



**Investigating the Disabled Detective**  
**Disabled Masculinity and Masculine Disability**  
**in Contemporary Detective Fiction**

DISSERTATION  
zur Erlangung des  
akademischen Grades eines  
Doktors der Philosophie  
am Fachbereich 2: Philologie/Kulturwissenschaften der  
Universität Koblenz

vorgelegt im Promotionsfach:  
Schwerpunkt:  
am  
von  
Erstgutachter:  
Zweitgutachterin:

Anglistik/Amerikanistik  
Anglistik, Literaturwissenschaften  
21. Dezember 2022  
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## Acknowledgements

The journey of this thesis could not have been completed without the invaluable support of some companions along the way.

First and foremost, I am sincerely grateful to my supervisor Prof. Dr. Michael Meyer, whose constant and reliable support, belief in my skills, insightful comments and critical questions have accompanied me from my first semester, through my Bachelor's Thesis and now through my PhD Thesis. His credo, "If in doubt, leave it out", has fundamentally shaped my approach to revising texts.

I am also deeply grateful to my second supervisor Prof. Dr. Nicole Maruo-Schröder, for engaging with my work from the first drafts and organising inspiring PhD colloquium sessions.

Thank you to the former "Interdisziplinäres Promotionszentrum" – now known as the "Interdisziplinäres Forschungs-, Graduiertenförderungs- und Personalentwicklungsamt" – for their financial and ideological support. Special thanks to Dr. Kathrin Ruhl, Johanna Hoffmann, Dr. Rebekka Smuda and my colleagues from the former "Graduiertenschule Genderforschung" for inspiring discussions either on the corridor or in meetings but always with a nice 'cuppa'.

Thank you to the English Department; especially to Prof. Dr. Constanze Juchem-Grundmann for her immediate encouragement when I first considered pursuing a PhD and whose enthusiasm never fails to amaze and inspire me. I also thank Dr. Sarah Schäfer-Althaus for early insights into life in academia as a research assistant and lecturer, and Maria Mothes for last-minute proofreading and motivating conversations among fellow PhD students.

In addition to such professional support, the encouragement of my family and friends was invaluable to me. Thank you to my family – especially my parents, my brother, my grandparents and my family-in-law – for (often) patiently refraining from asking how the thesis is going while steadfastly supporting and believing in me. Additionally, I thank my friends for their assistance in proofreading, discussing primary material and occasionally distracting me from work.

I express my deep appreciation to Dr. Linda Schürmann, my long-time flatmate, office-mate and best friend, for sharing the highs and lows of pursuing a PhD, for our productive working sessions – day and night – without exchanging a word for hours, for well-deserved breaks and invaluable support in every aspect of professional and private life during and beyond this journey.

Finally, and most importantly, my heartfelt gratitude to my husband Michi, for being interested in my work from the first moment, for reading some of the novels of this thesis and discussing arguments with me, for taking care of me and everything else while I finished my PhD journey. I love you and am looking forward to the next adventure with you!

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## Abbreviations of Primary Material

The following table defines the abbreviations of primary material used throughout the thesis in alphabetical order.

Abbreviation	Meaning
BC	<i>The Bone Collector</i> (Jeffery Deaver)
BlCu	<i>Blind Curve</i> (Annie Solomon)
CC	<i>The Cuckoo's Calling</i> (Robert Galbraith)
CD	<i>The Coffin Dancer</i> (Jeffery Deaver)
CE	<i>Career of Evil</i> (Robert Galbraith)
CI	<i>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time</i> (Mark Haddon)
EC	<i>The Empty Chair</i> (Jeffery Deaver)
LW	<i>Lethal White</i> (Robert Galbraith)
MB	<i>Motherless Brooklyn</i> (Jonathan Lethem)
ML	<i>The Midnight Lock</i> (Jeffery Deaver)
MR	"The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" (Edgar Allan Poe)
PL	"The Purloined Letter" (Edgar Allan Poe)
RM	"The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (Edgar Allan Poe)
SB	"A Scandal in Bohemia" (Arthur Conan Doyle)
SF	<i>The Sign of Four</i> (Arthur Conan Doyle)
SM	<i>The Stone Monkey</i> (Jeffery Deaver)
StS	<i>A Study in Scarlet</i> (Arthur Conan Doyle)
SW	<i>The Silkworm</i> (Robert Galbraith)
TB	<i>Troubled Blood</i> (Robert Galbraith)
YF	"The Yellow Face" (Arthur Conan Doyle)

## 1. Introduction

### **Research Interest**

Ever since the birth of crime and detective fiction,<sup>1</sup> the figure of the detective has been presented and received as an extraordinary, even ‘odd’ or deviant character. This peculiarity is epitomised in the term ‘defective detective’, which emerged in the early twentieth century. Published in a collection of short stories called “Nonsense Novels”, Stephen Leacock’s short story “Maddened by Mystery, or: The Defective Detective” parodies characteristics of classical detective literature, most prominently the detective’s deductive skills.<sup>2</sup> The classical detective’s cognitive extraordinariness is here parodied as madness; in fact, he is “maddened by mystery”, as the title suggests. Instead of being composed, clear-headed and logical, as famously represented by Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes, Leacock’s Great Detective is a quirky character who overthinks obvious conclusions and exaggerates his disguises. As a master of disguise, the Great Detective replaces a dog in a dog exhibition, which he ironically wins. Since he lacks the genre-typical exceptional reasoning and cold observation skills, the Great Detective’s mind is ‘defective’.

Ever since, the term ‘defective detective’ has been used repeatedly throughout the twentieth and twenty-first century. It implies that the detective’s most important tools – his deductive skills – are not as extraordinary as expected, even ‘flawed’. For example, in Avner Geller and Stevie Lewis’s animated short film, the ‘defective detective’ jumps to the wrong conclusion. The term is also used in the title of several book series, such as Adam Maxwell’s books on Clint Barnum, a detective who uncontrollably falls asleep because he suffers from narcolepsy, and many more. These cultural representations understand ‘defective’ as ‘not functioning properly’ and, as a result, disappoint generic conventions and reader expectations of (classical) detective stories alike.

Contrasting this focus on the detective’s ‘defective’ mind, Gary Hoppenstand and Ray B. Browne concentrate on a physical meaning of ‘defective’. In *The Defective Detective in the Pulps*, they collect crime stories published in American pulp magazines in the early to mid-

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<sup>1</sup> Following predominant research, this dissertation understands crime fiction as an umbrella term since it “defies any simple classification” (Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* 1) due to the numerous subgenres. This dissertation specifically concentrates on the subgenre of detective fiction which, “sanctified” by Poe’s invention of the fictional detective (J. Allan et al., “Introduction” 2), focuses on the detective and his investigations (Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* 144). The dissertation refers to relevant subgenres, such as classical detective fiction, hard-boiled detective fiction and the police procedural, with the necessary foci in the respective chapters.

<sup>2</sup> In 1911, when Leacock’s stories were published, the genre largely consisted of stories which today are categorised as classical detective literature. In these stories, the detective’s extraordinary cognitive skills were the most distinctive characteristic. The genre’s diversification only started a few years later with the beginning of the Golden Age of detective fiction, famously represented, for example, by Agatha Christie’s detective novels.

twentieth century, starring physically or sensorially restricted detectives or, as they call it, protagonists who are “burdened with some sort of personal abnormality” (Hoppenstand and Browne 1). The (male) detectives lack a face, are blind, deaf, crippled, amnesiac, or a bleeder or are provided with extraordinarily sensitive hearing. Apart from the latter, these ‘abnormalities’ enforce the everyday (and stereotypical) understanding of ‘defective’ as imperfect or faulty and invite a connection to disability: “[c]rippled means defective” (Mintz 96). The term’s social connotation of dependence, weakness and inability connects impaired protagonists with the field of disability studies, turning the ‘defective detective’ into the disabled detective.<sup>3</sup>

In fact, the genre’s schematic nature and often archetypal characters (e.g. Hühn; Todorov) lead to a clash of expectations when the detective protagonist is disabled (see also Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 57).<sup>4</sup> While Hoppenstand and Browne observe (physical) ‘abnormalities’ along the lines of the genre’s development, Philippa Gates observes a trend in the changing (cinematic) representations of a detective’s masculinity. She observes that the “emphasis of brains over brawns encouraged the appearance of the detective with a physical disability”, which coincides with the development of “positive images of disability [...] in mainstream culture” (*Detecting Men* 180-81). Focusing on a detective’s masculinity, she argues that “the detective narrative [...] offers an investigation of the hero’s masculinity as it is tested and proved through his solving the case” (“Detectives” 216). In the case of the disabled detective, it is not the central case which challenges the protagonist’s masculinity but a physical impairment or a neurodiverse condition.<sup>5</sup> As the reader’s expectations of the investigator and his masculinity clash with the dependency and weakness stereotypically associated with disability (see also Murray, “Neurotecs” 177), the figure of the disabled detective challenges not only expectations towards the genre but also sociological stereotypes of gender and of neurodiverse or physical impairment (Cheyne, “Disability Studies Reads the Romance” 37; Mintz 5; Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 57). In addition, social expectations towards gender identity, or more specifically masculinity, are confounded. With this specific focus in

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<sup>3</sup> Instead of the term ‘defective detective’, this dissertation uses the term ‘disabled detective’ to avoid the discrimination suggested in the equation of disability with defect and to connect to current research on disability in detective fiction. Aware of the discussion surrounding the appropriate and politically correct language to use when talking about disability, the dissertation uses identity-first language (e.g. ‘disabled person’) and people-first language (e.g. ‘person with a disability’) interchangeably to refer to the characters’ neurodiverse and physical conditions. For further reference, see, for example, A. Hall (*Literature and Disability* 167-168) and Kizer (5-6).

<sup>4</sup> Popular research seems to be interested in disability in detective fiction, too. Some websites are dedicated to collecting novels featuring disability (e.g. MWms; Novel Suspects; for more websites, see Mintz 22n1). Such collections provide an extensive first approach to disability in crime fiction and supported the selection of material for this dissertation.

<sup>5</sup> These terms and their usage will be further defined below in the section on ‘Method and Material’.

mind, this dissertation elaborates on the intersection of detective fiction, masculinity studies and disability studies – the three research areas merging in the figure of the disabled detective.

While previous research focused predominantly on the disabled detective's professional activities with the neurodiverse or physically impaired condition, this dissertation pays specific attention to the disabled detective's masculinity. It adds a gendered reading to the academic research on the disabled detective, an aspect that has been largely neglected so far. By *Investigating the Defective Detective*, the dissertation project analyses how the disabled detective negotiates his masculine identity as a professional investigator and a private person, as represented in examples of contemporary detective fiction. It argues that the investigative profession supports the disabled detective in achieving 'masculine disability', which presents a positive answer to 'disabled masculinity'. In contrast to the latter term, which describes a gendered feeling of inferiority, insufficiency and weakness, the newly coined term of 'masculine disability' focuses on strengths and abilities and generates a positive, gendered perception of disability. Encouraging and demonstrating a rethinking of masculinity and disability, this dissertation reads the detective's disability in a decisively gendered understanding of developmental disorders and physical impairment. Adolescent detectives with a developmental disorder grow into masculine disability (chapter four). Detectives with an acquired physical impairment undergo the transition from disabled masculinity to masculine disability (chapter five). Both groups achieve this aim by relying on the (genre-inherent) masculine characteristics of the detective, by implementing the respective disability into their professional investigations and by accepting it as an essential, yet not defining, characteristic of their (gender) identity. Thus, the figure of the disabled detective challenges not only his own but also the reader's potentially internalised social expectations of a detective and a man with a disability.

### **Current State of Research**

While theoretical insights into disability and masculinity are given in the introductions to the chapters on neurodiversity (chapter four) and physical disability (chapter five), the following subchapter provides an overview of the current state of research on disability in the genre of detective fiction. Although the disabled detective appears frequently throughout twentieth-century detective fiction, he has only recently become the focus of academic research on representations of disability in popular culture.

Contributing to the relatively young yet thriving field of literary disability studies,<sup>6</sup> some books have been published on disability in popular culture in the last few years (e.g. Chivers and Markotić; A. Hall, *Literature and Disability*; Markotić; Waldschmidt et al.; Barker and Murray; Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre*).<sup>7</sup> Despite several smaller studies, monographs and articles on disability in detective fiction, the specific connection with the disabled detective's masculinity in the genre of detective fiction is still a marginal field of academic research. Recent anthologies, such as *The Routledge Companion to Crime Fiction* (J. Allan et al.), provide an overview of the genre but still largely neglect this intersection.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, anthologies such as *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Disability* (A. Hall) do not include keywords such as 'detective' or 'crime'. Although it aims to "showcase the diversity of contemporary critical writing about disability and to provide space for thinking through what the future of the field might be" (A. Hall, "Introduction to The Routledge Companion to Literature and Disability" 2), it barely analyses the genre of detective fiction. Moreover, the aspect of masculinity is missing even in works where one would expect masculinity to be investigated, such as in Susannah B. Mintz's *The Disabled Detective: Sleuthing Disability in Contemporary Crime Fiction*. Such research gaps in recent academic research call for an interdisciplinary investigation of the detective's disabled masculinity.

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<sup>6</sup> Developed in the late 1990s, this field of research combines a cultural and literary perspective on disability and scrutinises cultural and literary representations of disability. "Building on a tradition of identifying and critiquing the representation of disability which had begun with disabled activists, these works [such as Davis's *Enforcing Normalcy*, Garland-Thomson's *Extraordinary Bodies*, and Mitchell and Snyder's *Narrative Prosthesis*] analysed the representation of disability in particular forms of cultural production, with the goal of understanding how those representations might contribute to a disabling society or to challenging ableism" (Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 169-170). For an elaborated overview of how literary disability studies have developed, see, for example, Bolt ("Introduction"), Stanback or Cheyne (*Disability, Literature, Genre* 169–71).

<sup>7</sup> Although the relevance of the body has been explored in the genre of crime and detective fiction, the focus has been on the dead body and, hence, its objectification as a mere initiator of the investigation and the plot (Rachman 19; see also Cawelti; Plain, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*). As one of few examples, Gill Plain turns her focus from the corpse to the living body and the corporeality of the detective (*Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*). Nevertheless, even in Plain's analysis, physical integrity is assumed, which confirms what disability studies term "compulsory able-bodiedness", as the body is supposed to function without restrictions (Siebers 102-103). Bodies are only mentioned (and thus highlighted) when they do not 'function properly', as is the case for any kind of disability. However, literary representations of disability enjoy increasing popularity as two most recent publications show. Patrick O'Donnell et al.'s *The Encyclopedia of Contemporary American Fiction 1980-2020* and Travis M. Foster's *The Cambridge Companion to American Literature and the Body* include chapters on disability, i.e. neurodiversity and physical impairments, through which they contribute to and enforce the increasing (academic) attention to literary disability studies (these sources were unavailable before the completion of this dissertation).

<sup>8</sup> Regarding disability in Allan et al.'s anthology, Christiana Gregoriou points out that the "myth of criminals as physically 'abnormal'" must be challenged to avoid the perpetuation of ableist stereotypes ("Criminals" 171). Apart from that, Nicole Kenley's article provides only a minor reference to disability in crime fiction – an insignificant reference to one of Jeffery Deaver's Lincoln Rhyme novels, emphasising digital technology in crime fiction and the danger of the internet of things ("Digital Technology" 267–268). Despite its promising potential, Kenley's article fails to connect this focus to Rhyme's mobility impairment or the computer monitoring of his bodily functions.

Hoppenstand and Browne's focus on physically and sensorially 'abnormal' detective protagonists ranks them among the first scholars to focus on disability in the genre of detective fiction. Their collection, to which they added a second volume in 1985, presents the starting point for academic research on disabled detectives. Even Irving K. Zola, one of the founding fathers of disability studies as an academic field of research, referred to Hoppenstand and Browne's collection in "Any Distinguishing Features?" The Portrayal of Disability in the Crime-Mystery Genre". However, he critiques them for "derisively" collecting the "defective detectives" and accuses the authors of ignoring "the continuing popularity of a number of 'straight' detectives with disabilities" and, thus, "think[ing] of the whole set of portrayals as mere gimmickry" (489). In a historical overview of the genre, Zola critically highlights the numerous challenges impaired characters face in detective fiction. Examining all kinds of disabled characters (e.g. male and female, protagonist and side characters, heroes and villains), his focus lies on displaying their ubiquity in detective fiction rather than analysing gendered aspects in more detail.

Although Frederic W. Hafferty and Susan Foster concentrate on deafness as a specific kind of disability in detective fiction, they, too, neglect the gender aspect in their narrative analysis. Instead, they identify three narrative techniques for introducing and dealing with a disability in a text: disability-in-action, disability-in-dialogue and compensation for the deficit. In the case of disability-in-dialogue, the reader's attention is drawn to the disability in the conversation between the disabled and a non-disabled character. Disability-in-action actually shows the disability by including a scene in which the disabled character has to deal with his impairment. The disability is compensated with a stronger other skill which is unaffected by the impairment (for example, physical disability is compensated with extraordinary mental skills). Hence, the characters are capable "*because of* rather than 'just' *in spite of* their impairment" (Hafferty and S. Foster 192). In the growing academic research on disability in (detective) fiction, this way of reading disabled characters and their capabilities has become prominent. While drawing on it, this dissertation also broadens its scope to include the gender aspect.

In his hugely influential article "Neurotecs: Detectives, Disability and Cognitive Exceptionality in Contemporary Fiction", Stuart Murray shows how the two protagonists of Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and Jonathan Lethem's *Motherless Brooklyn* turn their neurodiverse condition into an investigative advantage. He argues that "'the special powers' of the differently abled detective function in terms of a 'compensation' narrative through which [...] the loss of one faculty allows for the development of another, more distinctive ability" ("Neurotecs" 180). Although agreeing with Murray's

article, in which he reads the disabled detective as competent “because of, not in spite of his disability” (186) and confirms Hafferty and Foster’s idea, this dissertation highlights that Murray neglects the consequences that such a reading has for the protagonists’ masculinity. Therefore, in-depth analyses are dedicated to both novels in later chapters.

Turning to a broader range of disabilities, Adrienne Christine Foreman’s dissertation *The Mystery of the Situated Body: Finding Stability Through Narratives of Disability in the Detective Genre* analyses classical, hard-boiled and postmodern detective stories and “identifies the positivist criminology tendencies in modern detective fiction” (8). She thus makes a valuable contribution to the research of disability in detective fiction, upon which this dissertation frequently draws. However, although Foreman pursues a similar structure as the present dissertation – starting with Sherlock Holmes’s “latent” disability and moving towards contemporary examples of disabled detectives (2-3) – Foreman neglects to examine how the protagonists of her chosen novels negotiate their masculine identity in light of their disability.

In recent years, the representation of disability in the genre of crime fiction has gained increasing attention. In addition to Clare Barker and Stuart Murray’s anthology *The Cambridge Companion to Disability and Literature*, two other important contributions decisively enriched this field of interest during the composition of this dissertation. Although these contributions confirm many ideas this dissertation dealt with prior to the publication, they still leave room for an in-depth analysis of gender aspects at the intersection of disability in the detective genre. In her monograph *Disability, Literature, Genre: Representation and Affect in Contemporary Fiction*, Ria Cheyne dedicates a chapter to the affective potential of disability in the genre of crime fiction. In addition to drawing attention to disability in genre studies (186), she reads Deaver’s first Lincoln Rhyme novel, *The Bone Collector*, with a specific focus on the affective responses his quadriplegic condition triggers in the reader. She concludes that “[u]nlike disabled people in other character roles, disabled detectives are not sacrificed on the altar of closure; instead, it is through their agency that closure is produced. The disabled detective is an affective agent, and it is through their actions that disorder is transmuted into order, ignorance into knowledge, and anxiety into reassurance” (80). Although this dissertation frequently refers to Cheyne’s intriguing research, she neglects the affective potential of the detective’s disability related to his own perception of his disabled masculinity.

Susannah B. Mintz’s *The Disabled Detective: Sleuthing Disability in Contemporary Crime Fiction* presents the most recent analysis of the figure of the disabled detective. Considering primary material from the birth of crime and detective fiction through to contemporary television shows, Mintz dedicates each chapter to a different kind of disability and analyses

how the respective male or female detectives negotiate an ‘alternative epistemology’ in their investigative professions due to their disability. Her analyses culminate in the conclusion that “the disabled sleuths show us ‘how else we can know.’ But they do more: they show us how else we can *be*. And who we already are” (201). Although her research includes many links to the disabled detective’s masculinity, she neglects a gendered focus.

In conclusion, current research on disabled detectives focuses on how they compensate for their physical or neurological restrictions when practising the detective profession and how they achieve agency through this compensation. Following on from this, the dissertation investigates how the detective’s disability and his profession influence his understanding of his disabled masculinity and his development of masculine disability.

### **Method and Material**

Approaching the disabled detective’s masculinity from a literary studies perspective, this dissertation’s way of reading and analysing is guided by two theoretical approaches of disability studies. First, it uses the terms ‘disability’ and ‘impairment’ in accordance with the social model of disability. The term ‘impairment’ comprises the physical aspects of disability and refers to the “individual and private” (Shakespeare, “The Social Model of Disability” 197) sphere, in other words, the “medical conditions” (Sherry 770) the person has to deal with. In contrast, the term ‘disability’ refers to the “structural and public” (Shakespeare, “The Social Model of Disability” 197) domain, meaning “social reactions to impairment, particularly experiences of discrimination, social exclusion and marginalization” (Sherry 770). The social model understands disability as the result of socially constructed barriers, which can only be deconstructed through changes in societal structures and beliefs to include people with disability (see also Oliver). Second, in its focus on rethinking disabled masculinity, this dissertation recognises the “interplay between ‘normality’ and ‘disability’” (Waldschmidt 26), which is dominant in the cultural model of disability. Similar to ‘disability’, ‘normality’ is also a social construct with the “normal” as the “central mode from which [neurodiversity and disability] deviate” (Barker and Murray, “Introduction” 3; see also Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*; Siebers 102-103; Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*). The relation between disability/impairment and ‘normality’ turns the field into ““dis/ability studies”” (Waldschmidt 25). Dan Goodley states that “*dis/ability* [...] acknowledges the ways in which disablism and ableism (and disability and ability) can only ever be understood simultaneously in relation to

one another” (xiii).<sup>9</sup> This dissertation analyses how cultural representations of neurodiversity and physical disability intersect with neurotypicality and able-bodiedness, and, in addition to class, race, age, sexuality and nationality, presents disability as an additional identity-forming category.

Aiming at answering the question of how masculinity and disability are negotiated by adolescent and adult protagonists in contemporary detective fiction, this research project examines five sample novels of detective fiction. The selected texts have been published in the United Kingdom and the United States since 1999.<sup>10</sup> A chapter is dedicated to each protagonist, following his growing into masculine disability (chapter four) and his transition from disabled masculinity to masculine disability (chapter five). Each chapter analyses the representation of his disability and his masculinity either as an adolescent or an adult, the potential relevance of other characters for his masculine development and their narrative perspective in addition to the (potential) effect on the reading experience.

Before turning to the disabled detective, the dissertation looks at the genre’s origin by closely considering the ur-detectives C. Auguste Dupin by Edgar Allan Poe and Sherlock Holmes by Arthur Conan Doyle. This chapter traces the detective character’s ‘otherness’ back to these archetypal and genre-defining characters who deviate from the social norm of their respective time through their peculiar habits. Indeed, these ur-detectives confirm and, at the same time, challenge masculine ideals of the early American to late British nineteenth century.

The following five chapters are dedicated to male protagonists and their neurological or physical disability. Although the term ‘disability’ is often stereotypically associated with physical impairments, it actually “encompasses a broad range of bodily, cognitive, and sensory differences and capacities” (Adams et al., “Disability” 5). Chapter four focuses on neurodiversity, an umbrella term that includes a wide “range of atypical cognitive styles due to neurological differences, including autism, intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity, epilepsy, post-traumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder, Tourette’s syndrome, and schizophrenia” (A. Hall, *Literature and Disability* 167).<sup>11</sup> Generally,

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<sup>9</sup> While ‘ableism’ describes “a [oppressive] form of prejudice against people with disabilities”, which prefers able-bodied, ‘normal’ minds and bodies (A. Hall, *Literature and Disability* 164), ‘disablism’ is “the oppressive practices of contemporary society that threaten to exclude, eradicate and neutralise those individuals, bodies, minds and community practices that fail to fit the capitalist imperative” (Goodley xi). Therefore, these two terms are inherently related.

<sup>10</sup> Film and screen adaptations are neglected in the selection since the analysis of visual material requires a different approach. While the reader of a story can be kept ignorant of the disability, which enables the author not only to use different techniques to introduce the disability but also to vary the importance given to it, the viewer of visual material is mostly directly confronted with the disability (unless innovative representation techniques are applied). For further research on disability in film see, for example, Longmore, Chivers and Markotić or Markotić.

<sup>11</sup> The following dissertation uses the adjectives ‘neurodiverse’ and ‘neurodivergent’ interchangeably.

the medical definitions of the respective neurodevelopmental disorders are based on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5).<sup>12</sup> Focusing on autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) and Tourette's syndrome in the analysis, the dissertation understands these conditions as neurodevelopmental disorders, which means that early symptoms are developed in infancy and affect adolescence and adulthood differently (DSM-5 31). The project pays specific attention to Mark Haddon's suggestion of autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and Jonathan Lethem's representation of Tourette's syndrome in *Motherless Brooklyn*.

Chapter five centres on physical disability caused by an accident. Highlighting how suddenly an individual can become disabled, this 'fluidity' underlines "the insider's acronym for the nondisabled, TAB (for temporarily able-bodied)" (Adams et al., "Disability" 5; Shakespeare, "The Sexual Politics of Disabled Masculinity" 63; Gerschick, "Toward a Theory of Disability and Gender" 1264; A. Hall, *Literature and Disability* 168). Accidents lead to the mobility impairment of the protagonists in Jeffery Deaver's Lincoln Rhyme series and Robert Galbraith's Cormoran Strike series, whereas they cause Danny Sinofsky's visual impairment in Annie Solomon's *Blind Curve*. As the project pays special attention to how the characters are introduced, it focuses on the series' respective first instalments, *The Bone Collector* and *The Cuckoo's Calling*. Contrastingly, Solomon's one-off novel exemplifies the detective's disability in the hybrid genre of the romance-detective novel.

It has to be underlined that the characters in the narratives are of a fictional nature. Instead of authentic representations of reality, they display the author's reflections and interpretations of (social) gender expectations and experiences (Barker and Murray, "Introduction" 11), which is why they cannot be regarded as realistic case studies.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, these characters' representation should be considered as comments on and an aesthetic interpretation of the social construction of masculinity and disability in the specific genre of detective fiction. For this reason, sociological and ethnographic studies, such as research on neurodiversity and the broad discussion on (physically) disabled masculinity, are considered as real-world models of how coming to terms with disability within masculine identity can be dealt with as a foil of fiction. Contrasting the "time[-], liberty[-], and energy"-consuming sociological and medical studies scrutinising the disabled person (Barker and Murray, "Introduction" 11), the 'aesthetic plus' of

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<sup>12</sup> This manual was published by the American Psychiatric Association. In the following, it will be referred to as DSM-5.

<sup>13</sup> For this reason, the dissertation neglects the aspect of 'life writing', in which a disabled or permanently ill author narrates his medical history and his personal coping phase. For further reading on life writing, see, for example, Couser or Frank.

such fictional representations lies in the characters' narrative perspective, which provides the reader with insight into living with a disability.

As (assumingly) few readers have the first-hand experience of living as a man with a disability, the figure of the disabled detective is a 'mystery' for non-disabled readers (Mintz 2; Foreman 2). Finding the solution to this 'mystery' is supported by the narrative perspective. The narratives of the selected disabled detectives in this dissertation are depicted from either a first-person or third-person perspective, which affects the reader in different ways.<sup>14</sup> The third-person perspective reflects the disabled protagonist's view during his struggle in dealing with his masculine identity and his investigative profession on the level of the story. The first-person perspective invites the reader to share the character's individual view on his condition and society's reactions from the double perspective of the experiencing I and the narrating I, which becomes especially visible in the neurodiverse narrator. This immersion in the disabled detective's point of view challenges the reader's potential prejudices and stereotypical understanding of disability. At the same time, it allows the reader to comprehend the character's impairment as a form of existence. To the non-disabled reader, the 'mystery' of being disabled is "pierced by the storyteller" (Mitchell and Snyder 6), in these cases the disabled detective himself, which makes the disabled detective seem less different and more 'recognisable'.

One way to achieve this recognition shows in the first pages of each novel as the protagonists' introductions set the tone as to how the reader understands this character. In addition, it is also the point where the reader's expectations of a detective are confronted with the fictional character's disability. However, since these stories are not *about* disability but include it as a character trait enriching the character's complexity (see also Foreman 21), the specific nature of the protagonist's disability is gradually revealed throughout the introduction, which means that "diagnosing fictional characters" (Bérubé, *The Secret Life of Stories* 20) is unnecessary. Moreover, since analysing masculine identity by looking at only male characters would lead to superficial results (see also Messerschmidt 51), the project analyses the social relationships between neurodiverse detectives and neurotypical characters as well as between physically impaired detectives and able-bodied characters.

By sharing the (disabled) detective's point of view, the reader collects evidence and becomes a detective him- or herself (Hühn 458; Tougaw 132). Similar to crime fiction in

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<sup>14</sup> Stemming from Arthur Conan Doyle's Dr Watson, the narrator of the Sherlock Holmes stories, the narrative perspective of the detective's sidekick is a common way to present an outside perspective on the detective protagonist and his investigative achievements (e.g. Hühn 452; Gates, *Detecting Men* 15). However, this 'Watson' perspective does not give insight into the detective's self-perception as a man with neurological or physical impairments. Therefore, as they do not contribute to this project's argument, narrative texts told from the 'Watson' perspective are excluded.

general, the disabled “bodies and behaviours of the characters are just another potential clue or piece of evidence”, which makes the genre “ideally suited to problematizing how we read – and misread – disabled bodies and minds in the wider world” (Cheyne, “Disability in Genre Fiction” 190). It enables the reader to evaluate the disabled detective’s perception of his identities as an investigator, a social agent and a private person as well as society’s reaction to his disability. The immersion in the narrative allows the reader to understand disability as an issue which “is believed to be off the map of ‘recognizable’ human experience” (Mitchell and Snyder 5) and, ultimately, to solve the ‘mystery’ of disabled masculinity. Following neurologically and physically impaired protagonists through their professional and private lives enables the reader to deconstruct disability (see also Wendell<sup>15</sup>) and discover the embodied social role, personality and agency of a person with disability in literary representations and maybe even in the extraliterary world (see also Barker and Murray, “Introduction” 11; Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 186). The following dissertation expands on the two stories of detective fiction, i.e. the story of the crime and the story of the detective’s investigations (Hühn 451-452; Todorov 295-296). It argues that the personal story of the detective’s disability and how he negotiates his masculine disability constitutes a third story, which is casually revealed through direct mentions in the narration or dialogue, flashbacks and conscious reflection. This third story allows the neurotypical and physically able-bodied reader an insight into the personal life of a neurodiverse and physically disabled person.

### **Desideratum**

Since Ria Cheyne lamented the lack of research on disability in genre fiction (“Introduction” 117), much has changed – not least through her own most recent monograph (*Disability, Literature, Genre*). Still, up-to-date research on disabled detectives points out that “there is more to explore about how disability works in [different subgenres of crime fiction]” in different media formats or even from different national perspectives, as Mintz suggests (200-201). Although the figure of the disabled detective has finally gained academic recognition, researchers have not yet examined how he negotiates his masculinity in light of his disability.

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<sup>15</sup> Susan Wendell argues that (assumedly able-bodied) readers of literary texts starring disabled characters fail to identify with these characters’ disabilities. This is because “[s]uffering caused by the body, and the inability to control the body, are despised, pitied, and above all, feared” (Wendell 248). This “fear” results in the innate reluctance of non-disabled readers (either male or female) to take the “imaginative leap” (248) into (fictional) people whose physicality and neurology function differently from their own. Thereby being confronted with the damaged body (or even the ‘different’ mind) and looking at its frailty creates an identification barrier. Therefore, the focus on interpreting disability as a metaphor for something else, as represented in the concept of the “narrative prosthesis” (Mitchell and Snyder), appears to be more comfortable than to face up to disability as a medical and, more importantly, socially constructed problem.

It is necessary to refine the different interpretations of the intersections of masculinity and disability. Titles like Bonnie G. Smith and Beth Hutchison's *Gendering Disability* and Margaret Rose Torrell's "Potentialities: Toward a Transformative Theory of Disabled Masculinity" allude to a gendered reading of disability and call for a more inclusive connection between disability and gender. However, like many other researchers in the field, they use 'disabled masculinity' for both negative, marginalising *and* supportive understandings of men with disabilities. This dissertation coins the term 'masculine disability' to distinguish inclusive from marginalising interpretations of masculinity and disability. Applying this paradigm shift (i.e. focusing on strengths instead of weaknesses) to the disabled detective allows a gendered, more specifically masculine, understanding of his disability. While Torrell criticises 'overcoming disability' as a "damaging stereotype" (220), a certain form of overcoming is inherent in narratives on disability (e.g. Murray, "Neurotecs" 180; Dolmage 39-40) as much as in the term 'masculine disability'. Nevertheless, this dissertation demonstrates that it is not the disability *per se* which is overcome. Instead, the disabled detective overcomes the assumed 'contradiction' between his developmental disorder or (acquired) physical impairment and what is socially considered – and what he himself considers – as masculine. Torrell argues that the interpretation of overcoming disability "is often used when the analytical emphasis is on the portrayal of disability in *absence of considerations of gender*" (220; *emphasis A.S.K.*). However, overcoming the struggle with disabled masculinity can *only be achieved* when the individual accepts disability as an important, but not dominating, part of his gendered identity, which is captured in the term 'masculine disability': the disabled detective achieves masculine disability by focusing on detective work as a profession associated with masculine characteristics.

Contributing to the study of genre fiction as a "productive cultural work in the ongoing struggle against the marginalization and oppression of disabled people" (Cheyne, "Disability in Genre Fiction" 186), it follows R.W. Connell and James Messerschmidt's call to "recogniz[e] the agency of subordinated groups as much as the power of dominant groups and the mutual conditioning of gender dynamics and other social dynamics" (848). The reciprocal relationship between readers and fiction plays an essential role in this analysis. Readers do not only "draw on their own [real-life] experiences" to understand fiction (Jakubowicz and Meekosha); likewise, fiction "has some mimetic relation to life" through which it gains the "power to further shape our perception of the world, especially regarding situations about which we have little direct knowledge" (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 10). Since (assumed neurotypical and physically able-bodied) readers may encounter disability through fictional representations

(Schalk 72), such representations have the power to encourage readers to reflect on their attitudes towards disabled people, on common stereotypes and stereotypical beliefs about disabled people (Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 162–63) as well as on hegemonic ideas of gender identity. The detective work has a beginning and an end but the disability remains (e.g. Mintz 116; Antolin 14). Therefore, analysing how detective work influences the identity of a disabled man is as intriguing as seeing how disability influences the investigations. The term ‘masculine disability’ encourages readers to perceive disabled men as gendered and sexual subjects, instead of emasculated objects; as people who have a professional and private life, enriched with agency, self-respect and a sense of masculinity, which is in no way inferior to neurotypical or able-bodied masculinity.

## 2. The Triangulation of Detective Fiction, Masculinity Studies and Disability Studies

Detective fiction, masculinity studies and disability studies have been the subject of a wide range of research, but their specific triangulation has been neglected so far. The following chapter outlines these three research areas and their intersections.

Despite numerous female detectives emerging since the Golden Age of detective fiction, detective fiction is not only an incredibly diverse genre (e.g. Rzepka and Horsley; Worthington, *Key Concepts in Crime Fiction*; Messent). It is also an essentially masculine genre (e.g. Gates, *Detecting Men* 7; Worthington, *Key Concepts in Crime Fiction* 41; Plain, “Gender and Sexuality” 102), not least underlined by the predominance of male detectives (Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* 20; Messent 85). Reflecting the nineteenth-century ideal of rational masculinity, Poe’s C. Auguste Dupin and Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes, the genre’s first and defining characters, stand out from their societies because of their cognitive capabilities. This intellectuality manifests the stereotype of the brilliant detective who has extraordinary observation and deductive reasoning skills (e.g. Gates, “Detectives” 216). Ever since, the genre has not only been “based on the social assumption that heroism, villainy, and violence are predominantly masculine characteristics” (Gates, *Detecting Men* 7). It has also drawn upon the “phallocentric western culture[’s association of] [...] masculinity with the search for knowledge” (Vanecker qtd. in Messent 86). Referring to Prometheus’s example as “the tireless and transgressing seeker who discovered the sacred and divine knowledge of fire”, Vanecker argues that “[t]he male heroes of the crime novel [...] are latter-day incarnations of this epistemological subject, individuals who traverse the mean streets to reach understanding as they ‘read’ the conspiracy behind the incomplete clues available” (qtd. in Messent 86). Therefore, detective fiction is essentially concerned with the acquisition and use of knowledge (Brownson 6<sup>16</sup>), and “[r]ationality, logic, the primacy of empiricism and the refusal of emotion” turn the detective’s pursuit of knowledge into a decisively masculine undertaking (Plain, “Gender and Sexuality” 102).

The detective uses his knowledge to protect his respective society. From the early-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century, the figure of the detective manifests in numerous different forms. Yet, essentially, “it is masculine heroism and rationality that solves crime and restores the social order”, making the genre “a particularly powerful ideological tool that consolidated

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<sup>16</sup> Brownson distinguishes between “warm and cool knowledge”, which he describes thus: “Cool knowledge is rational, acquired by thinking and observation, subject to logical analysis. Warm knowledge is instinctual” (6). In this distinction, Brownson manifests the detective’s generic masculinity and explains the late emergence of female detectives in the “deep-running conviction that women are not rational” as “[t]heir field of influence is warm knowledge” (9).

and disseminated patriarchal power”, articulated through “the rational, coolly logical voice of the male detective or his male narrator” (Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* 20). Male detectives, such as Dupin, Holmes, Philipp Marlowe and Sam Spade, metaphorically represent their respective culture’s values of masculinity (e.g. Gates, “Detectives” 215). By solving the mystery, identifying and delivering the criminal to the police, they ban the cultural fears reflected in the crimes (e.g. Griswold 146; Nickerson, “Introduction: The Satisfaction of Murder” 3; Foreman 21). Hence, the genre reflects social change and changes along with it (Gates, “Detectives” 218; Geherin 161).

Created in specific response to contemporary gender expectations, the male detective protagonist developed from the rationally thinking detective of the nineteenth century to a brute-force, hard-boiled detective in the early and middle twentieth century (Gates, “Detectives” 216). His capability to restore social order is the connecting element throughout the genre’s history. Therefore, the middle-class, non-disabled, white reader has expectations regarding the male detective as “society’s agent” (Hühn 460), a “hunter” of deviance, aiming at the “preservation of society” (Griswold 1). The detective’s “reason and analysis are opposed to the stereotypical ‘feminine’ qualities of intuition and emotion”, a relevant distinction for him to maintain “the detachment necessary for the firm decision-making, judgment, and coolness of mind that are so essential both to successful detective work and to larger systems of authority and power” (Messent 86). Hence, the detective is expected to be a “free-agent, self-sufficient and autonomous, and (in the hard-boiled variant) tough-talking, physically active, and – where necessary – violent” (86) character. Using real-life experiences of relationships, interactions and discourses to understand literary characters (Jakubowicz and Meekosha), the reader associates this “strong, dominating, controlling, confident, powerful and active” (Gates, *Detecting Men* 36), i.e. patriarchal, character who “embod[ies] the power of reason” (Connell 164) with hegemonic masculinity.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity represents the Western idea of ideal masculinity (Connell).<sup>17</sup> R.W. Connell defines it as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (77). Hegemonic masculinity is neither an “assemblage of traits” nor “a fixed character type” (Connell and Messerschmidt 847). Instead, it describes “the masculinity that occupies the

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<sup>17</sup> Connell and James Messerschmidt reviewed the original concept and reformulated some aspects in light of the most dominant and striking aspects of criticism. Summarising the concept’s original formulation and its reformulation, Messerschmidt adds the amplification of this reformulated model of hegemonic masculinity and gives prospects for its potential future use.

hegemonic [i.e. leading] position in a given pattern of gender relations” (Connell 76).<sup>18</sup> Hegemonic masculinity is neither naturally given nor inherent in the male body, but – like other forms of masculinity (and femininity) – is “constructed in interaction” and through “conventions in social practices” (Connell 35; see also Connell and Messerschmidt 836), which connects to Judith Butler’s research on gender performance.

As a form of gender embodiment, (hegemonic) masculinity is the result of performative acts (J. Butler, *Gender Trouble*; J. Butler, *Bodies That Matter*). In distinction to sex, i.e. the biological category of male and female, gender refers to the cultural interpretation of sex.<sup>19</sup> Thereby, gender is not biological but rather shaped and constructed according to current discourses of what constitutes masculinity and femininity (J. Butler, *Bodies That Matter* 34). In this vein, Butler shares Michel Foucault’s idea that there is no natural body. Instead, the body is always pervaded by discourses which regulate thoughts, beliefs and norms and, hence, create the individual’s body (Foucault 11). Wielding a certain power over individuals and their bodies, these discourses standardise the accepted ways of living as an individual in society and create a “world of norms” – “unstated but determining” – against which deviance is measured, be it in terms of gender embodiment or physical deviance (Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy* 23; Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 6-7). Hence, the individual (largely unconsciously) adapts its gender embodiment to discourses on what constitutes masculinity and femininity because it is unconsciously motivated by the wish to be “recognized by others as appropriately masculine or femininity” (Gerschick, “Sisyphus in a Wheelchair” 192) and, thus, accepted as a full and valuable member of society (Evans 2). Therefore, performing gender according to these discourses proves to be a “reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names” (J. Butler, *Bodies That Matter* 12). This repetitive performance of similar gender embodiments results in “a sedimentation that over time has produced a set of corporeal styles which, in reified form, appear as the natural configuration of bodies into sexes which exist in a binary relation to one another” (J. Butler, *Gender Trouble* 191).<sup>20</sup> This fits Connell

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<sup>18</sup> In this dissertation, the terms ‘dominant’ and ‘hegemonic’ masculinities are used interchangeably.

<sup>19</sup> Butler criticises the distinction between sex and gender. She argues that not only gender but sex, too, is a cultural and social construct. The body is socially constructed by the performative power of language. The “medical interpellation [...] shifts an infant from an ‘it’ to a ‘she’ or a ‘he’” (J. Butler, *Bodies That Matter* xvii), determining the baby’s biological sex. Accordingly, such a performative speech act decides how a body is treated and socialised, according to the discourses connected with a specific set of expectations towards gendered behaviour (*Bodies That Matter* 176-177). Therefore, Butler concludes that “the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all” (*Gender Trouble* 10).

<sup>20</sup> These expectations often concern the correspondence of the innate sex with the developed gender identity (cisgender) and reflect heteronormativity, which the novels analysed in this dissertation confirm. Therefore, the project recognizes the protagonists’ heteronormative sexuality. A closer consideration of how LGBTQ identities intersect with a disability requires further research.

and Messerschmidt's understanding of "bodies as both objects of social practice and agents in social practice" (851). They follow "role norms" of how to be masculine or feminine which "are social facts" and, thus, "can be changed by social processes" (Connell 23). That means that gender is not a static condition but rather an active, dynamic process.

Connell argues that hegemonic masculinity can only exist in relation to other, nonhegemonic forms of gender embodiments, depending on the specific settings in which they occur. Constructions of (hegemonic) masculinity vary according to numerous factors: the geographical – i.e. local, regional, or global – level (Connell and Messerschmidt 849-850; Messerschmidt 52, 69); their social embodiment depending on the situation and institution of interaction (Connell and Messerschmidt 851); the dynamics between all of these constructions. Until "a single society-wide or global 'ascendant' hegemonic masculinity" has been identified, it is mandatory to understand hegemonic masculinity "wholly in plural terms, analyzing hegemonic masculinities" (Messerschmidt 70). Therefore, it is important to recognise not only the "diversity" of several different masculinities but also "the *relations* between the different kinds of masculinity: relations of alliance, dominance and subordination", which highlights the "gender politics within masculinity" (Connell 37-38). Connell defines four nonhegemonic masculinities as relational to hegemonic masculinity, which Messerschmidt summarises as follows:

first, *complicit* masculinities do not actually embody hegemonic masculinity yet through practice realize some of the benefits of unequal gender relations and consequently when practiced help sustain hegemonic masculinity; second, *subordinate* masculinities are constructed as lesser than or aberrant and deviant to hegemonic masculinity, such as effeminate men; third, *marginalized* masculinities are trivialized and/or discriminated against because of unequal relations external to gender relations, such as class, race, ethnicity, and age; and finally, *protest* masculinities are constructed as compensatory hypermasculinities that are formed in reaction to social positions lacking economic and political power. (Messerschmidt 29)

Men can choose to perform hegemonic masculinity and "distance themselves strategically from hegemonic masculinity at other moments", which highlights the concept not as a universalising category but rather as "a way that men position themselves through discursive practices" (Connell and Messerschmidt 841). Just like the concept of hegemonic masculinity, these patterns are also subject to sociohistorical change and continue to challenge hegemonic masculinity as they present "men as bearers of alternative masculinities" (846). The term 'masculine disability' describes such an alternative form of masculinity as the result of an

individual's professional and personal negotiation of hegemonic norms of masculinity in light of disability.

Despite socioeconomic research's emphasis on the diversity and plurality of masculinities, "contemporary Western society does not necessarily recognize the multiplicity of masculine experience and tends to prescribe a standard masculine role to its male subjects regardless of their individuality" (Gates, *Detecting Men* 29; see also Connell 45; Messerschmidt 76). Therefore, despite "often unrealistic" attributes of masculinity, the idea of hegemonic masculinity prevails as the normative ideal for performing (non-)disabled masculinity and for judgments of it in (non-)disabled people's minds (Gerschick, "Sisyphus in a Wheelchair" 193; Connell and Messerschmidt 832). Such internalised beliefs become especially visible in cultural reproductions, which not only usually represent a "fixed, true masculinity" (Connell 45) but also display hegemonic masculinity as a "scientific-sounding synonym for a type of rigid, domineering, sexist, 'macho' man" (Messerschmidt 39). Such fictional representations of hegemonic masculinity perpetuate the idea that hegemonic masculinity is the ultimate embodiment of masculinity, which pressures male individuals to emulate such an ideal. Therefore, those men who cannot – or do not want to conform – to such a normative ideal face severe difficulties in being recognised as masculine.

Which form of masculinity to perform is not always a question of choice but can also be influenced by the bodily constitution and its social reception. Such is the case with a physical disability, which presents an example of "forces that counterbalance or limit the production of a particular kind of masculinity" (Connell 35). Although hegemonic masculinity is not inherent in the body, it implies "'compulsory able-bodiedness,' a logic presenting the able body as the norm that casts disability as the exception necessary to confirm that norm" (Siebers 102). Nevertheless, physicality is a decisive component in the construction of masculinity. Connell claims that masculinity is associated with "a certain feel to the skin, certain muscular shapes and tensions, certain postures and ways of moving, certain possibilities in sex" (52-53). Consequently, "the constitution of masculinity through bodily performance means that gender is vulnerable when performance cannot be sustained – for instance, as a result of physical disability" (Connell 54). In this case, bodily restrictions prevent the individual from achieving hegemonic norms and expectations of 'how to be a man' (Gerschick, "Toward a Theory of Disability and Gender" 1264). Messerschmidt subsumes this aspect as a "challenge" to "demonstrating and affirming embodied gender", resulting in the fact that "the individual is constructed as a 'deviant' member of society" (131). Since such 'deviance' is reminiscent of how neurodiversity is perceived in society, similar assumptions can also be made about

neurodiverse people's constructions of masculinity. Hence, as a "stigma – the situation of the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance" (Goffman *preface*), physical disability and neurodiversity impede the construction of 'appropriate' masculine identity and, thus, complicate or even hinder disabled men from attaining social recognition as men.

Therefore, men with a physical disability or a neurodivergent mind face a socially constructed "oxymoron" (Manderson and Peake 233).<sup>21</sup> This contradiction derives from the stereotyping and marginalisation of people with disabilities and, hence, is the consequence of a practised social hierarchy (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 7). Stereotypically, able-bodied and neurotypical men "are strong (not weak), active (not passive), subjects (not objects), competent (not ineffectual), productive (not redundant), invulnerable (not vulnerable), and hard (not soft)" (Barrett 42). Hence, masculinity embodies everything that disability is not and from which (hegemonic) men seek to distinguish themselves (Shakespeare, "The Sexual Politics of Disabled Masculinity" 59; Shuttleworth 166; Ostrander 80-81; Torrell 211; Barrett 40). This distinction is so characteristic that men with disabilities "have historically represented the abject repository of all that has been expelled from traditional accounts of male embodiment" (Barrett 42).<sup>22</sup>

Therefore, the disabled individual needs to negotiate an alternative way to meet social expectations of gender. Just like 'masculine' and 'feminine', the categories 'disabled' and 'non-disabled' as well as 'neurodiverse' and 'neurotypical' are less binary opposites than dynamic conditions, which change over time and with sociohistorical contexts. The many gradations on this continuum all have individual constitutions, enabling the disabled or neurodiverse individual to come up with different possibilities of how to express their (gender) identity. These ways are not fixed but vary according to the kind and degree of impairment (Shuttleworth et al. 179; Gerschick, "The Body, Disability, and Sexuality" 89). Consequently, there is not one ultimate way of coming to terms with a disability and connecting it to social (and individual) expectations of gender identity. While gender performance is usually subconsciously pursued, neurodiversity and physical impairment make a person aware of social gender expectations and

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<sup>21</sup> Contrastingly, femininity and disability have often been read together (e.g. Shakespeare, "The Sexual Politics of Disabled Masculinity" 55; Manderson and Peake 233-234; Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 29). Garland-Thomson argues that "[f]emininity and disability are inextricably entangled in patriarchal culture" since "[n]ot only has the female body been labeled deviant, but historically the practices of femininity have configured female bodies similarly to disability", as shown by dressing habits, such as wearing a corset, or beauty surgery aiming at eternal youth (*Extraordinary Bodies* 27).

<sup>22</sup> In their quantitative study on disabled men's conformity to masculine norms, compared to non-disabled men's conformity, T. L. King et al. confirm previous theoretical (qualitative) research on disabled masculinity.

how to meet or negotiate them.<sup>23</sup> Hence, when physical or mental restrictions hinder the subconscious “citational practice” of gender (J. Butler, *Bodies That Matter* 12), gender development becomes a process of (more or less) conscious, individual decision-making. In “Coming to Terms: Masculinity and Physical Disability”, Thomas J. Gerschick and Adam S. Miller identify three negotiation patterns of disabled masculinity in socioeconomic research, which presents a milestone in this field. Similarly, yet in the context of fiction, Margaret Rose Torrell specifically traces “gender and ability identifications” (222) and identifies four patterns categorising prominent ways of representing disabled masculinity. As both pieces of research focus on physical impairments, their patterns present a valuable theoretical basis for chapter five. Torrell’s call for “alternative models for productive associations between masculinity and disability” (220-211) can also be applied to neurodiversity, as elaborated in chapter four.

