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Serial Killers and the Media

1966

Manchester, 6 May

The Moors Murders Legacy

atural re- Early in the morning of 7th October, 1965 the
d Hind- Police in Hyde, Greater Manchester, received a
e for fu- phone call from David Smith. He was in a very
explores agitated and frightened state. He told the Police
e Moors that the night before he had witnessed a murder
nd geo- at 16, Wardle Brook Ave, Hattersley. The prop-
eorting erty was occupied by Smith's sister-in-law Myra
ich have Hindley and her lover Ian Brady. Hindley's
ases e.g. grandmother also lived at the property. The po-
discusses lice went to the address that morning and found
ow they the body of Edward Evans. They immediately
and art. arrested Brady. Four days later, Hindley was
al killing arrested. On 15th October 1965, The police
fixation recovered two suitcases belonging to Brady at
s, and it Manchester Central Station. The suitcases con-
and po- tain photographs and the tape of the torture of
ch cases Lesley Ann Downey. Lesley Ann Downey had
he treat- gone missing from a fair, on Boxing Day 1964.

edia also Her body and that
ature of of John Kilbride was
en men- recovered from the
e is ever Moors above Man-
ok draws chester. John Kilbride
ogy and had been reported
ention- missing in November
nd then 1963. He had disap-
recent peared after helping
liffe and stall holders clear up
at Ashton Market.

atural re- Thus began one of
d Hind- the most notorious
e for fu- criminal cases in Brit-
explores ish penal history. From that point onwards, the
e Moors case has rarely if ever been out of the headlines.
nd geo- Rupert Thompson's novel *Death of a Murderer*
eorting (Thomson, 2008) involves a prison officer sent
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to guard the body of a female killer -she is never named but the reader knows that it is Hindley. Thompson writes of " how deeply that series of murders had embedded itself in the nation's psyche. No one who had been alive at the time could ever be entirely free of it."

Brady and Hindley's trial began on 19th April, 1966 at Chester Assizes. This was the first high profile murder case since the passing of The Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Act which suspended the death penalty for five years. At the end of the trial in May, 1966 Brady is found guilty of the murders of

Ian Cummins, Marian Foley and Martin King



Palgrave Studies in Crime, Media and Culture

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Serial Killers and the Media

The Moors Murders Legacy

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1

Introduction

Using the Moors Murders as a case study through which to explore the symbiotic relationship between serial killing and the mass media, this book is a multi-dimensional analysis of the social and cultural legacy of the crimes of Ian Brady and Myra Hindley.

Using the research approach of bricolage, the crimes' authors examine this prime example of mediated murder via inter-disciplinary academic and non-academic accounts, print media, film, TV drama, music and art, with chapters focusing on serial killing as a modern phenomenon, a factual account and timeline of the role of victims, Brady and Hindley's trial and the reporting of their deaths, Hindley's status as 'the most evil woman in Britain' and a reflection on the process and ethical implications of engaging in this area of work.

This chapter will outline the structure, content and overall approach of the book. It is important to start with a clear statement of the purpose of this work. It is not an attempt to 'solve' any mysteries about the crimes of the Moors Murderers. There is no new information about the case in this volume. The chapter also outlines the main themes that are examined in greater depth throughout the work. It also discusses bricolage as a research method and how this approach is used across the work.

Mediatised Murder

Since their arrest in October 1966, Brady and Hindley have never been out of the media spotlight for any prolonged period, if at all. In the research for this book, we have read literally thousands of newspaper articles and academic papers and watched television programmes and internet material that consider aspects of the crime. There is a similar number of op-ed pieces that contemplate the meaning or significance of Brady and Hindley and their actions and how society should respond to them. The internet has seen an exponential growth in interest in serial killers. Again, the Moors Murders is one of the most widely examined and discussed cases. The nature of some of this material is simply salacious and disturbing, crassly insensitive to the feelings and suffering of the families of their victims. The transcript and recording of the tape of the torture of Lesley Ann Downey appears relatively easy to access on the internet. If an artist wants to shock then using a reference to the Moors Murder is guaranteed to produce a reaction. This was true for punk rock when Chrissie Hynde (The Pretenders) and Steve Strange (Visage) formed the Moors Murderers and recorded one single *Free Hindley*. It was also the case for Young British Artists when Marcus Harvey's painting *Myra* was part of the Sensation exhibition at the Royal Academy. The painting is a representation of the Hindley arrest photograph but made up of children's handprints. The exhibition was picketed and the painting vandalised.

