Tartan-Noir officially begins in Scotland. With the publication of the famous John Rebus, Edinburgh's famous fictional inspector, Rankin "was dubbed as the King of the Tartan-Noir" (Horsley, 2005, p. 99). He puts Scotland, mainly in Edinburgh, at the center of his writing, where his characters travel from neglected and impoverished areas to the lux casinos, expensive hotels, and luxury places. Rebus and Rankin called this dichotomy the city's "underworld and overworld." Rankin has therefore looked forward to offering accurate images of Scotland, expressing small nuances in Edinburgh's daily life, and delivering influential illustrations of the country as financial and societal shifts develop throughout his detective series (Bell, 2008, p. 55).

3. Women Tartan-Noir Writers and Val McDermid

In the last few decades, the increasing popularity of the female protagonist in Scottish crime fiction has demolished what was previously a male-dominant genre of writing. Scottish women writers aim to bring a new perspective to crime fiction by replacing the soulless male characters who sit behind the wheel and constantly consume junk food. Denise Misa, Val McDermid, Louise Welsh, and Kate Atkinson have worked hard to prove that this genre is not a male-dominated writing style. The objection here is that the fictional characters chosen are stereotypical male characters. These writers, thus, rebelled against the lack of women detectives in crime writing. While creating female novel heroines, they brought a different perspective to the genre by choosing from all parts of society. In other words, "They have gone beyond the genre's traditional boundaries, involved in feminist discussions concerning the formation of working-class urban identities" (Rodriguez, 2019, p. 2).

Female crime writing is not a new phenomenon. However, in contrast to the female-centred writing style of tartan noir women writers, most British women writers use male protagonists. Margery Allingham and Dorothy L. Sayers are best known for their mysteries, mostly centred on male detectives (Hill, 2017, p. 271). Likewise, Louisa May Alcott (1832- 1888), Ann Radcliffe (1764- 1823), Jane Austen in *Northanger Abbey* (1817), and Kate Chopin (1850- 1904) wrote thrillers dealing with women's issues; however, they could not emphasise female characters since the patriarchal society's pressure on them. On the Scottish side, the interest of women writers in the genre started in the 1970s. As stated above, Tartan noir grew in popularity in Scotland and gradually ceased to be a male-dominated genre. Most of the authors in Tartan-Noir regarded themselves as leftist and revolutionary. The main difference between golden-age writers and Tartan-Noir is to be on the side of power and the state no matter what. As Julian Symons (1972, as cited in Katzensteiner, 2009) stated, golden-age writers anticipated the governing class' perspective without questioning the established social order:

The idea is that these [Golden Age detective novels] were distinctive fairy tales that conveyed social and even political perspectives. It is reasonable to conclude that practically all the British and American authors of the 1920s and 1930s were indisputably right-wing. This is not to imply that they were openly anti-Semitic or anti-Radical, but rather that their feelings were essentially conservative. It would have been impossible for them to develop a Jewish or working-class detective who is forcefully aware of his roots because such figures would have appeared entirely out of place. It would have been as hard for them to design a cop who beats up suspects. […] Recognizing that such things occurred, they would have considered it inappropriate to write about

them since the police were representatives of established society and should not be portrayed as misbehaving (p. 105).

In other words, there is no place for golden-age authors to criticise the government and see the brutal police as the ideological weapon of the state, which is used to maintain power and keep the masses under control. Unlike them, authors such as Val McDermid, Denise Mina, and Lin Anderson are only a few women who have defied gender, genre, and patriarchal expectations to create critical female protagonists in conventionally male roles (Hill, 2017, p. 53). They challenge the misogyny and patriarchy in society and the working environment and aim to be the voice of marginalised and oppressed people. What is expected from female solid writers is to construct their novels in modern Scotland and reflect the societal and political issues through the eyes of a heroine.

