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Kristeva's novels are difficult to place in the context of her larger cultural work, and I suspect that for people who view her more psychoanalytic texts from the 1980s and 1990s there is some concern about how useful it is, or perhaps some fear of abandonment. For people who are in the fields of disability studies, there might be a slight nostalgia, an aching for her return to the bodily, or the abject, especially about melancholic failures of flesh. There is a gap in the critical writing about her fiction, marking a kind of embarrassment, a waiting for her to return back to the safety of the academy. This is the kind of fear which happens when someone in a familiar tribe turns loyalties. The undercurrents of these changes move quickly, and are difficult to elucidate, but aside from the gaps mentioned, one can see another in the lacunae of conversation around this work. Namely, a concern that Kristeva is slumming. There are few philosophers who write fiction, and those tend to write dense and thorny work. I am thinking of Simone De Beauvoir's well-named *Mandarins*, which is vastly different than the thrillers and noirs that mark this part of Kristeva's writing practice (though *Mandarins* shares a kind of coded discussions of the interior of the academy, and so perhaps the genres are closer together than critics imagine).

Not many of these concerns are directly stated in Benigo Trigo's edited collection of essays on Kristeva, but the works he has selected are adroit, clever, suitable, and allow a reader conversant in disability studies and in the psycho-analytic methods of Kristeva's fictional work to find a path through her novels. In Trigo's introduction he points out that the theorist's relationships to the boundaries of genre have always had a consistency, even if it moved through

a variety of systems and genres: “Kristeva’s turn away from the discipline of linguistics and toward psycho-analysis, resulted in her development of the concept of “the abject” which also helped her work to cross over into the disciplines of literature and philosophy. Arguably, the concepts of ‘the semiotic’ and ‘the abject’ remain to this day Kristeva’s most important contributions to the humanities and to the social sciences” (2).

This idea that the novels never abandon the abject, and so that they extend the problems of both body and catastrophic, permanent mood that her critical theory posits, is present here—somewhere between subtext and text. In his elegant essay “Sebastian's Skull,” on the implications of identity (theological, ethnic, sexual, gendered, historical) in Kristeva’s 2008 historical noir *Murder In Byzantium*, Francis Restruccia notes that even if it is a novel, it has continued not to abandon Kristeva’s commitment to this abjective practice: “in her work in general, Kristeva looks at philosophy and psychoanalytic theory for traces of ‘this border region of the speaking being that is psychosis’” (88, quoting Kristeva, 2002, p. 10).

How to reach the borderlands, not only in psychosis, but in other forms of madness, is an ongoing problem in the theory of abjectness. Restuccia hints at an argument that other people in this essay pick up, and quickly put down. Kristeva’s commitment to a clinical practice suggests that the theory of the mind is as important as the praxis; this can be reflected in the ongoing debate within disability studies, on how to talk about identity with relationship to that which cannot be spoken. The idea suggests that for a variety of reasons, some more complicated, some less convincing, the base problems of the subconscious are more easily arrived at in fiction, as opposed to either the clinic or the academy (this is especially found in Reineke’s essay on the natural and the metaphorical, “Not A Country for Old Men”).

People who are reading Kristeva's novels are part of either the clinic or the academy, it turns out—even fiction that is supposed to be populist. Her commitment to noir is dense and difficult. Reading these works requires a background that even work like Chandler does not require. They are often allegorical. In one example, *The Old Man and the Wolves*, the novel is about a mythical city, called Santa Varvara, which seems to never end. It is an explicit gloss on Guy Debord, and an implied gloss on the fall of the Soviet sphere of influence. So, the novel (and perhaps others) is paratextual, and intertextual. To use these works to describe depression or the abject requires a knowledge of her practice, the people she is quoting, and also the genre. This argument is made by S.L. Keltner's essay on her as a function of "whodunit" genre:

Kristeva's description of Santa Varvara and its inhabitants emphasises the banality of modern society which leads to nihilistic despair and its subsequent violence...Kristeva says 'we are basically dealing with the image of a depression that integrates aggression but under the ruinous guides of an erasure of meaning.' For Kristeva, the loss of meaning affects subjectivity in the form of despair and/or violence. The fictional characters of the detective novels embody the failures of social functioning and the condition of the modern subject (35).

This contextualizing of the body in social space—something that Kristeva has always done—is something that disability studies critics return to—so depression is not as medical as it is economic or political. There is something different in how that is told, not within the authority of textual analysis but interlayered within a narrative—maybe not easier, but as a kind of thief slipping through the palace walls. The inter-weaving of practice and theory is disassembled only to be reasserted in a form where the narrative is prioritized. Thus it is an example, perhaps not of embodying failure, but of re-orienting already extant absences. This is especially true in

detective fiction, where the body is an explicit problem to be solved, and not an allegory form to be analyzed. The translation of the traumatic body into language, as expected by Freud and his followers, does not exist for this kind of fiction. The body in the room must be first treated as a material object. The body must be made to talk, and not vice versa. Lacan requires the rejection of the bodily for language to emerge. Detective fiction has a more difficult time hiding the body or rejecting the body. Kristeva's belief that the body is on trial, or under process, and less stable than Lacan, is part of understanding how her novels might then function as successfully extending theory, but since they care less about the corpse in the room they are less successful narratologically.

In the last essay of the book, about her relationship to other novels written in the French avant garde tradition ("The Vital Legacy of the Novel and Julia Kristeva's Fictional Revolt"), Maria Margoni discusses what the body in the room of language looks like:

It is the 'dismembered score' resulting from the breathing of this body within language, as well as the simultaneous loss and return of the subject in its drifting to and fro from an immemorial 'before' that Kristeva calls "the text" a term she is committed to...as the index to a signifying practice that she clearly privileges over other practices, such as narrative, metalanguage and theoria (157).

This might be useful to think about in relationship to disability: that even if the body is the priority, even if the first text that scholars of disability consider is the unstable flesh, flesh needs to be translated into other theories—but the body reasserting itself, destabilizes any theories, or meta-languages that are used to analyze it. Even writing about violence in the metaphorical form of the novel, even in something as cozy as an Agatha Christie novel, or a Sherlock Holmes book (works tidier and more solution based than Kristeva), the body is the continual ghost throughout

the story—a ghost so present, that they never really disappear. The disabled body, even if we think about it like something to be solved, carries the violence of the linguistic acts of this puzzle seeking on its quite literal flesh.

Though Trigo never quite arrives at a discussion of disability, and the body slips in and out of these texts, it does provide a way for those kind of readers to construct meaning, and it becomes a kind of Kristevan task to find them—a kind of ironic anti-novelistic decisive game in a sub-career filled with them.