The book will argue that the media responses to these appalling crimes created a template for future media responses to serial killers. This includes the focus on the motivation of the killers. These processes often occur to exploit or exclude any consideration of the impact of such crimes on the families of the victims, who are thrust into the media spotlight.

From the moment of the arrest of Brady in October 1965, the case has been a consistent feature of popular and media culture. The influence of the Moors Murders is so profound that it can be regarded as producing a modern archetype of mediatised murder. The features of the archetype include the symbiotic relationship between the media and crime, including, for example, dubious ethical practices such as the payment of witnesses, the obsession with exploring the minute details of the lives of the perpetrators, an emphasis on constructing a psychological profile, which attempts to explain the killers' motivations, the ways in which the

killers are given a nickname as part of their celebrity status and the exploitation of the victims' families suffering. The modern roots of these developments can be traced back to Manchester in the mid-1960s. The first industrial city also gave the UK its first celebrity serial killers, at a time when murder on the TV screen was not a staple diet of the UK (and, indeed, global) population as it is now.

That is not to say that there were no previous UK serial killers who caught the press and public's imagination. Neville Heath was responsible for the deaths of two young women in London in 1946, and was dubbed 'the lady killer' by the press. John Haigh 'the acid bath murderer' was convicted of the murder of six victims between 1944 and 1949, disposing of their bodies using sulphuric acid. John Christie was convicted of eight murders in the 1940s and 1950s. His victims were strangled in his flat at 10 Rillington Place in London. Peter Manuel, an American-Scottish serial killer was convicted of murdering seven people across Southern Scotland between 1956 and 1958, nicknamed 'the Beast of Birkenshaw'. All were hanged.

However, we would argue that the rise of TV in the home, which grew exponentially between the late 1950s and mid-1960s, gives an additional dimension to the celebrity status afforded to Brady and Hindley and this will be explored further within the chapters of the book.

This collection will examine the wider social, media and cultural responses to the awful crimes of Brady and Hindley. It includes a discussion on the nature of evil, an analysis of representations in film, drama, novels and art. In addition, the work will use this case to question the ethics of the *serial killing industry*. Haggerty (2009) argues that serial killing is essentially a phenomenon of modernity. One of the key features of modernity is the role of mass media and the rise of celebrity culture. He suggests that there is a symbiotic relationship between the media and serial killers. These themes are explored throughout. The treatment of Brady and Hindley also raises profound questions about the nature of punishment including the links between mental illness and crime, and whether there is ever the prospect of redemption. There are many books on this case. The overwhelming majority of them are a salacious retelling of the events or a claim to provide new information, particularly clues to the whereabouts of the body of Keith Bennett.

The motivation for writing this collection comes from the authors' previous work in this area. The authors have examined cultural representations of serial killers, sexual violence policing and police officers. This

research includes explorations of the representations of place and serious violent crime as well as the response of police officers to the portrayal of the investigations of such events. Research methods used in previous works include bricolage, interviewing and thematic analysis and the analysis of visual texts using a combination of textual and discourse analysis. The authors have, therefore, begun to examine the responses to the crimes of Brady and Hindley. The main thrust of the argument is that the Moors Murders represent a case study and that broader responses to these crimes provide a template for an analysis of modern media and its symbiotic relationship with serial killers and serial killing.

This introductory narrative outlines some of the key themes of the work—the way in which the crimes of Brady and Hindley, the so-called Moors Murderers, have provided a template for media reporting and cultural responses to serial killing. The term serial killer was not in popular usage in the 1960s. FBI Criminal Investigator Robert Ressler is credited with coining the phrase in the 1970s. The awarding of a nickname, the focus on the killers at the expense of the victims, attempts to explore the motivation and reasons are now standard features of the mediated event that serial killing has become. The media's continuing interest in the minutiae of the case is also a key theme for exploration and the relationship between past and present, a key theme as explored by modern day crime writers such as David Peace and Didier Daeninckx will also be considered. The work of Nora (1989), Rejinders (2010) and previous work by King and Cummins (2013) will be built on to explore the role of place as central to media reporting of violent crime. Brady and Hindley are known as the Moors Murderers because of the place where the bodies were buried. The case has also been a focus for debates about crime and punishment. For example, Hindley's campaign for parole will be explored as it was, unintentionally, one of the factors in the development of the whole life tariff in the UK.