Disability, too, is culturally displayed in stereotypical and oversimplified ways. Disability is ubiquitous across movies and literature (e.g. Mitchell and Snyder 52; Torrell 209; Barker and Murray, “Introduction” 1) in all kinds of genres, such as science fiction (K. Allan), romance (Cheyne, “Disability Studies Reads the Romance”), crime and detective fiction (e.g. Mintz; Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre*) and even in the Disney franchises (Cheu). Nevertheless, disabled characters have only recently become a focus of research. They present the object of interest in the still young field of literary disability studies, which seek “to unpack the complexities of these metaphors, and the prejudices of the representations that often accompanied them” (Barker and Murray, “Introduction” 3; see also Bolt, “Introduction”; Stanback). Fictional representations of disability often reproduce common, real-life associations and prejudices such as vulnerability, weakness and dependence (Gerschick, “The Body, Disability, and Sexuality” 89), which enforces that “[s]tereotypes in life become tropes in textual representation” (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 11). In contrast to the (underlying) normative able-bodiedness of most literary characters, “literary texts necessarily make disabled characters into freaks, stripped of normality contexts and engulfed by a single stigmatic trait” (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 17). Hence, it comes as no surprise that in the early works on disability in literary texts, disabled characters were often found to be the villains (e.g. Gates, *Detecting Men* 180; A. Hall, *Literature and Disability* 32; Gregoriou, “Criminals” 171). The most popular examples include Shakespeare’s *Richard III*, Captain Ahab in Melville’s *Moby Dick* or Captain Hook in Barrie’s *Peter Pan* (Mitchell and Snyder 17; Mintz

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<sup>23</sup> Especially in the case of intellectual disability, young men actively copy their role models from television shows or their support workers by expressing their masculinity, for example, by having a similar hairstyle (Wilson et al., “From Diminished Men to Conditionally Masculine”; Wilson et al., “Conditionally Sexual”).

1-2; Torrell 222). These characters' deviant physicality (and masculinity) mirrors their deviant attitude towards their respective society, while at the same time turning them into "symbols of evil, exoticism, weakness or ugliness" (A. Hall, *Literature and Disability* 32).<sup>24</sup> Alternatively, characters with disabilities can also be weak, vulnerable and dependent, most famously demonstrated by Tiny Tim in Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (e.g. Shakespeare, "The Sexual Politics of Disabled Masculinity" 59; Torrell 209; Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 9; Barker and Murray, "Introduction" 2). The physical dependence continues in fictional representations of neurodiversity. Both Lennie in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* and Benjy in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* are well discussed in academic research as embodying the stereotypical 'retarded' character who is dependent on the neurotypical hero.<sup>25</sup>

Such stereotypical representations of disabled characters often include a metaphorical understanding of neurodiversity or physical impairment. Decisively contributing to literary disability studies, David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder argue that literary narratives use disability "first, as a stock feature of characterization and, second, as an opportunistic metaphorical device" (47) and summarise this relation as 'narrative prosthesis'. The term 'narrative prosthesis' refers to the fact that "disability has been used throughout history as a crutch upon which literary narratives lean for their representational power, disruptive potentiality, and analytical insight", which is why disabled characters are considered as "a potent symbolic site of literary investment" (49). Their embodiments as social agents are overshadowed by the cultural perception of disability as a metaphor (or even synonym) for "weakness, insecurity, bitterness, frailty, evil, innocence, etc." and, hence, always "has to stand for something else" (Davis, "The Ghettoization of Disability" 44). Such metaphorical portrayals "often misrepresent and flatten the experience real people have of their own or others' disabilities" (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 10) and, thus, "fail to do justice to the complexities of disability as an identity, a way of being in the world, or an embodied, lived experience" (A. Hall, *Literature and Disability* 32; see also Bérubé, "Disability and Narrative" 569-570; Murray, "Neurotecs" 177; Barker and Murray, "Introduction" 2-3).<sup>26</sup> In literary texts, such superficial representations often result in a character's marginalisation.

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<sup>24</sup> Such literary tropes connect to the nineteenth-century belief in phrenology, which reads criminals' bodies, i.e. their potential physical and mental condition, as indicative of their social deviance (Purchase 13).

<sup>25</sup> These characters rank among the most famous examples of disability in literature and frequently appear in research (e.g. Kriegel 39; Mitchell and Snyder 17; Torrell 209; Barker and Murray, "Introduction" 2; Mintz 1-2).

<sup>26</sup> Carol Thomas makes a similar point in her sociological elaborations on the "disabled body" when she claims that "[t]hose of us who live with marked impairments know that the body is 'real' however thoroughly it is culturally represented and positioned" (77). Although she does not explicitly refer to the metaphorical representation of disability, her claim underlines that, despite being "mediated through [...] meanings and cultural

Due to their metaphorical construction, disabled characters are often minor characters in fiction. Garland-Thomson observes that, while “main characters almost never have physical disabilities” (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 9), minor characters usually present a contrast to the protagonist, often most clearly marked with some kind of deviance. Charged and read with cultural meanings and associations in mind, their bodies become “spectacles of otherness” (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 8). Since disability is presented as a “deficit, defined by what it is *not*, rather than understood as its own mode of being” (Barker and Murray, “Introduction” 4), these characters deviate from and, at the same time, emphasise the normalcy of neurotypical and able-bodied characters (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 7-8; see also Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*). Additionally, disabled side characters serve “as a lightning rod for the pity, fear, discomfort, guilt, or sense of normalcy of the reader or a more significant character” (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 15). Through this metaphorical function, they reveal the protagonist’s moral standing and help the reader to sympathise and identify with the hero/ine (e.g. Zola 493; Shakespeare, “The Sexual Politics of Disabled Masculinity” 59; Bérubé, “Disability and Narrative” 569-570; A. Hall, *Literature and Disability* 66; Davis, “The Ghettoization of Disability” 44-45; Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 138). Consequently, denying them recognition as complex characters, traditional readings of the literary representation of disability present the disabled characters in an inferior, prosthetic and marginalised way.

However, what if the protagonist himself is disabled? In contrast to the disabled (minor) character’s underprivileged representation, the protagonist usually takes the position of the protector. The two roles of the protagonist and the disabled person stereotypically appear to be mutually exclusive because disability should mark the superior protagonist as inferior to the able-bodied antagonist from the start. Therefore, the question arises whether and how the prototypical position of the protagonist is challenged when he is disabled. As a protagonist, the disabled character takes centre stage to give voice to an ‘outsider’, a character who would usually be marginalised and stigmatised, from whose “underdog” (Markotić 5) perspective the narrative is told. Therefore, the metaphorical function of disability in narratives moves from revealing the protagonist’s moral standing to challenging the (assumed able-bodied and neurotypical) reader’s understanding of disability. Additionally, disability, no matter whether neurodiverse or physical, “demands a story” which explains how the disability developed or

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interpretations” (72), both disabled and non-disabled bodies are always (lived) experiences (77). Hence, literary representations of disability should always be carefully received and reflected.

came about (Bérubé, “Disability and Narrative” 570).<sup>27</sup> As a narrator, the disabled protagonist provides this story and often also alludes to how he deals with the disability. Such allusions imply notions of overcoming and compensating for the implied ‘gap’ between the disabled constitution and the social norm of able-bodiedness and neurotypicality. It implies that the character (or person) can overcome the restrictions and limits of the disability, for example, through “enough willpower and ingenuity” (Torrell 220), in order to “find their way back to a sense of legitimate personhood” (Mintz 152). To achieve this aim, the disabled character is provided with “compensating characteristics” which are often “causally related to the ‘defect’ in question”, such as the physically impaired character who displays “analytical prowess” (Hafferty and S. Foster 192). Therefore, the disabled protagonist is expected to make up for his physical or neurological ‘deviance’.

‘Deviance’ is one of the most inherent characteristics of the genre of detective fiction. Usually, it refers to the criminal committing crimes as acts of social deviance. The detective functions as a “hunter” of deviance, a seeker of truth with high morality, a protector of society preserving and/or restoring social order (e.g. Griswold 1; Messent 86), which requires a certain distance. Such a social superiority is most popularly represented in the aloofness of the classical detective (e.g. Michael Cohen 154; Malmgren 156). Apart from his peculiar character through which he “rise[s] above typicality”, the classical detective’s defining characteristic is his outsider position in society, which renders him “ec-centric, literally ‘off-center’ in one way or another” and through which he “stands apart” (Malmgren 155-156). Disabling features of a physical impairment or neurodiversity add to the detective’s deviance and marginalisation (Michael Cohen 154; Mintz 3).

The figure of the disabled detective challenges many genre conventions. While detective fiction usually marginalises the disabled character as “the silent or constrained witness, unable to communicate vital evidence” (Murray, “Neurotecs” 179; see also Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 55), the disabled protagonist confronts “dominant cultural assumptions about disability [which] clash with the genre convention of the exceptionally able detective” (Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 57). At the same time, the stereotypically inferior disabled character promises to become a “figure of achievement” by assuming the role of the detective protagonist (64). Upon closer inspection, it becomes evident that almost all detective

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<sup>27</sup> In the idea of a “disability hierarchy” (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*; see also Boyle), this story decides upon social recognition of the respective disability and its development/inception. Physical disability acquired in the line of duty suggests heroism because of their ‘sacrifice’ and, thus, presents the top of the hierarchy, to which other forms of acquiring a disability are subordinated (Boyle 98). However, this differentiation is not further pursued in the following dissertation.

protagonists are provided with a ‘flaw’ of some kind, be it physical, affective, mental or other (Hoppenstand and Browne 1), emphasising the exceptionality of the (disabled) detective as a genre convention (Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 56).<sup>28</sup> The respective disability often becomes supportive in the case’s solution and provides him with a different perspective on the specific case and life in general (e.g. Murray, “Neurotecs” 186; Dolmage 145; Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 56; Mintz 7). Jay Timothy Dolmage lists ‘defective detectives’ as disability rhetorics, i.e. “means of conceptualizing not just how meaning is attached to disability, but of viewing the knowledge and meaning that disability *generates*” and how such knowledge is dealt with (125). ‘Defective detectives’, Dolmage observes, are capable and effective investigators because “the deliberate social abnormality, the strange habits, the sensory confusion, and even the extraordinary bodies [...] are the rhetorical vehicle for their acuity and perceptiveness” (145). Hence, in contemporary understandings, the ‘defective’, i.e. disabled detective, is no longer ‘defective’. Instead, he has become an epitome of embodied alternatives, turning the presumed disadvantage of a disability into an advantage in the investigations.

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<sup>28</sup> In addition to Hoppenstand and Browne’s examples, popular culture also presents numerous disabled detectives, such as Ironside in his wheelchair, L.B. Jefferies’s broken leg (a temporary impairment) in Alfred Hitchcock’s *Rear Window*, Columbo with his glass eye. In terms of neurodiversity, Adrian Monk might present the most popular example of a neurodiverse detective as his compulsive obsessive disorder is essentially connected to his investigative skills (see also Mintz 179-186). Such neurodivergent or physical ‘flaws’ counterbalance the detective’s cognitive, i.e. deductive, extraordinariness and engage the reader in “the fallibility of the infallible hero, the humanness of the superhuman champion, the weakness of the sleuthing juggernaut” (Hoppenstand and Browne 2). Eventually, although such ‘flaws’ underline the detective’s deviance from the (able-bodied or neurotypical) norm, they also make him more human.

### 3. Odd Detectives: Socially Deviant Masculinity in C. Auguste Dupin and Sherlock Holmes

Comparing C. Auguste Dupin and Sherlock Holmes's masculine representation to American and British masculine ideals of the nineteenth century, these classical detectives simultaneously confirm and deviate from their contemporary gender expectations as they embody (unachievable) masculine ideals and display peculiar habits. Addressing the lack of research on male *bodies* in the detective genre, the following chapter contrasts Dupin's and Holmes's cognitive extraordinariness with their corporeality, through which it establishes the presuppositions for the figure of the disabled detective.

As a distinctly male genre, detective fiction reflects the patriarchal structures of nineteenth-century Western society (Purchase 75). Predominant gender constructions influence the distinction between the sexes by defining men and women's different roles in society. While women are restricted to the private sphere of hearth and home, men are attributed "features such as activity, strength, determination, and rationality", which they are supposed to display in the public sphere (Schneider 147-148). Mid-nineteenth century associations with (white) masculinity especially focus on the mind and cognitive skills (Kestner 42-43). They oppose assumptions about masculinity's 'other', represented in femininity and further deviances from masculinity, attributed to the body (Heholt and Parsons 4).

In the public sphere, work dominated masculine characteristics. Occupying a secure position was a sign of a man having "accept[ed] adult responsibilities as a provider, producer, and protector of a family" (Kimmel 13). Men were required to be self-determined, intellectual and active but, at the same time, supposed to embody genteel patriarchy. On entering the domestic sphere, they were expected to discard their attitude of the self-made man and devote themselves to their families (13; see also Person 130). Moreover, society had specific expectations concerning their physicality. Ideally, men were "white, middle-class, male, asexual, handsome (but not pretty or effeminate), impermeable, classically proportioned and, better still, statuesque (Roman nose, 'stiff' upper lip), strong" (Purchase 14). At the same time, they were supposed to discipline their body through their willpower by, for example, containing their sexuality (Kimmel 15-16). Hence, self-control was "one of the key building blocks of 19th-century gentlemanly behavior" (Person 150), which formed the basis upon which professional success as well as a strong personality and masculine identity were constructed. While society predominantly appreciated a man's cognitive skills in the first half of the nineteenth century, the focus expanded to a man's body in the late nineteenth century. Emphasis

on physical education in boys' upbringing ensured that a 'sound mind lives in a sound body' and prevented the body from deteriorating – an increasing concern in the late nineteenth century. The self-discipline required for sexual containment earlier in the century was now to be counterbalanced with a physically disciplined body in order to ensure a muscular, "worked-for" body which "displays strength of will and a negation of pain" (Heholt and Parsons 6). This "fully muscular body is an impenetrable body; one that protects itself and excludes the possibility of otherness" (6). Thus, physical fitness contributed to the predominance of white, middle-class masculinity in the closing nineteenth century.

Male literary characters are often, yet not exclusively, constructed with idealised masculinity in mind. The classical detective is traditionally associated with a high cognitive performance (Gates, *Detecting Men* 56; 60). Although the numerous subgenres of crime fiction have developed their own representation of masculine identity, they are connected by the detective's self-reliance (Messian 86). The male detective embodies logic as well as reason and remains emotionally detached to guarantee the objectivity required to solve cases. The following chapter connects to dominant research on Edgar Allan Poe's C. Auguste Dupin and Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes in that it highlights how both confirm predominant masculine ideals of their respective sociocultural contexts. However, both characters also deviate from such social norms and masculine ideals as their peculiar characteristics mark them as deviant characters.

### 3.1 C. Auguste Dupin

Although maybe not the most famous investigator, Edgar Allan Poe's C. Auguste Dupin was the first fictional detective, setting the tone for the genre and its reception. The three stories in which he appears contribute significant innovations to the newly initiated genre of detective and crime fiction: "'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' is a locked-room mystery; 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt' is the first example of armchair detection" (Marković and Oklopčić 98), and the mystery of "The Purloined Letter" is solved through the least likely solution.<sup>29</sup> Research often focuses on Poe's influence on initiating the detective genre (e.g. Rachman) and, more

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<sup>29</sup> While research concordantly identifies the innovations in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt", its analysis of "The Purloined Letter" is ambiguous. Marković and Oklopčić understand it to be "the theme of a most unlikely perpetrator" (98). However, this is a misleading assumption because, unlike in the previous two stories, the perpetrator's identity, Minister D-, is clear from the beginning (see also Thoms 141; M. S. Lee 377). Instead, Dupin surprises the reader with an obvious solution, yet one only he can find with his peculiar way of thinking (like a criminal) (Worthington, "From The Newgate Calendar to Sherlock Holmes" 22–23). Additionally, with the last Dupin story, Poe also "privatize[s] the genre and demonstrate[s] that it could traffic in private (as opposed to public) representations and mysteries" (Rachman 26).

specifically, the short story (e.g. Fisher, “Poe and the American Short Story”). In terms of Poe’s detective protagonist, research closely considers Dupin’s intellectual powers (e.g. Marković and Oklopčić; Thoms) or highlights Poe’s personal reflections on the sociohistorical context in his writing (e.g. Thoms). However, it largely neglects in-depth considerations of gendered aspects of his characters and writings (Person 149-150). Expanding on Leland S. Person’s argument that Poe’s “depictions of men and male behavior reveal extraordinary tensions between a [nineteenth-century] gentlemanly surface and volatile, even violent depths” (150), this chapter argues that Dupin’s dual character of disembodied intellectuality and his identification with social deviance challenges nineteenth-century American ideals of masculinity by embodying pure rationality.

Research often traces the genre’s origin to Poe as the “‘father’ of the detective genre” (Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* 7; see also Thoms 133; M. S. Lee 369; Rachman 17). His stories on the French aristocratic detective C. Auguste Dupin are inspired by real-life crime reports. Criminals, such as Eugène Francois Vidocq, a former convict who became a police inspector (Worthington, “From The Newgate Calendar to Sherlock Holmes” 18), or those whose criminal deeds were published in the Newgate Calendar<sup>30</sup> hugely influence Poe’s creation of the first fictional detective protagonist. Hence, Stephen Knight specifies that “[i]t is more accurate to say that Poe saw the possibilities that others were only half grasping” (26). Qualified by his personal background and “witnessing firsthand[sic!]” social and cultural change resulting from urbanisation and the increasing criminality (M. S. Lee 379-380), Poe’s generic innovation lies in the implementation of “how rational analysis combined with imagination can solve mysteries” (Worthington, “From The Newgate Calendar to Sherlock Holmes” 22).

Considering his previous, dark romantic work, it can be argued that Poe carves the reasoning detective figure out of the Gothic genre. Along with the supernatural, his Gothic stories are predominantly characterised by investigations of abysses of the human psyche (Fisher, “Poe and the Gothic Tradition”; Worthington, “From The Newgate Calendar to Sherlock Holmes” 23; M. S. Lee 369). Naturally emerging from these investigations, the “clever explanatory detective figure” (Knight 25) opposes Gothic fiction’s preoccupation with mystery. He controls the supernatural with his competence in reasoning, deducing and logically explaining the seemingly inexplicable supernatural (Cawelti 95; Plain, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction* 3; Knight 28; Fisher, *The Cambridge Introduction to Edgar Allan Poe* 59; Rachman 21). This

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<sup>30</sup> For more information on criminal reports collected in *The Newgate Calendar*, see Schwarzbach, Knight or Worthington (“From The Newgate Calendar to Sherlock Holmes”). For further reading on the French origin of the detective genre, see Schütt or Worthington (“From The Newgate Calendar to Sherlock Holmes”).

turns the central crime into a “game or puzzle” (Cawelti 99), for which the detective provides a solution, thus reassuring to the reader “that, despite the existence of crime and criminals, the world is in fact rational, intelligible, and controllable” (Brownson 13; see also Gates, *Detecting Men* 20). Therefore, the detective becomes “a spokesman for the power of thought” and “defender of rationality” (Brownson 14; see also Worthington, “From The Newgate Calendar to Sherlock Holmes” 22) while embodying “a machine for ‘ratiocination’” which eventually “can restore some level of justice and harmony” (Nickerson, “The Detective Story” 431). The investigator C. Auguste Dupin functions as a “transitional figure” between Gothic fiction and the developing genre of crime fiction (Cawelti 99).

“The Murders in the Rue Morgue”, the first Dupin story, introduces Dupin as a man of the mind even before he appears in person. The story starts with an essay-like introduction to the reasoning methods of the “analyst”, comparing them with chess and whist, both games of the mind (RM 141-144). Poe refers to the analyst as “he”, an “undefined, masculine, analytical category of people” (Marković and Oklopčić 101). At the same time, he implicitly rejects and excludes the stereotypically feminine characteristic of emotionality. Furthermore, among these explanations, the distinction between physical strength and mental skills plays a vital role. “As the strong man exults in his physical ability, delighting in such exercises as call his muscles into action, so glories the analyst in that moral activity which *disentangles*” (RM 141). Here, Poe enforces the Cartesian distinction between body and mind (M. S. Lee 371; Novosat 80) as he differentiates between “physical ability” and “moral activity”, aligning the former with the body and the latter with the brain. His contemporary masculine ideal preferred the mind over the body, leading to the body being largely neglected in social opinion. Thus, the explanations highlight the analyst’s “moral activity”, which underlines his judgment of right and wrong and turns him into a social protector. The examination of the analyst culminates in the introduction of Dupin, characterising him as such an analyst. Nevertheless, the anonymous narrator – who precedes Dr Watson as the detective protagonist’s sidekick, chronicler and source of identification for the reader in Arthur Conan Doyle’s stories (Worthington, “From The Newgate Calendar to Sherlock Holmes” 22; Foreman 39) – introduces him as a “double Dupin”. This not only characterises the detective as “the creative and the resolvent” (RM 146). It also indicates his ambivalent character, as his surface conforms to nineteenth-century gender ideals while his vague physicality indicates that he is a more ambiguous and deviant character (Person 150).

Dupin’s predominant characteristic is his extraordinary rational activity. On the one hand, he occupies an ‘unofficially superior’ position to the police after having solved the mystery of the Rue Morgue case, which earns him the reputation as a super-intelligent detective (MR). He

becomes the person to inquire when Police Prefect -G admits that he and his colleagues are incompetent (PL 282) or (despite their personal rivalry) desperately pleads for Dupin's support (MR). What appears to the narrator as mind reading is explained by Dupin as close observation, attention to easily overlooked details and a willingness to admit any possible solution (RM 146-148), which distinguish him from the common police. It characterises his "objectivity [which] is guaranteed by his apparent aloofness from the social world in which crime occurs" (Thoms 136). Hence, Dupin's investigative procedure is "part intellectual, part empirical" which "combines apparent subtlety with an inner simplicity" (Knight 27-28). Dupin himself highlights this simplicity as the origin of his genius: "Truth is not always in a well. In fact, as regards the more important knowledge, I do believe that she is invariably superficial" (RM 156). He disproves the mysteries' difficulty by deducing the solutions based on simple reasoning steps: If the murderer could escape, it is no locked room (161-162); if the foreign-sounding voices are neither human nor supernatural, they are animalistic (168-169); if the letter cannot be found in even the remotest secret hideout, it must lie overtly visible (PL 296). Thereby, this openness to a simple solution eventually creates an 'aura of genius', which distinguishes Dupin from his contemporaries.<sup>31</sup>

On the other hand, Dupin's largely cognitive activities present his physicality in ambiguous ways. His physical actions are reduced to a minimum, thus challenging American nineteenth-century models of the active and business-oriented male (Kimmel). Although some action precedes his confrontation with the sailor in "Rue Morgue" (i.e. the personal investigation of the crime scene and placing of the newspaper ad) and his presentation of the purloined letter (i.e. the localisation and retrieval of the document), Dupin's active investigations are "off-stage and he [Dupin] merely reports his activity to the reader" in direct speech. Agreeing with Knight, "[t]he stories do not create his activity" (27) in the public. Instead, Dupin confronts the sailor who owns the orangutang in "Rue Morgue" (171-172), presents the purloined letter to the Prefect (PL 289) and even conducts the entire investigation of Marie Rogêt's murder from his study. Solving the case by comparing different newspaper articles while "sitting steadily in his accustomed armchair" (MR), he is depicted as an "armchair detective" (Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* 21).<sup>32</sup> Throughout the detective genre, this trope, is referred to as solving the case "through

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<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, Dupin's solutions are not always comprehensible to the reader as transparent chains of reasoning. Instead, their occasional vagueness results in the observation that "Dupin's analysis cannot itself be analyzed" (M. S. Lee 374). On the one hand, this observation contributes to the detectives 'genius' but, on the other hand, also counterbalances his reasoning skills with intuition which evades any logical explanation (374). Hence, Dupin is not entirely rational, which contributes to his ambivalent character.

<sup>32</sup> As this story is based on the real-life case of Mary Rogers, it represents an interesting interaction between fact and fiction on which Thoms (140-141) elaborates.

deductive reasoning alone [...] without the detective ever leaving his or her armchair” (144).<sup>33</sup> Although such an attitude to his work might make him appear passive and even naïve since he relies on the adequate (and complete) representation of the crime scene in the given material, it also highlights him as a genius, whose extraordinary cognitive skills save him the effort of leaving the reclusive space of his study to solve those problems the official police is unable to solve.

Poe emphasises Dupin’s cognitive activities to such an extent that the detective’s physicality seems negligible. As a body “compromise[s]” the detective (Plain, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction* 13), “dislodg[ing] Dupin from his body” through “the act of thinking” (Novosat 81) eclipses the physical and social “baggage” that comes with a body and preserves the detective’s “intellectual ‘purity’” (Plain, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction* 13). In fact, Poe neglects to provide a description of the detective’s physical appearance. Ironically, Dupin *criticises* the Prefect -G for being overly detailed at the crime scene and describes him as “‘all head and no body’” (RM 176), which is an exact description of Dupin’s own behaviour. Courtney Novosat makes a similar point when she observes that “Rue Morgue” literalises the mind-body split not only in Madame L’Espanaye’s decapitation but also in Dupin himself (80). She reads the female victims’ lifestyle not only as a “body- and sexuality-centered counterpoint to Dupin’s reason-centered observation”, but also as a mirror to Dupin and the narrator’s relationship (85). Their reclusive, homosocial lifestyle suggests that they engage in a homosexual intimacy, which challenges nineteenth-century conventions of (hetero)sexuality, family and morality (81). Since such “‘deviant’ sexualities” (84) would challenge Dupin’s moral integrity and underpin his social deviance, a lack of focus on the body, with its stereotypically feminine connotation, prevents (or provokes) a discussion of his sexuality. Instead, supporting nineteenth-century ideals of rational masculinity, C. Auguste Dupin’s mind not only controls his body (Kimmel qtd. in Person 151) but even erases it (see also Foreman 93), through which he presents disembodied intellectuality – a perfect embodiment of entirely rational masculinity.<sup>34</sup>

Dupin’s (lack of) physicality also characterises him as socially deviant. Fictional characters’ physical descriptions guide the reader in differentiating between ‘good’ and ‘evil’, ‘same’ and ‘other’ while it is “the role of the detective to reveal the truth by stripping back the concealment

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<sup>33</sup> As Dupin disentangles the mystery from his home, he blurs the boundaries that typically separate the sexes. The armchair symbolises the private, domestic sphere, typically associated with femininity. By solving a public affair from the secluded position in his armchair, Dupin deconstructs the separation of the sexes and, by claiming a female-connotated space for his work, merges the segregated public and private spheres. At the same time, the living room serves as his study, a place in which his mind operates and excels, turning it into a decisively masculine room, which confirms the masculine domination of the private sphere (see also Schneider 149).

<sup>34</sup> Sally R. Munt arrives at a similar conclusion, which she terms “disembodied ratiocination” (qtd. in Mintz 97). 35

afforded by misleading externalities” (Jean Anderson 254; see also Michael Cohen 153). Hence, if the detective himself does not materialise as a physical entity, the social protector becomes associated with the very social deviance he hunts (see also Thoms 143). This inversion not only invites reading Dupin as “other” (Michael Cohen 153-154) but also gives rise to suspicions of physical deviance. He explains that his green spectacles protect (MR) and cover his “weak eyes” (PL 296). However, apart from serving to deceive his opponent, these spectacles also allude to a visual impairment, such as a (hyper)sensitivity to (sun)light. His photophobic behaviour supports such a hypothesis, as he leaves his flat preferably at night and darkens the windows during the day (RM 145) to avoid visual distraction while concentrating (PL 282). Such an impairment would not only flaw his ‘pure’ masculine embodiment but also restrict or even deprive him of his vision, the sense needed for detecting social deviance. However, not only Dupin’s physicality could align him with criminality, but also his way of thinking.

While the first two stories present Dupin as a detached analyst, “The Purloined Letter” undermines this image as it reveals not only Dupin’s “moral ambiguity” (M. S. Lee 377; Nickerson, “The Detective Story” 429) but also his similarity to the antagonist. Dupin’s investigations are driven by personal motivations. He claims the financial reward for reproducing the missing document (PL 289), which complements his mere pleasure in solving the case in the previous stories. Later on, he reveals his satisfaction at outwitting Minister D-, taking a personal revenge for the Minister’s “evil turn” (PL 299), which challenges his morality as a detective. The detective and the criminal engage in a “contest of wits” (Fisher, *The Cambridge Introduction to Edgar Allan Poe* 60; see also Thoms 144-145; Nickerson, “The Detective Story” 429; Person 151-152) which requires that they are like-minded. Dupin is willing to commit morally reprehensible acts himself, such as threatening a sailor (RM 172) or stealing and forging the letter in question (PL 298; see also M. S. Lee 377). Thus, the story “smudges the line between detective and criminal, champion of truth and self-interested genius” (M. S. Lee 377). It alienates the detective from the society he is supposed to protect as Dupin identifies with the criminal who becomes his double (e.g. Thoms 141-142; M. S. Lee 376-377; Rachman 25). Both detective and antagonist are “haughty geniuses” (M. S. Lee 377) and intellectual “twins” (Fisher, *The Cambridge Introduction to Edgar Allan Poe* 60). Knowing the Minister D- “[a]s poet and mathematician” (PL 293), Dupin understands that pure reason and (mathematical) logic alone cannot match the Minister’s cunning game (as the police assumes). Dupin assumes the Minister D-’s thought processes (291; see also Rachman 21), and adapts his investigative methods to the latter’s intellect (PL 293-294). As such, the detective anticipates

the ““simplicity”” of the solution (295), which suggests that the letter must be hidden in plain sight (296). Deceiving his opponent by hiding the focus of his gaze behind green spectacles (which, like a Claude glass, might also allow a different perspective on the investigations), Dupin outwits the Minister by locating the letter and exchanging it with a forgery.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, “The Purloined Letter” introduces the mirroring of detective and criminal as a central characteristic of detective fiction (Worthington, “From The Newgate Calendar to Sherlock Holmes” 22-23; Nickerson, “The Detective Story” 429). In doubling them, Poe reverses “the apparent opposition between *good* detective and *bad* criminal” (Thoms 142), which results in two aspects. First, the detective “bring[s] the terrifying potency of the gothic villain under the control of rationality and thereby direct[s] it to beneficial ends” (Cawelti 94-95). Although Dupin thinks and occasionally acts like a criminal (in addition to having egoistic instead of altruistic motivations), his actions contribute to the revelation of social deviance, which resocialises the detective as an outsider (Thoms 145; Geherin 160) and restores social harmony. Second, Dupin counterbalances pure rationality with the skill of empathising with and thinking like a criminal, which allows him to be (at least) one step ahead of the latter. Thus, “Poe suggests that psychological states are driven by physiological causes and that the mind/body split of ‘The Murders in the Rue Morgue’ is not as clean as sometimes supposed” (M. S. Lee 377). Indeed, Poe underlines that ““even the most ‘analytical’ mind cannot identify with another’s train of thought without observing his bodily movements” and that ‘it is impossible to achieve empathy with the criminal mind... without paying close attention to the physical activity displayed by the body attached to that mind’” (Rzepka qtd. in Mintz 4). Thereby, he reveals not only the detective to be more ambiguous than the reader first believes but also deconstructs the gentleman ideal of nineteenth-century American society. As a way to obfuscate such apparent critique of his sociocultural environment, Poe might have chosen to make Dupin French.

Person’s elaborations of Poe’s “rhetorical war upon nineteenth-century manhood” (152) can also be applied to Dupin’s deviant embodiment of masculinity. His family origin as well as financial and living situation further distance him from the ideal of the self-made man (see Kimmel). As his title ‘Chevalier’ indicates, Dupin is the descendent of “an excellent – indeed of an illustrious family”, which, “by a variety of untoward events, had been reduced to such poverty that the energy of his character succumbed beneath it, and he ceased to bestir himself in the world, or to care for the retrieval of his fortunes” (RM 144). Poe presents him as a socially

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<sup>35</sup> Dupin’s name gives a hint at “this wily sleuth’s frame of mind” (Fisher, *The Cambridge Introduction to Edgar Allan Poe* 59; see also Thoms 135). Pronouncing the French name in an English way, it becomes ‘duping’, which means ‘to deceive’, and underlines the detective’s deceptive nature and similarity to social deviance, which challenges his position as a (social) hunter of the truth.

reclusive, impoverished aristocrat. Although Poe reflects on his own poverty in Dupin (158), he sheds a positive light on this poverty. As Dupin has neither professional obligations nor a family to provide for, the “small remnant of his patrimony” and his “rigorous economy” (144) allow the investigator to focus exclusively on his interests, rather than on fulfilling social obligations. Hence, as “an unbiased, objective observer whose mind is not clouded by earthly pleasures of social trappings” (Marković and Oklopčić 100), Dupin is free to dedicate his energy to cognitive work, without financial pressure or the distraction of female emotionality or family responsibilities which would (negatively as much as positively) counterbalance his rationality. In Dupin, Poe presented the classical detective’s peculiarity that he “has little real personal interest in the crime he is investigating” but that his only motivation derives from his “delight in the game of analysis and deduction” (Cawelti 81) rather than his “personal sense of justice” (Nickerson, “The Detective Story” 429). Hence, he is the very opposite of the hard-working self-made man (Kimmel qtd. in Person 150-151). In this way, Poe turns the detective protagonist into a character who is close to and yet deviant from the society he protects.

The figure of C. Auguste Dupin proves disembodied intellectuality to be a superficial ideal and counterbalances it with physical vagueness. As Poe almost ‘parodies’ the masculine ideals of his sociohistorical context, Dupin’s duality “expos[es] the gentleman as a fiction” (Leverenz quotes in Person 151). Oscillating between good and bad, moral and immoral, the epitome of social order and deviance from social order, the detective’s ambiguity becomes an essential characteristic for future fictional investigators. With Dupin’s focus on pleasure instead of social obligations, his financial independence despite his impoverished nobility status, his reclusive (homosocial) living situation and the green spectacles, he exhibits a social deviance that is reminiscent of the decadence which developed only in late nineteenth-century Europe. Thus, Poe’s characterisation of C. Auguste Dupin displays and foreshadows eccentricities which subsequently become an integral part of the detective character, not least through Sherlock Holmes.

### 3.2 Sherlock Holmes

While Dupin is the first literary detective, Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes is the most famous detective of the genre.<sup>36</sup> He earns Doyle the title of “the omega of detective fiction’s century-long emergence from crime fiction in general, and the alpha of its triumphant march into the golden age of literary detection, the 1920s and 30s” (Rzepka 4). Teamed up with his loyal companion and narrator Dr Watson, these two characters rank among the most popular characters in detective fiction. While Holmes’s “intellectual genius” is reminiscent of the deductive reasoning skills displayed by Doyle’s former teacher Dr Joseph Bell (e.g. Knight 55-56; Worthington, *Key Concepts in Crime Fiction* xvi), Doyle leant heavily on Poe’s Dupin and other previous investigative characters in his creation of Sherlock Holmes. He created the detective as “an analytic genius who displays various eccentricities and shuns society, and who also [...] is a man of action and a master of disguise” (Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* 25-26). Hence, it seems that Sherlock Holmes is an embodiment of nineteenth-century British ideals of masculinity, such as “observation, rationalism, facticity, logic, comradeship, pluck, and daring” (Kestner qtd. in Schneider 159). However, he also challenges such idealisation in that his unconventional habits, idiosyncrasies (Kestner 60; Knight 63; Schneider 159) and peculiar fields of knowledge characterise him as ‘odd’ rather than ‘ideal’. Supporting Ralf Schneider’s argument of Holmes’s superficial idealisation – identifying him as a character that “*appears* to be idealized” (156) – the following chapter argues that Holmes’s peculiarity shows in an unrealistically perfect embodiment of nineteenth-century ideals of masculinity.

The first impression of Sherlock Holmes on the narrator Dr John Watson and the reader is filtered through a third character’s narrative. In *A Study in Scarlet*, Stamford, Dr Watson’s former colleague, delineates Holmes’s character by describing his work and his interests, thus preparing Dr Watson (and the reader) for his peculiar character. Stamford highlights that Holmes is “‘a decent fellow enough’” but “‘a little queer in his ideas’” and elaborates on his field of interest: Holmes seems to be “well up in anatomy” and “is a first-class chemist; but, as far as I know, he has never taken out any systematic medical classes. His studies are very desultory and eccentric, but he has amassed a lot of out-of-the-way knowledge which would astonish his professors” (StS 9). At the same time, Stamford notes that “‘Holmes is a little too scientific for my tastes – it approaches to cold-bloodedness. [...] He appears to have a passion for definite and exact knowledge’” (9). Stamford’s elaborations implicitly question Holmes’s

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<sup>36</sup> Due to the sheer number of short stories and novels, the following chapter focuses on Holmes’s introduction in the first two novels, *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of Four*.

dedication and decency to medical studies without being a physician (see also Brownson 36). The question resonating in Stamford's descriptions regards the decency of Holmes's interest: Why would anyone be this interested in corpses and chemical studies without being a physician? What could his interest be if it is not for the purpose of medical studies?

Holmes's first physical appearance supports his peculiar character. It specifies that he defines himself through his (passion for) scientific knowledge, through which he confirms a prominent aspect of Victorian masculinity. When Dr Watson meets Holmes in the laboratory – “a space signifying not only rationality and logic but also linking these traits with masculinity” (Kestner 42) – Holmes experiences a “Eureka moment” in his research (StS 11), which marks him as a man of action and self-determination who is dedicated to the discovery of knowledge. Later, Watson further elaborates on Holmes's other fields of interest on which the detective has substantial knowledge which is “as remarkable as his [ignorance]” (17). What Watson considers to be common knowledge, such as “the composition of the Solar System”, Holmes considers to be “useless facts elbowing out the useful ones” (17). He understands his brain as “a little empty attic” which he furnishes only with relevant, useful information to avoid crowding it with useless clutter (17). With this analogy, Holmes blurs the boundaries between the domestic and public sphere even more than Dupin. Although he later describes himself as a passive armchair detective (SF 21-22), picturing a study room in his mind, from which the detective solves mysteries and navigates the world, renders the armchair detective not a passive man but an extraordinarily active thinker. Being an armchair detective is no derogative attribution but rather credits his cognitive extraordinariness as he always carries his study with him – in his mind. He is able to read and combine the clues without having to leave his flat. Although Stamford might judge Holmes's fields of knowledge as “out-of-the-way” (StS 9), they are legitimate ‘furniture’ in the detective's mind attic as they allow Holmes to pursue his passion and work.

The detective's knowledge and cognitive skills also display Holmes's confidence and competitive nature as he believes himself to be superior to his society. When Watson compares Holmes to Dupin, with the aim of complimenting him for his deductive reasoning. Holmes rejects this compliment. Instead, he judges Dupin as an “inferior fellow” and his apparent mind-reading skills as “really very showy and superficial” (StS 22). Understanding to be the best in his metier and in order to apply his particular knowledge and extraordinary skills of observing and combining even the smallest details to draw conclusions, Holmes creates his own profession as a “consulting detective” (SF 6). As such, he offers his knowledge and skills to private clients and the local police as a consultant in particularly difficult cases. The supreme

confidence in his skills draws him to consider himself to be ““the last and highest court of appeal in detection”” (6). It manifests his competitive nature as “[n]o man lives or has ever lived who has brought the same amount of study and of natural talent to the detection of crime which I have done”” (23). Creating his own professional niche suggests the eccentric belief that existing social structures are insufficient for his cognitive capacities.<sup>37</sup>

Holmes’s peculiarity is further enforced by his focus on himself. Although it could be argued that his rationality and social contribution in solving crimes turn him into a “model of masculinity” (Griswold 11), using his knowledge to protecting society (9) or restoring social order is secondary to him. Similar to Dupin, Holmes’s primary ambition derives from “the work itself, the pleasure of finding a field for my peculiar powers, is my highest reward” (SF 6-7; see also Geherin 160). Hence, Holmes might act like “a doctor who administers to society’s ills” (Purchase 160) as he ‘cures’ and protects society, eventually even restoring order by eliminating the instances of social deviance. Nevertheless, Holmes does not *aim* at this achievement. To him, it is merely a concomitant of his favourite, mental engagement.

After Holmes’s introduction as a reasoner whose analytical work shapes his occupation and character (see also Brownson 40-41), Holmes’s tall and lean body is described only in the second chapter of *A Study in Scarlet*.

His eyes were sharp and piercing, [...]; and his thin, hawk-like nose gave his whole expression an air of alertness and decision. His chin, too, had the prominence and squareness which mark the man of determination. His hands were invariably blotted with ink and stained with chemicals, yet he was possessed of extraordinary delicacy of touch, as I frequently had occasion to observe when I watched him manipulating his fragile philosophical instruments. (StS 16)

With these detailed descriptions, Watson manifests Holmes’s masculinity and his character as a corporal figure. Holmes is an attentive observer, a man of action, with a body exhibiting the toughness of a predator as much as the sensitivity to handle delicate instruments. This description alludes to the Victorian ideal of a ‘sound mind in a sound body’.<sup>38</sup> Although Holmes’s cognitive skills are in no way inferior to Dupin’s, this portrayal of Holmes’s body demystifies his character, placing him within the realm of the physically perceptible, rather than

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<sup>37</sup> His living situation enforces this reclusive characteristic. Although his profession provides Holmes with acquaintances in all the different classes of society, he is not more empathetic than Dupin. Holmes, too, chooses a homosocial reclusive style of living, retreating from his profession, with Watson as his sole constant companion.

<sup>38</sup> Holmes takes care of his body through regular physical exercises (StS 18) and, as later short stories reveal, displays such great strength that only “[f]ew men were capable of greater muscular effort” (YF 302). With these characteristics, Doyle counterbalances rationality with physical energy and reflects the increased focus on the male body in the late Victorian era.

portraying him as a disembodied, intangible man. Nevertheless, such a physical body comes with “baggage” (Plain, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction* 13), which challenges the detective’s social superiority.

Sherlock Holmes’s rational and corporeal balance does not prevent him from being associated with deviance (see also Heholt and Parsons 6). In *A Study in Scarlet*, Watson observes “a dreamy, vacant expression in his eyes, that I might have suspected him of being addicted to the use of some narcotic”. Such contradicts not only “the temperance and cleanliness of his whole life forbidden such a notion” but also Holmes’s “working fit” (StS 15), i.e. his passion for his metier. Although Watson notices the physical symptoms, his appreciation of Holmes’s moral superiority prevents the narrator from believing what he perceives. By *The Sign of Four*, Watson has learned that Holmes, indeed, occasionally exposes his body to the strains of drug consumption, enjoying the mind-expanding effects. In the opening scene of *The Sign of Four*, Dr Watson watches Holmes injecting himself with a seven-percent solution of cocaine (5). Even though the consumption of substances such as opium and cocaine was common in the nineteenth century, especially as a medical treatment for several diseases, the late Victorian era brought increasing insight into the negative effects and consequences of drug consumption, such as addiction and physical withdrawal symptoms (Purchase 48). Watson communicates his concerns about the detective’s physical well-being and his cognitive abilities from the perspective of a medical man:

‘Count the cost! Your brain may, as you say, be roused and excited, but it is a pathological and morbid process which involves increased tissue-change and may at least leave a permanent weakness. You know, too, what a black reaction comes upon you. Surely the game is hardly worth the candle. Why should you, for a mere passing pleasure, risk the loss of those great powers with which you have been endowed?’ (SF 6)

Ignoring the medical warnings, Holmes prefers the substances’ enhancing effects on his mind over the potential damage to his body: ““I find it [i.e. cocaine], however, so transcendently stimulating and clarifying to the mind that its secondary action [i.e. its potential damage to body and mind] is a matter of small moment”” (6). As an analyst, Holmes ““crave[s] for mental exaltation”” and consumes drugs to avoid ““the dull routine of existence”” (6) when not involved in crime detection: ““I cannot live without brain-work. What else is there to live for?”” (12). Cocaine is the fuel that keeps his mind busy in times of inoccupancy and merely serves as a substitute for his real passion: engaging the mind in criminal mysteries. For Holmes, this “existential attitude” (Kestner 61) towards his detective profession justifies his drug consumption. Alternatively, it might be possible that the drugs provide Holmes with a different

perspective on the world. Although he never takes drugs when on a case, the occasional substance consumption might allow Holmes even further mind-broadening effects, enabling him to think differently and allow even the most unlikely possibilities. Holmes confirms his different view on the world with his credo: ““[...] when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, *however improbable*, must be the truth”” (SF 42). Thereby, the drugs have similar effects for Holmes as the green spectacles provide for Dupin, which links their social deviance with their nonnormative means of investigation (see also Dolmage 144-145).

It could be argued that giving in to the drugs’ temptation shows his lack of self-discipline and inability to control his (morally ambiguous) desires. However, knowing his bodily limits, Holmes correctly measures the substance’s dosage and, thus, balances drug-enhanced stimulation of the mind and physical response. In his case, the mind not only controls the body (Kimmel 15-16) but also respects its limits. The stories’ lack of physical consequences of Holmes’s drug consumption, such as withdrawal symptoms, or information on the frequency of consumption support such a hypothesis. The detailed description of Holmes’s “sinewy forearm and wrist, all dotted and scarred with innumerable puncture-marks” (SF 5) presents the only mention of physical effects of the substances on his body. Holmes is presented as a “‘languid’ user of cocaine, marking his ‘different’ status” (Kestner 60). Linked to “science, practical application, exact knowledge, logic and system, all elements gendered masculine in the nineteenth century” (29), Holmes served as role model. Despite his behavioural flaw of occasionally consuming drugs but because of his extraordinary self-discipline, control and rationality, boys were advised to read the Holmes stories and develop their own masculinity according to this literary role model (2). His rational mind and excellent knowledge of his physical constitution turn him into a paradigm of nineteenth-century masculinity.

Nevertheless, Sherlock Holmes has the potential to threaten society. Not only due to his (professional) dependence on criminality and deviance in society (Kestner 62), but also due to his extraordinary skills and occasional unpredictability, Watson communicates his fear of “what a terrible criminal he [Holmes] would have made had he turned his energy and sagacity against the law instead of exerting them in its defence” (SF 44; see also Loftis, *Imagining Autism* 32). Similarly to Dupin, Holmes assimilates his antagonist’s thought process, doubles him – especially his nemesis Moriarty (Michael Cohen 154). However, Holmes always restores social order, although it might only be a subordinate aim.

Consequently, Sherlock Holmes is an ambivalent figure as he is socially idealised, recognisable and ‘other’ at the same time. On the one hand, he embodies idealised nineteenth-century masculinity in his rationality, extraordinary cognitive skills, competition and self-

control. His extraordinary working methods and his drug consumption for the purpose of experiencing neuro-enhancing effects present a peculiarity which is not regulated by any controlling institution. He acquires a “quasi-divine status” as “a detective who is highly intelligent, essentially moral, somewhat elitist, all-knowing, disciplinary in knowledge and skills, energetic, eccentric, yet also in touch with the ordinary people who populate the stories” (Knight 55). Doyle created Holmes as a character who confirms social (gender) standards so that his reading audience might identify with and hold on to such an embodiment of ‘idealised’ masculinity in the turbulent time of the late nineteenth century (Kestner 40; Knight 61). At the same time, Holmes’s ‘idealised’ masculinity proves to be superficial (Schneider 159) as each of these aspects also excludes him from his society and displays his “singularity”. Numerous “*outré* traits” (Kestner 37), such as “uses cocaine, keeps tobacco in a Persian slipper, plays the violin, is prone to depression, often disappears, deploys disguises” (37; see also Jean Anderson 255), counterbalance his idealised masculinity and contribute to the conclusion that Holmes is “a model but also a paradigm” (Kestner 37), “both an elite genius and a thoroughly humanised person” (Knight 63). Hence, both deviant and masculine characteristics of nineteenth-century Britain ‘other’ Sherlock Holmes from his contemporary society.

### 3.3 Chapter Conclusion

In conclusion, the ur-detectives C. Auguste Dupin and Sherlock Holmes demonstrate that social deviance, displayed by their ‘oddness’, has been inherent in the detective figure. Although both Dupin and Holmes confirm their respective society’s masculine ideals in some ways, both also paradoxically challenge these ideals by, for example, precisely this embodiment of ‘ideal’ masculinity to the extreme, their unusual relation to their bodies or their homosocial lifestyle which defies the moral institution of a family.<sup>39</sup> As their social deviance and cognitive skills isolates them from their respective society, Dupin and Holmes are ‘other’ (Michael Cohen 154). Hence, this ‘otherness’ makes it a short leap to reading Dupin and Holmes in terms of neurological (and physical) deviance, which enforces the detective’s outsider status and invites political discussions on disability.

While Dupin’s potential visual impairment, to which his green spectacles allude, has been largely neglected in research, Sherlock Holmes can be seen as the first detective perceived from

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<sup>39</sup> Focusing on their protagonists’ homosocial lifestyle as confirmed bachelors, both Poe and Doyle marginalise female characters as they are presented as inferior to their patriarchal dominance. In both series, female characters are reduced to victims who are either murdered as in the Dupin stories or dominated by their male guardians in the Holmes stories (Worthington, *Key Concepts in Crime Fiction* 44; Knight 61), through which they initiate the male protagonist’s investigations.

a disability studies perspective. His occasionally asocial way of interacting with other people invites scholars to place him among autism spectrum disorders (ASD). While his extraordinary cognitive abilities have been widely recognised as the detective's means to outwit the criminals, Holmes's numerous (and peculiar) fields of interest, together with his homosocial, reclusive lifestyle shows parallels to a contemporary definition of ASDs in the DSM-5. Although ASDs were diagnosed by Hans Asperger only in the 1940s (roughly fifty years the first Holmes story was published), Uta Frith was among the first researchers who read Holmes as an autistic character *avant la lettre*: "the detached detectives of classical mysteries are not only eccentric and odd", but also "demonstrate a particular type of oddness that might be shared by highly gifted autistic individuals". She refers to "the clear powers of observation and deduction, unclouded by the everyday emotions of ordinary people" (43). Frith highlights the detective's distinction between reason and emotion as well as his lacking social manners due to his investigative thinking (43). Although such similarities manifest the idea in popular culture, Sonya Freeman Loftis critiques that the retrospective diagnosis of Holmes as an autistic character not only conveys an oversimplified image of autism (24-48) but also perpetuates dangerous stereotypes concerning "cognitive difference" in general (*Imagining Autism*, 43).<sup>40</sup> Hence, reading Holmes as an autistic character might be a starting point for studying literary representations of ASD, but it should be kept in mind that Doyle created a *fictional* character who cannot be 'diagnosed' with a concept that was developed about fifty years after Doyle's stories were published.

Sherlock Holmes's popularity largely overshadows the fact that even some of his fictional contemporaries also display physical impairments. Clinton H. Stagg's Thornley Colton and Ernest Bramah's Max Carrados star as blind investigators in their respective series in the early twentieth century.<sup>41</sup> While their impairment apparently deprives them of their vision as a detective's essential 'tool' for *detecting* social deviance, Colton and Carrados rely on personal assistants in everyday life and in their investigations, who enable them to move independently and solve criminal cases of social deviance. Although even such comprehensive genre

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<sup>40</sup> Loftis specifies that, in the case of Sherlock Holmes, the reader's understanding of the detective is filtered through Watson's neurotypical perception. Therefore, "[i]t might be more accurate *not* to say that Holmes is autistic but rather that Watson perceives him as autistic" (*Imagining Autism* 52). Hence, the importance of narrative perspective becomes an apparent tool for analysing autistic characters, which will be elaborated later. Interestingly, Watson himself is physically impaired and thus similarly deviates from the able-bodied norm. However, his wound results from his war experience, which essentially characterises his masculinity. For further information, see Bourrier.

<sup>41</sup> Interestingly, some historical detective series written in the 1990s turn to the disabled detective, such as Bruce Alexander's series on the visually impaired detective Sir John Fielding or Anne Perry's on the amnesic William Monk.

overviews such as Charles Rzepka and Horsley's *A Companion to Crime Fiction* pay little attention to Carrados and Colton, it is interesting to see that disability, and especially visual impairment, was already a component of Holmes's contemporaries and used by authors not only to furnish the detective protagonist with a distinctive characteristic (see also Michael Cohen 153) but also to challenge his investigative skills. For this reason, the dissertation will return to the visually impaired detective in chapter five.

While Mintz argues that "disabled detectives are not the offspring of Dupin in any direct way", although "their non-normative bodyminds manifest Dupin's intellectual flexibility in surprisingly *disabled* ways" (7), this chapter concludes with precisely this observation. Both Dupin and Holmes display unusual relations to their bodies. Dupin wears green spectacles and fails to physically materialise in the narratives, which potentially covers physical and visual impairments, and Holmes displays not only an extraordinary self-discipline in dealing with occasional drug consumption but also behavioural traits which potentially characterise him as autistic. Hence, it can be argued that Holmes – and Dupin – are not only "important precedent[s] for the generations of disabled detectives who follow" them (Mintz 13). They can also be seen as the fundamental origin of the figure of the disabled detective.