The history of cities and traditions of modern Scotland is intertwined with the stories of Scots. Val McDermid, who combines these stories with Scottish patriotism, was born near Fife, Scotland. She was a member of a working-class family in Fife. Her grandparents were working in a mining factory where she spent the summers. The memories she accumulated during these visits greatly influenced her writing life. Later on, she started her university education in Oxford, and after graduating from there, she began her career as a journalist in England. Her work as a journalist allowed her to investigate events in depth and look at them from different angles, laying the foundation for her to write critical stories recognised worldwide in crime fiction. In her works, she never gives up criticising England, the kingdom, and the brutal police force based on patriarchy. McDermid, who brought significant female fictional characters such as Lindsay Gordon, Kate Brannigan, Carol Jordan, and Karen Pirie to the literary world, presents the social picture of the 1980s and 1990s to the reader through these characters. For instance, Lindsay, In *Report for Murder,* openly criticises the unjust treatment of the British: "I can't help feeling it wouldn't be such a bad thing if the public schools felt the pinch like everyone else. It seems unreal to worry about playing fields when many state schools can't afford enough books to go around" (McDermid, 1987, p. 32). As Cathrine Avery (2017) commented, these quotations are bold, uncompromising commentaries on the inequalities that are part of everyday life in Britain at the time McDermid was writing; they question the disparity between state and private education, the political manoeuvrings of Margaret Thatcher and the institutional misogyny and homophobia of the police force (p. 172).

Thus, each of her stories addresses the gender-related issues, identity problems of Scots, and the harsh living conditions embedded in society. Her tone of writing and the direct comments that she directed to the political and social events of the era are ironic and cynical. She invites the reader. In other words, she invites readers to respond to her works by focusing on Margaret Thatcher, the Iron Lady of the 1980s and 1990s, institutional misogyny, and the marginalised individuals of Scotland. McDermid struggled against the political system and endeavoured to overturn male dominance in the literary world.

The typical detective figure within the hard-boiled form is always a man with specific characteristics. Raymond Chandler, one of the pioneers of detective fiction, created the world-famous fictional hero Philip Marlowe. From the 1930s until the 1950s, Marlowe was a hard-boiled private investigator operating in Los Angeles' nasty underworld ((The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2011)). Marlowe is cynically clever and plays a tough-guy role in the novels. Raymond Chandler, in *Simple Art of Murde*r (1972), states that a male detective is the only person who can solve any crime, no matter how complex or straightforward:

"Down these mean streets, a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid. The detective in this kind of story must be such a man. He is the hero; he is everything. He must be a complete man and a common person and yet an unusual man. He must be, to use a rather weathered phrase, a man of honour (Chandler, 1972, pp. 16-17).

It is clear from this quotation that Chandler uses very sexist language and has a binary approach in his depiction of the hard-boiled form. As Avery (2017) underlined, "the hero is the repeated prototype, also as an expectation of what Chandler calls 'extraordinary' masculine (p. 23). On the other hand, McDermid, by writing about strong women as detectives against the odds, aims to create a character who is essentially a female version of Marlowe's 'tough guy.' Besides, the female characters are becoming subjects of the novel rather than objects, as victims of crimes (Hill, 2017, p. 56).

At this point, it is worth considering Judith Butler's opinions on gender and its performativity. Gender is subjected to certain social conventions, causing individuals to think of binary oppositions such as male and female, good and evil, and nature and culture. While defining the detective, Chandler points out specific behaviour patterns, as cited above. These patterns decide who we are and how we behave in all areas of life. Therefore, in describing women and men, crime and criminals, he draws attention to the importance of binary oppositions and positions himself there. Likewise, feminists have made a similar mistake, suggesting that all women share common interests and have similar traits (Butler, 2007, p. 34). As Lorna Hill (2017) stated, "Gender is, therefore, a performance relating to what you do at certain times rather than who you are" (p. 56). In other words, Butler is against the Notion of gender performed on masculinity, feminity, and strict rules. Performativity needs to be preserved through diverse and unique performances rather than being restricted to gender roles. Therefore, for Tartan-Noir and McDermid, gender is not the decisive characteristic of sex because, as Butler asserted, gender is adaptable, interchangeable, debatable, and open to reproduction.