Key Themes and Approaches

There are a number of key themes that are examined in this volume. All of the research used bricolage as a method.

Bricolage as an approach is supported by Levi Strauss' (1972) ideas on the complexity and unpredictability of the cultural domain. Lincoln

(2001) sees the bricoleur as anthropologist. Wibberley (2012:6) argues 'bricolage brings together in some form, different sources of data'. It is important to consider the process by which the bricolage is built. It forms a reflexive commentary (Wibberley 2012). Using bricolage as a research method allows, in fact requires, the researcher to draw on a wide range of texts and sources. The continued fascination with the Moors Murders means that there is a wide range of material to be considered here. The attraction of bricolage is that there is not necessarily a hierarchy of the significance of texts that need to be observed. This work then considers academic texts on psychology, sociology, criminology and penal theory, alongside works of art and fiction. Bricolage is an inclusive not an exclusionary approach. We, therefore, consider a wide range of texts. The research considers novels, TV dramas, true crime accounts, Harvey's painting of Hindley and even a book by Brady himself. The true crime accounts included for this study were *Beyond Belief* (Williams 1967), *The Trial of the Moors Murders* (Goodman 1986), *The Lost Boy* (Staff 2008), *Topping the Autobiography* (Topping 1989), *Witness* (Smith and Lee 2011) and *One of Your Own* (Lee 2010). The commentary is based on viewing of the TV dramas such as *Longford* (Hooper 2006) and *See No Evil* (Menaul 2006) as well as readings of the novels *Myra Beyond Saddleworth* (Rafferty 2012), *Death of a Murderer* (Thomson 2007) and *Alma Cogan* (Burn 1991). The Moors Murders are so deeply embedded in British popular culture that it is important to consider a wide range of responses to these events.

Kincheloe (2005) argues that bricolage allows the researchers to construct a method from the tools that are at hand. He suggests that it is a fundamentally radical approach that challenges the notion that there are 'correct' methodologies that are universally applicable. The bricoleur creates a new hybrid method for each new project. In this work, bricolage is the overall approach, but it has been developed or used differently for the themes that we explore. This involves a slightly different focus or concentration on sources or texts. Bricolage can be viewed as a toolbox approach. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) regard bricolage as an eclectic approach that allows the researcher to draw on methods from a range of disciplines and employ them as appropriate. This project is somewhat unusual. The chapters can be read as individual essays. However, they have all been jointly written by the authors. This means that we can bring a range of perspectives, for example, from feminism, cultural studies and criminology, to

each of the areas that are examined. All the chapters involved the analysis of a wide range of sources including, film, TV dramas and novels alongside more traditional academic texts.

Kincheloe (2005) emphasises that bricolage requires researchers to move beyond their own disciplines. He argues that researchers become too narrow in their focus and concerns. This process of engaging with new methods and conceptual paradigms is a vital one in that it leads to new areas of research and knowledge production. This engagement with new disciplinary approaches should, in Kincheloe's (2005) view, lead to creative, dynamic and critical forms of research. Bricolage has its roots in philosophical perspectives that form the basis of critical theory. It requires the analysis of power relationships and the way that they are embedded within particular modes of discourse. For example, in Chap. 5, we discuss the emergence of the narrative of the psychopathic serial killer hiding in the shadows of modern life, appearing to strike terror and disappearing back to his lair. An analysis of the process of the creation of the modern serial killer requires a consideration of the roles of the media, law enforcement agencies, psychologists, artists and novelists. It also requires a sociological analysis of the nature of, particularly, urban societies and patriarchal systems which value some lives above others.