## 4. Growing into Masculine Disability as a Neurodivergent Detective

Throughout the evolution of detective fiction, the stories of Dupin and Holmes serve as points of reference for the genre and their masculinities as role models for the detective protagonists to come. Therefore, research on disability in the detective genre predominantly asks how the investigation evolves when the detective's mind is affected by a developmental disorder (see also Mintz 165). The detective's cognitive excellence moves from being a socially valuable characteristic with positive connotations into the political field of disability. Such a disability is associated with cultural stereotypes and prejudices, such as lack of agency, passiveness, retardation and infantilisation (see also Tougaw 133). Opposing such stigmatising stereotypes, the dissertation uses the umbrella term 'neurodiversity' to refer to a variety of brain functions that work differently from the neurotypical norm (A. Hall, *Literature and Disability* 167). More importantly, instead of stigmatising these different functions, the term implies that "disability also works in more expansive ways to rearticulate how we understand the mapping of knowledge across a range of bodily and intersubjective spaces" (Mintz 166). Transcending the predominant research question of how *detection* evolves with neurodiversity and acknowledging the ur-detectives' rational masculinity, the following chapter asks how *masculinity* develops when neurodiversity characterises the detective protagonist's mindset and perception of the world. It focuses on two contemporary and popular neuronovels in the detective genre and analyses how their neurodivergent (adolescent) investigators challenge neurotypical assumptions of (hegemonic) masculinity in detective fiction by negotiating their individual gender identity through emulating genre-conformant detectives.

The term 'neuronovel' only emerged about ten years ago. In his influential article on "The Rise of the Neuronovel", Marco Roth identified the modern fashion of the "neurological novel, wherein the mind becomes the brain" and which focuses on the protagonist and/or first-person narrator's neurological disposition. Neuronovels can be understood as "twenty-first-century heirs to modernist literary experiments" as they align with a long tradition of modernist narratives told by neurodiverse protagonists and position themselves at the intersection of aesthetics and politics (Tougaw 131).<sup>42</sup> They have become increasingly popular as a result to a rising awareness of and interest in neurodevelopmental disorders (Murray, "Neurotecs" 182;

<sup>42</sup> Jason Tougaw lists novels "narrated by or through characters with eccentric cognitive dispositions—many of them in direct dialogue with psychological theories, medical practice, or the philosophy of the mind: Cervantes's delusional Don Quixote, Sterne's extravagant-minded Tristram Shandy, Poe's many nervous narrators, James's haunted governess, Gilman's hallucinatory heroine in *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Ellison's disassociated outlaw in *Invisible Man*, Plath's Esther Greenwood, Keyes's Charlie in *Flowers of Algernon*" and many more (Tougaw 131).

Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 56).<sup>43</sup> By “translating traits associated with autism, Tourette’s [and other forms of neurodiversity] into a narrative voice”, neuronovels reinterpret “[s]ymptoms of medically defined neurological conditions [to] become patterns of narration in novels” (Tougaw 130; see also Berger, *The Disarticulate* 200) and thus exploit the aesthetic potential of neurodiversity.

The first-person narrative perspective of the neurodiverse narrators in the following chapter allows the reader an in-depth reading experience. These novels present the neurodivergent character not as the marginal side character but as the central protagonist, making him the narrator of his own narrative (Murray, “Neurotecs” 179-181). Thereby, the reader becomes familiar with the neurodivergent perspective. He or she is invited to “immerse” in the mind of a neurodivergent narrator (Tougaw 133), “affording new ways to ‘grasp’ the multiplicity of neurodivergent experience through particular ‘packages’” (135). Since such packages depend on the narrative’s sociohistorical context and its respective understanding of disability, neuronovels “may tell us more about a particular culture’s approach to cognitive difference, or its power as a metaphor, than they do about actual conditions” (A. Hall, *Literature and Disability* 124). Nevertheless, many authors of neuronovels (including this chapter’s examples) create their narratives from a neurotypical perspective (Tougaw 133), as they often lack authentic (first-hand) insights into how individuals experience their neurodiversity (Murray, *Representing Autism* 45). Hence, their neurodiverse characters are often composed according to the “taxonomies of symptoms like those created (and continuously revised) by the *DSM*” (Tougaw 138). Jason Tougaw highlights that, by summarising the most typical characteristics, the DSM generalises neurodiverse conditions (139). Therefore, when fictional representations follow such taxonomies too rigidly (aiming at creating representative rather than distinctive characters), they risk transmitting an oversimplified image of neurodiversity, which suppresses the individual experience of living with such a neurodiverse condition (139; see also Loftis, *Imagining Autism* 25-26). Thus, the following chapter highlights this individuality by focusing on the neurodivergent protagonist’s gender development, in which not only their social environments but also genre conventions are involved.

Especially the genre of detective fiction provides a fruitful framework for neurodiversity. While Foreman and Kenneth Jude Lota observe that implementing neurodiversity into hard-boiled detective fiction contributes to “reinterpret[ing]”, “re-invigorat[ing]” and “re-negotiat[ing]” (Lota 35) a well-established subgenre of the noir tradition, there is an

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<sup>43</sup> For further research on the neuronovel in contemporary literature see, for example, Henneberg, Burn and Farley.

additional connection to the traditional, classical detective fiction. The figure of the “‘differently able’ detective is granted a particular type of insight precisely because of a disability” (Murray, “Neurotecs” 179; see also Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 56; Tougal 133) and, thus, has often been associated with cognitive excellence. Although the detective’s neurodiversity enforces his social deviance, it updates the classical detective’s cognitive extraordinariness (Murray, “Neurotecs” 185). It is used “as a way of focalizing the unusual modes of cognitive processing that we expect from a great detective” and demonstrates alternative ways of thinking and knowing (Mintz 166). Additionally, the first-person perspective of the neurodiverse detective makes the thinking processes even more transparent than the classical detective’s revelation of his conclusions.

Tougal argues that, in their narratives, the novels engage their neurodiverse protagonists in “niche constructions”, using a biological term “to describe the remaking of physical environments to meet an organism’s needs” (133). The characters interact with their spatial and social surroundings and modify them according to their own idiosyncrasies: “They play to their strengths, admire role models, reflect on career aspirations, experiment with technologies, and make the most of human support networks” (134). Thus, they also create “new forms of [literary] affordance”, i.e. situations, interactions with neurotypical characters or interior monologues which vary in implicit and explicit descriptions (134-135). Reading these characters’ narratives, the reader encounters such ‘literary affordances’ and understands them as markers of a neurodiverse experience, through which he or she gets involved in a (fictional) engagement with neurodiversity. Tougal analyses novels like *Curious Incident* and *Motherless Brooklyn* with this focus and argues that “the novels themselves are affordances that enable the reader to engage with questions about neurodiversity” (135). Collecting and interpreting such affordances like clues to the central mystery, the reader himself becomes a detective as he or she combines them to create a picture of neurodiversity (132; Kümmerling-Meibauer 135-136). Therefore, “the central generic spaces of the crime narrative become locations for ideas of disability that refute the reductive, and rather outline the cognitively disabled as a complex space of human subjectivity” (Murray, “Neurotecs” 181). This dissertation contradicts Tougal’s claim that the neurodiverse narrator “give[s] fictional form to tensions between medical diagnosis and identity, without resolving those tensions” (132). In fact, the neurodiverse protagonists in the chosen novels *do* resolve such tensions when they come to terms with their neurodiversity and implement it into their (gender) identity by relying on (and challenging) the generic conventions of the detective genre.

Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and Jonathan Lethem's *Motherless Brooklyn* centre around an investigator whose neurodiverse condition distinguishes him from his fellow fictional characters and the detective genre as a whole. Haddon's *Curious Incident* presents fifteen-year-old Christopher Boone, who investigates the murder of his neighbour's dog and displays characteristics of ASD. Lethem's *Motherless Brooklyn* recounts the story of how Lionel Essrog, who has Tourette's syndrome, hunts for his surrogate father's murderer. By investigating a mystery, which seems relatively unimportant to others, they disprove their community's underestimation of their capability and claim their position in this environment. Both novels rank among the most popular examples of neurodiversity in the detective genre and have been widely acclaimed for their considerate representations of protagonists with neurodevelopmental disorders. Research on these postmodern detective novels demonstrates their embodied agency with the goal of connecting with their respective environments (Birge) and reveals the language play with which both Christopher's ASD-like condition and Lionel's Tourette's syndrome engage their readers (Berger, *The Disarticulate*). Research also highlights how within the genre of detective fiction the investigation is enabled – and not impeded – by the protagonists' unconventional and individual ways of thinking and acting (e.g. Murray, "Neurotecs" and *Disability and the Posthuman*; Tougaw; Mintz).<sup>44</sup> Despite occasional inhibitions, the protagonists' neurodiversity essentially provides them with relevant pre-conditions and skills for becoming detectives, demonstrating "how a productive sense of cognitive difference engages with a number of the classic tropes of detective writing" (Murray, "Neurotecs" 178).

The following chapter contributes a specifically gendered focus to the academic discourse on neurodiversity and detection in Haddon's and Lethem's novels. It pays attention to how the protagonists' masculinity is presented in tension with social as well as genre-related expectations of masculinity. Moreover, it examines how their masculinity develops along with their respective neurodevelopmental disorders, which both novels highlight by providing extensive insights into the protagonists' adolescence. Additionally, Christopher's and Lionel's interaction with and reliance on real-life and fictional role models of masculinity decisively shape how they negotiate masculinity in light of their neurodiverse conditions and grow into their respective forms of masculine disability. While Christopher emulates the rational detective following his role model Sherlock Holmes, Lionel becomes a (literally) tough-talking, hard-boiled detective on his hunt for his surrogate father's murderer (see also Birge 76). The close

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<sup>44</sup> For clarity's sake, the most prominent focus has been extracted from these sources. However, each source covers a wide range of topics, among which several analytical foci overlap.

relationship with their father figures is key for both characters, as it essentially characterises not only their performance as a detective but also their masculinity. Ultimately, while predominantly confirming stereotypical assumptions about neurodiversity, both Christopher's and Lionel's negotiations of masculine disability challenge stereotypes, as they each create idiosyncratic and freakish versions of masculinity.

#### **4.1 The Curious Incident of Idiosyncratic Masculinity – Negotiating Logic and Emotions in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time***

In Mark Haddon's *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*<sup>45</sup>, fifteen-year-old Christopher Boone investigates the murder of his neighbour's dog Wellington and stumbles upon a logically and emotionally shattering secret about his family, namely that his father has lied about his mother's death. Christopher's investigations place his character at the intersection between logic and emotions, which becomes particularly intriguing concerning Christopher's display of behavioural disorders recalling characteristics of an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). While his rational investigations about the dead dog are in line with his inclination towards logic and reason, which is (stereo)typical for characters with ASDs (Loftis, *Imagining Autism* 52), the emotional nature of the family situation challenges his "deficits in social-emotional reciprocity" (DSM-5 50). Throughout these two cases, Christopher's ASD-like condition constantly supports his logical investigations but also undermines his approach to a traditional form of masculinity. Ironically, Christopher solves both mysteries not intentionally by applying logical, objective methods but unintentionally through the emotions his dependence and vulnerability as a teenager with an ASD-like condition evoke in his parents, through which he creates idiosyncratic masculinity.

*Curious Incident* ranks among the most popular examples of ASD representation in contemporary fiction. Christopher shows a wide range of idiosyncrasies, such as an intense reliance on logic and rationality, while his struggles to understand both figurative and body language make social behaviour difficult for him. Although unspecified in the novel and even ruled out by the author (Mintz 166-167; Cho 91),<sup>46</sup> such characteristics comply with

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<sup>45</sup> Subsequently, the chapter refers to the novel as *Curious Incident*.

<sup>46</sup> Mintz refers to Haddon's website on which he "has insisted that Christopher is not to be read as autistic" but rather "that *Curious Incident* is 'a novel about difference, about being an outsider, about seeing the world in a surprising and revealing way' [which] raises questions about the relationship between disability and diagnosis" (166-167). However, "the context in which the novel was publicised, reviewed, consumed and discussed was one which very much cared about the medical questions [of Christopher's neurological condition], making them the

stereotypical understandings of ASDs, as defined in the DSM-5 (Orlando 324; Tougal 138).<sup>47</sup> The DSM-5 presents ASD as a neurodevelopmental disorder predominantly characterised by “[d]eficits in social-emotional reciprocity”, “[d]eficits in nonverbal communicative behaviors used for social interaction” and “[d]eficits in developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships” (DSM-5 50). Following Dustin Hoffman’s impersonation of Raymond Babbit in Barry Levinson’s 1988 film *Rain Man*, cultural representations of characters with ASDs oversimplify the struggles of living with neurodiversity (e.g. Loftis, *Imagining Autism* 25-26). Research claims that Christopher, too, confirms stereotypical representations of the “over-literal, ‘emotionless’ or ‘robotic’” boy whose “interests in cars, space, maths and timetables, and his assertion that ‘my memory is like a film’, fit with public stereotypes of autistic ‘topics’” (Murray, *Representing Autism* 48-49). In addition to *Rain Man*, Stuart Murray describes *Curious Incident* as a “foundational text” which “acts to produce an idea of autism, a process of conveying knowledge that allows the viewer (or reader) to feel that she or he has engaged in a significant learning moment” about the neurodiversity in question (88; see also Cho 91). On the one hand, the novel received much praise for its novelty of presenting an autistic first-person perspective (Murray, *Representing Autism* 12; A. Hall, *Literature and Disability* 115) as it caught the growing awareness of and interest in neurodiversity at the turn of the millennial (Sleigh). On the other hand, since cultural representations often shape laymen’s understandings of ASDs (Jack, *Autism and Gender* 27), research often criticises the novel’s reproduction and manifestation of stereotypes (e.g. Murray, *Representing Autism* 161; Loftis, *Imagining Autism* 124-125; Orlando 324),<sup>48</sup> which reinforces the (neurotypical) oversimplified belief that all people (and characters) with ASDs are like Raymond Babbit. Therefore, the following chapter

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focus of the text” (Sleigh 104). Therefore, although Haddon never specifies Christopher’s neurodiversity, the cultural and academic readership *wants* to read ASD into the characters’ behavioural problems and, thus, determines the novel’s reading focus. This dissertation does not evaluate Haddon’s depiction of Christopher as a neurodiverse character (for more information on this discourse, see Muller and Ciocia). Respecting Haddon’s intention to not provide a specific diagnosis for Christopher’s condition but recognising the similarities to the DSM’s definition of autism spectrum disorders, at the same time (see also Berger, *The Disarticulate* 191), the following analysis refers to Christopher as a boy with an ASD-like condition.

<sup>47</sup> The lacking specification of Christopher’s neurodiverse condition presents another way to introduce the protagonist’s impairment. Adding to Hafferty and Foster’s disability-in-action and disability-in-dialogue techniques, this approach could be called ‘disability-in-narration’ as it implicitly requires the reader to closely observe the narrator’s way of thinking, speaking, interacting (with other characters and the reader) and perceiving the world to recall prior knowledge and/or stereotypes to name the protagonist’s specific condition.

<sup>48</sup> Since 2012, a stage adaptation of *Curious Incident* celebrated great success. Interestingly though, it was only in 2017 that the first autistic actor was casted for the lead character (Parrotta). In June 2021, the National Theatre’s Instagram channel published a call for neurodivergent actors. As if in direct response, the casting of an autistic actor was in line with Davis’s critique that the film industry usually casts able-bodied actors for disabled characters (“The Ghettoization of Disability” 39, 48-49). The gap between launching the play and the first neurodiverse actor shows that producers only slowly seem to open up to a more inclusive – and authentic – adaptation of novels in general and this particular neuronovel specifically.

opposes the general opinion and highlights how *Curious Incident* (partly) undermines such stereotypes. It proves that Christopher's logic is motivated by emotions based on his idiosyncrasies. By having Christopher solve the mystery based on emotions (however involuntarily), the novel challenges and undermines the stereotype of the entirely rational character with an ASD and highlights the fact that people with ASDs, too, can and do display emotions.

Furthermore, the vast pool of research on *Curious Incident* predominantly focuses on its narrative representation of Christopher's ASD-like condition (e.g. Muller; Berger, *The Disarticulate*; Murray, *Representing Autism*; Loftis, *Imagining Autism*; A. Hall, *Literature and Disability*), specifically focussing on the genre of detective fiction (e.g. Ciocia; Murray, "Neurotecs"; Resene; Mintz), the novel's appeal as a "crossover novel" for an adult and adolescent readership alike (e.g. Ciocia; Falconer) and the protagonist's construction of selfhood through his narrative (e.g. Birge). However, what most research neglects is a specific focus on Christopher's gender development. Indeed, Loftis highlights that "[g]ender and sexuality also intersect with representations of autism in important ways" and underlines the desideratum in general (*Imagining Autism* 153). Focusing on this research gap, the following chapter analyses Christopher's masculine development in the course of his investigations.

Due to the prevalence of ASDs in males, which is supported by the medical evidence (DSM-5 57), the intersection of ASDs and masculinity bases on an interesting contradiction. On the one hand, medical research presents ASD as essentially confirming masculine gender norms. In 1944, Hans Asperger observes that "[t]he autistic personality is an extreme variant of male intelligence... In the autistic individual, the male pattern is exaggerated to the extreme" (qtd. in Murray, *Representing Autism* 155). Simon Baron-Cohen elaborated on Asperger in his theory of the 'extreme male brain', in which he roots autism in the cultural and stereotypical difference between men and women and, thus, relies on a rigid binary gender divide. Jordynn Jack summarises Baron-Cohen's argument in that "men are more interested in systemizing tasks, such as engineering, computer programming, and mathematics, or hobbies based on mechanics, construction, and categorizing", while women prefer social gatherings, focusing on interpersonal relationships and care ("The Extreme Male Brain?"). Therefore, following such medical observations, boys, men and cultural representations of male characters with ASD should be considered as the epitome of masculinity.

However, despite medical research's observation that ASD essentially confirms masculine gender norms, social presentations and cultural reproductions of male characters with ASD often position them as socially marginalised. Stuart Murray states that "autism offers a

particular *challenge* to an idea of masculinity, an *unsettling* of male norms that expresses a sense of the *dislocation* of men in contemporary culture” (*Representing Autism* 156; emphasis A.S.K.). In his Master’s thesis on the media representations of male characters with autism in contemporary film, James Samuel Kizer understands autistic masculinity as the “juxtaposition of hegemonic masculinity and normative understanding of autism” (63). In his working definition of autistic masculinity, he observes that “[m]asculinity for autistic men is not understood as a symbol of status, but rather a sign of ineptness. Regardless of how masculine they present themselves, autistic men are treated as though they are incapable or incompetent to live without having a strong non-autistic person to cling on to” (27). Such infantilising treatment (by neurotypical characters and viewers) pathologises autistic characters’ display of masculinity, since “the characters are depicted as incapable of adhering to gender norms” (63). Cultural representations often present young male characters on the way to adulthood. They foster the popular misconception that “only children have autism” (Loftis, *Imagining Autism* 17) and ignore the fact that “children with autism will become adults with autism” (Murray, *Representing Autism* 66).<sup>49</sup> In addition, they display the ASD-like condition as an additional struggle in (masculine) adolescence. This necessitates a closer look at how boy characters’ “autism, their masculinity and their youth combine to form the key contemporary autistic character” (140). Thus, the following chapter argues that Christopher, as an adolescent with an ASD, appropriates masculine characteristics in his investigation of the neighbour’s dog, confronting the stereotypical dislocation of ASD in contemporary culture.

The genre of detective fiction sets the framework in which the boy detective – whether neurotypical or neurodiverse – pursues his professional (or rather amateur) identity as a detective. In addition, this “male-centered” genre (Gates, *Detecting Men* 7) presents a framework of masculinity in two ways. First, boy detectives “live to be a detective and the act of detection, in turn, is what has given them life” (Cornelius 8). They find themselves in the “nether regions between boyhood and manhood”, balancing both their current developmental stage and their adult task of detection, while “stand[ing] on the cusp of full-fledged patriarchy” enables them to glimpse “in to the promised land” of patriarchal, adult masculinity (13). Claiming responsibility for the central crime’s investigation allows the boy detective to pursue the quest of finding his position in the adult world. However, for the boy detective with an

<sup>49</sup> Loftis observes that “[t]he narrative of autism as childhood also excludes autistic adults from narratives about autism in potentially dangerous ways” (“The Metanarrative of Autism” 96). Nevertheless, there are examples of autistic adult characters in literature, although they are, indeed, underrepresented. E.J. Copperman and Jeff Cohen’s books on Samuel Hoenig, for example, are about an adult detective with Asperger’s. Despite the almost progressive implementation of an adult protagonist with ASD, these texts also rely on a stereotypical representation of ASD, with the protagonist exhibiting striking similarities to Sherlock Holmes’s ‘autistic’ characteristics.

ASD-like condition, this quest includes his negotiation of his identity as a neurodiverse adolescent in the world of neurotypical adults. Thus, his agency as a detective allows him to challenge stereotypical assumptions about characters with an ASD-like condition with regard to marginalisation (Allen 171-172; Berger, *The Disarticulate* 200), infantilisation (Murray, *Representing Autism* 46) and occasionally even masculinity (Kizer 27). Second, confirming medical observations on ASDs, *Curious Incident* represents the stereotypical association of boys as being interested in technology and systems, which potentially allows him to pursue a traditionally masculine ideal. Moreover, Christopher's inclination towards logic, reason, maths and science as well as his "literalism and attention to detail" (Murray, "The Ambiguities of Inclusion" 97) provide him with relevant pre-conditions for not only embodying a classical detective. In such classical detective fiction, which is associated with neurotypical, hegemonic masculinity, logic prevails over emotions (Birge 66; Loftis, *Imagining Autism* 52). This prevalence of logic seemingly eclipses Christopher's difficulties in understanding non-verbal human interaction and paves his way towards emulating the rational masculinity of his role model Sherlock Holmes. Therefore, the genre of detective fiction presents a promising field for Christopher to "creat[e] an identity outside of the limitations of his condition" (Allen 171) and embody a detective *because of*, rather than *despite of* his ASD-like condition (e.g. Murray, "Neurotecs" 186).

Among the numerous pieces of research on *Curious Incident*, Nicola Allen contributes one of the very few research articles dealing with Christopher's gender development. She argues that he reaches "traditional masculinity" in terms of three decisive aspects: first, his logical and rational nature, through which he identifies with his role model Sherlock Holmes as "a positive rendition of the opposite of intuition" (172); second, Christopher's heroism as a detective, which makes him "extraordinarily brave when logic dictates that this is necessary" (167) and due to which he "stops at nothing to solve the mystery that he has uncovered" (173); third, his claim of the "alpha male" position in his family unit, which he restructures with himself at the centre (177-178). Although this chapter agrees with Allen in many points, it highlights that, upon closer consideration of his neurological condition, Christopher is not as rational as she argues.

The following chapter focuses on Christopher's oscillation between a logical detective and an emotional boy with an ASD-like condition. He challenges stereotypes of boy detective fiction as much as the common (mis)conception that characters with ASD are "emotionless, lacking in empathy, and incapable of love" (Loftis, *Imagining Autism* 51) due to their socio-emotional deficits (DSM-5 50). In the framework of detective fiction, the two mysteries of the

dead dog and the family's relationship become quests, dividing the novel (and the following analysis) into two parts. The first part focuses on how Christopher's idiosyncratic logic is based on emotional motivations, which shape not only his way of thinking but also his performance as a boy detective. The second part analyses how this idiosyncratic logic influences Christopher's relationship with his parents and provides him with (stereotypically unexpected) emotional power. Therefore, the following chapter investigates how his performance as a logical detective, his ASD-like condition and the reader's perception of his first-person narrative interact to merge Christopher's gender identity into an impression of idiosyncratic masculinity as his individual form of masculine disability.

#### **4.1.1 Idiosyncratic Deductions**

Assuming the role of a boy detective, Christopher strives to comply with notions of (hegemonic) masculinity closely associated with the ratiocinative investigator. However, his ASD-like condition often intervenes with his efforts to align with such notions, characterising them as subjective and idiosyncratic. Although “[t]here is no intuition, no guesswork, and no hunches in his detection, or, indeed, his life as a whole – only rational calculation” (Allen 170), upon closer consideration of his motifs, it becomes clear that the logic influencing his decisions is based on emotional motivations, which shape his masculine embodiment.

Although Christopher's meticulousness to detail in the first paragraph of the novel suggests his neurodiversity, the first page subordinates the boy's neurological condition to his identity as a boy detective. Michael G. Cornelius highlights that “boy sleuths are sleuths first and boys second” (8). This leads to the conclusion that, although it remains to be discussed where Christopher's neurodiverse identity is to be classified in this hierarchy, his neurological condition is secondary to his identity as a detective. Taking on the role of a self-reliant and sophisticated investigator, Christopher claims not only responsibility for the investigations of the murder mystery but also independence. Along with him writing a “murder mystery” (CI 5-6), his investigations become a quest through which he negotiates his way through the neurotypical world (Allen 171) – a “project”, to use Christopher's term. He likes having a “difficult project like a book” (CI 114), presumably because his affinity to order and structure finds satisfaction in such a task. The investigative quest of a typical whodunnit provides Christopher with material that enables him to complete this project and dedicate his energy and agency to the reestablishment of social order. To this end, he activates his prior knowledge of detective stories – especially Arthur Conan Doyle's novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (CI 6) – through which he aligns himself with Sherlock Holmes: “[...] if I were a proper detective he

is the kind of detective I would be" (92). Following his detective role model and the generic guidelines spark Christopher's agency logically and emotionally.

The crime mystery defines the generic framework through which Christopher strives to comply with the classical detective's notions of hegemonic masculinity. He is "truthful, honest, and brave" and "since the qualities that he lacks (empathy, intuition, etc.) are often thought of (however parochially) as traditionally 'feminine' qualities", Christopher is presented with a "traditionally 'masculine' heroic identity" (Allen 73). Additionally, as an embodiment of analytical, logical and rational masculinity, Sherlock Holmes presents an important point of reference for Christopher's masculinity. The boy recognises important similarities between the fictional detective and his own abilities and preference. He is similarly observant (CI 37, 92), able to "detach my mind at will and concentrate" on and immerse himself in a particular field of interest (92), while his "associative mind gives him advantages in activities that require logical thinking within strict regulations" (Berger, *The Disarticulate* 199). By emphasising his parallels to Holmes, Christopher highlights his own inclination towards logic and reason, through which he emulates Holmes's rational masculinity. Holmes encourages Christopher to engage in a "positive rereading of his inability to intuit other people's emotions" (Allen 169).<sup>50</sup>

However, the comparison to Holmes is based on the fact that, due to his highly analytical mind, limited number of interests and social difficulties, research (and cultural representations of the classical detective) often considers Sherlock Holmes an autistic detective (Frith 43-44; see also in Resene 82; Loftis, *Imagining Autism* 21-48). Neglecting this reading of Holmes's idiosyncrasies, Allen concludes that Christopher emulates Holmes as "a very 'masculine' hero figure" (172). However, considering Holmes's potential neurodiversity, Holmes himself challenges as much as enforces hegemonic notions and social expectations of masculinity. It can be concluded that Christopher recognises "a particular kind of stereotypical autistic identity" in Holmes, who embodies "an autistic hero" for the boy and "teaches Christopher to

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<sup>50</sup> Alluding to his ASD-like condition, the boy's detailed descriptions exaggerate his similarities to Holmes's powers of close observation and simultaneously reflect the boy's sense of order. Although Christopher's chains of reasoning are mostly obvious to the neurotypical reader, they reveal Christopher's perspective on and understanding of his environment and society. While the seemingly random topics of the inserted chapters distract the reader (as a detective) from the central investigation, they highlight the importance of certain information for Christopher. For example, having learned about his father's lie, Christopher inserts a chapter on stellar constellations (CI 156-157). Despite the arbitrary nature of constellations, such as Orion, as "you could join up the dots in any way you wanted" (156), Christopher emphasises that "they are nuclear explosions billions of miles away. And that is the truth" (157). Thus, he focuses on stars as scientific phenomena, through which he reassures himself that the (scientific) world is still in order while his own world is shattered. The boy relies on science as "the truth" and approaches his "wish for a form of knowledge and expression that is spatial, not temporal, and that therefore can be certain, not contingent", as observed by Berger ("Alterity and Autism" 275). Recalling the classical detective's seemingly random associations, Christopher's insertions highlight his individual way of thinking and perceiving the world.

value his autistic traits” (Loftis, *Imagining Autism* 125-126; see also Gilbert 246). The boy identifies with Holmes as a masculine role model, who similarly warps hegemonic notions of masculinity, and instead highlights the masculine characteristics of his idiosyncrasies.

While Holmes excels in interpreting verbal and nonverbal communication, which undermines reading him as an autistic character, Christopher’s difficulty in decoding nonverbal communication distinguishes him from his role model. Due to his ASD-like condition, Christopher has severe difficulties in understanding figurative and body language. His struggles result from the “hundreds of other things which are too complicated to work out in a few seconds” (CI 19); they overwhelm and distract him from focusing on verbal communication. However, this is precisely one of Holmes’s most distinguishing characteristics. Unlike a person with an ASD, he “acknowledges the value of emotions and of intuition” (Griswold 27). Holmes excels in closely observing and correctly interpreting body language and connecting even the slightest changes in facial expressions to a larger, more important context. As if in direct contrast, Christopher mathematically proves intuition to be fallible (CI 78-82), which underlines his distinction from Holmes. Therefore, Christopher’s similarity to Holmes is not as comprehensive as some researchers claim (e.g. Cho)<sup>51</sup>, although Holmes still sparks a feeling of confidence in his ASD traits (Loftis, *Imagining Autism* 125-126).

Christopher’s inclination towards logic and reason is also manifested in his interest in science and especially mathematics. Following explicit rules leading to precise results, mathematics can be “described as iconic of rationality” (Moreau et al. 142). Christopher reflects this deep connection not only in the chapter titles of his murder mystery novel, for which he chooses prime numbers, but also in his inclination towards the clear-cut logic which is relevant for both disciplines. Both detective work and mathematics involve joining investigative or mathematical quantities to create coherence and linearity in order to “solv[e] problems” (CI 78). Furthermore, Christopher’s mathematical skills provide him with a competitive attitude (see also Moreau et al. 152) towards his (neurodiverse) peers. When one of his fellow students

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<sup>51</sup> Although this dissertation supports Cho’s central argument that “[i]f, as many disability scholars have noted, autistic characters personify otherness or difference, familiar genre conventions or formulas could be one way of closing the gap between neurotypical and neurodivergent minds” (98), it strongly disagrees with her previous observation. Cho notes that Sherlock Holmes’s presumably autistic characteristics have “become a key trope in the representation of the modern detective”. She concludes that “because readers are already accustomed to the neurodivergent detective Holmes—to a degree that it feels normative for the detective figure—it becomes easier for them to recognize Christopher’s quirks and abilities as indicators of ‘detectiveness’” (94). Although several modern detective figures display some eccentricities (such as Adrian Monk in the television series *Monk*), Cho’s generalisation exaggerates such tendencies as it implies that all modern detectives display autistic characteristics. She extensively relies on Holmes’s retrospective diagnosis with a neurological condition first diagnosed about fifty years after his first literary appearance, which evokes dangerous stereotypes (see Loftis, *Imagining Autism* 24-48; 43). Retrospectively, ASD resembles a (classical) detective’s characteristics but does not define them.

(with special needs) at school calls him a “spazzer”, misinterpreting and denunciating Christopher’s neurodiversity, Christopher disproves the statement by referring to his extraordinary mathematical skills (CI 33). His skills allow him to take his A level in maths, as the first student of his school, through which he is “going to prove that I’m not stupid” (56). This situation makes him determined to pursue his targeted academic career: “I’m going to get an A grade” (56) and “after I’ve taken A level Maths I am going to take A level Further Maths and Physics and then I can go to university” (57). Therefore, his mathematical skills provide Christopher with the confidence to plan and control his personal and professional future.

Contrastingly, although he displays masculine determination in his academic ambition, Christopher is aware that his ASD-like condition and idiosyncrasies limit his independence. He requires his father to move with him to a university city “because I don’t want to live on my own or in a house with other students” (CI 57). Christopher is aware of his *lifelong* condition (see also Murray, *Representing Autism* 139), which shapes his idea of his adult self:

Then, when I’ve got a degree in Maths, or Physics, or Maths and Physics, I will be able to get a job and earn lots of money and I will be able to pay someone who can look after me and cook my meals and wash my clothes, or I will get a lady to marry me and be my wife and she can look after me so I can have company and not be on my own. (CI 58)

Rather than “articulat[ing] the desire for a more fair exchange in return for [the] labor” of “looking after ‘someone with behavioral problems’” (Allen 177), this statement challenges (neurotypical) expectations of adult masculinity. On the one hand, Christopher looks forward to the financial independence that his academic degree could earn him, which could pave his way to a self-determined life. On the other hand, directing this self-determination to pay for a carer himself reveals that Christopher continues to understand himself as a patient in constant reliance on a (neurotypical) carer. Hence, Allen’s argument that his statement expresses the “familiar adolescent desire for greater autonomy” (177) can be contradicted as Christopher’s idea of ‘autonomy’ as an adult is reduced to financial independence. Similarly, Loftis’s argument that, encouraged by Sherlock Holmes’s positive role model, Christopher “conceive[s] of his own disability identity in terms of neurodiversity rather than pathology, offering him a positive and empowering vision of his own autistic traits” (*Imagining Autism* 127) can be rejected. He envisions himself dependent on a wife not (only) as a partner (and company) for life but mainly as a caregiver, which, on the one hand, confirms his heterosexual masculinity while, on the other hand, refutes social expectations of independent (hegemonic) masculinity.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> This is the only reference to Christopher’s sexual orientation. The lack of further information impedes a profound discussion of whether Christopher’s suggested heterosexuality indicates his true sexual orientation or whether it

Thus, he confirms Kizer's observation that ASD traits are pathologised in stereotypical treatment of autistic masculinity (27). However, Christopher describes what he wants for himself as an adult, which suggests a more 'realistic' perspective on life instead of an infantilising reading. At the same time, his self-awareness of his behavioural problems limits his potential prospect of becoming an independent and self-reliant adult.<sup>53</sup>

While Allen correctly states that Christopher's "scientific brain is one manifestation of [his] Asperger's Syndrome" and "overrides his emotional response to his mother being hospitalized" (172), Christopher displays more emotions than it seems at first glance. Approaching the matter from a pragmatic perspective, he understands feelings as "having pictures on the screen in your head of what is going to happen tomorrow or next year, or what might have happened instead of what did happen, and if it is a happy picture they smile and if it is a sad picture they cry" (CI 148). Nevertheless, despite his difficulties with non-verbal communication, Christopher recognises his father's sadness and reacts how he would like other people to react when he is sad himself: "I decided to leave him alone because when I am sad I want to be left alone" (27). In terms of his detective task, Christopher describes his "mind as a machine" (8), recalling Watson's description of Holmes as the "most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen" (SB 3; see also S. Butler 141-142, 145-146).<sup>54</sup> Despite the de-humanising effect of the 'brain as a machine' metaphor, which is common in narratives on ASDs, the association with technological processes and computer-like precision highlights the boy's extraordinary skills. Christopher compares his brain to a computer (CI 97, 178) or a video recorder, which collects and archives his experiences and memories like data he can access and recall in detail (96-97). Demonstrating this 'skill', Christopher provides the example of a holiday with his mother to Cornwall. While his father seems to be absent from

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resembles a 'norm' he has learned about in school and to which he has adapted without reflection. The lack of a love interest in *Curious Incident* not only highlights Christopher's aversion to strangers but also underlines the fifteen-year-old teenager's focus on himself.

<sup>53</sup> The aspect of self-infantilisation can be seen in connection with Christopher's Swiss army knife. Following Loftis's argument that "Doyle inextricably links Holmes to violent, criminal behavior through his nemesis Moriarty", highlighting "a false equation between cognitive difference and criminal deviance", Resene observes a similar alignment to violence when Christopher hits adults. She suggests that "[a]lthough Christopher is never depicted as openly deviant, his violent attacks [...] inextricably link him to the eviler aspects of his detective role model" (*Imagining Autism* 94). Additionally, the necessity Christopher feels to be armed with his Swiss army knife and his readiness to use it suggest a violent aspect to his character. It hints at the adolescent's handling of an adult weapon, which indicates Christopher's approach to adult masculinity. However, he mostly refers to the knife as a means of self-defence instead of attack (e.g. CI 56), which counterbalances the violent, aggressive, criminal reading of his character. Although it could be argued that it might his self-victimisation as a boy with an ASD-like condition, it also indicates his refusal of becoming a victim, through which his character might further confront stereotypical beliefs about characters on the spectrum.

<sup>54</sup> Underlining the trope of the ASD character as a computer-like 'machine', Loftis refers to Doyle's quote in her analysis of Holmes as an autistic character (*Imagining Autism* 36-37). However, she does not draw on this comparison in her elaborations of Christopher's emulation of Holmes.

this particular memory, Christopher focuses entirely on his mother's looks and behaviour, how she respected and responded to his idiosyncrasies (96-97). Since the boy believes his mother to have died two years before the plot, this example demonstrates Christopher's loving and affectionate relationship with his mother. Ironically, he uses an emotional example to demonstrate, and simultaneously counterbalance, the detailed, technical functionality of his rational mind. These examples demonstrate that, challenging stereotypical beliefs and medical reports (Murray, "Neurotecs" 182-183), Christopher is indeed capable of showing and reflecting emotions and even empathetic tendencies.

Similar emotional motivations also characterise Christopher's detective identity (and agency). The murder of Mrs Shears's dog Wellington disrupts the social harmony, which, to the classical detective, would be sufficient grounds for starting the investigations. However, Christopher's decision to hunt down the murderer is influenced by three reasons, demonstrating that emotions motivate his ratiocinative investigations. Again, this emotionality counterbalances his approaches to the purely rational masculinity of a detective. First, apart from his excitement at becoming a detective, Christopher is also concerned about the dead dog. Throughout the novel, he repeatedly highlights that he likes dogs because they are easy to read and honest (CI 4). Unlike with humans, whose nonverbal and figurative communication he finds difficult to understand, Christopher is able to correctly interpret dogs' body language and deduce their moods from it (4), which prepares him for their potential reactions. He even applies these positive associations with dogs' characteristics to their owners, through which he finds the confidence to interact with strangers. As such, he approaches Mrs Alexander, a benevolent neighbour, only because "she was probably a good person because she liked dogs" (50). As one of his first actions, Christopher hugs the dead dog (4) – a physical expression of affection that remains unrepeated throughout the novel. His aversion to physical (human) touch even caused his parents to negotiate a substitute movement with him for expressing their affection: Spreading their hands and touching their fingertips (e.g. 21) complies with Christopher's idiosyncrasies. Compared to this rudimentary emotional expression with his parents, who usually are the most loved beings in a child's surroundings, Christopher's hugging the dead dog underlines his social difficulties and affection for the animal at the same time (see also Murray, "Neurotecs" 182). Highlighting that hugging the dog "was something I wanted to do. I like dogs. It made me sad to see that the dog was dead" (CI 7), Christopher consciously reflects not only on his action but, more importantly, expresses his sadness and mourning for the dead animal. Communicating his emotions to the reader, he – a teenage boy with an ASD-like condition – potentially displays even more emotional awareness than a neurotypical adult would

have done in the same situation. The emotional weight of this scene sparks Christopher's decision: "I am going to find out who killed Wellington" (26) and, thus, not only turns him into a boy detective but also initiates the plot.<sup>55</sup>

Second, in addition to his emotional reaction, the boy also responds logically to the dead dog. Drawing on his prior knowledge of detective stories, Christopher states that "when someone gets murdered you have to find out who did it so that they can be punished" (CI 26).<sup>56</sup> This statement invites a twofold interpretation. Finding and punishing the perpetrator is the logical, i.e. genre-formulaic, next step after the murdered victim has been found. At the same time, it expresses Christopher's sense of justice. He is motivated by the outlook of making Mrs Shears happy. When his father finds out about his investigations, which his father has forbidden him to conduct, Christopher justifies his trespassing behaviour with the words "[...] but Mrs Shears is a friend of ours" (63). In the second half of the novel, he believes Mrs Shears to be friendly and welcoming to him because he is able to provide knowledge of the perpetrator's identity (160). Therefore, it can be argued that Christopher is driven by an emotional, even social, motivation to generate positive feelings of justice.<sup>57</sup> The re-establishment of justice would restore the social order and appeal to Christopher's liking for order and structure. Hence, the driving force behind Christopher's investigations is the subliminal question of 'Who would

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<sup>55</sup> Animals present a source of emotional comfort and support to Christopher, especially his pet rat Toby. Being responsible for the animal, Christopher is aware of the rat's needs, such as food, warmth or entertainment (e.g. CI 27, 52, 255), which presents an integral part of his everyday routine (192). He not only takes physical but also emotional care for Toby, who keeps the boy company without requiring social (i.e. human) interaction. Christopher would take him to space (66) and once bravely (even naively) saves the rat from the train tracks, which nearly killed the boy (224-225). When he is reunited with his mother, he focuses on the rat rather than on his mother's relief at seeing him (see also Cho 95), which demonstrates that Christopher focuses on the one thing that gives him emotional support (CI 234). Hence, Monica Orlando's argument that Christopher's ASD-like condition isolates him and impedes neurotypical identification with his characteristics (327) should be specified. His condition does not isolate him per se, but only prevents him from interacting with *humans* as Christopher's love and care for his pet is an emotion common to teenagers, regardless of their cognitive condition. As an animal companion, Toby embodies and satisfies Christopher's emotional potential and needs despite his ASD-like condition. In the novel's conclusion, after Toby has died, Christopher is given a dog, which continues his 'project' of taking care and responsibility for an animal.

<sup>56</sup> Additionally, it reminds the experienced reader of Sam Spade's famous statement in *The Maltese Falcon*: "When a man's partner is killed, you're supposed to do something about it" (Hammett 198), which briefly depicts Christopher in the context of the tough, justice-seeking masculinity associated with the hard-boiled genre. Stephen Butler, too, aligns Christopher with the hard-boiled detective as the boy's "minority status" as a child (investigator) puts him "at [similar] odds with the social milieu" as the hard-boiled detective (147). Although in this comparison Christopher's neurodiversity is interestingly eclipsed by his child status, it unsatisfactorily compares Christopher to adult instead of boy detectives, which unnecessarily marginalises him.

<sup>57</sup> Additionally, Christopher is motivated by the outlook of making Mrs Shears happy. When his father finds out about his investigations, which his father has forbidden him to conduct, Christopher justifies his trespassing behaviour with the words "[...] but Mrs Shears is a friend of ours" (CI 63). In the second half of the novel, he believes Mrs Shears to be friendly and welcoming to him because he is able to provide knowledge of the perpetrator's identity (160). Therefore, it can be argued that Christopher is driven by an emotional, even social, motivation to generate positive feelings of justice.

do this to such an honest and good creature?’ which, thus, characterises the story as a classical whodunit.

Third, apart from this genre-induced motivation, Christopher’s general agency is based on a more individually negotiated system. He cannot stand insecurity and uncertainty (CI 260, 262), which aligns him with the hegemonically masculine (and detective) ideal of being in control (e.g. Gates, *Detecting Men* 36). Hence, he creates his own criteria to maintain this control over his environment. Typical for a person with an ASD-like condition, Christopher struggles to understand figurative language because of the ambiguity of metaphors or similes, which is why he prefers clear-cut literal language and needs explicit directions to adapt his behaviour to his neurotypical surrounding. When social circumstances fail to provide him with such (e.g. CI 38), he creates these directions for himself as he likes to know what comes next. He lives according to a “meticulously detailed timetable that covers his every waking moment and activity” (Gilbert 243), which turns holidays into a nightmare for him because this timetable does not apply anymore (CI 193). Similar to the generic framework of detective stories, the timetable allows him to act in prescribed and rehearsed ways (Birge 75), providing him with confidence and security. Christopher’s aversion to uncertainty especially concerns things he cannot control, such as time in general (Birge 68-69) and the future more specifically (e.g. CI 262; Berger, *The Disarticulate* 196). In an attempt to control the future, he refers to future events in the going-to future tense when, for example, elaborating on his academic career (CI 33, 56). Thereby, he creates the impression that even his future is structured according to a timetable. The logic according to which he ‘functions’ is decisively based on emotions and, fundamentally, on the simple ‘rules’ of his ASD-related preferences and aversions.

Similarly, Christopher applies a ‘logical’ system for controlling a more short-term future, such as the upcoming day. During the bus ride to school, he observes and counts cars: “4 red cars in a row made it a Good Day, and 3 red cars in a row made it a Quite Good Day, and 5 red cars in a row made it a Super Good Day“, whereas “4 yellow cars in a row made it a Black Day, which is a day when I don’t speak to anyone and sit on my own reading books and don’t eat my lunch and *Take No Risks*” (CI 31). However subjective, this classification system provides Christopher with an approximate idea of what he can expect from the upcoming day and gives him the necessary confidence to take initiatives in everyday life and especially in his investigations. A Good Day inspires Christopher to start the investigations (33), while a Super Good Day, promising “something special” (69), encourages him to leave his comfort zone and address a stranger. When talking to Mrs Alexander gleans a new insight for his hunt for Wellington’s murder, the day’s classification inspires him to actively contribute to the day

becoming ‘super good’ (70-71). This initiative not only supports Christopher in confronting his fear of strangers, but his talk with Mrs Alexander also triggers a chain of actions, which ultimately leads him to Wellington’s murderer. Although it is true that his neurodiverse condition “manifests itself in an inability to repudiate logic” (Allen 167), his logic is not universal but rather idiosyncratic. It bases on his very individual preferences and aversions, and proves to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. He is active because he has defined the conditions when to be active. Nevertheless, Christopher’s classification system provides him with (masculine) agency, a feeling of control and the confidence to leave his comfort zone and subordinate his fears to the higher purpose of detection.<sup>58</sup>

However idiosyncratic, this agency drives the boy’s investigations as a detective. Instead of his methods being comprised with his idiosyncrasies – for example, he could have elaborated on his search for physical evidence in Mrs Shears’s garden (CI 41) – Christopher challenges his own limits. While usually avoiding social interactions with strangers, he chooses to interrogate potential witnesses of Wellington’s murder. Christopher justifies this decision not only to the reader but also to himself: “So talking to the other people in our street was brave. But if you are going to do detective work you have to be brave, so I had no choice” (46). Hence, Christopher follows the higher power of (his) logic and implements the bravery of a detective in his own detective persona (Allen 167). In seeking social interaction with strangers, he actively challenges his idiosyncrasies and, again, subordinates not only his fears but also his identity as a person with an ASD to his identity as a (hegemonically masculine) detective. Ironically, Christopher thus relies more on subjective witness statements than on the ‘hard facts’ of physical evidence. He approaches the investigations using means that he *cannot* control, since he has severe difficulties in recognising when people lie (Resene 85). This is because his struggles with social relationships impede his judgment of people’s statements and undermine his efforts to emulate Sherlock Holmes.

Despite occasional empathetic tendencies, which contradict his portrayal of a person with an ASD, Christopher’s detective identity is decisively restricted by his deficits in interpersonal relationships. First, instead of interrogating all of Mrs Shears’s neighbours, Christopher excludes those neighbours who undermine his newfound bravery. While one neighbour is not available, another laughs at Christopher, causing the boy to withdraw from the interrogation. Christopher avoids other neighbours altogether because of their drug consumption (CI 48-50). Therefore, despite overcoming some of his fears, Christopher’s idiosyncrasies still intervene on

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<sup>58</sup> Allen argues similarly that Christopher considers his investigations more important than his fears when she presents the mystery as the boy’s driving force (169).

the micro-level of his investigations. Second, although Christopher's inclination towards structure makes him follow generic guidelines of fictional detection, it also deprives him of the ability to react spontaneously to witnesses' answers (see also Allen 173), although they promise insight. His one-dimensional and unspecific questions are neither clever, nor challenge the given answers. He asks the neighbours whether they have seen ““anything suspicious”” and when they say no, he moves on to the next. He even suggests answers to the witnesses (“So, you don't know anything which might be a clue”, CI 48-49) in order to elicit clear information, which he can process. He is not suspicious of the witnesses' puzzled reactions to his questions (Resene 83). Once, “*Trying a Different Tack*”, he asks about the motive instead of gathering evidence (“I asked her whether she knew of anyone who might want to make Mrs Shears sad”) and the neighbour answers: ““Perhaps you should be talking to your father about this”” (CI 49). While the reader understands that this statement suggests that the father might be involved in the mystery, Christopher focuses on the fact that his father has prohibited the investigations, which – logically – prohibits Christopher from talking to his father about the topic. Had he applied Holmes's method of considering every answer before deducing the solution (SF 42), of which he is well aware (CI 124), Christopher would have understood the hint and might have solved the mystery himself. While it is one of the classical detective's most characteristic abilities to observe every change in facial expressions and nonverbal communication, Christopher's inability to read and understand figurative, metaphorical language and to interpret facial expressions makes him unable to detect the inconsistencies in his investigations. Although his motivation might be “heroic” (Allen 167) and proves that, as a detective, he is willing to challenge himself by confronting his ASD-like self with his fears, Christopher experiences limits – not the limits of detection per se (174) but of his ASD-like condition, which influences his idiosyncratic logic in the context of detection.<sup>59</sup>

Despite some confident action by challenging his interpersonal deficits, it is not his “heroism” (neither as a boy with an ASD-like condition nor as a detective) that “solv[es] the mystery of who killed the dog” (168). Instead of solving the mystery through deduction as Ciocia suggests (326), Christopher arrives at the solution by accident, more specifically as a result of an involuntary emotional breakdown. While looking for his book with his notes on the mystery, which his father took away from him to stop his investigations, Christopher finds a box with recent letters from his mother. He realises that that his father has lied to him and that

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<sup>59</sup> Christopher experiences such limits even in everyday life. When realising that the system does not work in London because there is no definite timeframe in which to count the cars, he turns the strategy into a ‘therapy’ of merely counting cars to find solace and distraction (CI 250). At the same time, this inapplicability demonstrates to him that his system is not universal and shows him the limits of his idiosyncratic logic.

his mother is not dead but lives with Mr Shears in London, which shatters his beliefs and familiar way of life. It triggers an information overload and emotional chaos, which he cannot process logically and to which he physically reacts with a meltdown (Berger, *The Disarticulate* 205). This typical reaction of children with ASDs is “often attributed to extreme sensitivity to sensory stimuli” (Birge 71-72). Resene observes that “[i]ronically, [Christopher’s] meltdown, which represents his final failing as a detective, is what leads to his father’s confession” (85). Indeed, the severity of Christopher’s reaction, which the reader recognises when Christopher does not resist his father’s physical touch (CI 143-144), appeals to the father’s love for his son. He cannot stand seeing the boy suffering in such a way because of his actions and, therefore, admits his responsibility in the dog’s murder. Hence, ironically, not Christopher’s ASD-related focus on logic and his Holmes-inspired deductions lead him to the perpetrator, but his uncontrolled emotions.