McDermid's writing style and use of characters support Butler's gender rejection. In other words, she gives voice to women narrators by rejecting and deconstructing the traditional understanding of gender. She questions the heterosexual and patriarchal point of view and aims to bring a fresh perspective to her novels by women detectives. She never rejects using male characters in her books and tries to give a place to everybody in her stories. In doing so, she glorifies not traditional male-dominated characters but innovative male characters who are open to change and can accept different ideas and identities.

4. A Female Rebel, Lindsay Gordon

Val McDermid's first Lindsay Gordon novel, *Report for Murder*, was published in 1987. With the novel's publication, Scotland's heterosexual Tartan-Noir environment's throne has shaken sharply. Her invention of Lindsay Gordon, a feminist lesbian amateur detective, casts a focus on the lesbian experience in Scottish culture (Katzensteiner, 2009, p. 83). In other words, McDermid challenges traditional British crime fiction using lesbian female detective Lindsay Gordon. Lorna Hills draws attention to this novelty by saying, "She cleverly uses Lindsay to challenge the perception that investigating and reporting on crimes can only be done properly by a man" (2017, p. 55). By doing that, she aims to revise the portrayal of women in detective novels as a source of issues and disorder (Palmer, 1991, p. 15). It is a fact that the victims in traditional detective

novels are women. She dies, is raped, or disappears, and a male detective searches for the criminals. Conversely, McDermid does the opposite, bringing strong female detectives to search for murdered men.

In *Report for Murder*, McDermid explicitly informs the reader that her narrator is not like the traditional detective; she is different from the usual: "How could a cynical socialist lesbian feminist journalist as she mockingly described herself) be on her way to spend a weekend in a girls' public school?" (McDermid, 1987, p.16). In the years when the book was written, it was challenging to use a lesbian character and even to declare this preference to society. This period also coincided with the othering of lesbian, gay, and other marginalised groups in Britain. In the same year that *Report for Murder* was published, Margaret Thatcher, The Iron Lady, was re-elected and at the top of her power. The 1987 British English presidential vote was the third consecutive election won by the Conservative Party. This landslide victory, which went down in British history, also consolidated Margaret Thatcher's power. No one in history could do this until then except Thatcher. Unfortunately, Britain's women and other marginal groups suffered the most under Thatcher. In an interview with the Independent on September 12, 2010, Val McDermid shares her sincere and true feelings with the reader and sees the period as the most devastating and intimidating thing in her life.

Margaret Thatcher's Conservatives introduced Section 28, the harsh law designed to silence us, in the 1980s. However, it had an adverse impact. They sought to remove LGBT problems from the political agenda in the United Kingdom, but we'd come too far to let that happen. Similarly to what happened in the United States after Stonewall, LGBT people were mobilised; a generation was radicalised. History demonstrates that our drive to be heard triumphed against their reluctance to listen. But we'd grown up enough not to hammer our readers with "pity me" protest literature. And then all these fantastic novels started to arrive. Curious readers began to purchase them. Then, word of mouth began to spread. Fingersmith and other cult classics have become commercial hits. (Independent, 2010).

This repressive environment created under the rule of Thatcher also led to difficulties for writers like McDermid. Most prominent publishing houses ignored her at the beginning of her writing career. In an interview with the Independent newspaper, she expresses her astonishment at that period in the following remarks when she decided to publish the first Lindsay Gordon novel: "Still even in the late 1990s, When I suggested to my agent a novel with a lesbian theme, she was a ghost," That would be commercial suicide," she protested (Independent, 2010). McDermid's representative is not wrong, considering the political environment of the 1980s. The oppression and the intolerance of alternative identities in Britain isolated individuals and pushed them to different fears. However, McDermid, aware of the significant risk she was taking, stated that she would also defend the rights of heterosexual individuals and that she aimed to try to change the system that marginalised them regardless of their identities. The author, thus, accepted the heterosexual environment because of her sexual identity and the marginal character she chose.