Roberts (2018) notes that bricolage as an approach can put researchers, who seek to use it, at odds with the more instrumentalist paradigms that dominate the neoliberal academy. He notes such researchers often face huge challenges to gain ethical approval to carry out direct field work. Kincheloe (2001) suggests that there is an implicit assumption in the criticism of interdisciplinary approaches that means that the research is somehow superficial. This is, of course, linked to the notion that there is purity and rigour in particular methods that need to be maintained. This can be manifested in a range of often dismissive reactions to bricolage and the products of it. This is partly because bricoleurs as researchers are stepping into new spaces.

Place

Nora's (1989) concept of *lieux de mémoire* examines the ways in which a rapid slippage of the present into a historical past that is gone for good (Nora 1989:7) is compensated for by the focus of memory on particular

physical spaces. Nora (1989) outlines an idea of a modern world obsessed with the past and in search of roots and identity that are fast disappearing, a loss of collectively remembered values replaced by a socially constructed version of history as a representation of the past. Nora (1989) sees memory and history as being in opposition to each other. King and Cummins (2013), drawing on the work of Nora (1989) and Rejinders (2010) have created the concept of *lieux d'horreur*; unlike Nora's (1989) argument that sites of historical horror have been sanitised for public consumption causing a fracture between memory and history, *lieux d'horreur* refers to place where the horror remains. The case has become woven into the cultural frameworks and references for Manchester such that the Moors become a *lieux d'horreur*.

Manchester is the world's first modern industrial city. It has reinvented itself as a financial creative centre and, recently, was included by Lonely Planet in its list of the top ten cities in the world to visit. Fifty years ago Manchester was the focus of the world's media for rather different reasons as Brady and Hindley, who subsequently became known as the Moors Murderers, were sentenced to life imprisonment on 6 May 1966. Manchester, then, is the crucible in which the template for the way in which the media reports serial killing, mediated murder as it has become known, was formed and the site of the creation of two of the UK's most notorious celebrity serial killers.

Chapter 2 includes a brief chronology of the case and consideration of the main themes of the work. The case has to be considered in the context of the symbolism of 1960s social changes. These include slum clearances, consumerism and increased car ownership and other symbols of 1960s modernity such as cameras and tape recorders. Hindley drove and owned a car. They took photographs and recorded one of their crimes. The murder of Edward Evans took place in Wardle Brook Avenue in Hattersley. Hattersley was a new estate on the outskirts of Manchester built in the 1960s. Hindley was rehoused there with her grandmother.

The focus here will be on the role of the city within the broader context of the social changes of the 1960s. For the award winning author David Peace, when exploring the background to any crime, one of the key questions has to be 'why in that place at that time?' (Tickell 2003:2). Using Manchester as a *lieux d'horreur* (King and Cummins 2013:43) provides a historical and geographical context for the crimes and their perpetrators.

This work considers the nature of that impact alongside the often mythical nature of place. Our notions of crime are linked to the places in which they take place. Massey (1992:153) argues that space should be thought of as the ‘simultaneity of stories so far’. Didion (1979) uses the Manson murders to paint a portrait of the dark side of 1960s hippiedom. This work involves a strong evocation of place. Rejinders (2010) introduces the concept of *lieux d’imagination* in relation to detective fiction tours. It is possible to go on a tour of Wallender’s Ystad just as it is possible to go on a tour of the Krays’ East End. As in the case of *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1989), the locations are places where horrific acts have taken place. These are, albeit in a fictional sense, a part of what happens on the TV detective tours, and according to Rejinders (2010), is the sanitising of this horror, for example, through re-enactment of scenes from particular episodes. This is also the case for the tours, which claim to be giving accounts of real events. In many ways, the Krays’ East End is as much a mythical creation as is Wallender’s Ystad. Both are geographical locations, which are imbued with a series of cultural meanings that attract the tourist. They are then sites of production and reproduction of these meanings on an individual and group level. Walkowitz (1982) argues that we have grown up in the shadow of Jack the Ripper. The representation of the Whitechapel murders is dominated by Gothic symbols—fog, the crowded East End of the 1880s. Bloom (2013) argues that the image we have of Whitechapel fits the one we have created of the murders.