In fact, his idiosyncratic logic has led him astray as a detective. Although aware of the danger of “leap[ing] to the wrong conclusions” based on insufficient evidence (CI 124) – recalling Sherlock Holmes’s credo (SF 42) – Christopher does precisely that. His rigid focus on logic prevents him from identifying his father as the actual perpetrator. Christopher perceives Ed Boone’s prohibition of the investigations – “keep your nose out of other people’s business” (e.g. CI 26) – as ground for causally excluding his father from any connection to the mystery. For that reason, the boy neither investigates why the lady neighbour suggests talking to his father about the dog (49), nor considers that the deductions that lead him to suspect Mr Shears also apply to his father (54) or questions the father’s unusually aggressive behaviour (103). Furthermore, Christopher’s difficulties in empathising “prevent him from even wondering about the exact nature of his parents’ engagement with the Shears household” (Ciocia 330), which would have revealed the father’s affair with Mrs Shears and his (murderous) jealousy of her dog. Therefore, the reader understands that, despite some promising applications of the generic guidelines and his eventual revelation of Wellington’s killer, Christopher fails as a detective (Resene 85). The reason for Christopher’s failure lies in his difficulties in “understand[ing] about other people having minds”, as he remembers a situation from his childhood (CI 145). This recalls notions of “mindblindness”, also called the “theory of mind”, a typical concomitant of ASDs, in which the individual lacks “the capacity to attribute mental states to oneself and to others and to interpret their behaviour in terms of mental states” (Baron-Cohen qtd. in A. Hall, *Literature and Disability* 118). Here, Christopher’s ASD-like condition essentially impedes his investigations as it prevents him to question other people’s

motivations.<sup>60</sup> In generic terms, he disappoints the expectation of the infallible (classical) detective who solves the case with his extraordinary deductive skills.

The detective framework still supports Christopher in dealing with his neurotypical surroundings. It provides him with the guidelines to manage the neurotypical world (Allen 169-170) in social and spatial terms (Birge 75) and, thus, supports his development. Drawing an (idiosyncratically) logical conclusion from his father's betrayal – “Father had murdered Wellington. That meant he could murder me” (CI 152-153) – Christopher decides to live with his mother in London. Understanding the journey as another (detective) adventure Christopher again refers to the generic framework to master the journey. First, he decides that he “had to be like Sherlock Holmes and I had to *detach my mind at will to a remarkable degree*” to distance himself from the emotional chaos he undergoes (163), through which Holmes functions as a role model again (Allen 169). Second, Christopher applies detectives' methods and skills to everyday situations. He closely observes not only his surroundings, processing this information in his machine-like brain (CI 177-178), but also how (neurotypical) people, for example, buy tickets for the London tube before he imitates the process (212-213). Similar to interrogations, Christopher asks for information from strangers (170), although such interactions exhaust him, as he is in constant fear of being attacked (170-171, 223-228). The numerous symbols in public places could be perceived as red herrings, potentially distracting Christopher from his purpose (208-209). Therefore, the knowledge he gained during his murder mystery investigations provides him with valuable ways for navigating the world outside his comfort zone (see also S. Butler 148). It confirms Cornelius's observations that in stories about boy detectives, “genre is both the means through which the boy sleuths interact with their world and their reason for said interaction” (7-8). Thus, handling the neurotypical world as a detective mystery, appropriating the unknown terrain and challenging his fear of strangers, Christopher experiences a feeling of safety thanks to his identity as a detective and, ultimately, gains confidence as a result of his achievement.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> For further reference on the ‘theory of mind’, see, for example, Jack (*Autism and Gender* 133-134) or Loftis (*Imagining Autism* 9-10). For further reference on the ‘theory of mind’ in *Curious Incident*, see, for example, Berger (*The Disarticulate* 204-205) or Kümmeling-Meibauer (135-136).

<sup>61</sup> In addition to relying on detective methods, Christopher also relies on his idiosyncrasies to whether the unknown situations during his (developmental) journey to London, which is, predominantly, an act of “surviving” (Resene 85). When the sensory input overwhelms him, he uses his usual coping strategies to focus on himself, such as groaning and covering his eyes and ears (CI 180). Especially the complexity of numbers helps him to control his emotions and calm him down (181-183). Furthermore, the overwhelming circumstances of the whole journey force Christopher to adapt his coping strategies when he counts imaginary trains instead of real ones because the real ones scare him (221) and when he fears that his “mind wasn't working properly” as he ‘accidentally’ wishes to be back home with his father (217). Therefore, the journey is not only an application of his newly gained knowledge as a detective, but also supports Christopher's further development as a self-determined teenage boy with an ASD-like condition.

Consequently, although Christopher's ASD-like characteristics provide him with promising prerequisites for being a detective, Allen's argument that Christopher, similar to Holmes, represents "the opposite of intuition" (172) can be refuted. The boy's logic is, in fact, an idiosyncratic logic based on emotions, such as ASD-related preferences and aversions, which motivate his actions and decisively influence his success as an investigator from his first-person perspective. Christopher gains a sense of (masculine) independence through his reliance on, "his engagement with, and search for a place within, the detective genre" (Allen 178). However, his idiosyncratic logic also reveals the limits of the detective's rationality to the reader as "life without the ability to intuit other people's emotions is fraught with difficulty" (173), even as a detective. Despite his objective failure as an investigator, the genre provides him with the confidence to develop beyond the limits of his neurodiversity, as shown in the second part of the novel. Christopher's physical and emotional breakdown presents a turning point in the narrative as the revelation of the dog's murderer concludes the first mystery and, at the same time, reveals another one which Christopher does not perceive as such. The mystery of who killed Wellington proves to be only a "blind for the real" mystery (Resene 81; see also Loftis, *Imagining Autism* 128). The novel's actual mystery is about Ed and Judy Boone's relationship and roles as parents to Christopher as a boy with an ASD-like condition. While the first part of the novel is characterised by logic as a result of Christopher's narrative presentation of himself and his investigations, its second part concentrates on social relationships and the accompanying emotions, which Christopher approaches by treating them as another mystery which is not to be solved by logic.

#### **4.1.2 Powerful Emotions**

In contrast to the generic logic of the whodunit in the novel's first part, the second part plunges Christopher into the emotional mystery of his parents' relationship. The following chapter elaborates on Murray's observation that "the assertion that [Christopher's use of logic] entirely governs not only his actions but his feelings and capacities to engage with others is a misreading" and that Christopher indeed appears to show empathy ("Neurotecs" 182-183). While in the first part of the novel, Christopher's (unconscious) emotional motivations direct his idiosyncratic logic and structure his detective investigations, the second part shows how his emotions towards his parents follow traditional and even gender-specific, i.e. – in Christopher's understanding – logical, family relationships. At the same time, these emotions motivate his actions, which affect his parents' emotions in his favour. Therefore, after having drawn

(il)logical conclusions regarding his parents' characters, Christopher renegotiates his relationship to them, which proves to be "clearly at heart an *emotional process*" (Murray, "Neurotecs" 183). Its "emotional complexity" opposes not only the logical nature of the mystery of the dead dog but also Christopher's rational mindset (Murray, *Representing Autism* 162). Presenting Ed and Judy Boone in detail, this chapter analyses the boy's changing relationship to each of them and argues that Christopher's (masculine) power over his parents is subliminal yet idiosyncratic.

In the first half of the novel, Christopher relies on his father Ed Boone as his primary caregiver and understands that his father's actions are driven by affection: "Father looks after me when I get into trouble, [...] and he looks after me by cooking meals for me, and he always tells me the truth, which means that he loves me" (CI 109). However, Christopher's narrative perspective barely recognises his father's efforts. The reader understands that Ed is a hard-working single parent who "takes an active, protective role in Christopher's everyday life" (Allen 172) by providing and caring for him. Despite embodying both father and mother – challenging (stereotypically gendered) roles in parenting (Murray, *Representing Autism* 161) – Ed's household activities are reduced to a minimum as he, for example, leaves the hoovering to Mrs Shears (CI 60n9). Hence, he follows a hegemonic idea of masculinity.<sup>62</sup> As the father of a child with an ASD-like condition, Ed accepts and adapts to Christopher's idiosyncrasies, such as his aversion to physical contact (e.g. 21) and his food preferences (e.g. 62). He even arranges for Christopher to take his A level in mathematics because "'Jesus, this is the one thing he is really good at'" (57). He fosters his son's interest and fights for him to gain a positive and valuable experience in order to help the boy develop his identity. However, Christopher's ASD-like condition prevents him from responding emotionally to his father's affection. Their interaction is reduced to food-related conversations and Ed's hostile prohibition of Christopher's investigations, which adds a patriarchal aspect to their relationship.

In contrast to Christopher's inclinations towards logic, Ed Boone is a rather emotional person, which holds potential for conflict in their father-son-relationship. Despite being a "more level-headed person" than his wife (CI 103), Ed sometimes loses patience with Christopher and becomes an authoritative, occasionally even physically aggressive, father figure. Ed's occasional angry shouting intimidates and confuses Christopher, who cannot handle such emotions (102). When Ed learns that his son has disregarded his patriarchal prohibition to

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<sup>62</sup> For further information on how "Autism Dads" reconfigure their understandings of hegemonic masculinity, their roles within their families and their professional identities to adapt to their son's autism, see Jack (*Autism and Gender*).

investigate the dog's murder for the third time, Ed grabs Christopher by the arm and, thus, equally (yet involuntarily) disregards the boy's aversion to physical touch. Ed's uncontrolled emotional outburst causes Christopher's body and mind to shut down due to an overload of emotional distress: "It was like someone had switched me off and then switched me on again" (103). During this brief blackout, Christopher hits his father – a similarly violent response to the authoritative, patriarchal masculinity.<sup>63</sup> Still, Christopher's understanding of his father's affection assures him that they have an honest and trusting relationship, which is why Ed's lie about Christopher's mother's disappearance hits the boy even harder. It violates Christopher's belief that "loving someone is [...] telling them the truth" (109), which thus indicates to the boy that his father does not love him (anymore).<sup>64</sup> This breach of trust changes their relationship drastically and results in a fundamental alienation between father and son (Resene 83). Additionally, their struggle to communicate on equal terms makes it even more difficult for Christopher to understand Ed's (clumsy explanations of his) emotional motivations.

Ed's confession reveals that his (adult) neurotypicality infantilises Christopher's (adolescent) neurodiversity. Contrary to his previous authoritative appearances, Ed appears vulnerable and weak during his confession, in which he justifies his behaviour in terms of Christopher's wellbeing: "'I did it for your good, Christopher [...] I just thought it was better if you didn't know [...] I was going to show [the letters] to you when you were older'" (CI 143). On the one hand, these explanations demonstrate that the father is protecting his son from the hurtful truth that his mother has left him because of his idiosyncrasies (133). On the other hand, they reveal that Ed deemed his son unfit to understand the complicated emotional situation of his marriage with Judy and their relationship with the Shears'. The lie demonstrates the characteristic patronising treatment observed by Kizer in cultural representations of autistic masculinity (27). Deciding over Christopher's head, Ed regulates the boy's knowledge and not only maintains patriarchal dominance but also enforces Christopher's position as a social

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<sup>63</sup> Both father and son, however, forgive each other in their individual ways. While Ed apologises to Christopher verbally and with a visit to the zoo (CI 109), Christopher consciously reflects that "hitting is not allowed, except if you are already in a fight with someone then it is not so bad", which would have justified his reaction. However, as "grabbing is OK if it is on your arm or your shoulder when you are angry", his father did not act against the rules (114). Christopher considers his own behaviour to be more severe than his father's, through which he indirectly forgives him. Christopher's logic shapes his emotional evaluation of his own and his father's actions since overwhelming emotions can excuse bad actions. Although the boy does not evaluate their respective motivations, and such reflection would be evidence of his empathetical inclinations, it stills displays his awareness of (other's and his own) emotions.

<sup>64</sup> Allen argues that Christopher "rejects the models [of masculinities] around him", including his father (176), but neglects to explain why he does so. Here, it can be specified that his father's lie indicates that he does not love and, thus, rejects Christopher. However, this is not an objective, but rather a highly subjective understanding of the situation, created through Christopher's difficulties in understanding his father's (emotional) protection of his son.

outsider. While even the neighbours know about the Boones' relationship with the Shears', demonstrated by their surprised reaction at hearing about Judy Boone's 'death' (CI 74), the father's specific denial of knowledge because of the boy's ASD-like condition metaphorically excludes Christopher from the core family.

Although Ed's behaviour (stereotypically) deprives the boy of emotional capability, Christopher still displays that he understands emotions by 'logically' approaching social relationships. Contemplating on his prime suspect Mr Shears's potential motivation for making Mrs Shears sad, Christopher reflects on the meaning of marriage: "And if you don't want to live together you have to get divorced and this is because one of you has done sex with somebody else or because you are having arguments and you hate each other and you don't want to live in the same house any more and have children" (CI 55). By transferring social relationships into a logical sequence of cause and effect, i.e. through "sequential thinking", Christopher demonstrates not only his inclination towards logic but also "betrays [his] sensitivity to emotional motive, whatever trouble he may also have with facial expressions (Mintz 177-178).<sup>65</sup> He identifies feelings such as 'want', 'desire' or 'hate', which he designates as the emotional foundations of these relationships. In a similar way, Christopher understands his parents' difficulties with each other and his idiosyncrasies: "I used to think that Mother and Father might get divorced. That was because they had lots of *arguments* and sometimes they *hated* each other. This was because of the *stress* of looking after someone who has Behavioural Problems like I have" (CI 59; *emphasis A.S.K.*). Here, expressed and processed in his individual, idiosyncratic way, Christopher displays almost empathetical awareness of his parents' emotions, which would contradict the observation in research that he has not developed a 'theory of mind' (e.g. Berger, *The Disarticulate* 204; Kümmerling-Meibauer 135-136; Resene 84-85). At the same time, he also displays self-awareness that his ASD-like condition is the reason for his parents' difficulties. Christopher would have been able to understand the emotional motivations behind his mother's disappearance; she left the family because she could not cope with his idiosyncrasies (CI 133). Thus, he challenges the stereotypical representation of a character with an ASD-like condition as cold and incapable of showing, understanding and even reflecting on emotions.

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<sup>65</sup> This reflection of social relationships based on emotional foundations could have enabled Christopher to solve the mystery. Interestingly, this passage presents an almost correct deduction of his parents' separation. Their arguments due to Ed's disapproval of Judy's handling of Christopher's idiosyncrasies and education caused Judy to alienate herself from the family and start an affair with their neighbour Mr Shears. Here, Christopher applies the right approach to solving the mystery of who killed the dog (Mintz 177-178); he only suspects the wrong man as this explanation also applies to his father.

Ed's motivation for lying to his son stems from his own inability to communicate with Christopher. He justifies his lie ““because I didn’t know how to explain”” (CI 144), which underlines the fundamental problem in his relationship with Christopher. It is not Christopher’s neurodiversity that poses a challenge, but rather Ed’s inability to “detach [his] mind” (92) from the emotional issue, creating a divide between father and son. Had Ed explained his problems with Judy in a logical sequence, Christopher would have understood. However, lying seems to be easier for Ed as it spares him the effort of adapting to Christopher’s need for specificity. Ironically, Christopher’s initial disregard for patriarchal rules resulted from such a lack of clarity – because he did not understand it as a prohibition (38). The father-son relationship is characterised by a failure to establish common ground in their communication, which not only leads to mutual misunderstanding in both logical and emotional terms, but also causes Christopher to alienate from his father.

Christopher’s idiosyncratic logic essentially shapes his emotions and actions in the second part of the novel as it causes him to develop a mortal fear of his father. While the reader understands the ambiguity of Ed’s motivations, Christopher increasingly perceives Ed as a murderous villain. Thereby, *Curious Incident* represents the boy detective’s special relationship with the antagonist (Cornelius 9), who is a member of the core family. Realising that his father is the perpetrator in question *and* has lied to him about his mother’s death destabilises his perception of the core family as a refuge where he can go for love and support. More importantly, it shatters the fundamental honesty on which Christopher relies. The boy’s “pure (misguided) logic” (Orlando 327) results in the conclusion: “I had to get out of the house. Father had murdered Wellington. That meant he could murder me, because I couldn’t trust him, even though he had said, ‘Trust me,’ because he had told a lie about a big thing” (CI 152-153). To Christopher, it is a logical conclusion that his father could commit another murder again at any time. This unexpected act of violence is more significant for him than the lie about his mother (Mintz 178; see also Loftis, *Imagining Autism* 129). Although such an (il)logical conclusion neglects his father’s love and again encourages the stereotype of the unempathetic character with an ASD-like condition (Orlando 327), it becomes the driving (emotional) force behind Christopher’s agency in the second part of the novel. It literally forces him to leave the comfort zone of his hometown. He even subordinates his fear of strangers and public transport to the fear of his father, which can be considered brave in light of his ASD-like condition (Allen 168).<sup>66</sup> However, refuting Allen’s argument, Christopher’s fear – a strong emotion which

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<sup>66</sup> Similar to Birge’s analysis of Christopher’s memory of throwing himself out of a moving vehicle because there are too many people in the car (CI 196), the boy’s running away from his father can also be interpreted as “a

counterbalances his bravery – disqualifies him as a traditional hero (176). Instead of confronting the villain, Christopher runs away as he deems himself unfit to fight his father if necessary. Christopher's initial rebellion against the patriarchal prohibition and authority, through which he demonstrated self-determination, now turns into inferiority and vulnerability. As a result, he distances himself from his father in terms of affection, space and ultimately masculinity.

Christopher's decision to seek his mother Judy in London appears to reflect a child's longing for his mother whom he presumed dead. Instead of questioning her motivations for leaving (and being disappointed), he accepts her 'existence' and restructures his life accordingly. Choosing her as his new caregiver, Judy's role in the novel changes from being the dead parent to a 'lifesaver' because Christopher chooses his mother as a refuge from his father's 'dangerous' potential: ““I’m going to live with you because Father killed Wellington with a garden fork and I’m frightened of him”” (CI 234). Christopher blindly assumes that his mother will take him in and protect him, which proves his emotional understanding of familial relationships, such as the mother-child relationship. It emphasises his intuitive trust as a child in his mother as well as his reliance on honesty and truth. However, he chooses Judy's home only because it fits all of his criteria of a refuge (160-163) and after having thoroughly evaluated all possibilities and having ruled out the first (most convenient) one.<sup>67</sup> Hence, Christopher's departure from his comfort zone to seek his mother is a rational, deliberate decision, not encouraged by affectionate longing for his mother but by his fear of his father.

While Christopher treats his father as the villain, it is his mother who actually betrayed the boy. Christopher remembers his mother as “a very hot-tempered person” who “hit me sometimes” (103). She even threatened him, ““Jesus, Christopher, I am seriously considering putting you in a home”” and complained that ““You are going to drive me into an early grave”” (61).<sup>68</sup> While Ed was calm and patient in coping with Christopher's behavioural problems, Judy

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decision, self-injuring though it was, to remove himself from intolerable stimuli” (Birge 72). In both situations, Christopher demonstrates awareness of what motivates his decisions, which determines his selfhood in terms of his “spatial agency” as defined by his “embodied interaction with the world” (67; 60). It also emphasises his unusual and unexpected (self-)reflection.

<sup>67</sup> Interestingly, Christopher's first decision is to live with Mrs Shears as she fits all his criteria: “she wasn't a stranger and I had stayed in her house before” (CI 160) as she lives within his comfort zone. Furthermore, unlike his mother, Mrs Shears knows about the situation with Wellington, whose murderer Christopher could reveal now (which, he believes, would appease her and through which he demonstrates an empathetic tendency). He expects her to understand the situation with his father, whom they both would consider a common enemy (160). Therefore, living with Mrs Shears would have been the more convenient solution. Christopher only abandons this plan because Mrs Shears does not open the door, supporting the conclusion that Christopher's decision in favour of his mother is not affectionate but logical.

<sup>68</sup> Especially the last comment attracts the reader's attention. Since Christopher believes his mother to have died of a heart attack at the age of only 38 (CI 36), Judy's fear of meeting ““an early grave”” due to Christopher's behavioural problems (61) seems morbidly ironic. It could be argued that unconscious feelings of guilt are implicit in Christopher's frequent references to his mother. However, his rational inclination understands death as a ‘final

was not able to do so, which made her leave the family: “Maybe if things had been differant[sic!], maybe if you’d been differant[sic!], I might have been better at [mothering]” (133).<sup>69</sup> When she left her husband and (neurodiverse) child to start a new life with a new man, Judy acted out of “personal motivations and selfish desires” (Cornelius 10), which makes her the true ‘antagonist’ to the boy (detective). She guiltily writes letters to her child to maintain a connection to him, although this does not compensate for her failure as a mother and neglect of her child with an ASD-like condition (CI 240). Judy Boone has deprived her son of his mother’s love, which is usually a guarantor of unconditional protection and affection.

Although Judy still struggles with Christopher’s idiosyncrasies (CI 233, 246), infantilises him (247, 252) and repeatedly restricts his developing independence as a fifteen-year-old adolescent (248), she still weathers the numerous obstacles and consequences of Christopher’s appearance. She loses her job because she feels obliged to stay at home with him (249). She breaks up with Mr Shears, who does not tolerate her decision in favour of her son (259) and from whom she fears physical violence (253). Against all organisational odds, she arranges for her son to take his A level in maths (forced by Christopher’s refusal of food and sleep) (256-257). Eventually, she argues with her ex-husband about his lie and the options for organising Christopher’s life. Despite Christopher’s explanation of his decision as the logical consequence of his father’s confession (234), Judy understands his sudden appearance as an (emotional) return to her, which she takes as a second chance as a mother.<sup>70</sup> Although this ‘misunderstanding’ underlines their lack of communication and her insufficient understanding of his idiosyncrasies, Christopher revives Judy’s motherly feelings of affection and responsibility, to which she consequently subordinates her own life.

Both Judy and Ed Boone are too emotional for Christopher. His father’s quick-tempered reactions to covering his own misdeed and his mother’s emotional reaction to Christopher’s explanation of Ed’s lie – she produces a “wailing noise like an animal” (CI 193) – contrast with

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cut’ which rejects any post-mortem feelings (99). Since Christopher neither hints at such feelings nor mourns his mother emotionally, this observation is not further pursued.

<sup>69</sup> This motivation recalls the theory of “refrigerator mothers”, originally formulated by Leo Kanner and later developed by Bruno Bettelheim, according to which autism results from lacking motherly affection in the child’s infancy (Jack, *Autism and Gender* 33; Tweed 367; Loftis, “The Metanarrative of Autism” 103). Although the literary representation of Judy shows similarities to Kanner and Bettelheim’s theoretical approach to understanding autism, it will not be further pursued here as their theory has been highly criticised and repudiated (Jack, *Autism and Gender* 33-34). For more information on “refrigerator mothers”, see, for example, Murray (*Representing Autism* 173-176) and Jack (*Autism and Gender*).

<sup>70</sup> Therefore, it may be misleading to understand Christopher’s relationship with his mother as “a lasting reconciliation” (Allen 168) since the boy never blamed or accused her of anything. On the contrary, in view of the initial betrayal of her maternal duties, Christopher’s intuitive trust in Judy is rather ironic compared to his severe judgement of his father for losing control on one single occasion.

Christopher's logical and rational inclination.<sup>71</sup> Their emotionality demonstrates to the reader that feelings (can) motivate actions, such as his father's jealousy and anger which lead to the murder of the dog, and his mother's depression, frustration and helplessness, which make her abandon her child. However, despite Christopher's potential for understanding and reflecting on emotions, Judy and Ed fail to communicate their emotions and motivations in a suitable language. Instead of enabling the boy to understand their situation, thus respecting his condition and position within their family structure (and dynamic), Ed and Judy choose to withhold information from Christopher. His father infantilises Christopher by lying while his mother leaves with neither a farewell nor an explanation. Hence, suggesting the trope of ASD as a "tragedy" which destroys the core family (Loftis, *Imagining Autism* 128-129; see also Loftis, "The Metanarrative of Autism" 100; Tougal 150), Christopher's ASD-like condition prevents his parents from approaching him on equal footing.

Interestingly, Christopher's idiosyncrasies allow him (involuntary) emotional control over his parents, through which he assumes (hegemonic) characteristics of masculinity (Allen 176). It is not his strength of character which causes a "renewal of the family unit with himself as the central figure", as Allen argues (175), but rather his dependence and vulnerability, which influences his parents' emotional life. To his mother, Christopher's presence in London indicates that something terrible must have happened which forced the boy to leave his comfort zone and take on the "really frightening" (CI 234) journey on his own. Her duty as a mother obliges Judy to protect Christopher. Running away due to his fear of his father, thus avoiding a confrontation with the villain, and seeking shelter with his mother, presents Christopher in a vulnerable, helpless and infantile position. Instead of "protecting his emotionally vulnerable mother" as an "alpha male", an embodiment of hegemonic masculinity (Allen 178), Christopher seeks protection with his mother, who shields him from his potentially dangerous father ("It's ok. Christopher. I won't let him do anything", CI 240).<sup>72</sup> Christopher's implied infantile

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<sup>71</sup> James Berger extensively analyses how Judy's emotionality contrasts not only Christopher's 'rational' nature but also his narrative voice. Her letters interrupt Christopher's ASD-like perspective with a female perspective on "adult emotions and social and sexual relations", which are "[s]imultaneously chatty and emotionally intense" (*The Disarticulate* 204).

<sup>72</sup> Neurodiverse protagonists can meet such an identity as an 'alpha male'. Similar to Christopher, the protagonist of Kim Slater's *Smart*, Kieran Woods, negotiates his masculinity not only by following Sherlock Holmes's role model as a detective but also by resolving his family situation. However, unlike Christopher, Kieran's role on in the latter part essentially and consciously changes his perception of his own masculinity. His mother's new boyfriend emotionally and physically mistreats Kieran and his mother and, thus, confronts the boy with violent, toxic masculinity. Initiated by his mother's weakness, Kieran becomes more of what Allen calls an "alpha male" (178) than Christopher. By protecting his mother from her boyfriend's violence and revealing him to be the perpetrator of the central crime, Kieran restores social order in the public and private space.

vulnerability causes Judy to change her life altogether again and to provide constant support (and protection) her son.

Similarly, this vulnerability causes his father to abandon his patriarchal position of authority. When meeting his father after having run away, Christopher shuts himself off from Ed, avoids situations alone with him and even refuses to talk to him because of his fear that his father might hurt him. It is only when Ed learns to communicate with Christopher on equal footing that the boy opens up again. Ed's approach succeeds because he defines the specific conditions of their communication and interaction. He sets timeframes for their interaction (CI 265), which satisfies Christopher's need for explicit requirements, and suggests that their reconciliation is a ““difficult project””, thus using Christopher's own terminology (114). Ed adapts to Christopher's way of thinking and structures even minor actions, through which he demonstrates what Murray observes in a different novel: “a recontextualization, often in terms of a clear sentimentality, of the issues of masculine behaviour and appropriate adult responsibility” (*Representing Autism*, 158). Although he does not explicitly agree to Ed's suggestion, Christopher describes how they deal with each other in shared projects, such as gardening (CI 267). Christopher's acceptance of their deal could also be interpreted as his form of forgiveness for his father's mistakes. The breach of trust, which caused the crisis in their father-son relationship, encouraged Ed to undergo a “learning process produced by an engagement with autistic presence” (Murray, *Representing Autism* 157) and develop as a father figure. He has learned to communicate with Christopher on a level, such as issuing explicit directions, which Christopher appreciates (CI 56) – an achievement that only Christopher's teacher Siobhan had managed so far.<sup>73</sup> Ed and Christopher's relationship changes from talking about mundane topics during dinner to a still fragile yet more fundamental, genuine connection and honest interaction – a change enforced by Christopher's display of emotions in the meltdown.

Consequently, the (re)negotiation of his relationship with his parents is a struggle, in which Christopher “prov[es] himself to be capable of much more complex emotional engagement than his parents previously believed” (Allen 168). His emotions, essentially shaped by his individual way of thinking, stimulate the parents' development, which contributes to Christopher's happy ending. Although Judy might not have learned to handle Christopher's idiosyncrasies adequately, she has returned to assume her motherly duties and, taking pills to fight her

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<sup>73</sup> Therefore, Siobhan's role as a “double sidekick” (Cho 95) extends to a ‘triple sidekick’. In addition to supporting Christopher in handling and dealing with social behaviour (and his book) and mediating between Christopher and the reader (95), Siobhan also shows tendencies to mediate between Christopher and his parents.

depression (CI 262), is willing to rise to the task. Contrastingly, Ed has learned to understand Christopher better in terms of his idiosyncrasies and means of communication. While Ed has developed a ‘logical’ way of thinking like his son, Christopher takes on the challenge of accepting an emotional connection, through which both father and son reunite at the end of the novel.<sup>74</sup> Although “wider issues of care and [Christopher’s] relationship with his parents remain provocatively unresolved”, which impedes a happy ending for *all* characters (Murray, *Representing Autism* 162), the boy terminates his narrative with a feeling of independence and confidence: “And I know I can do this because I went to London on my own, and because I solved the mystery of Who Killed Wellington? and I found my mother and I was brave and I wrote a book and that means I can do anything” (CI 268). This list of achievements encourages him not only to look confidently ahead to his academic career. His final conclusion – “that means I can do anything” – also implies that he finds himself capable of rising to emotional challenges. This is confirmed by his observation that “if something is a puzzle there is always a way of solving it” (145). By appealing to emotional, empathetic elements as well as to his rational mindset, this challenge holds promising potential for the boy to succeed.

Nevertheless, instead of being an “alpha male” (Allen 178) because of his superior masculine strength, Christopher’s ‘control’ over his parents’ emotions derives from the subliminal force of his neurodiversity. Although Christopher’s achievements – having solved the dog’s murder and rearranged his family unit, triggering a change in his parents’ residences and responsibilities (see also Tougaw 148) – suggest “a positive rendering of a reconfigured patriarchal order that sees him usurp his father and take control of the family unit” (Allen 176), this is only superficial. The success of Christopher’s achievements relies on his dependence and vulnerability directing his parents’ behaviour (see also S. Butler 151). Not only since his detective episode (Allen 175) have his idiosyncrasies shaped the family dynamic as his parents have always aimed to avoid the (public and private) confrontations and the emotional and physical stress they entail for Christopher and themselves. Christopher’s ‘power’ over his parents’ behaviour roots in their care for him, rather than in his active, intentional claim of (hegemonic) masculinity, which confirms what Loftis calls the “metanarrative of autism as eternal childhood” (“The Metanarrative of Autism” 105). Gaining such a seemingly

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<sup>74</sup> Berger highlights that Christopher’s representation as an “object of care” functions as a “moral imperative” for the reader who “must care because one *does* care” (*The Disarticulate* 209). While he contextualises the reader’s care for Christopher in the observation that “all of us share, in part, this lack of empathy and care, this wish for isolation” (209), it also contributes to reading Christopher as a narrative prosthesis. His ASD-like condition evokes other characters’ as well as the reader’s empathy and protection and is “symbolically tied up to the fragmentation of the postmodern family” (Loftis, *Imagining Autism* 129), through which the reader is invited to learn from Christopher’s neurodiverse perspective.

authoritative position from his vulnerability and dependence contributes to his idiosyncratic masculinity, or – more correctly – masculine idiosyncrasies.

#### 4.1.3 Conclusion

*Curious Incident* stresses the interplay between logic and emotions and demonstrates that these seemingly opposing areas cannot be separated, especially not with a protagonist with an ASD-like condition. As Christopher solves the mysteries through emotions – however involuntarily – the novel undermines stereotypical representations of and neurotypical assumptions about characters with ASDs. While Christopher presents himself as a logical detective in his first-person narrative, the reader's neurotypical perspective complements the boy's neurodivergent perspective, which results in an impression of idiosyncratic masculinity.

Christopher's first-person narrative emphasises that he solved the dog's murder and found his mother due to his logical, rational nature, through which he successfully emulated Sherlock Holmes and his embodiment of rational masculinity. Through his successful investigations, Christopher gains a sense of masculine confidence in his achievements (CI 268). However, reading between the lines, the reader understands that Christopher's logic is based on ASD-related feelings of preferences and aversions which shape his character and agency. Although this underlines that his logic is highly subjective, the novel also shows that Christopher is “not some kind of automaton directed by logic alone” (Murray, “Neurotecs” 183) as this logic – however idiosyncratic – allows Christopher agency, confidence and courage to confront his own fears. While usually, “emotion (such as the passion or rage of the murderer) serves a highly disruptive function in the orderly world of detective fiction”, dominated by rationality and reason (Birge 66), *Curious Incident* challenges stereotypical representations of the autistic (detective) character as entirely logical (Allen 172).<sup>75</sup> Christopher's first-person narrative shows that the framework of detective fiction supports his dealing with his behavioural problems and finding his identity. It “allows him to shape his agency in a way that helps him manage change and the unknown” (Birge 74-75). By subordinating his fears to the higher aims of solving the mystery, he confronts his idiosyncrasies. Christopher understands life among

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<sup>75</sup> In addition to the emotions underlying Christopher's logic, occasional contradictions in Christopher's display of stereotypical characteristics further challenge his interpretation as an autistic character. Although Christopher “find[s] it hard to imagine things which did not happen to me” (CI 5), he imagines himself as an astronaut which would be “a Dream Come True” (66) or has almost romantic ideas about his mother's molecules in the air after being cremated (43-44). Furthermore, he elaborates on his favourite dream of a neurodiverse population after neurotypical people become extinct due to a virus (242-244), imagining a neurotypical dystopia as a neurodiverse utopia. Such contradictions deviate from stereotypical representations of ASD and underline the fact that ASD-like conditions vary considerably.

neurotypical people as a puzzle, which motivates him to apply a detective's methods and find a solution to this puzzle (75). The detective framework provides him with supportive means for navigating the neurotypical world and boosts the boy's (masculine) adolescent development in light of his ASD-like condition.

Attributing Christopher's success to his parents, the reader realises that the boy's masculine development through his detection is only marginal, which differs from typical representations of (neurotypical) boy detectives and their approach to masculinity. Cornelius highlights that social interaction with peers is a decisive source of support for the neurotypical boy detective's coming of age and masculine development (13-14). Although social interaction might be difficult for the boy detective on the spectrum, the protagonists in Kim Slater's *Smart*, Ashley E. Miller and Zack Stentz's *Colin Fischer*, Francisco X. Stork's *Marcelo in the Real World* and Siobhan Dowd's *The London Eye Mystery* benefit from the support of their (mostly neurotypical) peers in their investigations and (gender) development. They confirm that interaction with same- and mixed-sexed peers promotes the boy detective's transition to "practiced manhood", confirming traditionally masculine gender norms (Cornelius 13).<sup>76</sup> In contrast, Christopher's ASD-related lack of interaction with either neurodiverse or neurotypical peers prevents him from developing "emotional knowledge and social maturity needed to serve as an effective detective figure" (Loftis, *Imagining Autism* 127-128), which would have led him to solve the cases *intentionally* rather than involuntarily. While "Christopher's neurodiversity does not turn out to be the benefit it initially appears in dealing with the difficulties he faces" and his "neuroatypicalities are presented as barriers to be overcome" (Orlando 326), his mathematical skills promise a more fundamental and objective approach to masculinity.

Detection is neither Christopher's special interest (S. Butler 147) nor constitutes his identity; but mathematics does.<sup>77</sup> Although detective fiction and mathematics similarly appeal to his logic, Christopher's detective adventure is completed at the end of the novel while his dedication to mathematics is ongoing. As such, his mathematical skills function as, what Murray calls, a "compensation cure" (*Representing Autism* 209). Similar to other literary

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<sup>76</sup> Other boy detectives with an ASD-like condition in young adult literature are presented in interaction with girls, which supports their negotiation of (normative) sexual orientation in a similar tradition as neurotypical boy detectives (Cornelius 9-10). As such, Marcelo feels attracted to Jasmine, who becomes his girlfriend (Stork), while Colin's growing affection for his childhood friend Melissa helps him to cope with his social difficulties (A. E. Miller and Stentz). Both novels imply that a female love interest provides potential support with adapting to the neurotypical social surrounding. The boy detectives' 'professional' occupation is thus counterbalanced with a private life.

<sup>77</sup> Indeed, detective fiction and logical thinking per se form the special interest of other neurodiverse boy detectives, such as the eponymous protagonist of Miller and Stentz's *Colin Fischer*. Colin's room presents a "shrine [...] to cool, clear-headed logic" (9), which proves that Sherlock Holmes shapes Colin's detective identity and his investigations even more than in Christopher's case.

representations of disability, narratives on characters with an ASD-like condition are provided with a skill which “compensate[s] for the disability” (66) and makes the respective characters “gifted in their areas of special interest” (Loftis, *Imagining Autism* 3-4). Hence, this skill counterbalances the notions of ‘disadvantage’ (18) presented, for example, in the ASD-like condition as an additional struggle in adolescence (Murray, *Representing Autism* 139).<sup>78</sup> Compensating for this struggle, Christopher’s mathematical skills allow him competence, agency and confidence. He repeatedly demonstrates his mathematical skills throughout the novel, which peaks in him taking his A levels in the novel’s conclusion – one of the few achievements he reaches without (neurotypical) support. Although neurotypical adults provide the circumstances for the exam (Orlando 327), Christopher’s skills and performance during the exam are his very own accomplishments. Proud that he is the first student at his school to take an A level, Christopher prioritises the exam in Swindon over his new-found refuge with his mother in London (CI 246-247).<sup>79</sup> Passing the exam with the expected A grade demonstrates Christopher’s justified confidence in his mathematical skills, which aligns him with a “mathematical genius figure” (Moreau et al. 152). As a result, he also consciously reflects on his emotional reaction to the news of his success and adequately expresses it with a happy face (CI 268). Ultimately, the mathematical success encourages him to rely on his other skills and allows him to confidently look ahead to his future, a phase he now feels ready to control. The fact that, in this future, he sees himself as a mathematician – rather than as a detective – underlines the conclusion that Christopher’s dedication to mathematics creates a more fundamental identity.

Similar to the detective genre which presents a field that invites the boy to create an identity outside his neurodiversity (Allen 172), mathematics, too, presents such a field with a similar masculine connotation (Moreau et al. 142-143).<sup>80</sup> Mathematics predominates his identity and structures Christopher’s life more than detection as it even shapes his handling of emotions. He relies on the complexity of numbers to control his own emotions, as counting, calculating and

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<sup>78</sup> Such compensatory skills ease the “nightmare scenario that the child will *not* learn to ‘progress’, that there will be no overcoming” (Murray, *Representing Autism* 145), that ultimately the child will not become an autonomous member of society but remain dependent on parents and other caregivers. While special interests are common but not ubiquitous concomitants of ASD and foster the “erroneous stereotype that all people with autism are savants” (Loftis, *Imagining Autism* 4), fictional representations of characters on the spectrum often rely on this (commercial) trope. Enabling the autistic character because of his neurodiversity, a special interest contributes to the character’s empowerment (e.g. Murray, *Representing Autism* 127).

<sup>79</sup> Allen’s argument that Christopher believes that “he needs to demonstrate his capabilities [in his maths A level] in order to win back the mother” (177) can be refuted as Christopher’s early sitting of his A levels rather underlines his (masculine) competition to demonstrate his capabilities to his teachers, his peers and himself (CI 33, 71; Moreau et al. 152).

<sup>80</sup> Moreau et al. focus on filmic representations of mathematical masculinity in popular culture and merely list *Curious Incident* as an example without applying their observations to Christopher.

playing with numbers calms him when he is overwhelmed with sensorial input (e.g. CI 181-183). Christopher's A level in maths presents the most significant boost to his masculine development. In the last paragraph, he presents his involvement in the detective investigations and the emotional mystery as mere stepping stones to finding the courage to actually pursue his academic career in mathematics (268). Hence, while the detective quest boosts Christopher's "grow[ing] into adolescence" (Allen 178), his mathematical success provides him with the self-confidence needed for his professional future. In his masculine development, he approaches what Moreau et al. call "mathematical masculinity", as "everything in [his] life, personality, practices and beliefs [is] subjugated to [his] mathematical self" (148). Christopher's rationality and sense for competition (CI 33, 71), aligns him with complicit masculinities as he does not embody but approaches hegemonic notions of masculinity (Moreau et al. 152-153). Thereby, he counterbalances his identity as a socially challenged teenager with that of a mathematical genius (146), through which he recognises his (potential) place in and contribution to society. Taken to its logical conclusion, this argument continues *Rain Man's* legacy of the mathematically gifted character with ASD and, thus, perpetuates stereotypes (see also Orlando 328).

Christopher's idiosyncratic masculinity manifests at the intersection between what Christopher reveals in his first-person narrative and what the reader perceives between the lines of this narrative in terms of logic, detection and power. His gender representation largely underlines what Kizer observes on media representations on autistic masculinity as *Curious Incident* "appeal[s] to both hegemonic masculinity and stereotypes about autism" (37). In addition to his white, middle-class status as male, Christopher's ASD-related focus on logic and his dedication to mathematics present him as (per se) able to approach a hegemonic ideal of masculinity (Allen 167). Simultaneously, the novel confirms Kizer's observation of the stereotypically infantilising treatment of autistic masculinity (27) as not only Ed Boone's underestimation of Christopher's investigative skills but also Christopher's understanding of himself as a patient, dependent on neurotypical support (CI 58) and his vulnerability contribute to Christopher's infantilisation. However, in contrast to Kizer's autistic masculinity, reading Christopher's gender embodiment as idiosyncratic masculinity gives credit to his (idiosyncratic) achievements. This chapter has shown that Christopher approaches traditionally masculine characteristics of power and emotional authority (over his parents) precisely through his dependence and vulnerability. His "innocence and naivety", stereotypically presented in the autistic male character (Kizer 63), do not deprive him of his (masculine) authority but rather provide him with it. Although unconsciously achieved, this (highly subjective) 'power' and

idiosyncratic masculinity provides him with a sense of self-reliance, achievement and confidence to whether one of his worst fears: the future. Furthermore, his logic allows him a great deal of self-determination and self-care as he rarely ever does anything he does not want, but he also learns to adapt this logic when necessary. Hence, Christopher's masculinity is idiosyncratic as it might be less successful from a universal perspective, yet it challenges the reader's neurotypical perspective on the world and gender expectations – not despite but because of Christopher's neurodiversity.

*Curious Incident* gives insight into (the fictional representation of) an adolescent's life with ASD. Christopher's first-person narrative voice "throw[s] 'mystery' back onto the world" (Mintz 167) as he 'others' the neurotypical world while normalising his neurodiverse perspective (A. Hall, *Literature and Disability* 118; Murray, "Neurotecs" 183). It is this tension between Christopher's insight and the reader's external perspective through which not only Christopher's idiosyncratic masculinity is revealed but which also creates the aesthetic appeal of the novel. Embedding medical and theoretical descriptions of ASD (as well as cultural assumptions) in a (fictional) everyday surrounding, Haddon's novel underlines that the lived experience of ASD is "more than (and sometimes simply *other* than) the diagnostic criteria" (Loftis, *Imagining Autism* 25; see also Tougaw 138). By oscillating between undermining general assumptions about his neurodiverse condition and confirming other, Christopher demonstrates that ASD is a highly individual condition, which largely evades medical and cultural standardisation. Therefore, Haddon's detective protagonist with an ASD-like condition emphasises the fact that there is a broad *spectrum* of autism disorders (see also Berger, *The Disarticulate* 191).

#### **4.2 The Hard-Boiled Freak – (Dis)Ordered Hard-Boiled Masculinity in *Motherless Brooklyn***

*Motherless Brooklyn*, published in 1999, is Jonathan Lethem's most acclaimed novel. The stand-alone novel follows the first-person perspective of Lionel Essrog, a self-proclaimed detective with Tourette's syndrome, who is investigating the murder of his surrogate father, Frank Minna. Since "[m]ales are more commonly affected than females" with Tourette's syndrome (DSM-5 84), characterising it as a decisively male condition, it comes as no surprise that Tourette's syndrome challenges traditional forms of masculinity, such as the hegemonic masculinity displayed in the framework of hard-boiled fiction in which Lionel moves. His "multiple motor and vocal tics", typical for Tourette's syndrome (32), often hinder him from

imitating Minna's hard-boiled masculinity, that of a tough-talking part-time gangster. Instead, the tics, which are "sudden rapid, recurrent, nonrhythmic motor movements or vocalizations" (82), which earn him the nickname 'freakshow'. Lionel shapes this 'freakshow' identity into a freakish masculinity, based on fictional characters as quirky as himself. Lionel and Minna's father-son-like relationship highlights (the development of) masculinity as an essential topic in the novel as they both embody two opposing, yet connected, forms of masculinity. In a developmental journey through Minna's murder investigations and the generic context of hard-boiled detective fiction, Lionel comes to appreciate not only his potential as a Tourettic detective but also his freakish masculinity.

Apart from receiving academic praise for the 'authentic' representation of Lionel's neurodiversity (e.g. Tougaw 143), Lethem predominantly earned his fame for the unconventional play with genre characteristics in this example of the postmodern detective novel (see also Sorensen 326-328): He "revels in the possibilities and the limitations of genre fiction alike – faithfully executing some characteristics of hard-boiled fiction while gleefully questioning and ignoring others – while depicting a character (the detective with Tourette's syndrome) and a setting (gentrifying Brooklyn) that Chandler and Hammett could not have imagined" (Luter 29-30).<sup>81</sup> *Motherless Brooklyn* presents a metafictional self-reflection of the hard-boiled genre of detective fiction, transferring the private eye protagonist to Brooklyn at the closing of the twentieth century. This establishes a connection to Chandler's "mean streets" in his famous description of the urban hard-boiled novel (18; see also Holmgren 22; Lota 183); it is "as much *about* hard-boiled detective fiction as it is a hard-boiled novel in its own right" (Luter 27; see also Mintz 171).<sup>82</sup> As such, the novel modernises hard-boiled/*noir* conventions. These traditions are manifested most clearly in the protagonist, whose Tourette's syndrome turns him into a contemporary modification of the lone-wolf private eye, who dominated American hard-boiled fiction in the inter-war period (Foreman 156).

*Motherless Brooklyn* is a complex, well-researched novel. Researchers agree that, despite the initial incompatibility of 'sensational' Tourette's and inconspicuous detection, Lionel's Tourettic condition proves to be a skill rather than an impediment. He can thus plausibly assume

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<sup>81</sup> Several anthologies collect interviews with Lethem in which he elaborates on his literary play and provides understanding to the unconventional, multi-layered complexity of his works (e.g. Luter, Clarke, Schiff and Lethem).

<sup>82</sup> In 2019, Edward Norton created and directed the novel's filmic adaptation, while also starring as Lionel Essrog. Although the movie highlights the plot's generic references to the *noir* tradition by transferring the characters to New York of the 1950s, its loose adaptation of the novel replaces the central conflict between the two Minna brothers and the topic of Lionel's identity development with a story about racial segregation and discrimination. Therefore, the movie adaptation will not be considered in this analysis.

the identity of a (hard-boiled) detective (e.g. Mintz 172; Murray, “The Ambiguities of Inclusion” 96-97; Murray, “Neurotecs” 185-186). So far, recurring topics in the relevant research focus on the connection between Lionel’s Tourette’s syndrome and the urban space of New York (e.g. Peacock, “We Learned to Tell Our Story Walking”; see also Murray, “Neurotecs”), its influence on the narrative structure of the novel (e.g. Tougaw), Lionel’s (in)ability to connect to his surroundings through embodied agency (Birge) or the nature of his symptoms as represented in the novel (Fleissner). Furthermore, Lionel’s Tourettic language per se is a prominent topic. While Ronald Schleifer underlines the poetic potential of Tourettic language, Adrienne C. Foreman pays specific attention to the violence that Lionel is subject to because of his condition. Kenneth Jude Lota argues that Lionel expresses himself through the frameworks of popular media culture, especially the hard-boiled/*noir* genre. In a “post-*noir* ending”, he explains Lionel’s liberation from generic restrictions and his readiness to develop “his own language” (54).

Most important for the following discussion is research’s occupation with Lionel’s various expressions of identity. Bent Sorensen argues that Lionel undergoes a transition from “having defined himself exclusively in terms of his syndrome and his status as orphan, towards discovering possible belonging in a Jewish identity” (324). Although Lethem confirms Lionel’s undiscovered Jewish identity (Silverblatt 26), hints at this identity are given continuously but pervade the plot only marginally. Using Mikhail Bakhtin’s theories on the grotesque and laughter, Pascale Antolin highlights how Lionel as a “freak of nature” evokes laughter with his motor and verbal tics and thus positively challenges the literary representation of disability. Two studies focus on Lionel’s relationship with his adoptive father Frank Minna. While Pelle Holmgren’s bachelor thesis analyses Lionel’s five stages of identity formation, but fails to specify which identity Lionel actively pursues, Debra Shostak focuses on duplicity in the novel. She understands Lionel’s “split self” as a result of his Tourette’s syndrome and a reflection of Minna’s doubleness as a gangster and loving surrogate father. Moreover, she argues that Lionel not only needs to accept his own and Minna’s doubleness but also to recognise the potential of his Tourettic language for distinguishing himself from his surrogate father (143). Holmgren and Shostak leave the desideratum of Lionel’s masculinity open for discussion.

Expanding on such secondary material, the following chapter addresses this research gap and adds a specifically gendered reading of Lionel’s Tourette’s syndrome in the context of the masculinity of the hard-boiled detective genre. The novel’s title, *Motherless Brooklyn*, refers to the group of orphan boys that Lionel is part of (MB 71), introducing the novel’s occupation with family and belonging (see also Shostak 138). On the one hand, it states that a motherly

figure is (obviously) absent and that these boys are growing up without caring, loving and affectionate female guidance (see also Lota 37).<sup>83</sup> In more general terms, femininity is overshadowed by masculinity (there are only two female characters of importance), rendering the novel a “very male book” (Schiff and Lethem 133). On the other hand, it implies that a (surrogate) father figure is present and that the absence of such a figure would create “a much larger void than the lack of a mother” (Shostak 138). Turning masculinity into a prominent topic, *Motherless Brooklyn* is aligned with the masculine hard-boiled tradition (Plain, “Gender and Sexuality” 103; Porter 112; Nyman 39). The hard-boiled genre not only “connects gender and power with the control of language” (Nyman 149) but also depicts masculinity as a serious category that “is not something to make fun of”, but “to admire and defend” (Plain, “Gender and Sexuality” 104). However, Lionel Essrog’s freakishness due to his Tourette’s syndrome challenges and destabilises notions of the ‘seriousness’ of the male (body) by provoking generic incongruity and at times even adding an element of comedy. The pursuit (and negotiation) of hard-boiled masculinity, “with an emphasis on power and control and their preservation” (Nyman 90), clashes with Lionel’s Tourette’s syndrome, as a form of disabled masculinity, and presents a central conflict in the novel. Therefore, the following chapter addresses the research gap of disabled masculinity in *Motherless Brooklyn*. Following Lionel’s ageing process, it analyses how he negotiates his gender identity by relying on popular culture and generic frameworks. By performing two opposing versions of masculinity – as the freak and the hard-boiled detective – he comes to terms with his Tourette’s syndrome and accepts his freakish masculinity.

#### 4.2.1 Freakish Masculinity

The first paragraph of *Motherless Brooklyn* introduces the reader to the protagonist’s condition: “I’ve got Tourette’s” (MB 1) – the most concrete and immediate (self-)diagnosis among the examples of disabled detectives presented in this dissertation. In a first-person narrative perspective, Lionel Essrog describes the medical characteristics of motor and verbal tics that shape his life: echolalia, that is “repeating the last-heard word or phrase”, and coprolalia, that is the “uttering [of] socially unacceptable words, including obscenities” (DSM-5 82). While such knowledge about his condition ntil he is given a book on Tourette’s syndrome at the age

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<sup>83</sup> Dealing with the loss or absence of one parent and negotiating the relationship with the remaining parent is a prominent topic for Jonathan Lethem. Having lost his mother at the age of fourteen, Lethem incorporates parts of his biography into *Motherless Brooklyn*. It manifested in the sense of alienation and struggling identity while, at the same time, resonating the “generic echoes” or father-and-son relationships he observes in the *noir* tradition (Silverblatt 24).

of fifteen (MB 81), his life before that ‘enlightenment’ is characterised by insecurity and alienation from his peers and himself. The plot largely evolves in the typical chronology of a detective novel, but the second chapter, “Motherless Brooklyn”, recounts Lionel’s childhood and adolescence at a boys’ orphanage. In this retrospective of his childhood, Lionel filters the events through his knowledge of and experience with Tourette’s syndrome. As he struggles to identify with the masculine embodiments in his social surroundings, Lionel’s Tourettic characteristics develop along with his masculinity, with him responding to cartoon representations of masculinity in popular culture. While the characters of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton demonstrate that freakishness can have a positive, entertaining effect on one’s social surroundings, it is his father figure Frank Minna who decisively shapes and supports his development of freakish masculinity.