On the contrary, she defended their rights: "I don't set out to hammer home a message or titillate. And I'm not a separatist. I spend most of my life in a small village where my wife and I are the only out lesbians, but we are as much a part of the community as anyone else" (Independent, 2010). McDermid wants to give voice to groups marginalised by the patriarchal order and ignored even by big publishing houses. Although at first McDermid's efforts seemed futile in the main-

stream British publishing world, writers such as Sarah Waters state that McDermid had a positive impact not only on lesbians but on all those who were ignored in British society.

Sarah Waters believes that our rise to the centre of literary life is related to a broader loosening in British culture. "I think there's been a shift in people's perceptions of what constitutes British literature in the last few years," she explained, "so it's not just lesbian and gay voices that have been welcomed into the mainstream, but a range of ethnic voices as well." "Our books have entered the mainstream alongside novels such as Brick Lane and White Teeth." I believe that British culture has opened and British society has relaxed. Our books have performed well while we have gained legal victories; civil partnerships have arrived. "I think there's been a change in people's habits which was not thinkable a decade ago" (Independent, 2010).

This unimaginable situation is also reflected in *Report for Murder*, and Lindsay Gordon, contrary to what is expected of her, adopts a rather cold-blooded attitude when she encounters the murder:

"What do you mean?" asked Lindsay indignantly. "Well, I couldn't have sat on the end of a phone all day rattling off sensational stories about Lorna's murder. I don't know how you can be so cool about it." Lindsay shook her head, disappointed. "It's the job I do. I've been trained to forget my feelings and do the business. And I do it very well. Don't think I've enjoyed today." (McDermid, 1987, p. 133).

McDermid's female characters replace Raymond Chandler's cold-blooded male detectives, and the male-dominated order is deconstructed at the novel's beginning. Likewise, Lorna Hill (2017) underlines the importance of the new version of Philip Marlowe, which is different from the former: "a female heroine with a brain who did not have to phone in male companions whenever something tough occurred" (p. 55). Unlike the traditional hard-boiled form of writing, which puts the male protagonist before everything else, McDermid develops a female heroine, giving her a voice to speak freely and solve the crime as expected of a male hero.

With these novels, women started to be heard by people, though the progress was slow. Although the situation of women improved in the 1980s compared to the Victorian Era, a male-dominated environment was strictly apparent in business life. Many people in society expected women to stay at home and be mothers. Most women who joined the working life were paid less than men and were constantly subjected to psychological harassment, even though both men and women did the same work. After Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister, British women hoped that conditions would improve for them after Thatcher became Prime Minister. But things did not turn out as they expected. The most ironic situation happened in her cabinet during her long-term presidency. Thatcher did not give enough seats[1] in her cabinet to women during her prime ministership and did not open the anticipated opportunities for women in business life.

In his book *American Culture in the 1980s,* Graham Thompson (2007, as cited in Avery, 2017) asserted that the Christian extreme right, which championed family values such as a stay-at-home mother and was openly opposed to abortion, and single parenting, was vocal in its opposition to feminism (p.146). McDermid's work also plays a vital role in ascertaining the hidden truths of the

1 For more information please also look: https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2020/11/27/the-crown-margaret-thatcher-feminism-the-queen/.

Thatcher era. Besides being a successful woman, it was obvious that she was not a sister to other women. As Natasha Walter, a writer and a feminist campaigner, underlined:

Thatcher was not a feminist: she showed no concern for social equality and understood nothing about female solidarity. I knew it then, and I know it now; by the time I graduated from high school, I was a veteran of protests that echoed the slogan Maggie Maggie Maggie Out Out Out. We must never forget her heinous policies or whitewash her toxic legacy. (Reporter, 2017).

Although Thatcher was a woman, she was not very popular among feminists due to her failure to improve the conditions of women in society and her lack of openness to different identities. She, therefore, offers readers the opportunity to challenge patriarchal ideology in every aspect of individuals' social and private lives.