Bauman (2007:117) has claimed that modern society is based on ‘disengagement, discontinuity and forgetting’. These are features of responses to representations of crime and violence. A sense of place is one of the key features of both the detective and true crime genre. The criminal acts documented in Peace’s *Red Riding* (1974, 1977, 1980 and 1983) novels can be read as a metaphor for the industrial decay of the 1970s and early 1980s Britain. The setting for the quartet, the dark decaying Leeds of the 1970s and the declining industrial North form a backdrop to, but are also central to, the narratives in *Red Riding*; descriptions of violence to women are juxtaposed with descriptions of the places in which they occur. Industrial decline creates the abandoned urban spaces in which

these appalling acts of violence are perpetrated. The feeling is of a community and citizens, who have been abandoned and attacked on all sides.

Similarly, the Moors have become a character in the ongoing drama of Brady and Hindley—they give the case its name and are the sites of murder. They also have a hugely symbolic value and role. Wild, bleak, unforgiving and holding terrible secrets, the Moors have long been a key feature of the Gothic terror narrative of the case.

The Moors Murders are one of the key stories that have become part of the Manchester myth. They are obviously part of a darker side of the history of the city. They are a feature of 1960s Manchester. Brady and Hindley are part of a nascent celebrity culture in the same way that George Best was. None of the authors were born or grew up in Manchester. They have lived and worked in the area for most of the past 35 years. We were clearly aware of the case before moving to the area. As the timeline in Chap. 2 shows, there has barely been a time when either Hindley or Brady or some aspect of the case has not been in the news. We arrived in the city at a time when there was a resurgence of media interest in the case because of Brady and Hindley's confessions to the murders of Pauline Reade and Keith Bennett. There was extensive TV coverage of the police operation that saw them return, separately to the Moors.

The modern image of Manchester, the first industrial city, is of a vibrant cultural centre famous for its music, football and nightlife. Behind that glitzy facade, there is another reality of huge economic and social inequality (Savage 2016). The image of the North as a bastion of community values has its roots in the representations in 1960s new wave cinema examples. The long running soap opera *Coronation Street* has had a key role in creating and perpetuating this representation. The images of back to back housing, angry young men and a community of strong women may now appear clichéd. They remain very powerful and difficult to escape despite the huge social and economic changes that have taken place. The city centre of Manchester is dominated by modern constructions of steel and glass that often obscure moments such as the Town Hall, from its Victorian civic heritage. The image of the city as community orientated remains a very strong one. This was demonstrated by the response of the city to the Manchester Evening News Arena terrorist attack of May 2017.

The Northern kitchen sink dramas of the 1960s and *Coronation Street* have created a series of nostalgic images of the post-war community and particularly working class life. Part of this nostalgia is the idea that there was a time when violent crimes did not really exist. Whatever the merits of these notions, it would be foolish to deny the strength of their cultural currency. Brady himself pointed this out in his own evidence to the Mental Health Review Tribunal (MHRT) when he said that the case has been *running longer than Coronation Street* (it has not, as the long running soap began in 1960). The Moors Murders are awful repellent crimes in and of themselves. They are deep wounds to the communal self-image, they unsettle more comforting notions of community solidarity but the crimes become difficult, if not impossible, to escape. In *Death of a Murderer* (Thomson 2007:72), Billy Tyler, a prison officer sent to guard a killer's body before cremation says of her, 'You did something people couldn't bring themselves to think about. You forced them to imagine it. You rubbed their noses in it.'

Celebrity

One of the key features of modernity is the role of mass media and the rise of celebrity culture. Haggerty (2009) suggests that there is a symbiotic relationship between the media and serial killers. The modern mass media provides many more opportunities for the construction of an identity or personality. Serial killer thus becomes one of the forms of identity that can be created. This is not to suggest that the media coverage is the cause of serial killing, only that it has a key role to play in the creation of the category of serial killer. Part of the cult of the modern celebrity is simply someone who is talked about, often for reasons that are not wholly clear. As Gordon Burn illustrates throughout his work, celebrity is a category all of its own, divorced from the origins of that fame. In the hyper-reality of the modern media, the serial killer joins the former member of the boy band, the winner of a TV cooking competition and the reality TV star as an inhabitant of the celebrity world. The tabloid press and TV report their lives in minute detail. Egger's analysis (2002) of seven US serial killers concluded that they all seemed to enjoy their celebrity status.