Lionel grows up at St. Vincent’s Home for Boys, a socially alienated and remotely located orphanage in Brooklyn.<sup>84</sup> One could argue that, based on their shared, parentless fate at the orphanage, Lionel and the other boys constitute a homosocial community. However, his awareness of his (not yet specified) deviance isolates him from his fellow orphans. He introduces himself to have “[grown] up in the library” of the orphanage, in which he “set out to read every book” (MB 36-37), which indicates his embodiment of the retreated book worm. Apart from the orphans’ social alienation, Lionel’s additional lack of social interaction with peers turns him into an outsider among outsiders, primarily due to his Tourette’s syndrome (see Lota 37; Holmgren 9-10). Hence, even before becoming a detective, Lionel embodies an extreme example of the “homosocial reclusive”, a typical characteristic of the hard-boiled detective (Messent 39).

While companions are scarce throughout his childhood, Lionel retrospectively focuses on three boys because of their later significance as his fellow Minna Men; each of them depicts a stereotype of schoolyard masculinity. First, Tony Vermonte embodies the leader, whose Italian identity the other boys envy as it implies a lingering parental heritage and a life before the orphanage, where he has demonstrated his (hegemonic) masculinity (MB 39-40). Second,

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<sup>84</sup> Social deviance in *Motherless Brooklyn* starts with the remote position of this orphanage. Positioned “off-ramp to the Brooklyn Bridge” (MB 36), it is surrounded by heavy traffic in grey, “monolithic” neighbourhood and joyless, loveless and colourless surroundings. In an extremely long sentence, Lethem establishes a parallel between the orphanage as a building, including its spatial ‘unbelonging’, and the orphan boys, and characterises it as alienated from Manhattan (36-37). Lionel distinguishes this place as “officially Nowhere, a place strenuously ignored in passing through to Somewhere Else” (37). This description highlights its character of being neither a start nor a destination and resembles a “Dickensian way” (Silverblatt 31) of socially (and spatially) alienated orphans. It creates an interrelationship between identity and space which characterises the whole novel. For a detailed analysis of the interrelationship between identity and (urban) space, see Peacock (“We Learned to Tell Our Story Walking”).

Danny Fantl represents the stereotype of the athletic teenager. His white skin colour does not prevent him from “assimilat[ing] to the majority [black] population at St. Vincent’s happily, effortlessly, down to his bones” (42-43). ‘Choosing’ this form of identity, Danny demonstrates that social belonging can be actively shaped. Both Tony and Danny “at least have a sense of ethnic ancestry thanks to their names and looks, and thereby a sense of potential, future belonging” (Holmgren 10), which shows Lionel that identity can be developed on both of these aspects.<sup>85</sup> Third, Gilbert Coney embodies masculine physicality not only in his “fatness” but also in his inclination for masturbation (MB 41-42). When Gilbert refers to masturbation as “his crazy feelings”, he associates it with deviance, through which he believes to connect with Lionel (MB 42). However, when Lionel fails to meet Gilbert’s need to discuss masturbation and sexuality due to his inexperience, Gilbert distances from Lionel and, similarly to Tony and Danny, intimidates the boy (42). Nevertheless, Gilbert’s questions cause Lionel to embark on the self-satisfying habit (42) and trigger his sexual development. In these three boys, Lionel encounters a mosaic of hegemonic masculinity, consisting of leadership and autonomy (Tony), athleticism (Danny) and sexuality (Gilbert). Although he aims at connecting to each of them, his own physicality and behaviour deviate and exclude him from their circle of hegemonic masculinity.

Throughout his adolescence, Lionel’s motor tics (i.e. touching and kissing) and verbal tics (i.e. echolalia and coprolalia) develop along with and become integral parts of his masculine identity. At the age of eleven, Lionel develops the motor tic of touching everything in his near surroundings. During a visit to the museum with Gilbert, Lionel climbs into the exhibition of plastic penguins. He is “overwhelmed by a tender, touchy impulse toward the stiff, poignant penguin” and it quickly “became imperative that I touch *all* the penguins, all I could, anyway” (MB 41-42). This situation marks an essential point in Lionel’s development. On the one hand, the compulsive penguin touching unexpectedly transforms him from a social outsider into a ‘cool kid’. Being entertained by Lionel’s show with the penguins, considering it a “comedy routine” (Foreman 171), Gilbert recognises him as “a kid who’d do anything, do crazy things” (MB 42), which holds potential for social connection. Indeed, the scene presents an early incident of Lionel’s entertaining freakishness, which accompanies him especially among Frank Minna and the Minna Men. On the other hand, the impulse to touch these plastic penguins reveals Lionel’s wish to connect with his (social) surroundings in order to overcome his social isolation. In this scene, he recognises himself in the penguins, a lifeless imitation of the real-

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<sup>85</sup> Although Lionel’s Jewish identity counterbalances his ‘unbelonging’, he neglects it until the end of the novel (see also Holmgren 10).

life conspecifics they represent. Here, ‘lifeless’ means without an identity of his own with the constant need to copy others (Birge 80). Embedding him in the physical world – thus “bridg[ing] the gap” between himself and his social and physical surroundings (83-84) – the tic of touching establishes a physical connection to those objects or people with whom Lionel wants to identify, especially to his surrogate father Frank Minna (MB, 6; see also Birge 80). Interestingly, while touching the penguins connects him to his immediate surroundings, Lionel (at first) fails to touch himself in masturbation. He is initially unable to create a similar ‘tender’ connection to himself, the most intimate relationship one can have, which underlines that he is not yet ‘at ease’ with his masculine identity.

At the age of twelve, Lionel’s tic of touching develops into an inclination to kiss everyone in his immediate surroundings. He involuntarily “lunge[s] at someone, surround[s] him with [his] arms, and kiss[es] his cheek or neck or forehead, whatever [he] hit” (MB 44-45). Like his urge to touch, the kissing tic presents ‘obstacles’ regarding his masculinity. Although this behaviour resembles (non-Tourettic) teenagers’ experiments with heteronormative sexual orientation, the homosocial environment of the boy’s orphanage punishes Lionel’s “‘abnormal’ behavior, which breaks strict gender and sexual boundaries”, with physical violence (Foreman 187) and subsequent social isolation. The consequence is a vicious circle: although the kissing and touching reflect his longing for connection, his odd ways of expressing himself cause his peers to exclude him. Identifying himself as different from the social norm, Lionel “grew terrified of myself then, and burrowed deeper into the library” (MB 44), withdrawing from the hostile company of his peers.<sup>86</sup>

In consequence, Lionel suppresses his tics. Although “layer[ing] the kissing behind hundreds of other behaviors” (MB 44) indicates some kind of control, it might rather be a form of ‘outgrowing’ or even suppressing his tics in order to present a more socially acknowledged behaviour (see Foreman 187; Birge 79). Further suppression affects Lionel’s development of language, which characterises his adolescence and dawning adulthood. He often compares it to

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<sup>86</sup> Ashamed of his uncontrollable and socially unacceptable behaviour, Lionel tries to excuse his odd behaviour by introducing a game, “The Kissing Game”, in an effort to embed his tic in the cultural convention of Sadie Hawkins Day (MB 45). This convention is derived from a 1937 comic strip in which 35-year-old spinster Sadie Hawkins pursues bachelors in order to marry the one she catches. In a similar, active hunt for social connection, Lionel aims at “single-handedly dragging the underprivileged into adolescence” by ‘offering’ himself as a manikin for the boys to practise kissing, as there are no girls at the orphanage (45-46). Thus, he disguises his kissing tic by making it part of an American teenage event, aiming at social (and cultural) belonging. Although Sadie Hawkins Day represents a playful reversal of conservative gender roles (here, the woman ‘hunts’ for her future husband) – while still complying heterosexual normativity – Lionel’s act of offering himself aligns him with femininity, which undermines his approach to (hetero)normative masculinity. The novel does not further pursue Lionel’s sexual development is not further pursued until he is sexually aroused by the femme(s) fatale(s), through which the novel settles his heterosexuality and follows the hard-boiled tradition (Lota 105).

a “roiling ocean [trapped] under a calm flow of ice” (MB 45) which develops into a “sea of language” that “reach[es] full boil” or “bubble[s] inside [him]” (46-47). Both images metaphorically turn him into a boiling water kettle, unable to blow off steam. This metaphorical pressure refers to the real pressure Lionel’s developing verbal tics put on him to avoid socially unacceptable behaviour. At first, his brain (silently) responds involuntarily to linguistic input of all kinds. It turns commercial slogans such as “*to last the rest of a lifetime*” into “*to rest the lust of a loaf tomb*” or names such as “Alfred Hitchcock” into “Altered Houseclock”, while his “throat and jaw worked behind my clenched lips” (MB 46; *original emphases*). As if by their own will, Lionel’s brain and body seem to revolt against him his mind’s command (Antolin 4). What he does not know yet is that these linguistic inversions are early symptoms of echolalia, the “involuntary mimicry or repetition of others’ words or actions”, which is often characterised by “involuntary or compulsive utterances of curses and obscenities (coprolalia)” (Sacks qtd. in Schleifer 139). The consequence of both is not only “‘strange, often witty’ associations, [...] ‘a constant testing of physical and social boundaries’” but also “‘a constant, restless reacting to the environment, a lunging at and sniffing of everything or a sudden flinging of objects’” (Sacks qtd. in Schleifer 139). While the latter can be seen in his urge to touch and kiss, the former becomes a decisive characteristic of Lionel’s identity as a detective.

Similar to the kissing and touching, his verbal tics violate social conventionalities (see also Shostak 135) and do not comply with socially acknowledged forms and expressions of masculinity. What appears as playful inversions of words, syllables and sounds to the reader are curses and insults to Lionel’s immediate surrounding: “Practically speaking, it was one thing to stroke Leshawn Montrose’s arm, or even to kiss him, another entirely to walk up and call him Shefawn Mongoose, or Lefthand Moonprose, or Fuckyou Roseprawn” (MB 47). Ashamed of such transgressions, he reflects that “[s]peech was intention, and I couldn’t let anyone else or myself know how intentional my craziness felt” (47).<sup>87</sup> He fears that his peers might perceive his transgressions as intentional as they do not understand his condition, which causes them to withdraw from him. Although Lionel believes that physical and verbal suppression of his inner workings will make him appear as normal (i.e., neurotypical), and therefore allow him to connect to others, it puts additional pressure on him. Lionel’s echolalia and coprolalia are the ultimate expression of his alienated otherness, which results in social exclusion and leads him to further retreat into his shell.

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<sup>87</sup> Schleifer elaborates on the “Poetics of Tourette’s Syndrome” and reads the (in)control and (un)intentionality of the verbal tics as powerful means for the narrator.

Lionel's tics are closely connected with decisive aspects of masculinity. He struggles with the negotiation of (homo)social connections, belonging (i.e. touching) and sexual orientation (i.e. kissing) as represented by his language (i.e. echolalia and coprolalia). Although "Tourette is pure contact", it is also "both social, being based on various forms of verbal and non-verbal communication, and antisocial, as its behaviour is irreconcilable with the accepted norms" (Vanderbeke 488). Lionel's condition complicates his teenager's way to manhood, which per se is paved with constant challenges. While the lack of parental guidance exacerbates Lionel's struggle with his gender identity as a teenager, he also lacks medical guidance in diagnosing his Tourette's syndrome and helping him to cope with it. As a result, he is 'lost' with his whole being, unable to articulate his identity or explain his odd behaviour. Ironically, although he is a voracious reader and viewer of films and television shows, Lionel struggles with articulating language. While Silverblatt and Antolin argue that this struggle happens only in dialogues, but not on the narrative level (Silverblatt 30; Antolin 9), a closer look not only at Lionel's "thought process" (Foreman 195) but also at his lack of narrative coherence refutes this argument. While the entire second chapter – a retrospective to his childhood and youth – disrupts Lionel's main narrative for about sixty pages, some intermezzos, for example on how Tourette's influences his perception of the world or his detective performance, interrupt the story's flow. As these interruptions are not only on the narrative but even on paragraph level, they can be interpreted as tics.<sup>88</sup> With these ticcish and non-ticcish narrative perspectives, Lionel reflects the two voices of the typical hard-boiled narrator (see also Scaggs, "Double Identity") while undermining them at the same time, which affirms his postmodern nature.

As real-life embodiments of masculinity fail to resonate with him, Lionel turns to fictional characters in cultural productions of mass media, searching for "signs of my odd dawning self" (MB 37). However, it is not only "film *noir* and the hard-boiled crime novel" which decisively influence Lionel's teenage identity (Lota 43). (Over)consuming literary and popular culture without (parental) guidance to explain or relativise the input, Lionel becomes "nearly a pure product of a postmodern media environment" (42-43). The result is a freakish identity in which his "scrambled, hyperactive language reflects the equally chaotic mediascape" (42-43; see also Fleissner 390). It expresses an increased alienation from the real world and a lack of self-articulation. Apart from seeking ways of communication and self-articulation (Lota 39-40),

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<sup>88</sup> Although Sarah Birge observes that Lionel "constantly disrupts his own story of detection" by "relating everything around him to his disorder" (82), she fails to interpret such disruptions as tics. Although these narrative tics disrupt the narrative flow of the detective story, they reveal much about Lionel's condition, for example, his "meta-Tourette's": "Touching touching. Counting counting. Thinking thinking. Mentioning mentioning Tourette's" (MB 192). Emphasising his self-reflexion and self-awareness for his 'deviance', this "meta-Tourette's" structures his life and detective narrative as it closely intertwines Lionel's private with his professional identity.

Lionel's retrospective references to television shows and characters also reveal them as potential masculine role models.

Watching popular American TV series, such as "*Bewitched* and *I Dream of Jeannie* and *I Love Lucy* and *Gilligan and Brady Bunch*" (MB 37), the orphans at St. Vincent are exposed to traditional gender embodiments in conservative mid-twentieth-century American families and households.<sup>89</sup> However, similar to Tony, Danny and Gilbert, the male characters' conservative, normative masculinity, which complies with the current norms and expectations of heterosexual masculinity, does not present Lionel with an image of masculinity worth emulating (MB 37). Instead, he identifies with quirky and odd characters who deviate from heteronormative masculinity. For example, Art Carney's embodiment of Ed Norton in *The Honeymooners* resonates with Lionel because of "the way he jerked his neck" (37) which resembles his own motor tics. Lionel particularly identifies with the cartoon figure Daffy Duck, whose distinctive characteristics (i.e. his lisp and choleric fits) combine a speech fault with verbal aggression. Lionel retrospectively recognises similarities between this behaviour and his later-developed Tourettic coprolalia. In fact, the cartoon duck "provides the verbally challenged Lionel with a figure he can instinctively understand" which proves that "it is only the (sometimes literally) cartoonish that seems to explain young Lionel to himself" (Lota 40). Furthermore, as a cartoon duck, Daffy Duck's anthropomorphic nature implies a blurring of animal and human. It alludes to Lionel's repeated comparison of himself with animals, which supports his understanding of himself as a 'freak' (Antolin 12-13). The duck's masculine connotations are artificially constructed. Apart from his male voice and masculine personal pronoun, the duck often cross-dresses or adopts feminine behaviour, undermining his masculinity. Similar to the plastic penguins, Lionel recognises a part of himself in this cartoon version of masculinity, which comically imitates and interprets real-life masculinity. Lionel identifies with such quirky characters because of their deviance from (neurotypical and masculine) normalcy.

At the age of thirteen, when his echolalia and coprolalia cause him to suppress his language and hide his deviance to pass as neurotypical, Lionel finds guidance in the silent movie era. He observes traces of his own eccentric and uncontrolled body language in the characters of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton.<sup>90</sup> In retrospectively comparing himself with "an overwound

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<sup>89</sup> It could be argued that, in highlighting these shows' female protagonists "as exotic as letters, as phone calls, as forests, all things we orphans were denied" (MB 37), Lionel is developing heterosexual masculinity as he perceives them as desirable objects. However, it can only be speculated as to whether he does that because he honestly feels that way or whether he is just assimilating his peers' behaviour and attitude in order to be accepted as a part of their group.

<sup>90</sup> Making eccentric movements similar to Chaplin and Keaton, Lionel also recognises his Tourettic self in the music by Prince. Lionel understands Prince's song "Kiss" as "a private message of confirmation to my delighted

watchespring, effortlessly driving one set of hands double-time while feeling it could as easily animate an entire mansion of stopped clocks”, Lionel recognises his early similarities with Charlie Chaplin’s Tramp in the movie *Modern Times* (MB 47). The movie shows Chaplin’s iconic character overwhelmed by the task of tightening bolts in a production line, which leads to an urge to turn everything that looks like a screw, to pull every lever and to push every button in the factory. Such an urge closely resembles Lionel’s compulsion to touch things, and the resulting transgressive behaviour which gets him into comparable awkward situations. Similarly, the tension between Buster Keaton’s heightened physical activity and his emotionless expression suggests, on the one hand, that underneath the hard, composed surface there is a potentially soft interior, suffering silently. On the other hand, it also implies that he is a mechanical man whose affective detachment from his surroundings not only parodies the classical detective’s aloofness, as displayed in Keaton’s movie *Sherlock, jr.* (Meyer 9), but also reflects Lionel’s physical and social alienation. In Chaplin and Keaton’s characters, Lionel discovers “a reflection of his own Tourette-laden, stemmed-up urge to engage with his surroundings” (Holmgren 10; see also Luter 40). Based on these characters, he deduces coping strategies not only for his own eccentricity, but also for his gender identity.

The “frantic but, importantly, silent screen characters” embodied by Chaplin and Keaton (Holmgren 10) demonstrate to Lionel that self-expression can be achieved by means other than language. Compensating for their inability to express language verbally (due to technological rather than physical restrictions), they “translate [words] into physical performance, manic choreography”, as “they’d managed to keep their traps shut, and so had endlessly skirted danger and been regarded as cute”. Thus, they teach Lionel the credo “silence, golden, get it? Got it”, from which he deduces coping strategies for his involuntary verbal and motor tics: “Hone your timing instead, burnish those physical routines, your idiot-wall-stroking, face-making, until they’re funny in a flickering black-and-white way” (MB 47). Lionel aims to disguise his Tourette’s tics as a ‘show’ (a ‘freakshow’ as will be discussed below) of incongruity, through which they become “unexpected ruptures in the expectations of the everyday” and cause his peers to laugh. Thereby, Lionel confirms Peter C. Kunze’s observation on laughter as a means

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Tourette’s brain” when Prince’s “four-minute catastrophe of chopping, grunting, hissing and slapping sounds” become “the nearest thing in art to my condition” (MB 128). Thanks to Prince’s music, Lionel can “let my syndrome live outside my brain for once” (128), thus, he outsources his tics which calms and relaxes him (see also Peacock, “We Learned to Tell Our Story Walking” 76). Additionally, Prince’s androgynous masculinity recalls Chaplin and Keaton’s “feminine” performances (Karlyn 111). It resonates with Lionel’s own deviant and quirky masculinity as it is in line with the homosexual inclinations of Lionel’s kissing tic and supports Minna’s description of him as “[h]alf a fag” (MB 33). Although mentioned only sporadically throughout the novel, Prince’s relevance to Lionel’s masculine and Tourettic identity, like that of Chaplin and Keaton, should not be underestimated.

of social reintegration (11-12). Kunze uses Bergson's theorisation of laughter which argues that it is always a (social) group that laughs at “*“mechanical inelasticity”*”, i.e. instances when a human fails to adapt to his surrounding, for example by tripping over a stone (11-12). In such instances, the individual briefly resembles “an automaton; his mechanical nature – this quality of being a thing instead of being a human – is the essence of the comic” (12). In this context, the group laughs to highlight the absurdity of the situation and to reassociate the individual who tripped with the group. A similar understanding of laughter as “reformative, not dismissive” (Kunze 12) underlies Lionel's emulation of Chaplin and Keaton's character, based on which he triggers laughter to achieve social approval and connection.<sup>91</sup> He turns their staged unintentionality into a staged intentionality, presenting his tics not as a lack of control over his body (and language) but rather as a controlled, staged performance of entertainment.<sup>92</sup> Inspiring Lionel to turn his weakness into a strength, Chaplin and Keaton serve as role models of socially accepted deviant masculinity.

Although they are not mentioned again in the novel, Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton shape the very foundation of Lionel's masculine identity as a Touretter.<sup>93</sup> Their portrayals of ‘clowns’, embodying frail, small, clumsy male characters, more lucky than skilled in action, yet intelligent enough to outwit their opponents, reassure Lionel that his own body's eccentric behaviour might be unusual but not singular.<sup>94</sup> As their characters are “blazing with aggression, disruptive energies barely contained” (MB 47) (enforced through the occasionally heightened speed of the black-and-white silent film), Lionel recognises them as embodiments of deviant masculinity and role models with which he identifies and to which he aspires. Kunze argues that “possessing a good sense of humor – that is, the ability to provoke laughter – is seen as

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<sup>91</sup> In a similar way, the individual's gender performance is judged by its social surroundings. “Our need for social approval and validation as gendered beings further encourages conformity” (Gerschick, “Sisyphus in a Wheelchair” 192), which explains the “reiterative and citational” nature of gender performances (J. Butler, *Bodies That Matter* xii). The individual repeats previous performances in order “to be recognized by others as appropriately masculine or feminine” (Gerschick, “Sisyphus in a Wheelchair” 192). In that sense, Lionel's attempts to entertain his social surroundings aim at social approval not only as part of society but also at the social approval of his embodiment of masculinity.

<sup>92</sup> While their characters' physical actions seem unintentional within the narrative, Chaplin and Keaton's moves are intentional and staged on a production level, requiring a significant amount of control over their physical movements to achieve this staged unintentionality. Contrastingly, Tourette's syndrome largely evades control as it “comes from deep own in the nervous system and the unconscious” (Sacks qtd. in Schleifer 151). Since “the interpretation of behavior by others has just as much, if not more, weight as intention in social determinations of agency” (Birge 79), Lionel's staging of his uncontrolled movements as intentional attempts to entertain his social surroundings can be interpreted as a coping strategy.

<sup>93</sup> Thus, Luter's argument that “Chaplin becomes, in a small but vital way, an influence on Lionel, if not as prominently so as Chandler” (40) should be reversed. Although Raymond Chandler's hard-boiled novels significantly influence Lionel's identity, it is Chaplin (and Keaton) who fundamentally form Lionel's freakish masculinity and provide him with the reassurance he needs.

<sup>94</sup> Holmgren makes a similar observation when he refers to Minna's book on Tourette's syndrome, which highlights that “Lionel is unique [...] though not alone in this uniqueness” (22).

masculine” and that “humor and masculine performance seem to be strongly related” as numerous male comedians demonstrate (7). As successful actors, Chaplin and Keaton prove this point. Turning ‘his symptoms turn into the grotesque characteristics of a freak’ (Antolin 3), Lionel invites other characters and the reader to laugh. He confronts – even annihilates – laughter as a typical discriminatory reaction to disability.<sup>95</sup> On a character level, “laughter is a means of resistance and self-assertion” (Antolin 14), through which Lionel turns his weakness (i.e. his Tourette’s syndrome as a potential point of attack) into a strength (i.e. consciously inviting laughter before it becomes discriminating). Interestingly, he draws on the technical restriction of silent movies, i.e. the inability to transmit sound, into a coping strategy for Tourette’s syndrome in order to gain social approval of his deviance, even in masculine terms.

However, Lionel has to admit that he does not have the necessary control over his Tourette’s syndrome to achieve such an impression. Although he can finally name his condition at the age of fifteen, he learns that “his constellation of behavior was ‘unique as a snowflake’” (MB 82) and “discover[s] an absolute intolerance” of the medication: “I might outsmart my symptoms, disguise or incorporate them, frame them as eccentricity or vaudeville, but I wouldn’t narcotize them, not if it meant dimming the world (or my brain – same thing) to twilight” (83). Such a resistance to medications that might support him in controlling his condition demonstrates that, despite his wish to ‘blend in’ with his neurotypical social surroundings, Lionel is not willing to completely silence his tics for good. Nevertheless, the lack of control over his syndrome causes his early attempts at staging his freakishness to fail. His ‘audience’ of school mates and teachers become accustomed to his Tourettic tics; his idiosyncrasies lose their entertaining effect and become “white noise or static, irritating but tolerated, and finally boring” while Lionel himself turns into “a walking joke, preposterous, improbable, unseeable” (83). At this developmental stage, he is “prone to floor-tapping, whistling, tongue-clicking, winking, rapid head turns, and wall-stroking, anything but the direct utterances for which my particular Tourette’s brain most yearned” (47). Due to his lack of control over his body (i.e. his motor tics), his language (i.e. his echolalia and coprolalia) and even his mind, Lionel presents himself as a “prisoner of my syndrome” (78), underlining his helplessness once his tics overwhelm him. Such a lack of control renders him unmasculine in hard-boiled terms. In line with Jopi Nyman’s observation that “hard-boiled fiction presents masculinity as a public code, supporting it with an emphasis on self-control”, Lionel confirms that “when a man loses [or lacks] control over his actions he is bound to become a non-

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<sup>95</sup> For further reference on the cultural history of comedy and disability, see for example Gottwald, Coogan and Mallet or Kastl.

masculine loser” (Nyman 122). Although Lionel emphasises his ability to channel his verbal tics into motor tics, implying a slight gain of control over the syndrome, this nevertheless does not counterbalance his deviance. In a long paragraph, Lionel retrospectively emphasises that his social alienation at high school resulted not only from his deviance but also from disappointed social expectations of his masculinity: “I wasn’t tough, provocative, stylish, self-destructive, sexy, wasn’t babbling some secret countercultural tongue, wasn’t testing authority, wasn’t showing colors of any kind” (MB 84). After such a list of the things he is *not*, he concludes with the one thing he understands himself to *be*: “I was merely crazy” (84). Enforcing Lionel’s position as an outsider, this self-diagnosed neurodivergent identity expresses his annoyance with his symptoms and his reluctant acceptance of his ‘unmasculine craziness’.

To solve his struggle, he requires a guiding parental figure who comes in the shape of Frank Minna. This “small-time gangster” (Lota 36) and “racketeer” (Holmgren 10) runs a driving service as a cover for a detective agency, through which he hides his own questionable doings with two Italian mobsters in a hard-boiled world. Minna’s duality confirms what Christopher Breu describes as the “tough, shell-like exterior, a prophylactic toughness that was organized around the rigorous suppression of affect and was mirrored by his detached, laconic utterances and his instrumentalized, seemingly amoral actions” (1) of the typical (non-)fictional idea of hard-boiled masculinity.<sup>96</sup> Perceiving “banter as a form of expressing solidarity” (Nyman 166), Minna teases Tony, Danny, Gilbert and Lionel by giving them nicknames, scolds them and treats them as subordinates, dismissing their comments and questions with brief answers. To this end, he employs vernacular language, “one of the [hard-boiled] tradition’s key distinguishing factors” (Lota 26). In addition to mirroring “the life of the streets”, vernacular language demonstrates masculine “issues of power and control” (Nyman 140), which reinforces Minna’s parental authority. Nevertheless, when asked ““what kind of men”” they are going to be, the boys respond: ““Like Frank”” (MB 63). Contrasting Lionel’s fictional role models, Minna becomes a real-life role model for hard-boiled masculinity – which is based on a fictional genre that has some effects on extra-fictional reality (Nyman; Breu) – and a father figure.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Although Lota also refers to Breu’s definition of hard-boiled masculinity (78-79), she does not apply it to *Motherless Brooklyn*, where it provides insight not only into Frank Minna’s masculinity but also into his importance as a masculine role model for Lionel.

<sup>97</sup> While the novel is based on the absence of a mother figure, with Frank as a single father ‘raising’ four orphan boys, the scene of the Christmas dinner at Minna’s mother’s house, a “gesture [that] is simultaneously warm and dismissive”, demonstrates to the boys not only “how unmoored they really are” (Luter 33). In this scene, Lionel and the other Minna Men also get a glimpse into family life, but it also challenges traditional family roles and values and fundamentally questions the mother figure. Although the scene promises a loving family relationship with Minna as the father and mother Minna as the grandmother, the affectionate relationships seem misdirected. While Frank caresses his mother almost harassingly (reminiscent of Freud’s Oedipal complex), she ignores him and directs her own attention to the boys instead. Carlotta Minna’s physical affection in the form of neck caressing

Minna gives the boys a sense of social (and spatial) belonging outside the orphanage (Shostak 138; Luter 33; Holmgren 9) by engaging them in his business, however dubious (Holmgren 22). Especially for Lionel, this activity results in social connection. With his no-nonsense and authoritative attitude, Minna unites the boys as social outsiders due to their orphan status.<sup>98</sup> He relativises Lionel's deviance arising from his Tourettic condition – “‘Yeah, well, you’re all freaks’” (MB 49) – which becomes essential for Lionel’s understanding of the group (see also Antolin 7). Lionel manifests the boys’ unquestionable loyalty to Frank by calling them the Minna Men, which resembles a “collective ego” uniting them “under the sign of Frank’s name [and] inscribes their patrimonial focus and debt” (Shostak 138). As an authoritative father figure, Minna not only controls their knowledge, for example, by keeping them in the dark about the “*noir* mental universe” in which they act (Lota 46). He also provides knowledge, most explicitly when he gives Lionel (aged 15) a book on *Understanding Tourette’s Syndrome*: “‘Turns out you’re not the only freak in the show’” (MB 81). Minna not only recognises Lionel’s syndrome but also suggests that his identity lies within the comic realm.

Frank Minna positively highlights Lionel’s ‘craziness’ and gives him the nickname ‘Freakshow’. Among the many etymological explanations of the term ‘freak’, its sixteenth-century Middle English meaning of “capricious behaviour, whims” (*freak*) best summarises its connection to Lionel’s Tourette’s syndrome, which is characterised by involuntary movements and verbal outbursts. The term experienced its cultural peak in the nineteenth century when freak shows, such as by P. T. Barnum in the U.S., displayed people with physical deviance, “nature’s caprice” for public entertainment (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 56).<sup>99</sup>

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is also harassing, with the boys enjoying and fearing it at the same time. It challenges images of the motherly affection and grotesquely caricatures a (grand)mother’s stereotypical pleasure in spoiling (temporarily adoptive) (grand)sons with good food at Christmas. Frank interrupts his mother’s behaviour with a casual comment on having brought together “all of motherless Brooklyn” (MB 71). While providing the stage for an idyllic family Christmas dinner, Carlotta and Frank’s controversial behaviour clashes with stereotypical gender behaviour and inverses potential threats. Stereotypically, the mother is the loving and protective parent, while the father’s (physical) authority occasionally presents a threat. However, despite his awkward behaviour towards his own mother in this scene, Frank Minna acts as the boys’ protector, which adds to his usual position as an authoritative father figure.

<sup>98</sup> The argument that disability can act as a social bridge rather than a gap (Foreman 180; see also Mintz 116) does not apply to Lionel’s selection as a Minna Man. Minna prefers Lionel to an obese boy not because his Tourette’s is considered “more ‘normal’ or ‘okay’ than obesity” and “preferable” over obesity as “it ‘disrupts’ in moments as opposed to the constant ‘disruption’ of obesity” (Foreman 171). Minna chooses Lionel not because his Tourette’s is ‘the lesser evil’ but because Lionel’s physical condition better suits Minna’s purpose of engaging the boys in moving work. Therefore, instead of discriminating against the obese boy, Minna’s decision is rather pragmatic in favour of Lionel’s physical ability.

<sup>99</sup> In “constantly reaffirm[ing] the difference between ‘them’ and ‘us’” (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 65), such shows “created a ‘freak,’ or ‘human curiosity,’ from an ordinary person who had a visible physical disability or an otherwise atypical body by exaggerating the ostensible difference and the perceived distance between the viewer and the showpiece on the platform” (62). Thus, these shows “descended from a long tradition of reading the extraordinary body” (56). Hence, “the wondrous monster of antiquity, who became the fascinating freaks of the nineteenth century, transformed into the disabled people of the later twentieth century”, a

Although Minna's nickname assigns Lionel to a socially marginalised group, it still pleases Lionel. Perceived "through the prism of Minna's rough endearments" (MB 44-45), the nickname acknowledges the entertaining potential of Lionel's Tourette's tics (see also Antolin 3; Luter 31), which he has developed based on Chaplin and Keaton in order to shape his identity. It highlights how "his freakishness is inescapably written on his body and his actions" and "make[s] him a clown, funny and useful" (Foreman 174).<sup>100</sup> Jennifer L. Fleissner correctly observes that "while everyone sees Lionel as a freak, Minna alone seems able to enjoy the way Lionel's freakishness momentarily exposes an underlying freakishness organizing the social whole" (391), which comes in handy when Lionel takes on the investigations of Frank's murder. The nickname 'Freakshow' turns Lionel's tics into his "trademarks" (MB 45), through which his Tourette's syndrome becomes a decisive and positive property. Embodying the human comedy that Minna himself believes in, Lionel becomes the "mascot of a worldview" and the "Overt Freak Supreme" (68).<sup>101</sup> Even among the orphans as social outsiders, Lionel sticks out "with my utterances, lunges, taps, my symptoms, those extra factors Minna adored throwing into the mix" (35). Although Minna thus still emphasises Lionel's extraordinary difference, his interpretation encourages Lionel to recognise his Tourette's syndrome as an advantage, not only within the group of Minna Men but also in professional terms as a detective.

Frank Minna teaches Lionel to value and use his Tourettic skills as an investigative advantage. As such, the condition functions as a "source of inspiration and protection" (Antolin 12; see also Tougaw 149) and agency (Tougaw 142). Lionel's busy Tourette's brain (ironically) supports his concentration, for example, when he sorts out the order of sequences and events (MB 211), and is an advantage in stakeouts: "[M]y compulsiveness forced me to eyeball the site or mark in question every thirty seconds or so". During wiretaps, he only needs "a key list

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transformation through which "[t]he extraordinary body moved from portent to pathology" (58). For further reference on the 'freak', see Cassuto.

<sup>100</sup> In fact, Lionel even introduces himself (and his narrative) in the circus context from the very first paragraph: "I'm a carnival barker, an auctioneer, a downtown performance artist, a speaker in tongues, a senator drunk on filibuster", culminating in the highlighted conclusion: "*I've got Tourette's*" (MB 1). He fundamentally connects the circus context with Tourette's syndrome in his identity, which underlines the argumentation that he wants his social environment to perceive him as comical.

<sup>101</sup> In Frank Minna's perspective on the world, comedy is central and existential (see also Foreman 174): "If you weren't funny, you didn't quite exist" (MB 68). Similar to Lionel's Tourettic tics, Minna's inclination for joking even comically relieves tense situation, such as his death scene (Antolin 18n10). As he enjoys "the spectrum of human comedy" (MB 85), his humour often reveals his convictions and prejudices on gender, sexual orientation and minority groups, which he judges not only based on racist and popular stereotypes but also based on their potentially comic effect on him (68). To Minna, Lionel is the personification of "human comedy" as with his Tourette's syndrome, orphanhood and ambivalent sexuality, he embodies "bone stupidity, mental illness, and familial or sexual anxiety", aspects which Minna considers "the animating forces that rendered human life amusing" (68). As a result to such an inclination to 'human comedy', Lionel's tics enforce Minna's fondness of the boy.

of trigger words to listen for in a conversation and I'd think about nothing else, nearly jumping out of my clothes at hearing the slightest hint of one" (4). In both cases, his compulsions make him an expert at otherwise tiresome tasks because "Tourette's teaches you what other people will ignore" (43), which recalls the heightened attention to detail of the (classical) detective. Most importantly, Minna encourages Lionel to value his syndrome's disarming effect on his interlocutors, while animating them not to take Lionel seriously (see also Foreman 174n57). He presents Lionel as a "shot out of a cannon" (MB 57), referring to him as a circus attraction again. Lionel's entertaining freakishness "unnerve[s] them, disrupt[s] some schmooze with an utterance, a head jerk, a husky '*Eatmebailey!*'" and, thus, turns him into Minna's "special effect" (57). Consequently, Lionel "is automatically judged as mentally disabled" and "dismissed as a fool and a 'Human Freakshow'", and his condition thus "serves as a disguise" (Vanderbeke 485). As a result, Lionel is an (in)visible, i.e. unsuspicious, investigator as his Tourette's syndrome is "veiling the abilities of the disabled and offering him the chance to observe from the safe position of the harmless freak" (485; see also Antolin 3; Tougaw 143).<sup>102</sup> Thus underestimating Lionel, his interlocutors are unaware of Lionel's close observations, which mainly characterise his later detective identity.

Due to Minna's inclination for joking and his comic pleasure in Lionel's Tourettic inability to tell a joke without interruptions, a life-long joking contest between the two characterises their father-son relationship. The jokes resemble a secret language full of insider references. While dying from a lethal stab wound, Minna draws an analogy to one of their favourite jokes (MB 88-89). As the punchline of this joke communicates to Lionel that the killer is "Irving" (29), Minna indicates that once Lionel has understood the relationships between the characters in the joke and adapted them to the real-life social relationships in Lionel's (and Minna's) surroundings, the joke will eventually lead Lionel to Minna's killer. Finding "Irving" means finding the killer. Communicating in their secret language, Minna legitimises Lionel as the investigator of his murder, a legitimacy which Lionel persistently defends when others doubt it, such as The Clients (174) or Tony (183).<sup>103</sup> The day of Frank's death constitutes Lionel's

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<sup>102</sup> What characterises this underestimation most distinctively is the fact that "[t]he Touretter can also be The Invisible Man" (MB 44). Lota argues that here Lionel connects to H.G. Wells's *The Invisible Man* as "someone written out of the mental reality of those around him", highlighting a "profound sense of social isolation and alienation" (Lota 37). However, following her footnote, the reference to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* seems more reasonable not only because Ellison's protagonist's social invisibility due to his ethnicity matches the Touretter's invisibility. Also, both Ellison's nameless protagonist and Lionel contextualise their identities and social perceptions in the circus framework – they are attracted to the "bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows" (Ellison 3) and the 'freakshow' respectively.

<sup>103</sup> However, as Minna never *explicitly* tasks Lionel with the investigations, this legitimisation also paves Lionel's way to maturity. It "acknowledges Lionel's free will, thereby releasing him from the authoritarian bonds that have kept him in the status of *foreclosure*" (Holmgren 23). Accepting the case, Lionel takes the opportunity to question

coming-of-age within the genre of hard-boiled detection (Holmgren 6) and opens the stage to his performance as a hard-boiled Tourettic detective.<sup>104</sup>

Minna recognises Lionel's Tourettic point of view as an alternative perspective on reality (e.g. Antolin 3; Lota 35; Silverblatt 25). On the one hand, Frank supports Lionel to "have a take on everything, and to spit it out, as though he thought my verbal disgorgings were only commentary not yet anchored to subject matter" (MB 57). Minna's encouragement liberates Lionel from his self-imposed need to suppress his Tourette's tics: "In this way, Minna licensed my speech, and speech, it turned out, liberated me from the overflowing disaster of my Tourettic self" (57).<sup>105</sup> Eventually, after having formerly suppressed speech to hide his deviance, Lionel uses speech as a valve to let off the pressure from suppressing his tics.

On the other hand, Minna reads meaning into Lionel's tics. He confirms Oliver Sack's observation that "[a]lthough they may appear random, [...] 'the particular *form* of tics often has a personal or historical origin. Thus a name, a sound, a visual image, a gesture, perhaps seen years before and forgotten, may first be unconsciously echoed or imitated and then preserved in the stereotypic form of a tic'" (Sacks qtd. in Schleifer 140). Believing in the 'creativity' of Tourette's syndrome (Schleifer; Vanderbeke 486-487), Minna understands Lionel's Tourettic self "as an interpreter" with the "compulsion to interpret and reinterpret events – qualities central to detective fiction and to Essrog's agency" (Tougaw 137). He recognises the truth revealed through Lionel's tics, as they reflect unconscious connections in response to sensorial (mostly verbal) input. Vanderbeke's argument that Lionel produces "meaningless" language

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Minna's authority as a father. In this way, he gains insights into his surrogate father's life outside the agency and learns about and understands the intrigue surrounding his death. Lionel's decision to accept the case supports his position in the social construct related to his surrogate father, the 'wheels within wheels' (Holmgren 23). In the course of Lionel's investigations, the reader understands that, among the characters fundamentally involved in Minna's death, Lionel seems to be the only one who does not know about the reasons for his surrogate father's death. Therefore, more than anything else, by providing Lionel with a clue that only he is able to understand, Minna appeals to Lionel on a personal and intimate level. Implicitly, he provides Lionel with the means of connecting the circumstances of his murder with the world as Lionel knows it (i.e. jokes) and, thus paves Lionel's way to maturity.

<sup>104</sup> The reader soon understands that Lionel's agency, his "unravel[ing] the novel's mysteries while the other characters flounder" (Tougaw 143), is because he is the only character who is not involved in Minna's business. Therefore, Lionel indeed works as a "lone wolf", but *not* "because his community views him as disabled and ostracizes him" (Foreman 167). Instead, Minna's clue makes Lionel the only legitimate investigator of the murder and pushes him towards adult self-reliance. In contrast to the stereotypical hard-boiled detective's "superior personal morality" (167), Lionel's driving motivations are his "loyalty" to Frank Minna (Vanderbeke 484) as well as Minna's legitimisation of him as an investigator, which encourages him to undertake a personal quest to solve the family affair (Worthington, *Key Concepts in Crime Fiction* 124) and learn who killed his surrogate father.

<sup>105</sup> Considering Lionel's retrospective view on his adolescence, it almost seems as if he grew up as a mute, silent character. Apart from his desperate "It's a game!" excuses for his kissing tic (MB 45) and his insulting inversion of a peer's names (47), there is no mention of his direct speech until Lionel's time with Minna; yet, this direct speech, too, only refers to Lionel's ticcing associations with the name of Minna's agency (51). Hence, Lionel's language development, i.e. his tics, is reflected on a narrative level as he starts using direct speech in the phase with Minna.

can be refuted as Lionel's tics can be *meaningful*: "In Frank's presence, Lionel's Tourettic utterances are, as it were, sublimated, transcending pure craziness into something at least closer to meaningfulness" (Holmgren 11; see also Antolin 13). Minna's appreciation assures Lionel that, rather than negating meaning, his Tourette's syndrome can provide meaning (see also Birge 81). His ticcish associations and linguistic inversions (potentially) solve conundrums, not only in everyday life – for example the meaning of the initials in L&L driving agency (MB 50-51) or how to pronounce Prince's unpronounceable glyph (113-114) – but also in a professional context. As these incidences show, instead of undermining structure with his tics, Lionel's Tourette's structures randomness, orders the chaos and "convey[s] meaning" (Schleifer 140).<sup>106</sup> His tics "deform and restructure language" (Silverblatt 26), through which "hidden thought-associations are revealed" (Reed 62), almost "like interruptions from the id [of Freud's psychoanalytic theory]" (Shostak 135). Hence, his mentor's confidence in and appreciation of his tics as observation skills teaches Lionel a form of control over his language, which Nyman characterises as a decisive characteristic of (hard-boiled) masculinity (149).<sup>107</sup>

Minna's (re)interpretation of Lionel's tics allows Lionel (and the reader) to re-evaluate his own qualification as a man and a detective. Those characteristics which seemingly rendered Lionel unsuitable turn out to be relevant requirements for an investigator (e.g. Sorensen 323-324; Murray, "The Ambiguities of Inclusion" 97; Reed 62) and, specifically, for a hard-boiled detective, such as Lionel's double identity. As becomes evident from the retrospective to his adolescence, Lionel understands himself as a "split self" (Shostak 140), with his non-Tourette's self separated from his "Tourette's self" (MB 57), "ascrib[ing] agency to his brain" (Tougaw 137) and distinguishing "between symptom and personality" (Foreman 177).<sup>108</sup> This division

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<sup>106</sup> As a Tourettic detective, Lionel oscillates between chaos and control. As he himself explains in the novel's first paragraph, his "invisible army" of words and tics, on the one hand, "smooth[es] down imperfections", thus creating order. On the other hand, when there is too much perfection and order, "then my little army rebels", disrupting the order with an echolalic outburst (MB 1-2). Agreeing with the reciprocal relationship between order and chaos, Fleissner observes that "order can so often look like chaos" (391) while Shostak adequately summarises: "Just as chaos calls for control, control invites order" (138), which is manifested in several situations throughout the novel. Lionel's tics disrupt his order, for example, in response to investigative epiphanies (which is why he tics erratically when he finally reveals the case's overall connections) (MB 201-202; 274-275). Additionally, he often *wishes* for an "ordinary interruptive tic" to (comically) relieve awkward situations (105) or to "throw my bloodhoundlike obsessions off" conundrums distracting him from his actual case (143). At the same time, his tics (re)create order by, for example, "threading beads [of clues] together, smoothing the sequence into order" (211), following a "call for symmetry" (283) or, most essentially, by establishing connections through ticcish unconscious associations. Thus, as a Tourettic detective, Lionel's 'closure' can only be "conditional" (Sorensen 326) as the central mystery might be solved but his Tourette's, his embodied chaos, persists.

<sup>107</sup> Although Foreman mentions Nyman's study on hard-boiled masculinity (5-6), she does not pursue such a gender perspective in her analysis, neglecting its potential for a comprehensive understanding of the disabled, in Lionel's case neurodiverse, detective.

<sup>108</sup> Similar observations are made in medical analyses of Tourette's syndrome, such as by Sacks: "'Any disease introduces a doubleness into life – an 'it' with its own needs, demands, limitations. With Tourette's, the 'it' takes the form of explicit compulsion, a multitude of explicit impulsions and compulsions: one is driven to do this, to

becomes most evident when Lionel tries to explain his condition to a homicide detective. When Lionel tics “‘*Tourette Is the Shitman!*’”, the detective interprets this exclamation as a reference to a suspect (MB 110). Instead of explaining the situation, Lionel consents, “[l]et Tourette be the suspect and maybe I’d get off the hook” (MB 110) and gladly accepts that even other people occasionally recognise his Tourettic self as a different identity (see also Shostak 139). Through the implied duality – “Tourette’s was my other name” (MB 110) – Lionel “creates a kind of doppelgänger” (Reed 62), which allows for psychoanalytic insights (see also Shostak).<sup>109</sup> It also ‘qualifies’ him as a hard-boiled protagonist, whose double identity (i.e. public and private) constitutes one of the genre’s distinctive characteristics (Knight qtd. in Scaggs, “Double Identity” 132).<sup>110</sup> Lionel matches this duality of the divided self with his two voices, i.e. the voice of the Tourettic tic and the non-Tourettic language (in conversations with other characters as much as on a narrative level) – a narrator and a freak (Antolin 3-4). Furthermore, with his Tourettic means of investigation, Lionel proves to be an “unusual man”, which corresponds to the essential understanding of a hard-boiled detective, as described by Raymond Chandler (18).<sup>111</sup> While the symptoms might frequently seem to control Lionel, they occasionally also provide him with means of controlling and structuring. His urges for “counting, processing, and inspection” (MB 37) and touching allow Lionel to control a seemingly uncontrollable mass, such as books in a library (37) or plastic penguins (41), through which he establishes an

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do that, against one’s own will, or in deference to the alien will of the ‘it’” (Sacks qtd. in Antolin 4). The challenge is not to fight but to accept this doubleness and channel it into a holistic identity.

<sup>109</sup> Interpreting Tourette’s as a double identity is further developed in Daniel Hecht’s *Skull Session*. The novel presents Paul Skoglund, who medically treats his Tourette’s syndrome. He suppresses his tics to experience precisely the tranquillity that Lionel avoids (MB 82-83). Paul understands that he has an extreme form of hyperkinetic disorder, which he mistook for Tourette’s syndrome, which makes him turn into a superhuman, violent being in extremely tense situations. In this hybrid thriller-fantasy novel, a developmental disorder is presented as an underlying, physically and psychologically challenging threat which can only be suppressed – and, thus, controlled – with medication.

<sup>110</sup> As a prevailing motif, the double forms the “framing metaphor of the novel as a whole” (Shostak 137) as not only Lionel displays a double character. Numerous characters are (freakishly) mirrored in other characters, such as Tony/Lionel (in terms of detective identity), Lionel/Loomis (the freak doppelgänger), Frank/Gerard (the good ‘father’ and the bad ‘uncle’) (see also Shostak 140). In addition, some of them are also twofold in their personality, most importantly Frank Minna. His double identity as “a hard guy living on the fringes of the criminal underworld and an empathetic, curious, playful man with a soft spot for lost boys like the Minna Men” turns him into the “prototype of duality” (Shostak 137). Although Lionel understands (and accepts) Minna’s doubleness only at the end of the novel (142-143), Minna’s duality mirrors Lionel’s ‘split self’.

<sup>111</sup> Although Lionel is similarly isolated from his social surroundings as the stereotypical hard-boiled detective – a socially alienated, detached loner and outsider (Messent 38; Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* 64; Worthington, *Key Concepts in Crime Fiction* 123) – this is not Lionel’s wish but the result of his neurodiversity (e.g. Foreman 187; Lota 37; Holmgren 21). Unlike the traditional hard-boiled detective’s social isolation, Lionel’s wish for *connection* shows most fundamentally in his tics, such as touching, kissing or imitating other people. Additionally, his “desperation to connect” shows in his creation of Bailey, “an imaginary figure towards whom he directs many of the things he says during tics” (Lota 37), his occasional calling other people named Essrog, with whom he suspects a familial connection (38-39), most importantly, his loyalty to Frank Minna and the Minna Men. Thus, through adopting Minna’s hard-boiled masculinity and, thus, emulating his father figure, Lionel puts on the ‘disguise’ of hard-boiled masculinity as an acknowledged form of gender identity to cover his freakishness.

unconventional means of perceiving and cataloguing his surroundings. Therefore, when Minna reinterprets Lionel's tics and takes him along to the hard-boiled world of gangsters, dubious characters, intrigues, double bluff and femmes fatales, he provides a new framework for Lionel's condition. In this world, Lionel learns that his freakishness due to his Tourette's syndrome and his masculinity are not mutually exclusive. Instead, it contextualises Lionel's freakish masculinity in an hyper-masculine world.

#### **4.2.2 A Tourettic Detective in a Hard-Boiled World**

Research on *Motherless Brooklyn* agrees that Lionel Essrog's Tourette's syndrome serves numerous subversive purposes. It challenges literary conventions not only in general, such as when "freak narrator" Lionel "turn[s] the novel into his own freakshow" (Antolin 14), but specifically those of the hard-boiled detective genre. The clash between Lionel's freakishness clashes and the hard-boiled impression he intends to project disappoints the reader's expectations of a hard-boiled detective and results in a comedy of incongruity. Lionel's seemingly uncontrolled motor and verbal tics render him "the opposite of the hard-boiled detective who is defined by his verbal control, his mastery" (Johnson 128). He becomes too loud as "[i]t is hard for a detective to remain coolly restrained, both emotionally and linguistically, when he lives with a condition that places both his language and his self-presentation outside of his own control" (Luter 28). Unlike the traditional hard-boiled sleuth who vanishes in a crowd, Lionel is too 'visible' because the tics make him "attract the attention of my environment by sudden quirky movements, tics and unexpected loud exclamations, frequently of an obscene nature" (Vanderbeke 482; see also Sorensen 328). In an interview, Jonathan Lethem himself explains that "[i]t seemed incredibly funny" to "pour" Lionel's "radical" (i.e. Tourettic), "linguistic content" into the "traditional form" of the hard-boiled subgenre of detective fiction (Johnson 128).<sup>112</sup> His Tourette's manifests in "comically inconvenient moments" (Lota 36), i.e. situations that would enforce a neurotypical detective's masculinity – situations in which he accepts and displays investigating authority, solves the mystery, (sexually) interacts with female characters and confronts villains – and determine the investigator's position as the narrative's hero. The following chapter argues that such scenes in Lionel's quest to fulfil Minna's implicit task prove that Lionel's emulation of a hard-boiled detective's masculinity reveal his freakish masculinity as his authentic (gender) identity.

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<sup>112</sup> Shostak similarly emphasises this contradiction, referring to this specific interview (135).