In *Report for Murder,* when McDermid shares Lindsay's conversation with the news editor of the Clarion, a Glasgow-based newspaper, Duncan Morrison, the reader can quickly feel the tension between the patriarchy and Lindsay: "He threw a memo to her and said, "Get busy on that. A real tear-jerker there. Just the job for you. What it needs is a woman's touch"(McDermid, 1987, p. 245). What Lindsay is expected to do is accept the job that Morrison has offered to her.

As a woman, she has no right to say no in a male-dominated work environment. What is expected of a woman is to be a servant to the patriarchal system, just like in the Victorian era. Although time and place have changed, the angel in the house has replaced the Victorian concept of the angel in the work. But Lindsay is a solid and outspoken character, and she will deconstruct the patriarchal order by refusing this job: "The story was about a woman who had given birth to twins after surgeons had told her she would never have a child. "Wait a minute, Duncan," Lindsay moaned. "I'm not here to do this sort of crappy feature. Woman's touch, my arse. What this needs is a dollop of heavy-handed sentimentality, and you bloody well know that's not my line" (McDermid, 1987, p. 246). These female protagonists challenge the patriarchal system and typical assumptions that males solve crimes by writing about powerful women who drive the story and solve the crime (Hill, 2017, p. 56). In other words, In the 1080s, the journalism profession was male-dominated, so Lindsay was expected to serve men, not lead them. Nonetheless, the novel's clash between Lindsay's expectations and professionalism is a recurrent theme.

Another critical issue that McDermid touches upon through the eyes of the character Lindsay Gordon is discrimination in the public sphere. Feminist detective novel shows the polarising aspect of separatism. What sets McDermid apart from most of her Tartan-Noir contemporaries is her open attention to sexual orientation (Katzensteiner, 2009, p. 53). In other words, McDermid does not hide the truth or create a mystery; instead, she fearlessly displays her character's sexual identity to the reader. This lets the reader know about different types of people from various classes within Scotland.

Regarding promoting the lesbian identity, *Common Murder* (1989) plays a critical role in McDermid's writing. The story takes place in Scotland, and Lindsay Gordon, a reporter, shows up in the second novel in the series. Lindsay must utilise all of her investigative reporting skills when a former lover is accused of murder at a women's peace camp. When tension at a women's peace camp erupts into murder, a protest group makes headlines. Already on the scene, journalist Lindsay Gordon struggles to manage personal and professional duties (McDermid, n.d.). During the story, Lindsay Gordon falls in love with Cordelia and decides to live with her. Cordelia is a rich

woman living a luxurious life, yet Lindsay has an average life, and this imbalance would be a big problem for their relationship. To show the devastating effect of this imbalance, She quickly understands that their disparity would ultimately lead to the breakdown of her connection with Cordelia. Besides, this unequal relationship resembles England and Scotland's political and social clash.

The novel *Common Murder* introduces issues heavily debated in the 1980s, including equality, inequality, and lesbian identity politics. This is further developed in *Common Murder* when Lindsay has, despite her doubts, come to London to live with Cordelia: "These days, however, it seemed that what they had to say to each other could easily be accommodated in the hours between work and sleep. Indeed, Lindsay was beginning to find it easier to open her heart to friends who weren't Cordelia (McDermid, 1989, p.21). From these lines, Lindsay reassesses her relationship with Cordelia and begins to find a way to leave her. However, the story's focal point is the fictional Brownlow camp, where a group of women protest against the U.S. missile program within the U.K. In the story, the dominant ideology did not like that Lindsay took up political issues and raised the flag of rebellion against Thatcher and the USA in the fictional world. To get rid of these women protestors, patriarchy and far-right politics supported Ratepayers in the novel: "Rupert Crabtree was the leader of Ratepayers against Brownlow's destruction pressure group dedicated to the removal of the peace women from the common" (McDermid, 1989, p. 22). As Catherine Avery (2017) stated, this gender prejudice may also be seen in the judicial reactions to nonviolent women's protests against cruise missiles. Protests against nuclear weapons by women-only activists fueled anti-lesbian sentiment and highlighted the gap between feminist and government policies (p. 181).