Haggerty (2009) notes that the serial killing industry is booming. This boom has continued in the years since that paper was written. The digital revolution has only added another area of expansion including a phone app: *Psychopedia: an encyclopaedia of serial killers and unsolved serial murders*. Those who have not migrated to a smart phone can access: *murderpedia; the encyclopaedia of murder or deathpenaltyUSA.org—the database of executions in the USA*. Within this, the killers become part of the tawdry world of modern celebrity whilst those whose lives they have destroyed become what Burn calls, ‘a para-celebrity- a celebrity by association’ (Burn 1984:106).

Icons of Evil

Brady and Myra Hindley came to be seen as icons of evil by which all others continue to be measured. Birch (1994) and Clark (2011) explicitly examine the role of the media in constructing *a monster* that Hindley became. Clarke (2011) examines the case in the context of the sociological literature on evil, an area of sociology which has recently begun to expand, and the processes resulting in Hindley being the *most hated woman in Britain*. Myra Hindley came to be seen as the most evil woman in Britain; an icon of evil by which all others continue to be measured. In examining the iconography of evil, the role of the press, *that* photograph linking Hindley to other ‘evil’ blondes such as Irma Grese and Ruth Ellis and gender role expectations are examined. Hindley’s role in the crimes was inextricably linked with perceptions of gender as she was regarded as doubly transgressive.

There have been female child killers before and after Hindley. The argument that is put forward here is that Hindley’s cultural impact created a template for the press for the coverage and representation of later cases. For example, in the case of Maxine Carr, girlfriend of Ian Huntley who killed two young girls in Soham (Jones and Wardle 2008), Carr was not involved in the murders but provided an alibi for Huntley. She was charged with perverting the course of justice. Carr, after serving a relatively short sentence, had to be assigned a new identity for her own protection. There are clear parallels with the treatment and representation of

Hindley. One of the predominant themes of this book is the way Brady and Hindley form a template for the way in which serial killing is publicly perceived and reported.

Gazing into the Abyss

He who fights with monsters should be careful lest he thereby become a monster. And if thou gaze long into an abyss, the abyss will also gaze into thee. (Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil. Aphorism 146)

The authors have worked around this idea in previous works in relation to cop culture (Cummins et al. 2014). Through the ever-present police mugshots, reproduced at various intervals in the media, Brady and Hindley continue to stare out of the past into the present; the audience gazes back in fascination long after the event. The work will draw together the ideas which emerge from previous work in an attempt to explain the continued cultural impact of the Moors Murders and the way in which they still frame ideas about serial killing. The work will also explore the ethical and moral issues that arise in the process of writing about violent crime. This will consider the symbiotic relationship between the subject and the reflections on the authors' motivation for writing on this sort of subject.

Chapter 2 provides a brief timeline of the most significant events in the case and its aftermath. This is not definitive. It is intended to serve as an introduction to readers not fully familiar with events. Chapter 3 examines the reporting of the trial and the initial responses to the case. Chapter 4 explores the way media portrays victims. It argues that the suffering of victims and their families is often marginalised, particularly in the more salacious coverage of such crimes. It also recognises that such events have more widespread effects. In this case, Maureen Hindley and other members of the family became outcasts or scapegoats. The following three chapters are closely connected. Chapter 5 first examines the *serial killer* as a product of modernity. Serial killers are presented as modern cultural icons. Part of this phenomenon is the notion of the serial killer as celebrity. The nature of the fame that Brady and Hindley acquired is explored

more in depth in Chap. 6. The death of a celebrity is an archetypal modern media event. These issues are examined in Chap. 7. Chapter 8 provides an analysis of the media coverage of the deaths of both Brady and Hindley arguing that it was structured in the same way as responses to other celebrity deaths. In Chap. 9, the authors discuss the impact of researching and writing about such dark matters. Chapter 10 reviews the main themes of the work, exploring the cultural legacy of the crime of Brady and Hindley. It also acknowledges that the work that is the basis of this volume had an emotional impact on the authors.

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