The death of Minna – the only person who recognised, appreciated and encouraged Lionel’s comic potential for private and professional purposes – forces Lionel to change his strategy. Instead of hiding his disorder to pass for neurotypical, he adopts Minna’s hard-boiled masculinity as a more traditional, i.e. hegemonic, form of masculinity.<sup>113</sup> Equally inspired fictional role models (Lota 43) and Minna’s real-life example of masculinity, Lionel starts emulating the identity of a hard-boiled detective, which Tony later mockingly summarises: “Everything you know comes from Frank Minna or a book” (MB 184). Entering the ‘post-Minna’ era of his development, Lionel copes with being “again orphaned” (Holmgren 13; see also Shostak 138) by not only copying his father figure with whom he identifies. In dressing like Minna, wearing his watch and using his beeper (MB 132), Lionel almost ‘resurrects’ Minna, “model[ing]” his own hard-boiled persona on the latter’s example (Shostak 140; see also Holmgren 14). In a later context, Lionel summarises: “*Frank Minna c'est moi*” (MB 214).<sup>114</sup> Lionel realises: “I was Minna’s successor and avenger”, through which he concludes that “[i]t seemed possible that I was a detective on a case” (132). Insecurely, yet actively, he claims the role of the detective and – only halfway through the novel – becomes the protagonist of his own narrative (Murray, “Neurotecs” 185). The ‘detective son’ sets out to discover the ‘gangster father’s’ secrets (Shostak 140-141). In adopting Minna’s identity, Lionel not only puts on the ‘costume’ for his performance as a detective but also becomes aware of the hard-boiled world in which his surrogate father operated. Thus, following the first sentence of the novel – “[c]ontext is everything” (MB 1) – Lionel seizes the hard-boiled framework as a new context, in which its “generic boundaries” present a “shared cognitive map for protagonist and reader” (Peacock, “Jonathan Lethem’s Genre Evolutions” 439; see also Holmgren 3; Lota 44; Luter 33). While Minna taught Lionel about the potential of his Tourettic self as a detective

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<sup>113</sup> Lionel’s attempts to pass for neurotypical recalls Erving Goffman’s *Stigma*. Goffman “defines passing as a strategy for managing the stigma of ‘spoiled identities,’” through which “people with disabilities find ingenious ways to conceal their impairments and to pass as able-bodied” (Siebers 97). Although Goffman refers to physical impairment, Lionel’s performance as a masculine, hard-boiled detective invites a similar reading. Throughout the novel, he frequently copies other characters’ everyday behaviour, such as coughing (MB 197), sexual intercourse (219), but also during stakeouts as a detective. By imitating his opponent’s behaviour (241) or even copying Tony’s sandwich order, Lionel could be read to hope for insight into their ways of thinking – a “mind-meld” (244) – and to arrive at similar conclusions. Although these imitations might be Tourette’s-related as he tries to pass for neurotypical, they still qualify the condition as supportive ability as they allow the Tourettic detective an extraordinary identification with the people he observes.

<sup>114</sup> Lionel compares Frank Minna to a statue whose shoulder Lionel has “buffed [...] to a high shine” (MB 6) with his touching tic, pinpointing Minna as his main subject of identification. As “‘Tourette patients quite often copy the behavior and speech of others (and themselves) in their tics’” (Hardcastle qtd. in Birge 80), it comes as no surprise that Lionel ‘becomes’ Frank Minna in his hard-boiled embodiment. Minna and Lionel are fundamentally connected. Lionel characterises Minna as “a mover and a talker, a word and a gesture, a detective and a fool” and concludes that “*Frank Minna c'est moi*” (MB 214). In this statement, Lionel compares Minna to the French king Louis XIV (“*L'état c'est moi*”), which implies that, similar to a sovereign, Minna has absolute power and authority (over Lionel).

before, his non-Tourettic self now complements his Tourettic self, through which Lionel channels and shapes his duality as a hard-boiled detective.

Lionel's strong identification with Minna becomes a vulnerability, which his opponents use against him. When Lionel introduces himself as Frank Minna, presenting Minna's business card, his identity is weakened. Demonstrating "a glimmer of legitimacy", "[t]he name came easily" (MB 158), ticlessly, underlining his ease in imitating Minna (Shostak 140). However, overwhelmed by his touching tic, Lionel's Tourettic self undermines his Minna/hard-boiled identity (MB 159). Similarly, when Tony addresses Lionel with Minna's name 'freakshow', he "cued my Tourette's, [...] cut right through the layers of coping strategies", which destabilises Lionel's post-Minna hard-boiled performance, catapulting him back to his identity as a freakish stooge (155). Although Lionel's tics weaken his hard-boiled impression when he is confronted with the Clients, the Italian mobsters overlook them and instead refer to Frank's nickname as a connection to the surrogate father: "There's a little part of Frank in you [...] We speak to that part and it understands. The rest of you may be inhuman, a beast, a freak. Frank was right to use that word. You're a freak of nature" (177). The Clients describe his identity as a hybrid, a mixture of Frank Minna and a "beast". While Tony and the Clients focus on and confirm Lionel's freakishness by using Minna's nickname, Gerard Minna (Frank's brother) compares Lionel to Frank as a person: "You are so like Frank" (232). He positively recognises Lionel's similarity to Frank, which Lionel was not only aiming for but had developed as a result of his surrogate father's education. These opponents manipulate Lionel by reminding him of or alluding to his similarity to Minna. Thus, enforcing Lionel's tics, they undermine his constructed hard-boiled identity and reveal the freak.<sup>115</sup> Hence, "as if to insist on the uniqueness of the Tourette's identity that distinguishes him from the father figure" (Shostak 140), Lionel's Tourette's impedes his imitation of Minna, as the identity as a freak undermines his professional performance.

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<sup>115</sup> Interestingly, the opponents highlight that it is through this freak identity, his split self, that Lionel resembles Minna most. It matches the surrogate father's "*duplicity*", as Minna was similarly divided Lionel (Shostak 137-138). Tony reveals to Lionel that "Frank Minna was two guys [...] The one I learned from and the chucklehead who thought you were funny and got himself killed. You only knew the chucklehead" (MB 184). Thus, Tony highlights Frank's different treatment of his surrogate sons (Shostak 137). While the Clients highlight Frank's identity as a part of Lionel's doubleness, complemented by the "freak" identity, Gerard Minna describes Lionel and Frank's alienation from their social and spatial surroundings (for further reference on space's influence on identity constructions, see Peacock ("We Learned to Tell Our Story Walking")). Thus, in his imitation of Minna's hard-boiled masculinity interrupted by the Tourette's syndrome, Lionel could be seen as Minna's freakish double. At the end of the novel, the reader understands that Frank "was a talker, too, but rootless, chaotic in the stories he told" (MB 288), which resembles Lionel's orphan rootlessness, the chaotic disruptions and interruptions in his stories and inclination to talk excessively because of his Tourette's syndrome. Frank might have recognised something of himself in Lionel and his Tourette's, which is why he took the ticcish boy under his wing. Mirroring each other, Frank can be seen as the 'original' and Lionel as his distorted mirror image.

The hard-boiled framework presents Lionel's verbal tics, i.e. his echolalic and coprolalic outbursts, in the masculine context of a private eye's vernacular. The hard-boiled detective's duality usually shows in that he "hides his true motivation and identity behind a tough-talking mask" (Scaggs, "Double Identity" 133), which also covers "personal vulnerability" behind an "overt display of masculine self-sufficiency" (Messian 39; see also Gates, *Detecting Men* 45). However, in Lionel's case, his Tourette's-related tough talk does not cover his vulnerability; on the contrary, his tough talk *is* his vulnerability as his verbal outbursts transgress social norms and turn him into a social outsider. Thus, "twist[ed]" through Lionel's Tourette's syndrome (Foreman 195), the hard-boiled vernacular turns his tics into "[t]he tough talk, wisecracks, and hard-boiled conceits," which are "important linguistic moves in a game of power to live autonomously and to make meaning of experience" (Christianson 161). Thus, the hard-boiled context "disguises" (Vanderbeke 485) his Tourette's as "tough talk" and his verbal aggression as a "language of power" (Christianson; see also Scaggs, "Double Identity" 132; Messent 38), turning his stigma into the expression of masculinity. Lionel's Tourettic vernacular consists not only of his verbal tics, such as "*Eatme!*" or numerous variations of 'Bailey' (e.g. MB 112), but also of some of Minna's wisecracks, which he terms "Minna-isms" (e.g. 187). Minna's street slang, insults and derogative nicknames for those he deems inferior trigger Lionel's verbal tics. Imitating Minna's way of talking makes Lionel feel authoritarian and self-confident, for example, in the way he greets his conversation partner: "You're the first name, I'm the last name. In other words: You're the jerk and I'm the jerk's boss" (153).<sup>116</sup> He even uses Minna-isms as a linguistic shield against his insecurity and fear: "'Don't try to hand me no two-ton feather'" (233). By "ap[ing] the rhythm of his overheard dialogues, his complaints and endearments, his for-the-sake-of arguments" (57) and (Tourettic-ly inversing) the father's language (Shostak 135-136), Lionel feels that his new hard-boiled persona is empowered with masculine authority.

However, few characters understand Lionel's tics as authoritative, masculine language. While the reader easily recognises such Tourettic eruptions because of their stylistic highlights,

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<sup>116</sup> Just like "some of Lionel's tics reveal his immersion in *noir* fiction" (Lota 44), some other tics reveal the influence of Minna and Lionel's jokes on Lionel's tics, for example, the influence of the joke about an octopus (MB 26). Lionel splits the word 'octopus' in its syllables and implements them in various executions into his verbal tics, such as in "'Octaphone!'" (101), "baileyoctopus" (118) or "Octapot" (123). Another example of this is the insult "Dickweed," a name Minna called Tony when the latter questioned the former's authority (76). The word is connected to Lionel's "uppermost tic-echelon" (76) and, repeated throughout the novel, it demonstrates another kind of 'imprisonment' as the word is trapped in his Tourettic brain (78). At the same time, these instances prove Lionel's adoption of his father's language and, simultaneously, he distinguishes himself with his inversion of the language (Shostak 136). This language liberates Lionel from suppressing his tics which are manifested as hard-boiled vernacular instead.

such as italics, parentheses and punctuation (Foreman 195, Antolin 6; Tougaw 137), other characters are unaware of Lionel's condition, which often creates comic situations. For example, a doorman recognises Lionel as “pretty odd” because he “talk[s] funny” which makes him lose his fear of Lionel's authority (MB 133-134). Furthermore, a homicide detective (mis)understands Lionel's outburst “*Tourette Is the Shitman!*” to be not only a hint to a suspect but also to be “up-to-minute street jargon”, which truly contextualises Lionel's tics in the hard-boiled genre (MB 110). Eventually, the homicide detective loses respect for Lionel, dismissing him because of his “harmless insanity” (115) and putting him off as a “harmless freak” (Vanderbeke 485; see also Mintz 171). Lacking Lionel's self-reflexion for the generic context in which he moves, other characters fail to understand Lionel's Tourette's syndrome as anything other than freakishness. They reveal his performance as a hard-boiled detective as a ‘game’ that is not to be taken seriously.

Unsurprisingly, those characters who knew Lionel before his hard-boiled performance see through the façade, such as his surrogate brother Tony.<sup>117</sup> Although Tony recognises Lionel's detective persona, he mockingly compares him to fictional detectives, such as Raymond Chandler's Philipp Marlowe (MB 178), “Mike fucking Hammer” (179) and Sam Spade (183).<sup>118</sup> With these comparisons, Tony deprives Lionel of these detectives' characteristics (see also Foreman 191). He denies Lionel adult masculinity by calling him “the Hardy Boys' retarded kid brother” and rewording it into “You're Hardly Boy” (MB 179). He also compares Lionel to cartoonish characters, such as McGruff, a crime-solving dog. These comparisons aim at infantilising Lionel and highlight the “revisionist, even parodic dimension of the novel” (Antolin 7), indicating that Tony, unlike Lionel, knows about the circumstances of Minna's death, which increases their feud. Distrusting Tony, Lionel carefully withholds his knowledge (MB 182-183) and the “Irving” hint (95) to keep his own advantage of having intimate knowledge. Tony becomes an additional opponent within Lionel's own ranks who impedes the investigations and sabotage Lionel's attempts at performing hard-boiled masculinity.

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<sup>117</sup> Tony's hostile and infantilising behaviour towards Lionel turns him into a rival for Minna's succession and even into an opponent as he tries to prevent Lionel from gathering information. If their relationship is interpreted as brotherhood, their feud is based on Tony being the ‘older’ brother who mocks and teases the younger one in order to demonstrate his authority. They both shared the same education through popular culture at the orphanage, which Lionel highlights himself: “Everything we *both* know comes from Frank Minna or gangster movies” (MB 184; *emphasis A.S.K.*). Such statements challenge and relativise Tony's authoritative impression. Hence, their relationship as surrogate brothers deserves more research.

<sup>118</sup> Although Lionel displays similarities to all of these three stereotypical examples of hard-boiled detectives in the course of the novel, it is Chandler's Marlowe whom he quotes twice: first, to align himself with Marlowe when he is knocked out (MB 205) and second, when reflecting about assertions connecting his Tourette's to detection. For further analysis on Lionel's comparison to Marlowe, see Lota.

When he operates as a Tourettic detective, Lionel's echolalic tics turn into a meaning-creating skill through which he, with the aid of the "Irving" clue, identifies Minna's murderer. During a meditative practice requiring him to "sit and concentrate on your breathing" (MB 194), Lionel challenges "the uneasy, half-stoppered force of my own language-generator, my Multi-Mind, that tangle of responses and mimickings, of interruptions of interruptions" (195). Encouraged by the Zen practitioner Kimmery's calming and relaxing influence, Lionel combines his Tourettic and the non-Tourettic mind, and straightens his "Multi-Mind" into "One Mind."<sup>119</sup> In this "One Mind", Minna's voice directs Lionel to the "Irving" joke. In this joke, a Jewish mother insists on speaking to the "High Lama" in Tibet. Against all odds, her name allows her to be admitted only to ask the "High Lama": "When are you coming home, Irving? Your father is worried" (MB 88-89), through which she is revealed to be his mother. With the guidance of Minna's God-like voice, Lionel connects the joke to the people surrounding him while his Tourettic brain retells the joke. It culminates in the punchline when the Roshi, a Zen master, enters the room, indicating that he is "Irving". The Tourettic repetitions of the joke make Lionel understand that the Roshi is Gerard Minna, Frank's brother: "Roshi looked like Minna. *Your brother misses you, Irving.* Irving equals Lama, Roshi equals Gerard. Roshi was Gerard Minna" (200). Lionel understands that Frank Minna died as a result of fratricide (see also Shostak 142). He could have arrived at the conclusion sooner had he not dismissed his tics as distractions, but rather acknowledged their potential subliminal meaning. Nevertheless, Lionel proceeds on his way to maturity by recognising his Tourette's syndrome as a "profound ability", rather than as a disability (Shostak 136; see also Murray, "Neurotecs" 186; Murray, "The Ambiguities of Inclusion" 97; Tougaw 148), which is what Minna counted on. Trusting on their joking contest, Minna was "certain I'd puzzle over the Irving clue" (MB 201), driven by his Tourettic force of solving conundrums and ordering chaos (see also Holmgren 22-23). Lionel solves the novel's central mystery, i.e. the question of who killed Minna, by accepting his Tourette's and integrating it as part of his identity as a detective.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Interestingly, this unprecedented unity of his two selves recalls his teenage difficulties in connecting to himself while masturbating (MB 42). Now, encouraged by thoughts about Kimmery, he associates the balance of his Tourettic and non-Tourettic selves with erotic feelings: "And as my penis stiffened it occurred to me I'd found my One Mind" (198). This indicates that he finds masculine potency by integrating his Tourettic self in his self.

<sup>120</sup> Although excluding Lionel from insider knowledge on the circumstances of Minna's death resembles other characters' ableist behaviour, Minna counts on the fact that "no conspiracy around him [Minna] could possibly include his pet Freakshow" (MB 201) as people tend to underestimate Lionel because of his syndrome. Considering Holmgren's twofold interpretation of Minna's behaviour, either as "diabolically pull[ing] the reins on Lionel even after his death" or a (surrogate) father's push to character development, the scene of finding the solution supports the latter. Minna appealed to Lionel's free will to 'accept' the case, through which the solution scene resembles a coming-of-age moment in Lionel's development.

However, the advantages of a Tourettic detective are followed by the disadvantages. Having proved his professional efficiency as a Tourettic detective, Lionel's lacking control of language ruins his moment of enlightenment with a parade of tics. His meaning-creating tics bear "the danger of speaking the truth, of allowing the physical propulsions of his verbal tics to expose the real of experience suppressed by social conventions and linguistic displacements", which makes Lionel vulnerable (Shostak 139; see also Foreman 174n57). Therefore, by giving way to "Zengeance!" (MB 201), Lionel not only gives away his position among the Zen practitioners. The use of a compound noun, a Tourettic fusion of 'Zen' and 'vengeance,' is a tell-tale tic which reveals Lionel's (yet unconscious) intention – to revenge Minna's death – to his enemies.<sup>121</sup> The following flood of tic turns him from an invisible (hard-boiled) detective into a genuine 'freakshow' or, using Garland-Thomson's term, a "spectacle of otherness" (*Extraordinary Bodies* 8; see also Antolin 3). Had he maintained control over his language, he could have learned more about Gerard's function at the Zendo, have left unnoticed and planned his further proceedings. Yet, his loud tics attract Gerard's attention who silently commands his stooge, whom Lionel calls the Polish giant, to remove Lionel from the Zendo (MB 203). From this moment, Lionel's performance as a hard-boiled detective deteriorates because, although he is constantly aware of it, he frequently fails to act according to the protocol of hard-boiled fiction.

The following scene of physical inferiority when Lionel confronts the giant serves as a contrast to Lionel's investigative epiphany. The hard-boiled framework, in which both Lionel and the giant move, suggests that the bad guy will shoot or seriously hurt the hero. However, despite his threatening and intimidating appearance, the Polish giant is ridiculed due to his preference for kumquats, comically relieving the situation (MB 203) and causing Antolin to read the giant as a "parodic version of the bad guy" (Antolin 8). However, exchanging the kumquats for a gun, the giant now reactivates the hard-boiled framework, whereas Lionel does not. "Here was where I *should* grow large with anger, facing Minna's killer right at the spot of the abduction" (MB 203; *emphasis A.S.K.*). Although aware of the generic 'expectations' in such a confrontation, Lionel misses his chance to prove his masculinity. Instead of (physically)

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<sup>121</sup> Similar situations occur throughout the novel, such as when Lionel unwillingly reveals the name of Fujisaki Corporation in a flood of tics, signaling to Gerard that he knows something about it (see also Shostak 139), or when Lionel understands the overall connections and circumstances of Minna's death. Observing the Fujisaki Corporation, a group of six Japanese monks, Lionel experiences an epiphany, triggering a tic which gives away his position and identity (MB 274-279). In this situation towards the end of the novel, however, he manages to control the monks' attention by distracting them by touching their shoulders, mumbling "Duck, duck, goose!" and "Monk, monk, stooge!" (279). Entertaining but also annoying the Japanese monks, Lionel instrumentalises his freakishness to cover his detective identity, demonstrating his advanced development of control.

overwhelming his surrogate father's killer, he feels "diminished, ribs aching from his squeezing, confused and worried—conworried—by my discovery of Gerard Minna inside the Zendo" (203). Unlike the typical hard-boiled detective, who "is capable of violence to back up that tough talk" (Christianson 160), Lionel realises that he is facing the giant unarmed. Instead, he silently compares himself with the cartoon character "Sylvester the Cat in a boxing ring with a kangaroo" (MB 204), which triggers a silent tic, expressing his fear and coping with the stress situation. Lionel's physical subordination to the giant clashes with the generic framework's expectation of masculine toughness. "Here was the man I'd been hunting and wishing to go up against, howling for a chance at vengeance like an insatiable ghost or marshmallow – yet had I planned a way to take advantage of him, a method or apparatus to give me any real edge, let alone narrow the immense gap in force his size presented? No, I'd come up pathetically empty" (204). When the giant knocks him unconscious, Lionel has to admit his failure as a detective and as a man, which turns his hard-boiled performance to resemble an unrehearsed role in a play instead of being his profound identity. However, as if to counterbalance such self-emasculation, he aligns himself with other fictional detectives, relativising his subordination as nothing unusual since "[s]o many detectives have been knocked out" (205), in an attempt to restore his masculinity.

What usually restores masculinity in the most fundamental ways is a detective's interaction with female characters. The only two female characters are Julia Minna, Frank's widow, and Kimmery, a Zen practitioner. "[Q]uestioning the authenticity of his detective-persona" (Holmgren 27), these characters temporarily distract Lionel from his investigations because he is sexually attracted to them. By "awaken[ing] a protective affection in Lionel", they not only appeal to his heterosexual masculinity, but also make him lower his guard, which – in Lionel's case – is his performance as a hard-boiled detective. Counterbalancing his "quest-focused persona" (Holmgren 23), they reveal his Tourettic persona, which causes Julia to reject him because he is "[m]uch too strange" (MB 105), whereas Kimmery perceives him as "strange in a good way" (219) and, thus, reinterprets his freakish masculinity in sexual terms.

As Frank's wife, Julia Minna occupies an important position for the orphan boys. Instead of playing the role of a surrogate mother, Julia becomes "*the original woman*" (297), a prototype of femininity, a "Minna Woman" (297), which inspires the boys' heterosexual development (97-98). While the other boys overcome their admiration for Julia over the years, Lionel remains vulnerable to her charm, even as an adult. Her appearance, "tall, plush, blond by nurture, defiant around the jaw" (97), conforms to the hard-boiled archetype of a femme fatale as an "attractive and overtly sexual" woman (Foreman 4), confirming and challenging

patriarchal ideas of masculinity (Lota 78-79; Holmgren 24). Julia approaches Lionel with her sensual vulnerability and, when close enough, threatens him (Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* 77) with intimate knowledge about the Minna brothers, with both of whom she had a relationship. Playing with her sexuality as much as with Lionel's inexperience, Julia finds (or pretends to find) erotic pleasure in Lionel's touching tic and his big, quick hands. While his touching tic is usually perceived as an assault, she sees capability and sexuality in his hands. Placing them on her breasts, she challenges Lionel's self-control in Tourettic (MB 103) as well as hard-boiled masculine terms (Nyman 123-124). Her (sexual) influence on Lionel allows her to easily evade his interrogation (MB 107-108); the femme fatale outsmarts the detective. Although she is eventually ruled out as a femme fatale (Holmgren 24-25), her connection with Lionel is based on their involvement in the (meta-)fictional framework of the hard-boiled genre.

In contrast to Julia's sensuality, Kimmery is a plain-looking, yet quirky potential witness at the Zendo. Lionel connects with her on a deeper level concerning his detective persona and his freakish masculinity. In terms of his detective persona, he realises that in her presence “[f]or once I was playing lead detective instead of comic – or Tourettic – relief” (MB 143), which boosts his confidence. Kimmery's “alleviating presence” (194) and “voice, ingenuous, unconsenting” (195) calms – almost stills – Lionel's motor and verbal tics. The result is a rare “ticlessness” (136) that enables him to “unify my mind” (195) and find the solution to ‘Irving's’ identity, through which Kimmery implicitly improves Lionel's detective persona. This effect on Lionel might derive from her own occasional ticcing, for example, in her walk (136, 206). Kimmery's quirkiness allows Lionel to “externalize” his symptoms (Peacock, “We Learned to Tell Our Story Walking” 76). He does not have to disrupt his immediate surroundings because she already does (see also Holmgren 23; Antolin 6).

Attracting Lionel's sexual attention, Kimmery appeals to and is appealed by Lionel's freakish masculinity, in which she recognises heterosexual, masculine potential. At first, Lionel feels self-conscious when she interrogates him about his verbal tics because she briefly inverses the roles of investigator and investigated, which undermines his detective authority. Kimmery also focuses on his freakishness instead of his hard-boiled masculinity (MB 217-218). She ‘ignores’ his intended masculine impression and recognises the masculinity in his freakishness. As one of few, Kimmery (mis)understands his echolalic eruptions as expressions of anger (213) and implicitly interprets them as masculine, tough language. She also (mis)interprets his ticcish mirroring of her movements as a romantic, approving response to her physical approach (219). Furthermore, she appreciates the fact that Lionel's oddness even applies to the size and shape of his penis. Discussing its “unusual-looking” appearance, Kimmery compares it to “a beer can

that's been crushed, like for recycling", although it presents the peak of his freakish masculinity: "freak shows within freak shows" (221-222). In their sexual encounter, she also encourages him to talk: "You can say whatever you want" (219), "It's okay to talk", "I like it when you talk. When you make sounds" (222). In fact, she encourages his tics with her phrase "It's okay" as she is sexually aroused by the 'dirty talk' of his verbal freakishness. At the same time, the phrase develops into her own tic (221), which underlines the ubiquity of tics even among neurotypical people (Antolin 6). Therefore, "both alike in their uniqueness" (Holmgren 23), they complement each other's tics – "reciprocity-ticcing" (MB 202) – as Kimmery's (attraction to) freakishness brings out Lionel's heterosexual self.

Although Kimmery's calming influence on Lionel also calms his ticcing, the resulting sexual impasse allows Lionel fundamental insight into his freakish masculinity. On the one hand, Lionel's "sexual excitement stills my Tourette's brain" and allows him to be "still myself and still in myself, a rare and precious combination" (MB 103-104). Hence, although Kimmery urges him to tic, Lionel produces only one-word responses which resemble faked tics. He "[doesn't] really need to" tic as he "was never less ticcish than this: aroused, pressing toward another's body, moving out of my own" (219-220). He highlights such increasing self-alienation by saying that "the distance between me and me was enormous" and that he feels "strange to myself at that moment: tugging, lulled, resistant" (219). Enforcing his "split self" (Shostak 138), this "stilled self" evokes a third persona (in addition to his Tourettic and non-Tourettic persona) who inverses sexual (and social) conventions. While sexual interaction is often characterised by (readily) giving up control and succumbing to usually socially controlled and suppressed erotic drives, this excitement renders Lionel unusually calm. It enables him to gain control over his body and language and conform with traditional masculinity.

On the other hand, their sexual interaction makes Lionel recognise and accept his freakishness as a potential advantage. While Kimmery "somehow spared me ticking aloud in conversation", her focus on and sexual attraction to his tics encourage him to "incorporate an element of Tourette's into our groping" and "negotiat[e] a new understanding between my two disgruntled brains" (MB 220). He stops suppressing his freakishness, and his calm self emerges, allowing him to behave in a traditionally masculine way. The highlight on "*Fonebone!*" at the end of the paragraph not only (re)enforces his identification with cartoon characters but also appears to be an honest tic, emphasised through the specific italics of tics (222). It resembles a cry of sexual and Tourettic liberation, and thus satisfies both Kimmery's and his own tic.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> So far Lionel has tried to approach a more traditional kind of masculinity. He not only wants to protect her (MB 141, 199, 214) but also tries to suppress and overlay his echolalic tics (144) instead of letting them out (213). He

Therefore, Lionel finds a feeling of belonging in Kimmery and her own freakishness which exceeds his sense of belonging to the Minna Men as he is able to manifest his masculinity in a heterosexual relationship. He also sees it as a potential ‘cure’ for his Tourette-related self-alienation because Kimmery recognises his Tourette’s as a part of his (freakish) masculinity outside the detective framework.

However, the generic boundaries of the hard-boiled context compromise Lionel’s promising future with Kimmery. As Lethem himself confirms, “Kimmery is the only ‘real’ character in the book besides Lionel” (Jackson 40). It enables her to perceive Lionel as the Touretter, the freak, that he is instead of the hard-boiled detective he tries to be. Seeing through his hard-boiled façade and appreciating his freakish masculinity as his identity, she “encounters his realness and briefly tempts him out of his thriller plot, into a calmer world” (40). Positioned “outside the bubble of the detective plot”, she wants him “as a fallible human being and not a sleek stereotype”, which is why she “forces Lionel to face his authenticity and question his generic representativeness” (Holmgren 23). Despite her initial (passive) support of Lionel’s detective persona, Kimmery explicitly doubts and rejects Lionel for his involvement in the hard-boiled framework. She questions his deductions (MB 214-216) and challenges his detective identity three times in one dialogue. Firstly, interpreting Lionel’s “*“investigation”*” as ““just running around a lot trying to keep from feeling sad or guilty or whatever about this Frank”” (255), Kimmery correctly identifies Lionel’s detective game as a “defense mechanism” to cope with Frank’s death (Lota 51). Secondly, she underlines that “[r]egular people, when someone they know gets killed or something they don’t go around trying to *catch the killer*. They go to a *funeral*” (MB 255). Thereby, she criticises not only Lionel’s performance as a detective but also refrains from allocating him to the category of “regular people”, highlighting his social (and neurological) deviance. Thirdly, she doubts his detective capability as a Touretter – “I guess I thought detectives were more, uh, subtle” (255) – through which she confirms general research observations that Tourette’s syndrome disqualifies an individual from being a detective (e.g. Antolin 3; Vanderbeke 482; Sorensen 323). However, Kimmery challenges Lionel’s performance as a (hard-boiled) detective not because she aims at discouraging him from his investigations (like a femme fatale). Instead, she wants to make him aware of and liberate him from the fictional world in which he lives. Although she helps Lionel come to

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thus aims at projecting an impression of traditional, tough masculinity in contrast to his usual freakishness. In this scene, however, Lionel abandons this performance of ‘conventional’ masculinity and returns to his freakishness. By comparing himself with cartoon characters, first to Mickey Mouse (220), underlining his self-alienation from his body, and later on with Don Martin’s comic characters (222-224), Lionel underlines freakishness as a positive aspect of his identity. A closer analysis of his comparison to Don Martin’s *Mad* comics would certainly give even further insight into Lionel’s (sexual) identity.

terms with his freakish masculinity and integrate it into his (sexual) identity as a Touretter, Kimmery does not perceive Tourette's as responsible for making Lionel a freak. According to Lethem, she rejects him because of his persistence in ‘playing detective’ and “refus[ing] to leave the cartoon” (Jackson 40). Thus, it is not his Tourette’s condition which denies him a heteronormative relationship but his involvement in the generic context.

Despite the outlook of a life outside the hard-boiled context, Lionel is not yet ready to leave the generic framework and instead, in a rush of self-awareness, sharpens his fiction-inspired detective persona because his quest is not yet complete.<sup>123</sup> Although aware of the irony of this, he comes to terms with his investigative identity: “‘On TV they’re all the same. Real detectives are as unalike as fingerprints, or snowflakes’” (MB 255-256).<sup>124</sup> Here, additionally to affirming the importance of his fictional detective framework, Lionel highlights his individuality as a Tourettic detective, through which his hard-boiled detective persona becomes a (temporary) identity. He confirms that his deviance does not exclude his detective identity, but rather encourages it.<sup>125</sup> In a “hard” mood and paying “narrow” attention, he hears “Minna’s voice now in place of my incessant Tourettic tongue”, telling him(self) to “*Floor it, Freakshow. You got something to go, do it already. Tell your story driving*” (263). Here, Lionel again implements Minna’s voice and language in his Tourette’s verbal ticcing, which reinforces his hard-boiled identity as a Tourettic detective.

Contrasting Lionel’s new courage in his abilities as a detective, the last third of the book describes the clash of the fictional framework with the real world and demonstrates how Lionel’s performance as a hard-boiled detective fails. First, Lionel faces Gerard Minna. While Lionel’s non-Tourettic self intends to confront Gerard with his knowledge, Lionel’s “throat pulsed with ticcishness” and fear as his Tourettic self takes over and his Tourettic brain sets out to tell a joke, “one from the deepest part of the made-Frank-Minna-laugh-once archive” (MB 229). Apart from “tweaking Gerard” because the joke implicitly exposes Gerard’s misdeeds

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<sup>123</sup> However, trying to keep up their connection the morning after their sexual encounter, Lionel develops a “calling-Kimmery-tic” (MB 260), which not only makes him his “syndrome’s dupe once again” (261) but also resembles a dependence on, almost addiction to, his ‘cure’. Interpreting Tourettic tics as unconsciously meaning-creating, this ‘calling-Kimmery-tic’ could be understood as Lionel’s longing to leave the generic boundaries, quit ‘playing detective’ and settle down in the real world. Instead, he abandons such a ticless – more suitably, ticcish in positive, heterosexual terms – private life to pursue his professional case as a detective.

<sup>124</sup> This statement reflects Lionel’s realisation that his “constellation of [Tourette’s] behaviors was ‘unique as a snowflake’” (MB 82), through which he unconsciously, yet fundamentally combines both of his personas – his Tourette’s and his hard-boiled detective – to the persona of a Tourettic detective.

<sup>125</sup> Additionally, it could be argued that it is calling another person named Essrog, whose number he learned by heart in one of his attempts at defining his identity, which liberates him from the ‘calling-Kimmery’ tic (MB 260). Murray Essrog recognises Lionel’s voice and tic from earlier calls and invites him to “‘Speak up, do your thing’” (261). This brief infantilisation allows him to temporarily drop his hard-boiled (adult) performance and tic freely, releasing pressure, frustration and anger at Kimmery’s rejection as well as his own neurodiverse condition. Afterwards, he resumes his hard-boiled quest and identity again with more focus.

(Shostak 139), Lionel feels emasculated and infantilised as a result of his Tourettic response to the tense situation because it makes him long for Minna to come to the rescue (MB 229-230). At the same time, however, fighting Gerard with a joke could be interpreted as unconscious reliance on what Minna taught him about the disarming effect of his freakish masculinity which confuses his opponents. Hence, “desperate to see him flinch, to impress him with the edge I had, the things I’d learned” (231) – about the case as much as about the detective potential of his freakishness – Lionel implicitly uses his Tourettic freakishness to confuse and distract Gerard Minna.

However, Gerard Minna is not only unresponsive to Lionel’s freakish weapon but he also refers to Lionel’s weakness as Frank’s protégé again. Seeing through Lionel’s façade as a hard-boiled detective, recognising and appreciating his impersonation of Frank (MB 231-232), Gerard undermines Lionel’s strength as a Tourettic detective. As if to affirm Gerard’s observation, Lionel uses Minna-isms to “build a golem of his language, then bring it to life, a figure of vengeance to search out the killer or killers” (233), mirroring Gerard’s stooge, the Polish giant, to fight Frank Minna’s evil double. However, Gerard’s “persuasiveness was a variant of the Minna style” (234) and his own ‘Minna-isms’ have a similar effect on Lionel. They distract Lionel from the hard-boiled guidelines which would have Lionel attack Gerard to revenge Frank Minna. Gerard’s voice disarms Lionel, makes him incapable of any verbal, let alone physical, confrontation and makes him feel exposed and aware of his inferiority as a ticcing stooge (233). Instead of confronting and intimidating Gerard with his knowledge and underlining his superiority as a hard-boiled detective (230-231), Lionel is overwhelmed when he learns about the things he does *not* know, namely Minna’s faults in his business affairs with The Clients and the Fujisaki Corporation as well as Tony’s succession regarding these illegal businesses (231-236), which highlights that he is the only person not involved in the circumstances of Frank’s death: “a web of betrayal I had to penetrate and dissolve, an ostensible world I’d just discovered was really only a private cloud I carried everywhere, had never seen the outside of” (227). Fighting Gerard’s manipulation, Lionel reflects and withdraws from the (unsuccessful) confrontation in order to evade Gerard’s persuasiveness and to “sort out the false and the real, the Zen and the chaff in our long discussion” (236). Gerard Minna destabilises Lionel’s hard-boiled language and fierceness easily because Lionel’s freakishness as a detective proves to be an unsuccessful weapon in this context.

Meeting Gerard presents a turning point in Lionel’s performance as a hard-boiled detective. It opens a new case related to Tony as dangerous successor involved in Minna’s business and death, which results in Lionel’s next failure as a Tourettic detective. Aiming at protecting Tony

from a similar fate as Minna and honouring Minna's legacy in the Minna Men (MB 248), Lionel follows the Polish giant who chases Tony to Maine.<sup>126</sup> Driven by his duty as a detective and a (surrogate) brother, Lionel leaves New York City, the "customary map" (MB 3) of his comfort zone, to progress towards his maturity (Holmgren 12; Mintz 172). This decision foreshadows the resolution of his identity. Although sure of his advantage once he deduces the destination, Lionel loses his lead because his "calling-Kimmery-tic" distracts him from focusing on the route and he gets stuck in traffic (MB 257), preventing him from saving Tony.<sup>127</sup> Paying for his Tourettic self's addiction to a potential 'cure' (which proved unsuccessful) with his surrogate brother's life makes him realise that he has failed again: "Now it seemed silly that I'd imagined anything else" (270-271). Dwelling in an idealised, unachievable world with Kimmery, Lionel loses focus on the actions in the real world.

The resulting feelings of guilt for Tony's and Minna's deaths and the need for vengeance, however, spark his agency and determination. Firstly, Lionel confronts the Polish giant again. Whereas in their first confrontation, Lionel proved inferior, this time they meet "in a grotesque David-against-Goliath contest, each of them armor-clad in their cars, with a parking lot as a battlefield" (Antolin 10). Now, by uniting his Tourettic and non-Tourettic self, Lionel outsmarts the giant. While his non-Tourettic mind tricks the giant into wrecking his tires, stopping the car and its driver, his Tourettic mind demolishes the giant's car in a "call of symmetry" by crashing into *both* sides (MB 283), "restoring order" in the chaos (Fleissner 391); "it's a Tourette's thing – you wouldn't understand" (MB 283). Thereby, Lionel not only takes revenge on Minna's and Tony's murderer, but also compensates for previous failure.

Secondly, Lionel turns to Gerard Minna and The Clients. While earlier, their voices manipulated Lionel, making him their stooge, The Clients now turn him into "something worse or less than human", a deviancy which, as he highlights, is unrelated to his Tourette's syndrome. Instead, he becomes "raging with purpose" and "an arrow to pierce through years" (MB 284-285), which projects an unprecedented (masculine) power and authority. In this decisive moment of resolution – uninterrupted by tics and in total control of his language as well as his

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<sup>126</sup> Due to the nature scenery described in the last third of the book, prominent research has analysed the contrast between the loud, busy city of New York and the quiet nature of Maine's coast. Here, Lionel's tics, representing and increased by New York as a "Tourettic city" (MB 113), are confronted with nature's calmness, which he experiences as a "loss of language" (264). For further analyses of how Maine's nature "deafen[s]" (264) his Tourette's, see, for example, Vanderbeke (486-487), Lota (48-49) and Antolin (10).

<sup>127</sup> Interestingly, the chapter is called "Auto Body" which, on the one hand, refers to Lionel's car, a Tracer, suitable for a Tourettic detective to be (in)visible during the chase. On the other hand, Peacock observes that "'Auto Body' [...] confirm[s] the implied pun on 'motor tics' that underpins all car-related actions of the novel" ("Autobodies" 3). However, it also emphasises the extent to which Lionel finds highway driving "maximally soothing" (MB 251) and implies that Lionel's body is in auto-mode.

hard-boiled authority – Lionel delivers Gerard Minna, the true villain of the plot, to the Clients (293). Although Lionel does not attack Gerard personally, for example by shooting him, Lionel bargains with the Clients, who take Gerard because he stole from them (304). Such revenge for Frank Minna's murder also redeems the Minna Men from The Clients' control (285). Thereby, Lionel completes his quest of catching Minna's killer (115), resolves the fundamental problem of Minna's debt to The Clients and proves his masculinity in an unconventional, yet effective way.

The ultimate revelation of the exact circumstances surrounding Minna's (and Tony's) death provides answers not only to the case but also to Lionel's identity. While the chapter's beginning is distinguished by a switch in narrative perspective to a third-person narrator – highlighting Lionel's “flexibility and his freedom from narrative and generic consistency” (Antolin 10) – its general scenery resembles a parody of a classical detective's revelation of his conclusions to the other characters. Here, Julia, the femme fatale, turns out to be the source of knowledge instead of Lionel, the detective. Although Lionel imitates Minna's appearance and finally states his conclusions with self-confidence (after having doubted his detective skills throughout the novel) (MB 292-299), his freakishness emerges when he elaborates on the Minna brothers' corrupt business with the Clients and the Fujisaki Corporation and Tony's role in it, again compromising his hard-boiled impression.<sup>128</sup> During his revelations, tics interrupt his direct speech (“*Dullbody, Allmoney, Alimony*”), his narrative (“I was unable to continue until I made a farting, fricative sound into the wind”, MB 293) and his motion (“I had to turn away myself now, imitate [Julia's] pensive searching of the horizon, though my fingers danced idiotically on the lighthouse tower rail”, 294). Elaborating on the circumstances of Frank's death, Lionel feels “as if I were trying to get through a joke without ticcing, but there was no punch line in sight” (294). Although he thus refers to his and Minna's joke contest (and by implication his freak identity), there is little freakishness in his content, proving that – regardless of his impression on other characters – Lionel is successful as a (hard-boiled) detective.

Julia turns out to be not only the source of knowledge, but also of identity. When she attacks his masculinity – “[Women] might want you. [...] But they'll never be fair to you, Lionel.

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<sup>128</sup> At the same time, Lionel understands that Tony is Minna's true successor. In death as well as life, Tony follows Minna's footprints as the new leader of L&L and is the one who takes over Minna's business by stealing from The Clients and the Japanese Fujisaki Corporation. Thus, Lionel realises that “[a]s I ached always to be a virtuous detective, Tony ached to be a corrupt one, or even to be an out-and-out wiseguy. He'd been fitting himself for the darkest shoes in Frank Minna's wardrobe” (MB 295-296). With shoes symbolising hard-boiled street readiness, this last statement confirms that, while Lionel often loses his shoes and oscillates between being a hard-boiled detective and providing comic relief, Tony was educated to ‘put on Minna's shoes’ and is unquestionably more suitable as Minna's successor. Therefore, while Loomis others, i.e. “externalize[s]” (Peacock, “We Learned to Tell Our Story Walking” 76) his freakishness, Lionel understands Tony as his other persona as a detective.

Because you're such a freak”” (297) – Lionel refers to and appreciates Kimmery whose (sexual) attraction to his freakishness increases his confidence and masculinity. Challenging both his integrity as a detective and his Tourette's syndrome, Julia suspects Lionel of being complicit in one or all of the villains' activities. She misinterprets his deviance for criminality instead of seeing it as an epistemological alternative perspective on the investigations (Mintz 167). The scene reaches its peak when Julia points a gun at Lionel and he responds by mimicking her action with his own gun. Although the gun provides him with a masculine feeling of power (MB 300), it recalls his earlier admission of his lack of experience with guns (281), which creates unprecedented tension. A gun in his hands presents the ultimate test of whether he can control his Tourette's syndrome, as the gun's “seductive” power challenges Lionel's Tourettic inclination to destroy the order of symmetry (both Lionel and Julia threatening each other with a gun) by pulling the trigger, which would cause lethal damage. At the same time, his scream “*“TRUST ME BAILEY!”*” causes Julia to flinch, which might lead to a similar result (301). However, it is precisely this tension between Lionel as a detective and Julia as the femme fatale which enables Lionel not only to come to terms with his (freakish) masculinity, but also liberates him from the generic hard-boiled framework.

Ultimately, by proving that he is able to control his syndrome, Lionel starts liberating himself from the hard-boiled context. Acting before his Tourettic brain, he throws away the gun “with all the force of my overwound-watchspring body” (MB 301). This reaction comically relieves the tense situation, as Lionel's tics cause him to throw away five things: his own and Julia's gun, Minna's beeper, the phone with which he called Kimmery and his “right shoe” (302-303). More importantly, the term “overwound-watchspring body” reminds the reader of Lionel's comparison to Charlie Chaplin during his adolescence flashback, through which Lionel closes the circle of his narrative. Using this term again in this particular scene marks his ultimate return to and acceptance of his freakish masculinity based on Chaplin and Keaton. By relieving himself of the five items representing the hard-boiled detective game and his imitation of Minna, Lionel liberates himself from the “generic map”, which dominated his moves and performance. He not only “lay[s] both Frank and the genre to rest” (Lota 51), but also “emerges professionally self-castrated, symbolically new-born and, indeed, visibly unique in his only shoe: a one-shoed gumshoe” (Holmgren 25).

His liberation is not only initiated by his control of his Tourette's syndrome, but also by Julia Minna. Trapped in the hard-boiled context and confined to the role of a supporting wife to her gangster husband, whose ‘detective work’ disenchanted her, Julia Minna turns out to be very similar to Lionel (MB 294). “Mirror[ing]” each other (Holmgren 24), both Julia and Lionel

have “been forced to align to a generic hard-boiled template for too long” (27) by Minna who, thus, shaped their characters (according to his own wishes). In Julia, Lionel sees his “platonic orphan sister” who presents “the epitome of the failure of the fictional template and the sobering triumph of lived experience” (Holmgren 25). Thus, Julia demonstrates how an excessive dwelling in the (fictional) hard-boiled context affects personality and character. As a result, Lionel understands her to be the “hardest-boiled of us all” because “she was the unhappiest” (MB 303). With this genre-reflexive statement (see also Holmgren 25), Lionel understands that “being hard-boiled is not all it is cracked up to be” (Lota 51) and decides against a prolonged hard-boiled identity. Finally, having solved the case of who killed Minna and taken care of the villain(s), Lionel now “no longer needs to live by its [*noir*] standards” and “can now move on to [...] his own story” (51-52). He ends his conversation with Julia not only with a Tourettic tic, ““Barnabaileyscrewjuliaminna””, but also with a Minna-ism, “[y]ou choose your battles” (MB 303). By drawing on his father’s teachings he distances himself decisively from the hard-boiled framework. In this way, Lionel completes his developmental journey, initiated by Minna, to maturity and self-determination.

At the same time, Lionel also liberates himself from his urge to connect everything (Lota 53; Shostak 143), which he internalised through Minna’s credo “wheels within wheels” (MB 74), a verbalisation of Lionel’s Tourettic inclination to touch, i.e. connect (to) everything. As a result of his liberation, he is in a position to “relate to the world around him”, spatially and socially, through action and movement, i.e. agency and development, to ‘Tell his story walking’ (Lota 53-54). He learns to “articulate a version of himself that does not have to be obsessively connected to every single other thing in the world” (54). In fact, he can choose with whom and what to connect. Such a liberation from numerous issues represents what Lota terms a ‘post-noir’ ending, which lays out “new possibilities for the character[s] who have learned how to think and speak about themselves” (72-73). In Lionel’s case, “disability turns into a means of liberation from traditional representation” (Antolin 9) as he has learned to accept his Tourette’s syndrome. In terms of his masculinity, Lionel frees himself from the idea of imitating an acknowledged form of masculinity to confirm society’s gender expectations of relating to the world. Since “[t]he hard-boiled route helps him to solve the case” but “at the cost of neglecting his human uniqueness and fallacies” (Holmgren 27), Lionel abandons the fictional and turns towards the real world. Lionel recognises his “capacity of free will that Frank plants in him” but, more importantly, he begins to “[do] things his own way” (Murray, “The Ambiguities of Inclusion” 97) and comes to terms with his freakishness (Lota 34; Holmgren 27), especially his freakish masculinity.

Lionel's "identity quest" (Antolin 10) comes to a conclusion when he "returns to the starting-point" (Holmgren 26) not only in terms of location but, more importantly, in terms of identity. Although the Minna Men have reorganised the L&L agency in Brooklyn, Lionel resumes his role as their "“maniac”" (MB 307) and 'freakshow'. While, in his brief experience as a detective, Lionel enacted Minna's hard-boiled identity in constant negotiation with his Tourette's syndrome, he now consciously decides to abandon this identity, distinguish himself from his (surrogate) father and return to his freakish masculinity. Thus, he comes to terms with Frank Minna as his surrogate father (Lota 74) and accepts his Tourette's syndrome as an integral part of his identity: "Lionel is who he is in part because he has Tourette's" (Foreman 195). Moreover, Lionel's "mission" as a detective "is less a mission to disclose societal or institutional corruption [like in stereotypical hard-boiled detective fiction] than to figure out his own place in Brooklyn's demimonde" and to find a way to manage "the disrupted order" of himself (Holmgren 6), in which he succeeds by accepting his freakish masculinity.

Despite his learning throughout his hard-boiled experience, it is Minna who answers the ultimate question regarding Lionel's identity. In a dream at the end of the novel, Lionel asks Minna, "“So what am I, then?”" to which Minna answers: "“I guess I'd call you King Tugboat”" (MB 309). This description refers to the Minna-ism "to *tugboat*" and the accompanying nickname for Lionel, "Terminal Tugboater" (52). Combining the contrasting aspects of a leading position of power and authority with Lionel's patience-challenging characteristics as a Touretter, the nickname "King Tugboat" 'crowns' him the "Overt Freak Supreme" (68). With this reference to Lionel's nickname(s), Foreman's claim that "[n]ames are supposed to distinguish a person as an individual and are believed to communicate information including lineage, gender, and other cultural assumptions" (Foreman 188) can be combined with Sorensen's observation that nicknames "can be extremely telling of the character of the person behind the name" (Sorensen 329). While both Foreman and Sorensen focus on Lionel's Tourettic inversions of other people's names, such as "Fuckyou Roseprawn" (MB 47), their combination can be applied to the Lionel's own nicknames. By calling Lionel "Freakshow" or "King Tugboat", Minna 'allows' Lionel to be a 'freak' and answers Lionel's "question of who I was, where'd I come from, and what kind of *man or freak* I was turning out to be" (MB 84; *emphasis A.S.K.*).<sup>129</sup> Thus, Holmgren's argument that Minna "hampers with Lionel's formation

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<sup>129</sup> Minna's encouragement for Lionel to accept his freakishness also shows in Frank's credo to better be "fully stupid, impotent, lazy, greedy or freakish than to seek to dodge your destiny, or layer it underneath pathetic guises of vanity or calm" (MB 68). Rather than suppressing his verbal tics, Minna encourages him to let it out, stand by his linguistic freakishness and his freakish masculinity. Lionel recalls such teachings from his early youth, which shows that he always knew the answer to his identity.

of self” (22) can be refuted. While Lionel initially understood masculinity and freakishness as mutually exclusive, Minna’s support – with his development through(out) the hard-boiled framework – encourages Lionel “to embrace the fullness of who [he is]” (Lota 74) and internalises the nicknames not as a contrast but as a symbiosis. He thus comes to terms with his freakish masculinity.

#### 4.2.3 Conclusion

The experiment with generic hard-boiled masculinity allows Lionel to mature and accept his freakish masculinity. He understands that his Tourette’s syndrome does not inhibit but shapes his (freakish) masculinity as it manifests his position and social contribution to the Minna Men. He is the ‘freak’, whose verbal and motor tics reveal surprisingly much about his ideas, opinions and observations. Following Minna’s example, Lionel acknowledges the social contribution and positive – even ‘beneficial’ – characteristics of Tourette’s as it provides an alternative perception of reality (e.g. Birge 81; Antolin 3; Mintz 167; Lota 35). Therefore, he recognises his strength (i.e. his comedic potential and the fact that other people underestimate him) in what other characters perceive as a deficit (i.e. his Tourette’s syndrome). His freakish masculinity even shapes his attractiveness to Kimmery, who appreciates his ticcing as characteristic of his (hetero)sexuality. Lionel’s process of channelling his Tourettic and non-Tourettic self into the identity of a freak results in two effects. First, it unites the hard-boiled protagonist’s “divided masculinity” (Gates, *Detecting Men* 45), through which Lethem modernises a generic characteristic as he demonstrates that a detective’s public and private identity are interwoven. Second, the channelling produces a holistic understanding of Lionel’s Tourette’s syndrome as he recognises the designation ‘freak’ as no longer derogative but appreciative. Therefore, Antolin’s argument that Lionel does not develop throughout the novel can be refuted. She argues that “[w]hile the beginning of the book challenges the narrator’s innocence and ignorance (‘I am a carnival banker’ [MB 1]), a conventional characteristic of the young hero in the coming-of-age novel, the end questions any real development of his part” (Antolin 6). She concludes that “Lionel may have solved the murder of his mentor and got a better sense of his identity at the end of the novel, but he remains forever a Touretter” (14). However, as this chapter has shown, Lionel’s hard-boiled masculinity is a mere performance contextualising his freakishness in the hard-boiled framework. This experiment with hard-boiled masculinity makes him realise that his freakish masculinity is a more suitable (gender) identity. While an occasionally supportive characteristic in his detective performance, his Tourette’s syndrome is a fundamental characteristic of his identity and masculinity. Hence, the latter quote should be

adapted: Lionel *has* solved the murder of his mentor and got a better sense of his identity at the end of the novel *because* he is a Touretter. The novel does not suggest that Lionel should find a ‘cure’ to his condition (although his connection with Kimmery alludes to such). Instead, its conclusion shows that Lionel accepts his Tourette’s as his identity and comes to terms with his freakish masculinity, which constitutes his form of masculine disability.