McDermid, in *Common Murder,* openly supports women protestors in their clash between the state and the police force. In September 1981, women chained themselves near Raf, England. This protest is known as the Greenham Common Disarmament organisation. After starting with only 36 women, the protest spread nationwide, gathering around 36.000 anti-nuclear proliferation women. While investigating a murder near the camp, Lindsay witnessed the 36.000 women marching towards the American airbase at Brownlow Common (McDermid, 1989, p. 25). During the protest, there were repeated brutal infiltration attempts by the police to break up the camp. McDermid shows the lethal police force and the heavy politics of Margeret Thatcher, gives voice to protestors, and lets readers decide who is right. The police were more aggressive than average because they were all women. Although Lindsay offers to call the police, peace camp residents reject it: "It was a waste of time calling the police, Lindsay. They just don't want to know" (McDermid, 1989, p. 50). They think they are sub-human because protesting the U.S. nuclear program means being rebellious to their female counterpart, Margaret Thatcher. The fact that women were subjected to all kinds of harassment, assault, and mobbing because of their justified protests and that the police watched instead of intervening was considered normal for the Thatcher era. This camp was recognised as a rebellion against the legitimate government. The police showed who is the authority by making harsh interventions against the Greenham women. While this is happening in politics, the free press is expected to be on the side of women. However, almost all of the newspapers in England at that time became Thatcher's ideological weapon. For example, The Daily Express, one of the most important newspapers of the period, carried the legitimate struggle of women on the front page with sarcastic remarks: "The Greenham Common women were "a ragtag and bobtail of politically motivated harpies" (The Age of Superwoman: Margaret Thatcher and the 1980s – Stockroom, n.d.).

French Philosopher Louis Althusser claims that the ruling class, patriarchy in McDermid's novel, uses media, state, police force, and even family as an ideological weapon to dominate the working class, as women in the story (Leitch, 2001, p. 1483). When Greenham women challenged the dominant socio-economic class's social order, Thatcher used the press, police, and families to stabilise the order in society. After that, the black propaganda started not to let a hole in their castle: "You either stay at home and be a proper wife and mother, or you go to Greenham, but noth both" (McSmith, 2010, p. 47, as cited in Avery, 2017, p. 183). Leaving only one option for women, men did not want them to raise their consciousness by participating in similar demonstrations in some way. McDermid, who harshly criticises the fact that women are left with no choice, gives Lindsay the role of an observer in her fiction and ensures that the events reach the reader successfully:

"How did you feel about that mission of your husband's? How did it affect you?" Lindsay probed. Mrs. Crabtree shrugged. "I thought he was doing the right thing to oppose the camp. Those women have no morals. They even bring their children to live in those shocking conditions. No self-respecting mother would do that. No, Rupert was right. The missiles are there for our protection, after all. And that peace camp is such an eyesore." (McDermid, 1989, pp. 131- 132).

In other words, it is very clear from the citation that Mrs. Crabree behaves like she is an ideological weapon of the patriarchy. Instead of supporting women who did not want U.S. nuclear weapons, Crabtree described them as vile creatures. Such women are only one of the obstacles to the revolution McDermid intends to make. Moreover, they have lost their identity and become the state's mouthpiece. In addition, women like Mrs. Crabtree refuse to support the protesters and be a voice for change with them. She refuses to be a member of McDermid's women-only groups. As Cathrine Avery (2017) underlined, the Gordon books rely primarily on long descriptive passages that reveal Gordon's cognitive processes through a mix of feminist and socialist ideas (p. 183): "They sat in a big circle, and each spoke in turn, without interruption" (McDermid, 1989, p. 73).