Due to his self-reflexive nature, Lionel is conscious of the discrepancy between his performance (i.e. hard-boiled detective) and actual (i.e. freakish) identity. He draws an animated image of a genre-conformant hard-boiled detective, “a coloring-book image of the Green Hornet” comics: “That’s who I was *supposed to be*, that black outline of a man in a coat, ready suspicious eyes above his collar, shoulder hunched, moving toward conflict” (MB 226; *emphasis A.S.K.*). This image transmits professionalism, scepticism and readiness to deal with risk and danger, culminating in a masculine physique of resilience. However, Lionel is aware that this is only an impression – wishful thinking – and contrasts it with reality: “Here’s who I was instead: that same coloring-book outline of a man, but crayoned by the hand of a mad or carefree or retarded child, wild slashes of idiot color, a blizzard of marks violating the boundaries that made *man* distinct from *street*, from *world*” (MB 226). In this contrast, Lionel presents himself as a “copy and parody of a hard-boiled detective” (Vanderbeke 484; see also Reed 61; Mintz 167; Sorensen 326) who is alienated from his social environment - “a homage to and a revision or rewriting of the conventional genre” (Antolin 8). In terms of detective fiction, the novel presents “a deconstruction of the detective figure by the freak and the freakshow [Lionel] is putting on” (8), through which “laughter [appears] as a means of transgression and liberation” (13). However, in terms of masculinity, existing research has neglected the fact that Lionel uses the hard-boiled context to ‘experiment’ with his masculinity. He ‘tries out’ Minna’s hard-boiled lifestyle and, despite his imitation of Frank’s identity, draws on Minna’s gangster characteristics to become a “virtuous detective” (MB 296). Thereby, he not only makes up for his father’s faults but also positively, i.e. ‘freakish-ly’, inverses his copy of Minna’s masculinity, turning it into his individual form of masculinity. However, Antolin’s observation that when Lionel “calls himself a freak, he puts on a mask, ‘the mask of the public spectacle’” (3), should be adapted. His performance as a hard-boiled detective makes Lionel realise that his freakishness is not a mask but his identity. Instead, the numerous situations in which his Tourette’s destroys his hard-boiled impression reveals that the hard-boiled detective is the mask that Lionel puts on. Eventually, he drops this mask and stands by his identity of the freak.

Additionally, in his (masculine) performance as a hard-boiled detective, Lionel underlines “the inevitable tension between the unstable, temporal ideals of [his] personal versions of ideal [i.e. hard-boiled] masculinity [...] and the lived experience of being a man” (Kunze 5-6) with Tourette’s.<sup>130</sup> It underlines his lacking control of his Tourette’s syndrome which largely impedes him from living up to the generic framework of hard-boiled fiction. In his performance as a hard-boiled detective, Lionel discovers what James Peacock describes as “how the individual behaves when confronted with alterity, with what is perceived as exotic or out of recognizable context” (“Jonathan Lethem’s Genre Evolutions” 440), which, in Lionel’s case, refers to his Tourette’s syndrome. Aware of his social deviance, Lionel knows that, as a Touretter, “you’re the one lobbing the intolerable, incongruous, and disruptive their way” (MB 43), which in generic as much as real-life contexts reveals social standards and expectations. Disrupting the generic framework, Lionel’s alterity alternately shapes and compromises his performance as a hard-boiled detective, which also influences his surroundings’ reaction to his performance and his own attitude towards his (freakish) identity. He acknowledges that a permanent, consistent framing of his Tourette’s in the chosen framework of hard-boiled masculinity is not possible, which is why he rejects this framework. Instead, Lionel’s freakishness highlights how laughter not only “unsettle[s] the representation of disability” (Antolin 12), but also reveals and challenges stereotypical expectations of (hegemonic) masculinity. Peter C. Kunze analyses how characters use “humour and laughter” as playful and, thus, “socially acceptable means for expressing the fears and frustrations” (5) of not being able to perform hegemonic masculinity, which they reveal as an unachievable gender ideal (14). In abandoning the hard-boiled framework, Lionel arrives at a “pleasurable independence from social and literary conventions” (Antolin 14) as he accepts his individual, freakish masculinity.

Lionel has felt his freakishness develop along with his Tourette’s syndrome since his early childhood. Shaped by Chaplin and Keaton’s comic examples and encouraged by Minna’s guidance, Lionel recognises the entertaining potential of his neurodevelopmental disorder and framed his Tourettic freakishness into freakish masculinity. Antolin argues that “[f]or Lionel, laughter is a means of resistance and self-assertion that can change the whole perception of

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<sup>130</sup> Kathleen Rowe Karlyn makes a similar point in her article on “The Detective and the Fool: Or, The Mystery of Manhood in *Sherlock Jr.*”, in which she analyses Buster Keaton’s detective performance. In *Sherlock Jr.*, Keaton comically challenges the detective genre and its generic masculinity (see also Meyer 13). Karlyn argues that the movie “casts a skeptical eye on adult masculinity, whether figured as the sheik or as Sherlock Holmes, and indeed, comedy – the genre in which Keaton chose to work – provides one of the few spaces where masculinity can be safely held up for ridicule and men not taken seriously” (110). Similar to Buster Keaton’s character’s tension between “the sheik” and “Sherlock Holmes”, Lionel oscillates between the freak and the hard-boiled detective, challenging generic conventions as much as social expectations of gender.

disability” (14), but it needs to be specified that it is not Lionel’s own laughter which presents this means. Instead, it refers to his perception of how his Tourette’s affects his social surroundings. Framing his tics as entertainment, he understands their laughter as a confirmation of his comedic abilities. Thereby, Lionel disarms laughter – a discriminating (and stereotypical) reaction to his Tourette’s syndrome – and perceives it as a reaffirming, (re)socialising and (re)integrating rather than marginalising reaction. As this applies not only to other characters but also to the reader, Lionel also demonstrates how humour can ease “the reader’s identification with problematized detective [...] characters” (Jean Anderson 255). As his Tourette’s often undermines his intended impression as a hard-boiled detective, the reader is invited to laugh at such situations as incongruous deviance from the underlying hard-boiled framework.

Lionel’s performance of hard-boiled masculinity recalls Judith Butler’s theory of the performativity of gender. Emulating a hard-boiled detective and copying Minna’s hard-boiled masculinity, Lionel confirms the “reiterative and citational” nature of an individual’s gender embodiment in reliance on social expectations (J. Butler, *Bodies That Matter* xii). Lionel’s imitation of and experiment with hard-boiled masculinity underlines Butler’s argument that gender is performative because “individuals are expected to suppress their personal characteristics in favor of exhibiting the ones allocated to their gender and thereby fulfilling their social roles as prescribed by society” (qtd. in Gates, *Detecting Men* 36). However, since Lionel resumes his freakish masculinity, Butler’s argument should be adapted in this context. Lionel’s Tourette’s syndrome has caused him to copy Minna’s hard-boiled masculinity and occasionally inverse it in a freakish, i.e. Tourettic, way. While gender embodiment is usually a subconscious process, Lionel’s Tourette’s syndrome as much as his self-reflexive nature made it conscious and, due to his freakish inversions, visible. He even consciously discards the copied hard-boiled masculinity in the end and chooses his gender identity. Hence, Lionel has experienced a conscious and partly subversive ‘citational repetition’ in light of his neurodiversity. Thereby, he demonstrates that gender identity I adcan be shaped not only by negotiating social expectations but also the individual constitution.

*Motherless Brooklyn*’s complexity opens up many more avenues for research beyond gender. Further research could analyse the possible metaphorical meaning of specific numbers, such as Lionel’s various Tourettic “lucky number[s]” (e.g. MB 135) or the often-repeated number 25 (e.g. Minna’s age when they met (40), Kimmery’s estimated age (5), the speed at which Minna was chased before he died (15)). Additionally, expanding on Shostak’s psychoanalytic focus, reading Lionel and his surrogate family through the lens of Freud’s

family romance could provide more insight into Lionel's relationship with the good and bad father's characteristics (divided between Frank and Gerard Minna) and with Tony regarding their fraternal rivalry for the (surrogate) father's love. Furthermore, Lionel's culinary inclination should be considered more closely as it manifests itself in the most unlikely situations. Although Sorensen briefly mentions its connection to Lionel's Jewish identity (Sorensen 331-332; Holmgren 10), Peacock leaves more room for further analysis. He already highlights this desideratum because of its "uneasy truce between material consumption [...] and metaphorical consumption" and points out that "[f]ood [...] allows [Lionel] to externalize his symptoms" ("We Learned to Tell Our Story Walking" 76). However, he fails to specify *how* Lionel externalises them. Food, especially sandwiches (e.g. MB 205), has a calming effect on Lionel's condition. It provides an additional insight into Lionel's understanding of his social and spatial surroundings, for example, when he hopes to understand Tony by copying his sandwich menu (242-245) or when he copes with difficult situations. As such, Lionel eats a sandwich while mourning of Minna, which resembles a Holy Communion (128).

Overall, even Lionel's narrative resembles a sandwich. Although as a Tourettic detective, Lionel proves to be a postmodern detective as he overthrows many generic conventions (Sorensen 326-328), this chapter has shown that Lionel's developmental journey confirms rather than undermines the traditional structure of "familiar-unfamiliar-familiar, or home-out-home, or order-chaos-order" (327). His experiment with hard-boiled detective masculinity begins and ends with his freakishness, which not only renders the novel "a freakshow" in itself, i.e. a "freak narrator's narrative" (Antolin 3, 14). It also turns *Motherless Brooklyn* into a 'freakshow sandwich' with a pinch of genre and a hearty taste of masculinity.

### 4.3 Chapter Conclusion

Mark Haddon's *Curious Incident* and Jonathan Lethem's *Motherless Brooklyn* present neurodiverse protagonists who grow into their respective forms of masculine disability as neurodivergent men. As their neurodiversity develops along with their gender identity, Christopher and Lionel integrate it into their masculinity. In Lionel's case, his freakish masculinity constitutes his masculine disability as he accepts the entertaining effects of his Tourette's syndrome on his social surroundings. In contrast, Christopher's idiosyncratic masculinity combines, on the one hand, the affective 'power' over his parents and, on the other hand, his mathematic masculinity, which he consciously chooses as a field of masculine identity

formation for his future. Both protagonists find their place in society, connect to their neurotypical surroundings and develop a sense of masculine disability, only by relying on and eventually distinguishing from genre conventions.

In both novels, the genres of classical and hard-boiled detective fiction function as guidelines (see also Peacock, “Jonathan Lethem’s Genre Evolutions” 427; Birge 75) for being and acting. On the one hand, the masculine conventions of the respective genres guide Christopher and Lionel through the negotiation of their masculine identity. In their metafictional self-awareness, Christopher and Lionel rely on a fictional detective’s masculine characteristics in their performances of the logically reasoning detective (Christopher) and the tough-talking hard-boiled detective (Lionel), through which they emulate those conventional, neurotypical masculinities. At the same time, the genres contextualise Christopher’s and Lionel’s neurodiversity in an advantageous framework and grant them agency through their neurodiversity.<sup>131</sup> As such, Christopher’s ASD-influenced inclination for logic and reason finds a predominant role model in the reasoning detective Sherlock Holmes and classical detective fiction. Being aware of his “Behavioural Problems”, Christopher overcomes personal fears and struggles when he does detective work (CI 46). Additionally, he strictly follows generic guidelines and explicitly relies on the “*forms and structures* of detective fiction” (Murray, “Neurotecs” 179) when he writes a “murder mystery novel” as a “proper novel” (CI 4-5; see also Allen 170). Lionel is aware of the discrepancy between his Tourette’s syndrome and the generic conventions of the hard-boiled detective, which shows in his frustrating attempts to emulate such a character. However, he recognises his Tourette’s-related ticcing as a meaning-creating skill and an intuitive way of reading clues, through which he (occasionally) reconciles his Tourette’s syndrome with the identity of a tough-talking hard-boiled detective. Hence, while Christopher’s and Lionel’s neurodiversity provides them with relevant and yet unconventional investigative methods (e.g. Murray, “Neurotecs” 186; Tougal 138), their metafictional self-awareness (e.g. Allen 118; Luter 27; Peacock, “Jonathan Lethem’s Genre Evolutions” 440) encourages their agency. Instead of “claiming that their literary predecessors bear no relation to the reality of detection”, as J.C. Bernthal observes as typical for the self-referentiality of

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<sup>131</sup> While this dissertation argues that both Christopher and Lionel gain masculine identity and agency through their reliance on generic frameworks, Birge argues that both Christopher and Lionel engage in “spatial agency” as they “make use of the detective genre to reconsider agency in terms of space rather than time” and thus, “demonstrate agency through movements and sounds like repetitive touching or groaning” (14). Mintz similarly observes the “tactile quality” of Lionel’s tics as they are “at once bodily and discursive in the novel” (171). Birge’s argumentation adds that, in “constantly negotiat[ing] the world through their bodies in an agentic orientation” – thus, through their “engaged interaction” (87) – Christopher and Lionel negotiate their social belonging not only in terms of their (masculine) identity but also in terms of social space.

characters in the crime fiction genre (227), Christopher and Lionel rather use their prior knowledge of detective fiction to construct their narratives and agency by implementing their forms of neurodiversity. Both novels establish neurodiversity as an ability rather than a disability (Murray, “Neurotecs” 186), which supports the neurodiverse protagonists’ investigations.

The genre of detective fiction provides a bridge between the neurodiverse detective protagonist and the (assumed) neurotypical reader in both *Curious Incident* (see also Allen 170; Cho) and *Motherless Brooklyn*. Christopher’s and Lionel’s habit of explicitly referring to other examples of detective fiction invites the reader similarly draw on generic guidelines for structure. The genre supports Christopher and Lionel not only in their agency as detectives, but also “provid[es] templates or simulation models for human behaviour” (Peacock, “Jonathan Lethem’s Genre Evolutions” 427). The reader draws on these templates to compare these neurodiverse protagonists to other detective characters. Therefore, “genre functions both for protagonist and reader as a form of cognitive mapping”, which guides them not only through “geographical, ethical and literary space” (427) but also through gender development. In supporting the reader’s identification with the protagonist, genre functions as common ground – if personified, it would serve as a sidekick – that bridges the gap between the (assumed) neurotypical reader and the neurodiverse protagonist. Consequently, the (assumed) neurotypical reader follows the neurodiverse protagonists’ gender development and gains insight into these characters’ individual form of masculine disability.<sup>132</sup>

However, in contrast to potential expectations, the emulation of the genre-conformant classical and hard-boiled detectives does not initiate the protagonists’ further careers as investigators. Instead, they reveal and enforce the identities they displayed before their detective performance, to which they ultimately return. Both Christopher and Lionel fail (at least partly) in their investigations. While Lionel identifies Minna’s murderer through his meaning-creating ticcing, he fails to save Tony from a similar fate because his tics distract him. Christopher solves the mystery of the dead dog only because his emotional breakdown at learning about his father’s lie makes the latter admit to his misdeeds. Christopher proves that his affective impact on his

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<sup>132</sup> Thus, this dissertation refutes Foreman, who argues that, considering the disabled hard-boiled detective’s “doubled nature”, “his disability acts as a malicious sidekick” in that “[h]e has internalized social norms and thinks of himself as divided, the part of him that can function ‘properly’ battles the part of him that is disabled” (Foreman 161-162). Although she claims that the figure of the sidekick usually “serves to bridge the [detective and the reader]” (161), her argument that the disability serves as an internal sidekick, thus replacing the external Watson figure of classical detective fiction, is not convincing. Instead, it is the genre of detective fiction in general which serves as a common ground for the (neurotypical) reader and (neurodiverse) detective and enables the former to relate to the latter.

social surroundings evades his control. Both protagonists can only control their investigative means to a limited extent, which restricts their success as detectives. As a result, they both abandon the fictional frameworks on which they relied. Lionel consciously liberates himself from the hard-boiled framework and returns to his role as the freak among the Minna Men, exchanging the detective identity with that of a “mascot” (MB 68). Similarly, although his detective performance proves to be successful and supportive (as he achieves all of his aims) from Christopher’s subjective perspective, it is a mere stepping stone to achieve confidence. His outlook towards his future focuses on his mathematical skills, which suggests maths as a chosen field to develop his masculine identity. Both Christopher and Lionel find their place in the social world outside the fictional frameworks of their investigations. Expanding Peacock’s observation on *Motherless Brooklyn* to *Curious Incident*, both novels show that “even if genres do indeed offer a form of cognitive mapping”, “human life is not readily amenable to the imposition of generic boundaries” (Peacock, “Jonathan Lethem’s Genre Evolutions” 430). Therefore, emulating and experiencing a detective’s masculinity in a brief episode of their development enables Christopher and Lionel to accept what constitutes their authentic masculinity as a basis for their further development of their gender identity.

By giving an insight into these individual negotiations of masculinity through the first-person perspective, *Curious Incident* and *Motherless Brooklyn* broaden the reader’s awareness for gender development with developmental disorders. In light of their neurodiversity, Christopher’s and Lionel’s emulations of detectives reveal their own highly individual forms of masculinity. Adapting Tougaw’s term of “niche constructions” (134), which “involves reshaping physical environments, institutions, and social relations in ways that enable perceived disabilities to become abilities” (148), it can be argued that both Christopher and Lionel represent ‘niche masculinities’. Although Christopher believes to be a successful detective, both he and Lionel objectively fail as detectives, which is why they *choose* different contexts, i.e. mathematics and comedy, that are similarly associated with masculinity (e.g. Moreau et al.; Kunze), but contextualise their individual preferences and neurological idiosyncrasies in more fundamental ways. While mathematics suits Christopher’s logical inclination and presents a field he consciously controls, comedy frames Lionel’s Tourettic tics in the socially acknowledged framework of entertainment. Both frameworks allow Christopher and Lionel to live their ‘niche masculinities’ of mathematical and freakish masculinity in conscious recognition of the masculine characteristics of their neurodiverse conditions. Therefore, Torrell’s pattern of the reinscription of masculine characteristics can not only be applied to male characters with physical impairments (220) but also to those with neurodiverse conditions. In

recognising and fundamentally contextualising their masculine potentialities, Christopher and Lionel gain confidence as (neurodiverse) men and claim their place in (neurotypical) society.

After having temporarily detached themselves in their detective episodes, both protagonists reconnect with their society (see also Birge 87). Although Christopher's first-person perspective emphasises his self-centeredness due to his ASD-like condition, the novel's conclusion manifests him as the centre of his family's emotional and spatial environment, which he unconsciously controls through his affective 'power'. Similarly, Lionel (consciously) claims the freak position, entertaining the Minna Men with his Tourette's syndrome, and seeing laughter as a means of validating his positive impact on their relationship. Hence, this dissertation contradicts Tougaw's argument that the neurodiverse narrator "give[s] fictional form to tensions between medical diagnosis and identity, without resolving those tensions" (132). Instead, this chapter has shown that, through their 'niche masculinities' as mathematician and freak as well as their reconnection to society through (emotionally influenced) care (*Curious Incident*) and entertainment (*Motherless Brooklyn*), Christopher and Lionel *do* resolve those tensions. Although the novels still reproduce stereotypes – and as "[a]esthetics and politics collide in these neurodivergent narrators" (Tougaw 133) – they also challenge stereotypical assumptions about detection, masculinity and neurodiversity. Christopher and Lionel "remake their niches" (135) not only "by creating new forms of affordance – by changing the fictional worlds they navigate [i.e. solving the respective mystery] and by narrating aesthetic experiences for readers" (135).<sup>133</sup> Their neurodiversity also contributes to the "neurological range" of detective protagonists which enrich the genre with "human diversity" (Murray, "Neurotecs" 187-188). *Curious Incident* and *Motherless Brooklyn* highlight that their neurodiverse protagonists "are not instances of radical otherness outside social-symbolic understanding" but, instead, "stand at different points on a neurological spectrum" (Berger, *The Disarticulate* 230).

Experiencing the world through a neurodiverse perspective, the reader becomes a detective himself by decoding the literary affordances provided by Christopher and Lionel (Tougaw 132). The explicit affordances in *Motherless Brooklyn*, such as Lionel's self-diagnosis "'I've got Tourette's'" (MB 1) and his self-awareness of his condition, support the reader in contextualising his behaviour in a medical framework. His "meta-Tourette's" awareness (192) – i.e. his tic to "relate everything to my Tourette's" (192) – 'guides' the reader through the

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<sup>133</sup> Tougaw observes that Lionel also constructs a "professional niche" (149). By implementing his cognitive skills as a service to his social surrounding, Lionel interestingly resembles Sherlock Holmes. Holmes invents his own profession as a 'consulting detective', through which he creates a similar 'professional niche'. Both Lionel and Holmes implement their cognitive skills as a service to their social surroundings, to which they connect.

discovery of neurodiversity. However, it is still up to the reader – and “part of the fun” – to decode Lionel’s meaning-creating tics and differentiate between “when these improvisations reveal something about Lionel” or the case (Reed 62). The reader ‘imitates’ Lionel’s “compulsion to interpret and reinterpret events” (Tougaw 137). Contrastingly, *Curious Incident* does not allow a concrete diagnosis, although Christopher’s display of his “Behavioural Problems” (CI 59) hints at the respective explanations in the DSM-5 while also representing oversimplified stereotypes.<sup>134</sup> Additionally, Christopher’s over- and underreporting, i.e. giving too much and too little information (Tougaw 141), require the detective-reader to fill the information gaps (Kümmerling-Meibauer 136), for example, in terms of his mother’s relationship with Mr Shears (Gregoriou, “The Poetics of Deviance and The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time” 102) or by drawing on genre conventions (Cho 91-92). Thus “engag[ing] in imaginative niche constructions”, the detective-reader interprets such literary affordances and “work[s] out relations between neurological difference and neurological norms” (Tougaw 140). Although such affordances become “red herrings”, distracting from the novels’ central mystery (Fleissner 390), they serve as essential clues, which the detective-reader collects and combines to understand the protagonist’s neurodiversity. The conclusions the reader gains from decoding such affordances in both novels potentially influence his or her perception of neurological deviance.

One of the first insights the reader gains from such affordances is that neurodiversity allows an alternative perspective on the world. This applies to the detective-narrator himself. In allowing the detectives to “see what neurotypical characters cannot” (Tougaw 138), the novels display an “alternative viewpoint that stems from a neurodiverse perspective” (Murray, “Neurotecs” 182). Thus, as this chapter has shown, Christopher’s and Lionel’s idiosyncrasies provide them with unconventional methods of practising their investigative tasks and developing their masculinity (as adolescents). Seeing the world through Christopher’s and Lionel’s neurodiverse perspectives, the reader “adapt[s] to simulations of neurodivergent ways of being” (Tougaw 135). Hence, both texts normalise a neurodiverse perspective and occasionally ‘other’ not only neurotypical characters’ masculinity but also their (and the reader’s assumed) neurotypicality, making the detective-reader “complicit” with the detective-narrator (A. Hall, *Literature and Disability* 118; see also Murray, “Neurotecs” 185). In addition

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<sup>134</sup> Similar to Haddon’s *Curious Incident*, Kim Slater’s *Smart*, for example, also presents a neurodiverse protagonist without specifying his condition. Kieran Wood’s disorder is even more complicated to determine than Christopher’s. Apart from the subtle hints about Kieran’s potential neurodevelopmental disorder, which come through his first-person perspective and through his support teacher Miss Crane, the novel’s subtitle – “A Mysterious Crime, A Different Detective” (Slater; *emphasis A.S.K.*) – is the only explicit evidence of potential neurodiversity.

to the texts themselves, especially Christopher's and Lionel's forms of masculine disability "help us to see how acts of self-expression might inaugurate a shift away from deficit models and encourage us to embrace alternative ways of knowing" and being, which are made possible by neurodiversity (A. Hall, *Literature and Disability* 124-125; see also Mintz 201). Consequently, "[t]he neurodivergence of a detective-narrator is not simply a 'vehicle' for aesthetic experiment, but an affordance that enables literary innovation that multiplies possible meanings for neurological difference" (Tougaw 135). Hence, *Curious Incident* and *Motherless Brooklyn* encourage the reader to become aware of his or her own prejudices and question normative assumptions about neurotypicality and gender embodiments.

Perhaps the most crucial insight the reader should gain from both novels is that "alterity is relative" (Berger, *The Disarticulate* 207).<sup>135</sup> Although Christopher's and Lionel's deviance is a major aspect in their respective narratives, both Haddon and Lethem occasionally relativise the protagonists' 'exceptionality' as "everyday occurrence[s]" (Murray, "The Ambiguities of Inclusion" 98). As such, Christopher consciously relativises some of his idiosyncrasies by saying that "everyone has learning difficulties" and "everyone has special needs" (CI 56). Similarly, Loftis emphasises that even neurotypical people "struggle to establish emotional connections with others" (*Imagining Autism*, 129), while Christopher's exam situation (CI 258-260) presents a similar potential, through which the assumed neurotypical reader identifies with the neurodivergent protagonist. This connects to what Berger calls "social autism", meaning that "social disconnection, anomie, and violence", which the novel presents as "products of autistic tendencies [...] are wired, in some degree, into all human neural systems" (*The Disarticulate* 203). Although Haddon does not universalise Christopher's neurodiverse perception, he still "constantly draws parallels between Christopher's experiences and a more general, almost 'everyman' experience", which proves that the boy's social position is unnecessarily marginalised (Allen 174) and highlights the ubiquity of any kind of idiosyncrasy. In a similar "'everyman' syndrome" (Peacock, "We Learned to Tell Our Story Walking" 71), Lethem's novel shows that 'ticcing' can show in everyday situations without being a symptom of Tourette's syndrome (see also Reed 63; Luter 32-33). Kimmery, for example, tics in her walk (Antolin 6). Recognising parts of his Tourettic self in Prince's music and extroverted cartoon or comic characters, Lionel highlights a "Tourettized world" (Fleissner 390; see also Sorensen 324-325). Additionally, Minna's credo emphasises that "bone stupidity, mental illness, and familial or sexual anxiety - these were the animating forces that rendered human life amusing

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<sup>135</sup> Although Berger states this only with reference to *Curious Incident* (*The Disarticulate*), it can also be applied to *Motherless Brooklyn*.

and that flowed, once you learned to identify them, through every personality and interaction” (MB 68). Through such a belief, Minna highlights that everyone deviates from an imaginative norm, which renders humanity diverse. Hence, while the protagonists’ neurodiversity might occasionally impede the assumed neurotypical reader from identifying with them (e.g. S. Butler 143), such relativisations of (seemingly) marginalised characteristics invite the reader to consciously reflect on his or her own daily habits (Ciocia 327; Cho 97). As a result, he or she might not only reconsider what constitutes neurodiversity but also develop a new stance toward the social marginalisation of neurodiverse individuals in extra-fictional reality.

Consequently, the genre of detective fiction proves to be a promising field for challenging stereotypical assumptions about neurodiversity and masculinity. It supports not only the neurodiverse protagonist’s negotiation of his masculinity and his social position but also the detective-reader’s contemplations on neurodiversity. However, a fundamental solution to the ‘quest’ can only be experienced by living with neurodiversity oneself – or (approximately) through extensive interaction and discussion with people who identify themselves as neurodiverse (Tougaw 155). In following the taxonomies of the DSM-5, the novels not only create representative characters (139) but, in recognising Christopher and Lionel’s choices for their contexts of masculine identity, they also create distinctive characters. Referring to *Curious Incident*, Tougaw summarises the argument as follows:

[I]f Christopher [...] is understood to represent all autistic people—or really any autistic people—then his character becomes a vehicle for reinforcing stereotypes about autism and autistic norms. Understood as a character, a fictional representation of autistic experience, he might instead become an affordance for rethinking assumptions about these norms. (150-151)

This applies to numerous fictional characters with neurodiversity. Their affordances should not be generalised as authentic, holistic teachings on living with neurodevelopmental disorders. The sheer diversity of individual manifestations and constellations of neurological conditions prohibits a comprehensive understanding of the experience of living with such a condition through reading fiction. Decoding literary affordances of neurodiversity provides mere glimpses into living with neurodiversity in an extra-fictional world. Instead, literature can make the reader reflect on neurological conditions that deviate from the neurotypical norm: “It is by recognizing how each mind works that the door for communication opens, not by assuming that all minds work the same” (Cho 98). Although the novels may not change the reader’s idea of neurodiversity, they may still raise awareness regarding the individual experience of living with a neurological condition. This diversity includes not only neurological conditions but also

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gender embodiments, which challenge normative assumptions about masculinity. Instead of rejecting neurodiverse characters as emasculated and stupid, the focus on masculine disability highlights decisively masculine characteristics in the protagonists' neurodiversity.

## 5. From Physically Disabled Masculinity to Masculine Disability

Just like the neurodiverse detective, the physically disabled detective is more than a rare phenomenon in fiction. Contributing to the growing (academic) awareness of disabled detectives, Hoppenstand and Browne as well as Zola emphasise this frequency in minor and main characters in detective fiction. The visually impaired detectives Thornley Colton (by Clinton H. Stagg) and Max Carrados (by Ernest Bramah) may not have been the first physically impaired detectives in fiction. Such figures still populate twentieth- and twenty-first century British and American fiction. While neurodiversity affects the detective's mind, a physical impairment challenges the integrity of his body and adds physical deviance to his (genre-inherent) social deviance (Michael Cohen 153; Gregoriou, "The Poetics of Deviance and The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time" 99). Even if it is not visible upon first sight, it associates the detective to a socially marginalised group, which emphasises his outsider position. Additionally, a physical impairment distracts from the detective's mind and draws the focus to his body (Michael Cohen 154). Instead of an object that initiates the investigation and is stereotypically associated with the (female) victim's fragility in the detective genre (Messent 79-80), the detective's body is perceived as a living entity (Plain, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction* 4). The result is twofold. First, the male detective himself becomes a victim, indicating that "the male patriarchal order, with its assumptions of rationality, authority, and control, has failed" (Messent 80). Second, a physically impaired detective challenges the "compulsory able-bodiedness" (Siebers 102–03) implied in the genre and society's expectations regarding masculinity, connecting him to the broad academic field of disabled masculinity. Therefore, the following chapter analyses the physically impaired detective's transition from disabled masculinity – his status quo at the beginning of the novel – to masculine disability through the negotiation of the masculine characteristics of his profession and (hetero)sexuality. Such a negotiation requires fundamental confidence in the skills he has despite (or even because of) the impairment and external emotional support.

In contrast to the neurodiverse adolescent detective's steady process of growing into masculine disability, the adult detectives in the following chapter acquire a physical disability as the result of an accident, which they experience as a truly life-changing incident.<sup>136</sup> An

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<sup>136</sup> Cherrell Green uses the terminology "violently acquired disability", which defines "any form of *physical* impairment acquired as a result of interpersonal violence which limits a person's mobility or ability to perform basic physical activities" (288n3). As this does not apply to all of the chosen examples, this dissertation occasionally uses the term 'newly acquired disability' to refer to former non-disabled men who have suffered a disabling accident, which also includes men who have been disabled by an act of interpersonal violence.

accident causes an often visible, “unintentional, undesirable, marginal deviation from idealized norms of fitness” (J. C. Anderson 17). Losing control of certain senses or parts of the body, the victim suffering the disabling accident moves from the state of a non-disabled person – the “normate” (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 8) – to that of a disabled person. The unforeseen suddenness of the accident highlights the (male) body’s fragility (Shakespeare, “The Sexual Politics of Disabled Masculinity” 63), to which the term “temporarily able-bodied” alludes (e.g. Adams et al., “Disability” 5; A. Hall, *Literature and Disability* 168).<sup>137</sup> It implies that disability can happen to anyone at any time and presents an imminent threat, which many (men) often reject, in some cases even remaining unaware of the potential disability (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 14; see also J. C. Anderson 17). While “the gradual disablement of aging or a progressive illness may not be considered a disability at all”, an accident “is almost always experienced as a greater loss” (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 14) and a severe disruption to the accustomed way of living and expression of one’s gender identity.

In adulthood, men have already developed and lived a certain type of masculinity, relative to the social ideal of hegemonic masculinity. R.W. Connell conceptualised hegemonic masculinity as “a specific form of masculinity in a given historical and society-wide social setting that legitimates unequal gender relations between men and women, between masculinity and femininity, and among masculinities” (Messerschmidt 28). Connell emphasises that hegemonic masculinity only exists in relation to these “abstract rather than descriptive” concepts (Messerschmidt 29). By internalising cultural ideals about masculinity, men act complicitly with hegemonic norms as they aim to achieve “the successful claim to authority”, which “is the mark of hegemony” and “legitimacy” (Connell 77, 79). Victims of an accident that results in a physical impairment are confronted with the possibility that the disability might hinder them in satisfying the socially constructed and internalised gender ideal they lived up to before their accident.

Acquiring a physical impairment in an accident forces a man to consciously reflect on what it means to be masculine not only to society but more importantly to himself. A newly disabled man needs to understand that his “masculine gender identity and practice are created and maintained at the crossroads of the demands of contemporary masculinity and the

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<sup>137</sup> Disability does not only have to be a physical restriction. Gerschick underlines that even “aging is often disabling and that many of us will develop a disability during our lifetime” (“Toward a Theory of Disability and Gender” 1264). Similarly, Torrell emphasises that “there is no such thing as a perpetually able body; ability is a temporary, fleeting state” (215). Both statements highlight the ubiquity of disability, the wide range of understandings of ‘disability’ and how quickly anyone can become disabled.

stigmatization associated with disability” (Gerschick and A. S. Miller 185). Gerschick and Miller propose that the concept of hegemonic masculinity functions as a reference for negotiating masculinity with a physical disability (187) and pressures disabled men to achieving this masculine ideal. At the same time, these men need to understand that such masculine ideals are culturally constructed (J. Butler, *Bodies That Matter* 34; Connell 35; Messerschmidt 35), which means that such ideals are negotiable and, thus, adaptable to the individual constitution.

Due to the contradictions of masculinity (i.e. strength, independence, agency, prowess) and disability (i.e. weakness, dependence, passivity, inability), newly physically disabled men lose their hegemonic legitimacy, which Shuttleworth et al. call the “dilemma of disabled masculinity”. Suddenly, they are confronted with and forced to adapt to characteristics they aimed to avoid throughout most of their lives (Shakespeare, “The Sexual Politics of Disabled Masculinity” 63). The loss of their “physical prowess” (Shakespeare, “The Sexual Politics of Disabled Masculinity” 63) contributes to them becoming alienated and “disconnected from their bodied identity” (Shuttleworth et al. 183; see also Gerschick, “Sisyphus in a Wheelchair” 196). The result is an identity crisis, “a schism in individuals’ lives” (Ostrander 82), which (also) shows in their sense of masculinity. They are suddenly forced from (potentially) complicit masculinity – i.e. aiming at achieving hegemonic ideals – to marginalised masculinity as the impairment (potentially) provokes discrimination by able-bodied people (Messerschmidt 29). Although this implies that men with disabilities still embody a *form of* masculinity, they themselves feel less of a man when faced with society’s gender-denying attitudes (see also Torrell 212). The consequence is a “status inconsistency” due to the new “stigmatized status of having a disability” (Gerschick, “Toward a Theory of Disability and Gender” 1265; see also Torrell 211; K. Q. Hall 90), which can be felt and observed in numerous areas of everyday life.

The new stigmatisation complicates physically disabled men’s social recognition as masculine. They face a severe double bind because they “are judged according to the standards of hegemonic masculinity which are difficult to achieve due to the limitations of their bodies. Simultaneously, these men are blocked in everyday interactions from opportunities to achieve this form of masculinity” (Gerschick, “Sisyphus in a Wheelchair” 189).<sup>138</sup> Disappointing social expectations of masculinity such as agency, power and control, competitive behaviour as well as sexual and physical prowess (e.g. Shuttleworth 166) might result not only in associations of dependence but also emasculation. Connell observes that “gender is vulnerable when

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<sup>138</sup> It must be underlined that these are generalised assumptions about disabled masculinity. The individual experiences vary “depending on impairment type, ethnicity, sexuality and class” (Shuttleworth et al. 178; similar in Shakespeare, “The Sexual Politics of Disabled Masculinity” 60) but can still be felt and observed in essentially gendered areas of life.

performance cannot be sustained – for instance, as a result of physical disability” (Connell 54).<sup>139</sup> Research shows that people with impairments are often attributed as being “genderless” (Gerschick and A. S. Miller 193), “unattractive” (Gerschick, “The Body, Disability, and Sexuality” 89) or “asexual” (Shakespeare, “The Sexual Politics of Disabled Masculinity” 55).<sup>140</sup> Hence, men with physical disability are not only deprived of their independence but also of their sexuality (Shuttleworth 170; Gerschick and A. S. Miller 189-190) and associated with “‘impotentiality,’ demasculinization, and castration” (Torrell 211; see also Shakespeare, “The Sexual Politics of Disabled Masculinity” 56-57; Barrett 42). Being denied social involvement, pleasure *and* the suitability to contribute to the survival of the human species, hence, comes close to a dehumanisation of men with disabilities.

However, upon closer examination, hegemonic masculinity and disability are not as contradictory as commonly believed but rather fundamentally connected. In fact, “[m]uch of what is traditionally associated with masculinity is [...] generative of impairment: fast cars, violence and war, excessive consumption, recklessness and risk, sport, and work, all contribute towards injury and illness” (Shakespeare, “The Sexual Politics of Disabled Masculinity” 63). The conclusion implied in this statement is that, ironically, excessive attempts to achieve embodied hegemonic masculinity might result in physical impairment. Instead of being recognised for their attempts, they are considered “‘failed’ men” (Gerschick, “Sisyphus in a Wheelchair” 189) and face restrictions from social as much as their personal perspective. Gerschick entitles the struggle – “[s]uccessfully creating and maintaining self-satisfactory masculine gender identities under these circumstances” – as “an almost Sisyphean task” (“Sisyphus in a Wheelchair” 190). Due to these numerous social restrictions, it comes as no surprise that “[h]aving a disability can also become a primary identity which overshadows almost all other aspects of one’s identity” (Gerschick, “The Body, Disability, and Sexuality” 89). As “a disability erodes much, but not all, masculine privilege” (Gerschick, “Toward a Theory of Disability and Gender” 1265), reconciling masculinity and disability – and solving the ‘dilemma’ of disabled masculinity – requires a conscious negotiation of masculinity with regard to the physical disability.

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<sup>139</sup> This quote was criticised by Tom Shakespeare who claims that “[n]either masculinity, nor disability, should be reduced to the level of physical determination” (Shakespeare, “The Sexual Politics of Disabled Masculinity” 57) and thereby correctly questions physicality as a determining factor in gender construction. However, when it comes to the perspective of a newly physically disabled person, the aspect of physicality is considerably shattered because adapting to different processes of movement, for example, is not only time-consuming but also physically and emotionally exhausting.

<sup>140</sup> Traditionally, the issue of ‘genderlessness’ (in distinction to sexlessness) is rather associated with intellectual disability (Gerschick, “Toward a Theory of Disability and Gender” 1265), in which gender is conditional (Wilson et al., “From Diminished Men to Conditionally Masculine”; Wilson et al., “Conditionally Sexual”).

In their influential contribution to the field of disabled masculinity, which Connell highlights as “small but remarkably interesting” (54), Gerschick and Miller prove that physical disability makes gender development conscious. Based on interviews with physically disabled men, the study provides empirical evidence of the observation that these men “depend on at least three patterns in their adjustment to the double bind” (203). First, the reliance pattern involves disabled men relying on internalised ideals of hegemonic masculinity, such as “physical strength, athleticism, independence, and sexual prowess”, which they still try to approach despite their disability (191-199).<sup>141</sup> Men following this pattern, consider disability to be an obstacle that is overcome by pursuing hegemonic ideals of masculinity. However, since it includes a “constant comparative process to ‘before’ the disability” (Ostrander 79), this approach is accompanied by frustration and anger because the ideal cannot be achieved satisfactorily, which can also have self-destructive effects. Second, in the reformulation pattern, men with physical disabilities “recognize in their own condition an inability to meet” culturally constructed ideals of masculinity. As a result, they “reformulat[e]” idealised masculinity, “shaping it along the lines of their own abilities, perceptions, and strengths, thus defining their manhood along these new lines” (Gerschick and A. S. Miller 187). Thereby, they achieve, for example, autonomy and self-reliance by delegating tasks to others (188) or sexual prowess by focusing on emotional proximity and trust in sexual relationships (189). Third, disabled men who adopt the rejection pattern consider dominant perceptions of masculinity as ‘wrong’ and reject them altogether. They aim to develop an individual form of masculinity that incorporates disability as a decisive aspect of gender identity (199-202). Men with physical disabilities negotiate, for example, alternative, non-traditional sexual techniques by focusing more on the partner’s than on their own pleasure (Gerschick, “Sisyphus in a Wheelchair” 207 ; Shuttleworth 172). This combination of Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity and socioeconomic evidence presents a milestone in research on disabled masculinity, on which many further research studies have drawn (e.g. Shakespeare, “The Sexual Politics of Disabled Masculinity”; Boyle; Ostrander; Shuttleworth et al.; Barrett; Robertson and Brett Smith).

Specifically referring to male disabled characters in fiction, Margaret Rose Torrell argues that “hegemonic structures underl[ie] the ways gender and ability are understood” (210). Proposing “disabled masculinity studies” as a “new direction in disability studies”, she argues that literary representations of disabled masculinity usually rely on “the ability-disability binary

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<sup>141</sup> Furthermore, Lenore Manderson and Susan Peake argue that disabled men are not concerned about sport exposing their physical inadequacy but, instead, perceive it as an opportunity to excel and create hyper-masculinity (241), which alludes to what Gerschick and Miller term the reliance model.

that disassociates men from their bodies and emphasizes the corporality of women” (210). These representations enforce the “patriarchal, ableist framework of gender and embodiment” which results in the oxymoronic meanings of disability and masculinity (209-211). Torrell identifies four patterns of how disabled masculinity is represented in literature. The first pattern focuses on the “contradictory nature of masculinity and disability” (217), referring to the predominant perception of disabled masculinity. Enforcing non-disabled masculinity, it compares male disabled characters with the binary of “malevolent hypermasculinity”, which is characterised by “overaggressiveness, sexual licentiousness, and violent coercion”, and vulnerability, as these characters are perceived as “pathetic, weak, exiled, asexual, destined to live alone or off of the charity of others”, which feminises them (217-218). Both prevent the disabled male character from achieving “masterful performances of masculinity” (218). The second pattern involves male disabled characters empowering able-bodied female characters, thus challenging the “gender-ability binary” (218). The third pattern subsumes those male disabled characters who “reinscribe themselves as masculine” by focusing on masculine characteristics with the aid of the respective disability (219). However, this pattern enforces the stereotype of “overcoming disability”, which is “used when the analytical emphasis is on the portrayal of disability in absence of considerations of gender” and suggests that “disability can be conquered or minimized with enough willpower and ingenuity” (220). Carrying the most “revolutionary potential”, the fourth pattern “provides alternative models for productive associations between masculinity and disability by showing masculinity to be shiftable, performative, and detached from biological sex and by showing disability to be a place of potential for identity generation apart from damaging social constructions” (220-221). These patterns describe “a continuum of available gender and ability identifications” in which “such reworkings of disabled masculinity” result in a “short-circuiting of hegemonic power, an equalizing effect, as various identity possibilities for disability and masculinity emerge” (222). These observations on disabled masculinity in fictional representations offer significant support for the subsequent chapter.

Despite their focus on literary representations of disabled masculinity, Torrell’s patterns essentially confirm the coping strategies which Gerschick and Miller have observed in their socioeconomic research on physically disabled men. Her first and second pattern – disabled masculinity as an oxymoron and an enforcement of female empowerment – strongly resemble what Gerschick and Miller term reliance on hegemonic characteristics of masculinity. Torrell’s third and fourth pattern, in which male disabled characters “reinscribe themselves as masculine” (219) and create “alternate depictions in which disabled masculinity is redefined, repurposed,

and rethought” (220), are comparable to a combination of Gerschick and Miller’s response of reformulating and rejecting hegemonic masculinity.

While the research of Gerschick and Miller as well as Torrell theoretically support the following analyses, this chapter goes a step further. Torrell argues that analysing traditional literary and cinematic “cultural icons” of disabled masculinity – such as Richard III, Tiny Tim, Captain Hook, Darth Vader, etc. (with which she begins her analysis) – reveals “what potential alternate readings of disabled masculinity can occur when the reconstructions of masculinity are considered alongside the representation of disability” (222). However, such analyses need to be seen in the respective medium’s individual sociohistorical context and the respective understanding of disability and masculinity. For example, twentieth-century representations of disabled masculinity (and respectively also masculine disability) differ from nineteenth-century representations. Turning the focus from past to present, the following chapter focuses contemporary examples of male disabled characters to elaborate on twenty-first-century assumptions of disabled masculinity and see how such fictional representations potentially shape our current and future understanding of disability, masculinity and masculine disability in fictional and real-life contexts. Although Torrell’s as much as Gerschick and Miller’s observations seem to categorise the coming to terms with disabled masculinity, they present only tendencies and not strictly separate methods. Similar to Gerschick and Miller’s coping strategies (290), Torrell highlights that her patterns are neither “exhaustive” nor “mutually exclusive” (222). Furthermore, Robertson and Smith emphasise that Gerschick and Miller’s patterns are “not seen as fixed” and that “disabled men move into and out of different strategies at different places and times” (80). Torrell’s and Gerschick and Miller’s patterns are phases of the coping process a (newly) disabled man or character undergoes. Therefore, it is likely that all interviewees of Gerschick and Miller’s research pass through all phases as they come to terms with their respective disabilities, with some possibly needing longer than others to move on to the next phase and some remaining in one of the phases. Similarly, male disabled characters potentially confirm and negate aspects of all four patterns depending on various factors. This understanding even broadens the “continuum of available gender and ability identifications” (Torrell 222) as it presents gender embodiments as fluid, changeable and adaptable. Applying this understanding to the genre of detective fiction, the following chapter scrutinises how physically impaired masculinity challenges, destabilises and even undermines the genre’s inherent association of the detective (and his masculinity) with ability and capability by following the disabled detective’s development from disabled masculinity to masculine disability.

The term ‘masculine disability’ combines the reformulation and rejection of hegemonic masculinity (Gerschick and A. S. Miller; Gerschick, “Sisyphus in a Wheelchair”; Gerschick, “The Body, Disability, and Sexuality”) in order to develop “a flexible gender identity” (Shuttleworth 175) and to “locat[e] the self in alternative versions of masculinity and mov[e] beyond gender expectations” (Torrell 213). In terms of physical disability, it implies the “gendered nature of disabled men’s varied social interactions, how these are shaped and also how they themselves act to shape and (re)form social structures and institutions” (Robertson and Brett Smith 83). Masculine disability recognises that, by consciously reflecting social expectations of masculinity and redefining them with regard to their own abilities, men with physical impairments develop from disabled masculinity to masculine disability. Instead of focusing on their disability as a devaluation of their masculinity, they accept their physical impairment as part of their masculinity and appreciate it as a chance to positively counterbalance hegemonic masculinity. Hence, they can be role models for other men who feel pressured by social standards of hegemonic masculinity (Gerschick, “Sisyphus in a Wheelchair” 208; Shakespeare, “The Sexual Politics of Disabled Masculinity” 64) and encourage them to come to terms with their physical impairment.

The following chapter analyses how disabled masculinity is negotiated in the genre of detective fiction. Cultural representations of disabled fictional characters not only deliver a story about how the disability occurred (Bérubé, “Disability and Narrative” 570) but they also present the emotional aftermath of the disabling accident in professional and private terms. In addition to being questioned as a “figure of achievement” (Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 63-64), the disabled detective investigates not only the central crime but also struggles with coming to terms with his disability (Mintz 114; Murray, “Neurotecs” 180). As a result, his ‘dilemma’ of disabled masculinity becomes a ‘mystery’ of disabled masculinity for the (assumedly able-bodied) reader, who is confronted with an unfamiliar physical condition. Experiencing the world through the eyes of the protagonist and other characters (such as the female sidekick), the reader’s perspective alternates between an inside and outside perspective on the protagonist’s physical impairment, through which he or she identifies with able-bodied and disabled characters. The fictional stories follow the detective’s journey from initially rejecting the physical condition to finally accepting it.<sup>142</sup> In this development, disability is presented as an insurmountable obstacle which needs to be overcome for the detective to feel

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<sup>142</sup> Similarly, Hafferty and Foster observe that a “character with a physical disability follows a normative pattern from bitterness and self-pity to self-acceptance and emotional adjustment” (187), which includes a sort of resolution for the protagonist’s struggle and closure for the reader.

masculine again. He often achieves this by compensating for his physical lack and by relying on his cognitive capabilities, which turns the novel into a “compensation narrative”, a popular way of reading stories on physical disability (e.g. Murray, “Neurotecs” 180; Mintz 97; Pâquet 206). Therefore, “the disabled detective both reinforces the stereotype (brain at work) and confounds the stereotype” of being considered an object rather than a subject as a disabled person (Jakubowicz and Meekosha). Eventually, however, approaching masculine disability, the disability proves to be no obstacle but the essential means through which the crime is solved, and masculinity is re-established.

These observations are demonstrated on three examples of contemporary detective fiction. First, Jeffery Deaver’s Lincoln Rhyme is probably the most popular example of a disabled detective. Contributing to the broad research on this long-running series, the chapter’s focus on masculine disability in *The Bone Collector* emphasises the ambivalent representations of gender. The different embodiments of gender-stereotypical characteristics of side characters complement Rhyme’s oscillation between independence and dependence. Second, Robert Galbraith’s series on Cormoran Strike presents the most recent example of a disabled detective, which is not yet fully recognised in academic research. Featuring a veteran detective with a prosthetic leg, *The Cuckoo’s Calling* not only opens the discussion about ‘heroic’ masculine disability but also invites the reader to reflect how a war veteran is reintegrated into society and how he hides his disability so as to be perceived as able-bodied and masculine. Third, as a hybrid of the detective and the romance genre, the dime novel *Blind Curve* by Annie Solomon partly reproduces stereotypes of gender representations. Telling the story of Danny Sinofsky experiencing an accident which leaves him blind, the novel presents how the protagonist negotiates his identity by compensating his visual impairment with hypersexuality. Drawing on Gerschick and Miller’s patterns of negotiation and Torrell’s patterns of literary representation, the following chapter argues that the disabled detective’s reliance on his masculinity prior to the disabling accident causes the struggle with his disabled masculinity. The central crime and the female sidekick encourage the disabled detective to negotiate his development in order to resist and reformulate hegemonic characteristics of masculinity. At the same time, the chapter focuses on how the female sidekick develops from a professional to a romantic partner and supports the physically impaired detective’s negotiation of (implicit and explicit) sexuality. All three novels highlight that the detectives’ individual processes vary and exhibit different perceptions and negotiations of masculine (dis)ability.