With this novel, McDermid gives voice to marginalised women and criticises the tabloid newspapers that have become the mouthpiece of the dominant ideology, the harsh police force, and, most importantly, the politics of Thatcher-era Britain. McDermid's *Common for Murder* also opposes the violence legitimised by the state. While presenting the events to the reader, the narrator, Lindsay, remains an observer and illustrates an objective point of view. Challenging the traditional women who oppose the justified protests of the Greenham women, McDermid offers alternative environments where women can live without the need for men. By deconstructing the hostile atmosphere of the 1980s on alternative identities, The male-dominated understanding of the hard-boiled form led by Raymond Chandler is ironically subverted by lesbian female characters in McDermid's writing. As mentioned earlier, McDermid was ignored by major publishing houses for a long time because of her portrayal of a lesbian character. However, the message McDermid wanted to give people here is clear. McDermid did not wish to impose a lesbian life on people but to inform readers that there can be different identities and different lives in society. In both *Common for Murder* and *Report for Murder*, McDermid criticised the period through Lindsay Gordon and succeeded in making their voices heard by giving leading roles to characters who had not previously appeared in crime fiction. While constructing the plot, McDermid combined the fictional female characters she created with real places and reflected the proper historical and social events of the period in her novels. At the end of the novel *Common Murder*, McDermid

shares an excerpt from Daily Clarion, May 11, 198-, with the title 'Missiles To Go' to show the reader that Greenham, Brownlow in the fiction, the campaign would never have succeeded without determination, dedication, and belief of women who are tortured, oppressed and ostracised by the patriarchy and the state2: "The Pentagon announced last night that the phased withdrawal of cruise missiles from Brownlow Common will begin in November" (McDermid, 1989, p. 402). This excerpt shows that the movement for change initiated by the Greenham women was successful. At first, they were subjected to both psychological and physical violence, but the women did not back down from the organisation they believed in. Under pressure from the USA, Thatcher used all the means of the state, but she could not make the protesters step back; on the contrary, nuclear weapons started to be taken out of the borders of England. Both Greenham Women and McDermid succeeded in deconstructing the male-dominated crime fiction genre by allowing women to speak freely in their stories.

Conclusion

After the world's creation, the first crime is committed between the children of the first human being after his creation and subsequent marriage. Crime, which can easily be committed even between people of the same blood, is one of humanity's most important problems. When we look at the definition of crime, it can be briefly defined as actions punishable by law. Therefore, crime can be divided into two types: those that can be caught and those that cannot be detected.

Crime Fiction, on the other hand, is a genre that describes mysterious, fearful, crime-related events that excite the reader. Although it has different types, the name crime fiction is generally used. Although the development of this genre dates back to the nineteenth century, the first stories in the genre date back to the Old Testament. The *Sherlock Holmes* series written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in 1887 increased interest in this genre. By the 1920s, authors such as Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, and Raymond Chandler, the genre's golden age writers, produced viral stories. It took until the 1970s for the genre, which was heavily influenced by England in this period, to become popular in Scotland. Developing as a male-dominated genre under the leadership of Ian Rankin, Tartan-Noir, Scottish detective fiction, unlike English writers, brings a sarcastic and cynical perspective to social and political issues. The dominance of Scottish women writers in Tartan-Noir began in the 1980s.

Val McDermid, known as the genre's Queen, reflects the stories of the territories dominated by the working class in her fiction. As seen in the examples taken from the novels *Report for Murder* and *Common Murder* in our study, McDermid criticises the Margaret Thatcher era in the 1980s. McDermid tries to be the voice of the characters whose voices are suppressed in Scotland and marginalised because of their lifestyles. Lindsay Gordon, the narrator of both novels, is a lesbian character. Lindsay, who tries to be the voice of women who are marginalised because of this preference, presents the oppression experienced by women to the reader with examples both in the workplace where she works and in the events she encounters in society. Through Lindsay Gordon, McDermid manages to deconstruct both the male-dominated crime fiction and the oppressive environment of the Thatcher era. While most writers at the time were afraid to address such issues, McDermid gave a voice to those despised and ignored in Britain, even though it could have ended her writing career. Therefore, McDermid succeeded in both her and women's revolutions in Britain.

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