## 5.1 Lincoln Rhyme: The Detective, the Man, the Quadriplegic

Lincoln Rhyme, a quadriplegic former forensic criminalist, is the protagonist of Jeffery Deaver's U.S. crime-thriller stories. This ongoing series currently consists of fifteen novels.<sup>143</sup> The first instalment, *The Bone Collector*, has been turned into a Hollywood movie and a television adaptation called *Lincoln Rhyme: Hunt for the Bone Collector*.<sup>144</sup> As a novel, *The Bone Collector* introduces and follows Rhyme and his assistant and later lover Amelia Sachs, a former fashion model turned police detective, as they chase the eponymous villain in a police procedural in contemporary New York. Along the way, the novel presents Rhyme's conflicts with his physically impaired body and his wish for (assisted) suicide to end these struggles, which he eventually overcomes by focusing on his professional agency and adapting it to his quadriplegia.

In literary disability studies, the Lincoln Rhyme series ranks among the most popular texts and is often the first association of disability in crime fiction. It is subject to several recent analyses on the intersectionality of disability and detection, which predominantly focus on the compensating potential of Rhyme's mind for his disabled body (e.g. Jakubowicz and Meekosha; Murray, "Neurotecs"; Foreman; Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre*; Mintz). Andrew Jakubowicz and Helen Meekosha are among the first researchers to receive *The Bone Collector* from an academic perspective. They understand "Deaver's use of disability as both a device to distinguish Rhyme from the mass of other detectives, and [...] of wider social metaphors of disability to explore angst and meaning in contemporary society", through which they read Rhyme as what Mitchell and Snyder call a 'narrative prosthesis'. Without elaborating on such metaphors, they superficially touch on three aspects: first, Rhyme's oscillation between the desires to live and die; second, the constant interaction of mind and body, respectively embodied by Rhyme himself and Amelia Sachs; and third, the disabled detective as a "supercrip" in that "those small parts of his physical body that still operate to the command of his mind, are pumped up to superhuman levels".<sup>145</sup> Cheyne criticises Jakubowicz and Meekosha

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<sup>143</sup> While the following chapter focuses on *The Bone Collector*, the first novel of the series, it also provides references to Deaver's *The Coffin Dancer*, *The Empty Chair*, *The Stone Monkey* and *The Midnight Lock*.

<sup>144</sup> In the Hollywood movie adaptation, Lincoln Rhyme is portrayed by Denzel Washington, whose Afro-American origins seemingly add to Rhyme's marginalised masculinity as they enforce the character's outsider status of a disabled with an ethnic minority. Interestingly, the TV adaptation takes up on this 'additional' marginalisation by casting Russell Hornsby as Rhyme. Several scholars have analysed the movie adaptation in terms of black masculinity and disability (e.g. Gates, *Detecting Men*; Cheu and Tyjewski; Steenberg). However, this dissertation refers to these papers only when their analysis of the Hollywood adaptation allows similar conclusions for Deaver's novel.

<sup>145</sup> The term 'supercrip' is often used in relation to "concepts of overcoming, heroism, inspiration, and the extraordinary" while such readings suggest that "all effects of disability can be erased if one merely works hard enough" (Schalk 73). They "emphasize (over) compensation for the perceived 'lack' created by disability" and

for reading of Rhyme as a “supercrip” and emphasises that, even without this “unproductive” reading (*Disability, Literature, Genre* 63), the disabled detective is a figure of achievement. In her analysis, she focuses on the affective potential of Rhyme’s disability on the reader, especially his suicidal determination. Cheyne argues that these characteristics challenge the reader’s wish for closure as that would mean Rhyme’s death. However, despite numerous potential connections, she neglects a specific connection to gender, especially masculinity, in the “metanarrative of [Rhyme’s] quadriplegia” (*Disability, Literature, Genre* 60). Mintz analyses “how disabled detection territorializes space” (117) and, thus, merges professional and private spheres in terms of space and social interaction as demonstrated in Rhyme and Amelia’s cooperation and unique approach to investigating a crime scene. Despite frequent references to Mintz’s work, the following chapter relativises her argument that Rhyme “has the stamina, grit, and courage to contest the dual ‘problems’ of both his body and crime” (114). These characteristics are not apparent in Rhyme from the beginning but rather result from his development towards accepting his impairment. Foreman dedicates an entire chapter of her dissertation on the first four novels of Deaver’s series. She includes numerous aspects of Rhyme’s disability, such as the ethics behind his suicidal wish, his professional and romantic (in later novels even sexual) relationship with Amelia, their different narrative perspectives and exchange of power structures and even the Hollywood adaptation. Although she includes several aspects of Rhyme’s negotiation of his masculinity in light of his disability, Foreman focuses on his potential to contribute to society and neglects Rhyme’s negotiation of his masculine identity.

Although these texts provide promising connections to gender as an additional category in the intersection of detection and disability, they do not focus on this particular intersection. Apart from presenting how the detective’s disability enables his investigative agency, *The Bone Collector* also focuses on Rhyme’s three different identities as a quadriplegic, a detective and a heterosexual man. They are interdependent but, to Rhyme, seem mutually exclusive. Throughout the chase of the bone collector, the hierarchy between these identities changes as the novel demonstrates how professional agency and success can support the disabled detective’s masculine identity. In the first part of the novel, Rhyme predominantly perceives himself as a quadriplegic and his masculinity suffers from his immobility and dependence as

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“set unreal expectations for people with disabilities to ‘overcome’ the effects of their disabilities” (74). Therefore, Sami Schalk re-evaluates the term by suggesting to understand the supercrip “as a narrative with specific mechanisms and types that can vary by genre and medium” (84). Differentiating three forms of the supercrip narrative – the regular, glorified and superpowered supercrip narrative – Schalk does not reject the concept of the supercrip but emphasises that its use should be carefully considered.

he clings to his pre-accident identity and his (hegemonically) masculine ideals. However, the professional engagement prioritises his detective identity while Amelia, as the (female) companion, also appeals to his heterosexual self. Both the profession and the female sidekick encourage him to accept the disability as a part of his professional and personal identity as a man. In addition to the seeming contrast between masculinity and disability presented in Rhyme, ambivalent gender representations of the male carer Thom and, more importantly, of Amelia further support Rhyme in recognising the masculine characteristics of his disability. The following chapter analyses how Rhyme develops from relying on hegemonic characteristics of masculinity (Gerschick and A. S. Miller 191-199) to reformulating them according to his disability-induced abilities (187), through which he achieves a form of masculine disability. At the same time, changing perspectives between Rhyme's and Amelia's third-person narrative perspectives alternately offer internal and external perceptions of Rhyme's disability and masculinity. While Foreman considers the perspective of "multiple characters" to highlight "the complex and dispersed ways in which disability is constructed" (115-116), this dissertation focuses on the perspectives of Rhyme, the male disabled protagonist, and Amelia, the female able-bodied sidekick. These most contrasting perspectives render the characters' (gender) representation more nuanced and ambivalent than previous research suggests.

### **5.1.1 A Life to Die For**

In the first part of *The Bone Collector*, Rhyme's identity as a quadriplegic eclipses not only his professional but also private identity. His first appearance, the revelation of his disability with its medical details and his attitude towards his immobile body show Rhyme in constant reliance on the professional and masculine identity he displayed before the accident, which peaks in his wish to commit suicide. Accompanying his quadriplegia, the issues of dependence on his carer Thom, lack of privacy and social treatment of infantilisation and emasculation cause significant struggles in terms of (masculine) identity and his understanding of his worth as a (social) human being.

Before his disabling accident, Lincoln Rhyme's work primarily shaped his identity. As head of the Central Investigation and Resource Division of the New York Police Department (BC 24), his extraordinary skills and unusual techniques in "draw[ing] brilliant conclusions from extremely subtle clues" (Mintz 97) found at the crime scene guaranteed his colleagues' appreciation as "'the world's foremost criminalist'" (BC 63). His methods decisively influenced young police trainees' education because – having published a manual on his

methods – “he literally wrote the book” (Mintz 114). He used to be a loner at work as he preferred to analyse the crime scene on his own (BC 53), experiencing it with all senses (103). He was a “manic pacer” when thinking (171) and walking the city to catalogue potential evidence standards in order to locate the next perpetrator more quickly (85-86). Rhyme appropriated the city’s and the crime scene’s space in a peculiar and *mobile* way that combined the detailed observation and systematic research of facts with intuitive reasoning. His ambitious, goal-oriented and impatient nature earned him professional reputation because of his success in identifying bodies (85) and because he was driven by the excellence of his mind, which was as “[s]harp as a razor” (259). Further references to Rhyme’s (former) personality describe him as invincible (259), “remarkable” and “invulnerable” (442). His embodiment of “an invincible force of truth and justice” (Mintz 116) culminates in Rhyme’s competitiveness, professional authority and success, which defines his self-perception as a man. At the same time, this competitive perfectionism might be the result of one dominant mistake, which is revealed towards the end of the novel and retrospectively explains Rhyme’s ambitious nature. In one of his cases, Rhyme failed to read the crime scene properly as he overlooked the hidden perpetrator. The result was a random shooting, in which Dr Colin Stanton was forced to witness his family’s death (BC 348-349). Now, in the current case, Stanton becomes the bone collector and seeks revenge on Rhyme for this experience (440-441). Rhyme’s perfectionism can thus be interpreted as a compensation for an irreversible mistake. He tries to avoid repeating such a failure and lives with the guilt of the consequences. Nevertheless, confirming socioeconomic research (Gerschick, “Sisyphus in a Wheelchair” 19), the resulting competitiveness and ambition allow the conclusion that Rhyme negotiated his masculine identity in light of hegemonic ideals of masculinity before his accident.

The disabling accident happened three and a half years previous to the plot and demonstrates to Rhyme that, while his mind might be “invulnerable” (BC 442), his body is not. The accident was an “unintentional, undesirable” event (J. C. Anderson 17). As a genuinely life-changing experience, it divided Rhyme’s sense of self into ‘before’ and ‘after’ the accident (see also Foreman 97-98). The resulting quadriplegia replaces his mind as his predominant characteristic. He becomes “more embodied because of his impairment” (Foreman 109; see also Mintz 100) as it draws attention to his body on which his life centres now. The accident and the quadriplegia raise Rhyme’s (new) awareness for the fragility of physical health, implied in the term ‘temporarily able-bodied’ (A. Hall, *Literature and Disability* 168; *emphasis A.S.K.*). The novel recreates the accident through flashbacks and conscious reflections during Rhyme’s coping process. He remembers how a wooden beam crashed down on him during the

investigation of a crime scene, damaging his spine cord and leaving him quadriplegic below the shoulders (BC 38). Although he is able to move his neck (33) and left ring finger (38), he is still dependent on the around-the-clock support of his carer Thom. Thom manages Rhyme's everyday hygienic issues, such as catheterising (36), massaging (136-137) and shaving (203), and is ready to expertly treat Rhyme in medical emergencies, such as fits of autonomic dysreflexia (317-321). These unpredictable fits of “[p]ounding heartbeat, off-the-charts blood pressure, raging headaches” due to stress (39) turn his body even more unreliable and present an additional vulnerability, which disrupts Rhyme's intense deductions (316-317). Immediately after the accident, Rhyme depends on technology even in terms of breathing, a usually “autonomic, largely unconscious” action (Mintz 113). Since “[c]hanges to bodily functions [...] place the individual in a position analogous to childhood” and, thus, in a “social location that is presexual” (Manderson and Peake 232), the emasculating and infantilising consequences to such treatments are almost inherent. Suddenly, Rhyme's passive body contrasts his active mind.

The medical details to Rhyme's quadriplegia emphasise how being a quadriplegic suppresses his detective identity. Specifying his physical condition in a matter-of-fact tone, these medical details “make disability explicit” (Foreman 91). They contextualise Rhyme's body within a medical framework (95) and emphasise how much a quadriplegic's life is dominated by medical discourse (BC 65). Counterbalancing, for example, Jakubowicz and Meekosha's analysis of Rhyme's body as a narrative prosthesis – as a metaphor for “the fragmented identity of contemporary urban worlds, in which the desire for life is constantly threatened by random violence and omnipresent danger” – these medical details underline the very materiality of Rhyme's disabled body. A quadriplegic body is “flesh that must be washed, bones that ache” while “[a] runny nose on a quadriplegic demands mention” (Mintz 100; see also Foreman 109), a situation which is “fucking torture” to Rhyme (BC 29). The accident changed his professional and private life physically and emotionally, as it turned him from ‘a mind’ to ‘a body’. The impairment deprives him of his physical prowess to pursue his job (78), destroys his marriage and fundamentally disrupts his masculine identity. Similar to Rhyme, his colleagues, too, divide the detective's biography into ‘before’ and ‘after’ the accident (see also Mintz 98; Foreman 98): “In the old days, before his accident, you couldn't beat Rhyme if he didn't want to get beat. And you couldn't fool him either” (BC 259); “Now, he was a busted toy” (259). Such comments express pity and regret over Rhyme's fate, which opposes his previous invincibility. While his extraordinary mind predominated his able-bodied (self-)

perception, Rhyme's disabled body characterises his quadriplegic self, which is incompatible with his former understanding of himself.

Despite such emphasis on the detective's body, the novel introduces his quadriplegia only gradually and keeps the reader ignorant of Rhyme's disability until about twenty pages into the plot. Increasingly precise statements about his situation prepare the revelation of his quadriplegia. During a visit from two of his former detective colleagues – Lon Sellitto and Jerry Banks, who engage Rhyme in a case – Rhyme's third-person narrative perspective hints at his physical condition, mentioning "spinal cord specialists" (BC 17), and observes that he has been wearing the same pyjama for a week (18-19). In addition to explicit suggestions of "disposable adult diapers", the visitors' "shock" at the sight of "the *creature* Lincoln Rhyme" (23; *emphasis A.S.K.*) and references to the uncomfortableness of health-related questions (25), the impending meeting with a doctor for "[a] new form of treatment", Banks's blushing at the sight of Rhyme's legs and finally his carer Thom's infantilising attitude towards his employer (26) contribute to the observation that Lincoln Rhyme's mobility is impaired. The explicit solution comes through an intensified focus on Rhyme's body, whose "*atrophying* had stopped not long after the *accident*" while "his *physical therapists* had exhausted him with exercise" (27; *emphasis A.S.K.*). These hints are closely followed by mentions of "ROM [range of motion] exercises" and "spasticity". They culminate in the observation that "[f]or someone whose muscular activities had been limited to his shoulders, head and left ring finger for three and a half years, Lincoln Rhyme wasn't in such bad shape" (27). The reader has to put in some cognitive effort to understand the hints about Rhyme's physical condition until its explicit revelation. This engagement reflects what Hafferty and Foster term a "disability-in-action" approach, which enables the reader "to 'see' rather than 'hear about' the impairment in question with the author embedding the impairment in some sequence of actions" (191) or, in Rhyme's case, a description. Finally, explicitly calling himself a "quad", i.e. a quadriplegic (BC 27), Rhyme names his condition as quadriplegia and, thus, contextualises his physical constitution in the respective medical framework.

While Sellitto knows about Rhyme's constitution, Banks does not, which reflects the (assumed able-bodied) reader's ignorance and his or her potential reaction to meeting a quadriplegic person. Although Rhyme's third-person perspective is limited in terms of Banks's thoughts at seeing the quadriplegic body lying in a highly technological bed (BC 31), he follows Banks's shocked – and at the same time fascinated – staring at the unfamiliar sight of the quadriplegic body. Staring, "an interrogative gesture that asks what's going on and demands the story [of how the disability occurred]" (Garland-Thomson, *Staring* 3), makes the starer try

“to recognize what seems illegible, order what seems unruly, know what seems strange” (3) and, thereby, familiarise this “spectacle of otherness” (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 8) presented in the quadriplegic body. Although reflecting the first encounter with a disabled person through the perspective of the disabled person himself could enable a more inclusive perception of the disability, Rhyme uses terms such as “surprise and discomfort”, “shock”, “creature” (BC 23) and observes Banks’s blushing (26), which direct and shape the reader’s response to the quadriplegic body. They imply a discriminating, depreciating perception and, thus, enforce the image of disability as pitiful and ‘other’, which is “not an objective truth” but reflects “Rhyme’s feelings about himself” (Foreman 98) and which he assumes to be mirrored in Banks’s surprise.<sup>146</sup> Rhyme’s interpretation of his colleague’s reaction includes “fear, pity, fascination, repulsion, or merely surprise, none of which is expressible according to social protocol” (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 12) since it would result in an intrusive objectification of the disabled person. In this case, unlike suggested in the disability-in-action approach by Hafferty and Foster (191), the reader has no authority over interpreting this scene. Instead, he or she is invited to reflect on whether to share or reject Rhyme’s depreciative perception of himself, which reveals the detective’s frustration at his physical impairment and, presenting him as a “creature” (BC 23), his little self-esteem in terms of (masculine) identity.

Additionally, such insights draw attention to the general social treatment Rhyme experiences from (able-bodied) people. He hates it when they are “walking on eggshells” (BC 264) because of their insecurity and inexperience of interacting with people with impairments. Amelia Sachs, for example, quickly realises that she hates Rhyme because of his patronising behaviour towards her during their cooperation but reprimands herself because “[i]t’s wrong to hate a cripple” (98). His quadriplegic status exhorts her to use a (politically correct) tactful, respectful, supportive language and maintain a friendly opinion of and attitude towards Rhyme to avoid offending him. However, it is such enforced respectful behaviour (Foreman 97) which

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<sup>146</sup> The scene reflects the potentially tense situation of an able-bodied person meeting a quadriplegic person for the first time as he or she is unsure about how to behave. Garland-Thomson argues that it is up to the disabled person who “must use charm, intimidation, ardour, deference, humor, or entertainment to relieve nondisabled people of their discomfort” (*Extraordinary Bodies* 13). While Rhyme mainly intimidates his colleagues during the plot, the initial relief of the inexperienced visitor and the reader comes through a comment from Rhyme’s colleague and friend Lon Sellitto. Complaining to Rhyme about the dustiness of the room, Sellitto asks: “‘Why don’t you get off your lazy ass and clean this pigsty up?’” (BC 30). Pulling Rhyme’s (quadriplegic) leg, Sellitto disguises his insecurity about how to behave with a joke, mentioning the ‘elephant in the room’ of Rhyme’s quadriplegia – a joke, Sellitto assumes, his friend will laugh about. However, Rhyme “squelche[s] [a] burst of laughter” (30) and, thus, comically relieves the situation only to the reader. As a result, instead of relieving his colleagues of their discomfort, Rhyme maintains a tough and unapproachable appearance as he avoids social connections due to his forthcoming suicide.

makes Rhyme feel that people treat him as a different person because of his impairment. He frequently refers to himself and identifies as a “crip”, short for ‘cripple’ (e.g. BC 36-37, 209, 240). The term presents “an informal, affectionately ironic, and provocative identification among people with disabilities” and “a relaxed, confident claiming of difference” (V. A. Lewis 46). Without the “‘tyranny of euphemism’” (BC 44), the term describes Rhyme’s physical condition with straight accuracy. It reflects his fact-oriented nature as a criminal forensic and preference for a “blunt language”, through which he takes “a personal stance on disability by asserting that some description of disability is correct” (Foreman 97) and (re)claims some dignity. Rhyme’s deliberate use of the term invites his social surrounding to do so as well and avoid overcautious behaviour.<sup>147</sup> Wishing for honest conversation as adults on equal terms, he wants people to “tell [him he was] a jerk when [he acted] like one” (BC 264) and “take the gloves off when they fight a with a crip” (124). He gets “infuriated” when non-disabled people “talk to him through others, through *healthy* people”, as, for example, Amelia does upon their first meeting (66). Instead of directing her speech to Rhyme himself, she addresses Thom, the carer, as a mediator between herself and Rhyme as the disabled. This behaviour results from able-bodied people’s “frequent assumption that a disability cancels out other qualities” (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 12), such as sanity (Dolmage 46). As “[c]rippled means defective, [...] limited locomotion may be said to strike at the core of legitimate adulthood as defined by standing on one’s own two feet” (Mintz 96). Therefore, Amelia’s behaviour not only “explicitly den[ies] him power because of his impairment” (Foreman 126), it also robs Rhyme of his adult status and his mind. Consequently, both aspects infantilise Rhyme as a disabled person and deprive him of authority, agency and adult masculinity.

At the beginning of the novel, Rhyme states that “[a] quad’s life is wires [...]. The rich ones, at least. The lucky ones” (BC 27). Indeed, he is “lucky” since he has been paid three million dollars by the construction company in whose building Rhyme experienced the disabling accident (42). This sum pays for Thom’s around-the-clock care, the apartment on New York City’s Upper West Side “overlooking Central Park” (18) and the technological devices which keep him alive. Although “[t]he extent to which Rhyme’s wealth minimizes the effects of a disabling social environment is largely unacknowledged, as are the privileges he enjoys as a white, middle-class, heterosexual male” (Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 57-58), the financial compensation also becomes a metaphorical compensation. Counterbalancing

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<sup>147</sup> His straightforward use of the term “crip” also creates comical effects. When Amelia struggles to find the (politically) correct word for her “‘friend who was challenged’”, Rhyme supports her by stating: “‘You mean he was a *crip*

the restricted mobility and the reader's negative impression of Rhyme's physical condition, the detective is 'at least' rich enough to afford the best possible lifestyle with his condition. Thus, Deaver creates fortunate circumstances through which he conveys a romanticised and unrealistic image of living with quadriplegia.

The expensive technology attached to Rhyme's body has ambivalent effects on him. On the one hand, it allows him not only comfort, as the bed and mattress are designed to comfort his quadriplegic body most efficiently (BC 37), it also allows him a little independence and autonomy. He can use a phone (239) and control a computer and electronic control unit with his left ring finger, the only body part following his brain's command (27). Additionally, a "sip-and-puff control for his mouth, the chin joysticks, and the computer dictation unit that could type out words on the screen as he spoke them" (41) allow him, for example, to write letters without assistance (25) and go through documents with a "page-turning frame" (29). However, somebody has to arrange everything for Rhyme to reach (41), which again restricts his independence.

On the other hand, although parts of this technological equipment are necessary to monitor and control Rhyme's physical functions to keep him alive, they also put a usually highly intimate affair on public display. The technological devices visualise issues like Rhyme's urine function (e.g. 36, 341), which essentially limits his privacy as they invite not only his doctors' medical gaze but also his visitor's curious gaze towards his immobile body.<sup>148</sup> However, "[o]ne of the first things crips get over is modesty" and, thus, Rhyme is used to the "halfhearted effort at draping – shrouding the body when cleaning, evacuating and examining" (36-37). Additionally, the wires attached to his body make Rhyme appear like a 'puppet on strings', an object with no power or authority of its own, which metaphorically emphasises his dependence on Thom. Although "wires are now part of a new body" as they keep him alive, "Rhyme's response to the wires portrays a belief in an authentic, natural body", which rejects wires as "artificial and external, and he does not want to depend on them" (Foreman 96). On the one hand, his specific form of quadriplegia allows him to move his head (BC 33), through which he can be autonomous in certain situations. On the other hand, Rhyme rejects the "[t]oo many fucking wires" (90) as they turn him into a "spectacle of otherness" (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 8), which he abhors (although he later uses a wheelchair for the

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<sup>148</sup> When Amelia assists Thom in treating Rhyme during a fit of autonomic dysreflexia, she witnesses how public the life of a quadriplegic actually is. Holding Rhyme's penis while Thom injects a drug to ease the fit has nothing to do with sexual attraction (BC 319). It is a medical intimacy which draws her attention to Rhyme's corporeality instead of his mind and, in light of their increasingly romantic relationship, allows her an insight into living with a quadriplegic, in which such medical interferences are daily routine.

investigations, Rhyme maintains this reluctance to being stared at). The technology visually emphasises the fact that “[m]obility impairment cannot be overlooked” and that the “unmoving body, the body rooted in house/chair/bed [is] emphatically *noticed*” (Mintz 98). In order to avoid such notice, Rhyme prefers to stay home and enjoys “nestling his head against his two-hundred-dollar pillow” as one of the “so few sensuous pleasures left to him” (BC 33). He prioritises the physical comfort of his bed and the emotional comfort of avoiding able-bodied people’s stares over more autonomy, which gives insight into his level of ‘surrender’ to his limited mobility at the beginning of the plot.

The mobility impairment has also terminated his marriage. Being married to his wife for about seven years, their relationship lacked intensity, probably due to Rhyme’s dedication to his work (Jakubowicz and Meekosha), and seems to have been foremost established on sexual intercourse: “Sex is a messy business to start with and when you add catheters and bags to the equation you need a lot of stamina and humor and a better foundation than they’d had” (BC 123). However, although Rhyme’s disability might have added to their break-up, it was his wife’s “pity” which “stabbed him in the heart” (123) and caused Rhyme himself to file for divorce. This act protected his wife from the guilt to leave a husband in need and, at the same time, underlined Rhyme’s claim to agentic masculinity by protecting himself from being an object of pity. Had his wife filed for divorce, he would have been perceived as the weak, vulnerable ‘crip’ whose wife left him because she could not cope with his physical condition. Such actions would have emasculated not only his personal but also his public identity. Ending the relationship himself spared him such discrimination and allowed him to maintain his masculine self-worth.

Rhyme’s characteristic of keeping his struggles with his disabled masculinity private further contributes to his masculine self-esteem. Revealing his crisis to the reader only through reflections of his current situation and reminiscences of the accident as well as its aftermath (BC 37-41), Rhyme denies the constraints that the quadriplegia presents for his masculinity in interactions with other characters. Confirming the image of the silently suffering man bearing up against pain, Rhyme carefully selects which information to share and whom to “spare” his medical history (38-39). Calling this episode of his life a “soap opera” (38), he downplays what he has gone through to stay alive. It seems that, to Rhyme, telling the story of his quadriplegia (and suffering) comes equal to chitchatting, a pastime usually associated with femininity. Talking about such experiences of physical vulnerability, weakness and dependence reflects the stereotypical male fear of admitting even more weakness and vulnerability than is already apparent in his immobile body and contradicts his idea of masculinity. Instead, attempting to

counterbalance his passivity, Rhyme emphasises his persistency. He conveys to the reader that it is “thanks to his own mulish nature and his therapists’ herculean efforts” that he is able to breathe on his own again, without a ventilator (38). He highlights that he now has “a pair of lungs on him that he bet could keep him underwater for five minutes” (38). Such an estimation alludes to Rhyme as a supercrip and suggests hypermasculinity – “Lincoln Rhyme, the crip with the killer lungs” (51) – because his lungs seemingly provide him with ‘superhuman’ powers (which will prove supportive later on). Rhyme underlines his resilient and persevering character and the effort he put into rehabilitating some bodily self-control and, hence, focuses on masculine characteristics during the recovery.

However, contrasting the supercrip narrative, his achievements are not as heroic as some researchers display them. Although his powerful lungs will save his life in the final confrontation with the villain, Rhyme himself does not understand them as ‘superhuman’. He puts their power into perspective as his lungs “are as strong as [Amelia’s]” and underlines that “[i]n a C4 quad that’s one for the books” (335). His efforts may seem to be “heroic, adult, and deliberate, requiring concentration and a sense of the future” (Mintz 113), but, from his perspective, this merely explains that he can breathe as well as non-disabled people, without mechanical assistance.<sup>149</sup> Although “it seems especially important to cast his breathing in terms of domination over some part of his body [...] wrestling his body into some form of obedience to his masterful resolve” (Mintz 113), Rhyme presents his breathing as a “mundane achievement” (Schalk 79; see also Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 64): “‘Eight months just to handle a basic animal function. I’m not talking about painting the Sistine Chapel or playing the violin. I’m talking about fucking *breathing*’” (BC 335). Despite his resilient, strong character and the extraordinary capacity of his lungs, Rhyme’s devaluation of his success and his persistence in committing suicide underline his shattered sense of masculinity.

Considering Gerschick and Miller’s phases of negotiating masculinity, Rhyme is stuck in relying on his (masculine) identity before the accident. Clinging to his internalised ideals of hegemonic masculinity, Rhyme believes physical integrity to be a necessary requirement for masculine identity as it legitimates his claim to autonomy, independence and authority (Gerschick and A. S. Miller 191-199) and enables his success in his profession as a detective. Through his damaged self-esteem after the accident, Rhyme not only considers quadriplegia “an inferior identity” (Foreman 97-98). He also believes that his impaired body prevents him

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<sup>149</sup> These aspects support Cheyne’s argument that Rhyme alludes to “all three narrative types” of the supercrip (*Disability, Literature, Genre* 64). His lung capacity may exceed even able-bodied people’s, due to which Jakubowicz and Meekosha read Rhyme as a glorified supercrip. However, Rhyme’s devaluating this effort as he ‘merely’ reaches a basic (abled-bodied) standard presents him rather as a regular supercrip.

from gaining significant achievements for himself and his social surroundings. Additionally, he mourns the fact that his quadriplegia makes it impossible for him to practise his accustomed investigative methods, such as pacing and experiencing the crime scene with all senses. As his masculine identity was so fundamentally characterised by his work and success, Lincoln Rhyme's 'post-accident' masculinity is undeniably shattered as he cannot reconcile his identity with the impairment. Although using more technological devices could support his independence, he refuses them as he is eager to maintain his masculine autonomy and control over his own body as much as possible. Frustration, anger and bad temper at not being able to embody the detective and the man he was before the accident define his character in most of the series' first book. Confirming the traditional pattern of representing male, disabled characters, Rhyme understands his disabled masculinity as "pathetic, weak, exiled, asexual", which – in his understanding – forces him to "live alone or off of the charity of others" (Torrell 217). Therefore, instead of negotiating his masculinity in light of his disability, as suggested by Gerschick and Miller, the protagonist Rhyme decides for the most drastic way out of this 'misery'. While an unintended accident ended his life as an able-bodied person, he is determined to end his life as a disabled man in an intended and desired act of (assisted) suicide.

Compared to his achievements and success before the accident, Rhyme's current dependence, immobility, vulnerability and passivity present enough reason for him to "coos[e] death, not life" (BC 334). Had he been injured above the fourth cervical, he would have been killed; had he been injured below the fourth, he had become a paraplegic who could use hands and arms; but having been seriously injured to the "infamous fourth" evokes the idea of having had bad luck because it brought the worst of both possibilities: it keeps "him alive though virtually a total quadriplegic" (BC 38). Rhyme's body becomes "a 'destroyed' encumbrance to his identity" (Mintz 113) in private as much as professional terms. It implies that being alive is not enough because the significant restrictions in agency and independence diminish his life quality. Rhyme's perspective presents a "reasonable and realistic" insight into a quadriplegic's struggles with his body and identity (Foreman 98) and emphasises life with quadriplegia as a life not worth living (Jakubowicz and Meekosha; Foreman 102; Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 59; Mintz 112).<sup>150</sup> Apart from "the little things about life [that] were the biggest burdens"

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<sup>150</sup> The affective potential of his suicidal thoughts as a dominant part of the "*metanarrative* of quadriplegia" makes the reader reflect about his or her own opinions on (assisted) suicide with a disability and fear closure which would mean Rhyme's death (Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 59-60). The reader either shares or, in a more productive and inclusive understanding of disability, rejects the devaluating image of Rhyme's physical condition, which creates the tension on which *The Bone Collector* bases its dynamic (see also Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 59). Jay Dolmage summarises suicide as a potential means to escape life with quadriplegia in what he calls the disability myth of "kill-or-cure". As such, "a disabled character will either have to be 'killed or cured' by the

(BC 240), Rhyme wants to escape “the most overwhelming fatigue of all” (54): the lack of autonomy and entire dependence predominantly, but not exclusively, on his carer Thom. Rhyme fears that his physical and mental condition could get worse, for example, leaving him “conscious for forty years and completely unable to move” and depriving him of “all ability to communicate”, which substantiates his decision: “At least now I’m still able to communicate my decisions” (333). With the chance to “surmount [his] own fleshly sel[f]” (Mintz 122), i.e. transcending the physical restrictions, committing suicide would allow Rhyme one last act of authority over his own life.<sup>151</sup> Ironically, he needs support for this act because, although “[e]veryone has the right to kill himself”, Rhyme is aware that his quadriplegia deprives him of the necessary physical mobility (BC 40). Needing assistance to take his own life increases his decision: “[h]e wants to die because he cannot kill himself” (Foreman 101). Apart from the crime’s solution, Rhyme’s planned suicide constitutes the ultimate aim of the novel. Cheyne argues that it presents an “affective misfit” because “[t]he reader’s desire for the case to be solved and closure achieved [...] is unsettled and problematised by a simultaneous desire for the case to remain unsolved, since that means Rhyme will continue to live” (*Disability, Literature, Genre* 59). This misfit not only relates to the affect of genre but also of gender. Rhyme’s suicidal plans contradict generic conventions of the detective as a (masculine) “figure of achievement” (64; see also Foreman 104-105) and a conqueror of adversities (Messent 77). Instead of weathering any obstacles of social or physical deviance and, thus, displaying masculine persistency as a detective, Rhyme’s suicidal plans imply ‘surrender’ to the overwhelming force of his quadriplegic body, whose physical weakness, powerlessness and dependence emasculate him, he believes.

Naturally, other characters not only deny their support in actively killing Rhyme, such as Thom (BC 40), but also try to discourage Rhyme from his suicidal endeavour. Dr Berger, a representant of a pro-euthanasia group on whom Rhyme places all his hopes to assist him with his suicide, highlights Rhyme’s privileged situation (such as his wealth), potential of social contribution and purpose. He emphasises: “If you want one, you could have a, yes, *productive*

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end of any movie or novel in which they appear” because “society views disability as something that must be eradicated in one of these two ways” (39). Similar to Hilary Swank’s character Maggie at the end of Clint Eastwood’s *Million Dollar Baby*, which Dolmage gives as an example, Rhyme considers suicide as the only alternative to being cured. However, although Deaver’s novel alludes to this stereotypical representation of coping with quadriplegia, it resists the ultimate confirmation in that Rhyme eventually abandons his suicidal thoughts.

<sup>151</sup> Foreman (127) and Mintz make a similar point. Mintz argues that the planned suicide is “proof of Rhyme’s ruggedly attractive individuality – this is a man who takes matters into his own hands, even when his left ring finger is the only body part below the neck that he can move, and such a man is one we want on our side in the battle against crime” (112). However, this reading resembles the supercrip narrative as it implies that Rhyme would kill himself to prove his self-reliance, which exaggerates his determination.

life ahead of you. A long life” (46). However, the prospect of a “long life” is precisely what Rhyme fears because it would change neither his physical immobility nor provide him with the (physical) autonomy to act upon his own decisions but rather prolong his ‘misery’. Similarly, his spinal cord specialist Dr Peter Taylor gives prospect for Rhyme to connect to “what it was like before the accident. The good and bad in your life. Happiness, sadness... You can feel that again” (162). At the same time, he also tries to appeal to Rhyme’s fighting spirit by observing that “all I see now is somebody who’s given up” (162). Despite all good intentions of his social surroundings, Rhyme’s decision is made and “the doctor’s words, as valid as they might be, couldn’t overcome the burden of pain and heartache and exhaustion Lincoln Rhyme felt day after day after day” (163). His competitive nature has gone with his physical ability, which proves his ultimate ‘surrender’ to his disabled masculinity. Neither his wealth to afford the expensive technology which gives him (some) autonomy nor a supportive social surrounding can discourage him from ending his life. However, he seems to have underestimated the appeal that an unsolved police mystery and a serial killer on the loose have to his identity as a detective.

### **5.1.2 (Re)Formulating the (Disabled) Detective Identity**

Rhyme’s suicidal plans are interrupted by a new case. His colleagues Sellitto and Banks ask his expertise for the crimes of the bone collector, whose actions trouble the police department (BC 32). Distracting Rhyme from his identity as a quadriplegic and appealing to his identity as a detective, the engagement in the case comes as a turning point in his negotiation of his disabled masculinity and has consequences for his professional as well as private identity (see also Foreman 104-106). While his curiosity for the puzzle makes him accept the responsibility for the case and allows him to pursue his former profession as a criminalist again, ambivalent gender embodiments of other characters and, especially, his cooperation with Amelia Sachs as a female assistant additionally allow him to negotiate his (hetero)sexuality as a man with physical impairment. Although his suicidal plans are not forgotten during the investigations, they are increasingly overshadowed as the case and Amelia support Rhyme in merging his three identities to one identity of a heterosexual detective with quadriplegia and, thus, pace the way for his transition to masculine disability.

#### *5.1.2.1 Curiosity Saved the Cop*

The case of the bone collector requires Lincoln Rhyme’s expertise in reading crime scenes to catch the villain and allows Rhyme to reconnect to his detective identity before the accident.

Although he occasionally sidelines his physical restrictions, his disability cannot be excluded in this undertaking as it accompanies his every move. It reminds Rhyme that he needs to adapt his methods to his physical restrictions, especially as a crime scene expert. Despite looking forward to his suicide, Rhyme's decision to spend his remaining days with investigating a difficult case shows that being a detective and contributing his knowledge still constitutes a significant part of his (masculine) identity. In fact, it initiates the reformulation of his (able-bodied) ideals of detective work and development of his masculine disability in professional terms.

*The Bone Collector* presents several instances in which disability and detection collide. At first, the close examination of Rhyme's quadriplegic body, and thereby of his disability, is interrupted by the case of the bone collector. Sellitto and Banks want Rhyme to read the crime scene report and contribute his knowledge and experience in this particular field to enhance the investigations (BC 32). Then, the arrival of Dr Berger interrupts their discussion of the case and causes Rhyme to dismiss Sellitto and Banks overhastily, despite his growing interest in the case (34-35). As Berger can support Rhyme in killing himself, Rhyme eagerly anticipated the doctor's visit. However, Berger must first check his client's determination and social as well as economic situation in a 'pre-suicidal' discussion, which is why the planned suicide is scheduled two days later. Rhyme avoids exaggerated enthusiasm when talking about his passion for forensics (43) as it would suggest that he has a purpose, something worth living for, which would render him unsuitable for Berger's euthanasia programme. Instead, ignoring Berger's list of reasons to live, Rhyme emphasises his 'miserable' and 'hopeless' situation due to his quadriplegia to underline his steadfast determination to end his life (46). However, the crime scene report Sellitto and Banks left for Rhyme to read distracts him from Berger's pro-living arguments as he realises something his colleagues have overlooked. It sparks "an intellectual itch" and "a twinge of urgency" in Rhyme which announces itself with bodily symptoms similar to a fit of autonomic dysreflexia (45). However, these physical reactions reveal that "Lincoln Rhyme was feeling something he hadn't felt in years. He was in one big fucking hurry" (48). He becomes so passionate about his discovery that he sends Berger away and postpones their discussion as well as his assisted suicide (48) in favour of doing his duty and reporting his enlightenment to his colleagues. Although looking forward to his next (and final) meeting with Berger, Rhyme's curiosity for the case gains the upper hand in this struggle (Jakubowicz and Meekosha) and – at least temporarily – saves him from suicide. Although this decision foreshadows that Rhyme's profession as a detective distracts him from his disability and becomes more important than his personal misery, which characterises his negotiation of his

disabled masculinity, his identity is still torn. The several interventions of disability and detection (Foreman 104) underline the tension in his identity crisis as he struggles to accept the case. He struggles with a proper arrangement of detection and disability and, hence, ‘switches’ between the two identities: the detective back in his field of expertise and the quadriplegic, tired of his restricted life.

Rhyme’s oscillation between his dedication to detective work and his longing for the planned suicide accompanies his coping process. He believes that his identity as a detective is seemingly incompatible with his identity as a man with mobility impairment, which underlines the stereotypical notion that disability and achievement are mutually exclusive (Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 63). His colleagues approach him in a moment of maximum weariness due to his impairment. “Why couldn’t they leave him alone?”, dealing with the “agony he felt in his neck and shoulders”, “the phantom pain [...] roaming through his alien body” or “the exhaustion he felt from the daily struggle to do, well, everything” and “the most overwhelming fatigue of all” of entire dependence on his carer Thom (BC 54). Reflecting this fatigue in an interior monologue, Rhyme fights this battle against his own body for himself, without conveying anything to his colleagues. Upholding the image of the strong man who denies his physical weaknesses, Rhyme does not want to admit that his bodily restrictions could hinder him from professional engagement and potential success. Such would fail the retrieval of his pre-accident identity, including his colleagues’ disappointed expectations to his detective performance.

However, Rhyme’s oscillation ‘settles’ on his professional identity through the appeal of the case and his social environment’s and eventually his own expectation of his professional performance. The case sparks not only his masculine sense of competition but also his curiosity. Resuming his profession, Rhyme could prove once again (before his suicide) that he is the best in his job. Although he initially refuses – “‘Does it seem like I could run a case?’” (BC 52) – Sellitto counters, “‘Not a normal case, no. But this isn’t a very normal one now, is it?’” (53). He emphasises that Rhyme’s extraordinariness matches the extraordinariness of the case and justifies his suitability for the job.<sup>152</sup> Thereby, the trope of “the brilliant detective called out of retirement for one last case” becomes literal due to Rhyme’s planned suicide (Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 58). While Mintz argues that “Rhyme’s limited mobility invites

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<sup>152</sup> In *The Coffin Dancer*, the second instalment of the series, the eponymous villain recognises Rhyme for his physical extraordinariness: “[...] it would take an extraordinary man to catch him” (CD 424). Thereby, he not only connects cognitive and investigative excellence with physical extraordinariness, meaning not the able-bodied norm (see also Foreman 106). The villain also underlines that he considers Rhyme as a worthy opponent, matching his mind, which emphasises the detective’s ability to think like a criminal and further highlights Rhyme’s similarity to the classical detective.

those around him to amend their expectations about what it means to work a case” (116), this chapter argues in the opposite. Rhyme is engaged in the case because his name stands for proper scrutiny of the crime scene, a metonymy for professional excellence (BC 437-438). His colleagues respect him for his expertise, determination and dedication to his profession. Therefore, instead of amending their expectations to his physical constitution, his colleagues rather expect Rhyme to excel in his profession as he always does – regardless of his physical constitution – which ensures an efficient investigation. Sellitto and Banks want Rhyme on the case of the bone collector because he is the best, which allows the conclusion that Rhyme’s social surrounding rather sticks to its expectations of how *Rhyme* works a case.<sup>153</sup> Such a confidence in his skills encourages Rhyme to not only revive his detective identity but also to adapt it to his physical conditions. His quadriplegia presents not just the “*opportunity for collaboration*” (Mintz 115; *emphasis A.S.K.*) but necessitates a team of supportive colleagues who do the physical fieldwork of crime scene investigations. Hence, “initiat[ing] a correction of sorts, to the lone-wolf trope of hard-boiled detection” (116), Rhyme’s impairment does not isolate him but, in this case, rather connects him as it forces social company upon him.<sup>154</sup> By adapting his pre-accident habit of working alone to his physical constitution, Rhyme becomes a part of a team.

In such a team, his knowledge and expertise as well as his restricted physical mobility allow him the distinctive position as the authoritative head of the investigations. While Rhyme previously mourned his entire dependence on his caregiver, he now learns that by, for example, delegating tasks onto his team (Gerschick and A. S. Miller 188), he can achieve a form of independence and authority. The team dutifully accepts his decisions and distribution of tasks (BC 59) as they accelerate the investigations (and the plot). Back in his former profession, Rhyme takes up his former identity as a “forensic authority” (Foreman 126) and a successful detective. Since he was “used to have his own way” (BC 192) before the accident, he now perceives his impairment “an excuse to exaggerate his brusqueness and insist that all respond to his demands” (Jakubowicz and Meekosha), which makes his behaviour and conversational tone all but appreciative. However, when Amelia Sachs, Rhyme’s assistant in the investigations,

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<sup>153</sup> Additionally, the novel’s conclusion reveals that it was police captain Jim Polling who ordered Sellitto and Banks to engage Rhyme. Polling admits that he was so obsessed with catching the criminal of the case back then that he sent Rhyme into the insecure building, in which Rhyme experienced the disabling accident. Polling tries to relieve his guilt by engaging Rhyme in the case of the bone collector, giving him “some of [his] life back” (BC 438). Hence, Rhyme’s professional expertise not only (indirectly) exposed him to the insecure building but also presents the means through which he negotiates professional identity.

<sup>154</sup> Birge (81) and Foreman (123, 180) make a similar point about how characters with neurodiversity and mobility impairment become socially involved.

doubts his authority because of his civilian status, Sellitto reminds her that “[w]e’re *all* reporting to Lincoln Rhyme” (BC 88), which underlines that his team loyally defends Rhyme’s position. They accept that, when they want Rhyme’s expertise, they have to follow his commands as he himself is not able to exercise them himself. He instrumentalises his disability in order to balance the “complicated interaction of power through [the] [...] marginalized position” of a person with quadriplegia (Foreman 125-126). One of such situations of instrumentalised disability comes when Dellray, who temporarily takes the case away from Rhyme and accuses him of having stolen relevant evidence, refuses to leave when Rhyme needs to communicate relevant information to Amelia. Intending to make Dellray leave, Rhyme demands his bath from Thom and thereby instrumentalises his impairment to put Dellray in the uncomfortable position of having to watch a disabled person perform his intimate care if he stayed. The scene demonstrates the first step to Rhyme’s reconciliation of his disability with his profession. Hence, he manages a cognitive shift by focusing on his abilities instead of his inabilities (Gerschick and A. S. Miller 191). Thus, he approaches the masculine ideal of authority through his impairment.

By focusing on his professional (i.e. cognitive) skills instead of his physical restrictions, Lincoln Rhyme becomes a literal, yet reluctant armchair detective. While *The Bone Collector* is a police procedural, its detective protagonist Rhyme “solves a crime through a process of logical deduction, or ratiocination, from the evidence that is presented to him or her by others” (Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* 21) and, thus, resembles classical detectives such as Poe’s Dupin or Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes.<sup>155</sup> Compared to the mind, the body is irrelevant and eclipsed for the

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<sup>155</sup> Being a (reluctant) armchair detective is just one of numerous resemblances between Lincoln Rhyme and Sherlock Holmes (see also Forman). Jeffery Deaver explains that he made Rhyme quadriplegic because of his passion for Sherlock Holmes and, thus, created “a hero whose main tool was an intellect” and who was “pure mind” (Spanberg). Both Rhyme and Holmes are characters “of a mind” (BC 86) for they prefer clear facts and evidence over (emotional) witnesses’ statements (e.g. 139). Similar to Holmes’s mind attic (StS 17), Rhyme ‘walks’ in his head to focus on the evidence (BC 204; EC 369). He can picture the city due to his mental map and his extensive research. Rhyme’s catalogue of soil samples from all over the city enables him (and his colleagues) to locate future evidence more efficiently (e.g. BC 137-138, 382-383) and is reminiscent of Sherlock Holmes’s numerous uses of tobacco ash (SF 8). Similar to Holmes, Rhyme is able to deduce information from the smallest pieces of evidence (Mintz 97). Furthermore, both detectives abhor the boredom of inoccupancy. When Rhyme’s team spreads out to exercise the allocated tasks, he has to wait for them to return with new input to engage his mind again (BC 81). It is in these times of inoccupancy that “his mind slows” and that his “hatred of his body ‘understandably’ resurfaces” which underlines “the typical public perception of the tormented person inside a disabled body” (Jakubowicz and Meekosha). Similar to Sherlock Holmes (SF 6), Rhyme’s mind needs detective work to be distracted from his body (Jakubowicz and Meekosha) and keep his sanity (EC 23, 220). However, while Holmes’s drug consumption in such situations proves his extraordinary control over his body, Rhyme’s longing for suicide when not involved in the investigations rather expresses his desperation due to the lacking control over his body. Rhyme’s unapproachable nature (BC 30) – avoiding social bonding in light of his approaching suicide – again alludes to Holmes’s anti-social qualities. Although not an amateur like Holmes, Rhyme functions as a civilian consultant to the police and, thus, contributes his knowledge and passion to society.

investigations (Foreman 93). While in classical detective stories, the detective's armchair investigations are but another proof of his cognitive excellence, stories on mobility-impaired detectives "mak[e] that trope [of the armchair detective] literal" as the detective's brilliant mind substantiates his "effectiveness as a forensic detective" (Mintz 97). Rhyme's quadriplegic condition turns him into a "detective who can [...] do nothing *but* think" and becomes what Sally R. Munt calls "disembodied ratiocination" (qtd. in Mintz 97). Thereby, Rhyme's brilliant mind compensates for his physical restrictions (e.g. Jakubowicz and Meekosha; Foreman 108; Pâquet 206-207), a pattern which repeats in numerous stories on the disabled detective (Hafferty and S. Foster 191). Thus, the novel turns into a compensation narrative (Murray, "Neurotecs" 180), in which Rhyme's extraordinary deductive skills positively "counterbalanc[e]" the negatively perceived disability "by 'sparing' the reader the full and negative measure of the impairment" (Hafferty and S. Foster 192). As such, Rhyme counterbalances the "feminization of his body" (Pâquet 207-208) in a masculine, i.e. cognitive, way.

Apart from underlining the protagonist's exceptional mind, the trope of an armchair detective also presents Rhyme as immersed in the private and domestic sphere. Due to similarly restricted movement in space, Mintz compares Rhyme to Nero Wolfe, Rex Stout's obese detective of the early twentieth century. Both mobility-impaired detectives focus on their investigative work as a distraction from boredom and get "a lot of work done with just [their] eyes, neck, and finger" (Mintz 104). Lincoln Rhyme describes his apartment as "his office" (BC 18), which later on develops into a literal laboratory when his investigating team adds several computers and evidence-analysing machines to his bedroom (in addition to the technology monitoring Rhyme's physical constitution) in order to have him participate in reading the crime scene evidence (308). This transformation opens the domestic to become a public space, "where cops, attorneys, witnesses, and suspects gather under Rhyme's authority" (Mintz 115). His team provides Rhyme with the collected evidence, whereby the boundaries of public and private sphere are even more blurred. Therefore, in this "crip-detective style", in which a team cooperates in merged investigative spaces, "[p]aralysis is the hinge between the imaginative attunement of Rhyme's crime-solving partnership with Sachs" – a gendered adaptation of detective work to Rhyme's disability, which will be elaborated in the next chapter – "and the blurring of spatial boundaries" (Mintz 115). The crime scene closes in on him, culminating in the final confrontation with the bone collector which, taking place in his apartment, turns it into an actual crime scene. Ultimately, the armchair detective combines his professional and private sphere because he 'lives in his office'.

The reformulation of how to achieve his professional ideals also encourages Rhyme to accept change in his life. Most importantly, despite the potential danger to “make things worse” (BC 293), he is willing to use a wheelchair to be able to visit a crime scene himself (375). Initially, Rhyme abandoned the wheelchair because he “got tired of being stared at” (375) and, therefore, rejected it as a symbol of his inability. Now, he realises that it allows him to return to the fieldwork himself and, thus, becomes a symbol of his reformulated identity. Using his little physical ability to control the wheelchair with his mouth (375), Rhyme keeps autonomy over his movements. Although he still investigates from his bed and delegates physical legwork onto his team in the further novels of the series, he is increasingly presented in his wheelchair. He develops from an armchair to a wheelchair detective who, despite his restricted physical mobility, is mobile enough to physically accompany Amelia to the crime scenes. Therefore, using a wheelchair demonstrates that Rhyme reformulates his habit of pacing the crime scene by now ‘cruising’ the crime scene, which marks a significant achievement in reconciling his identity as a detective with quadriplegia.

Although the novel largely focuses on Rhyme’s identity as a detective, it merely overshadows but never entirely eclipses the quadriplegia and his suicidal wish. Rhyme enjoys practising his profession so much that he occasionally even seems to forget about his quadriplegia as “[w]ith a burst of surprise he understood that he was once again doing what he loved” (BC 218). Nevertheless, disability-related incidents, such as social fatigue because of people’s infantilisation (221) or physical fatigue because of overstraining his condition (258), frequently interrupt Rhyme’s investigation and remind him of his restricted physical condition. Most prominently, a fit of autonomic dysreflexia comes as an immediate reaction to a significant trace to the criminal’s safehouse (316) and turns Rhyme from an active subject to a passive object in an instant; one of the most important breakthroughs in the investigation leads to one of the most severe physical setbacks (317). This scene emphasises that, despite the mind’s authority as a detective, the quadriplegic body is a powerful force which demands attention and treatment. This most severe incident of how his “disabled body interferes with his mind’s superior work” (Foreman 111) makes Rhyme doubt his suitability for the investigations and retire from the case (BC 325). In such moments, the silver lining of his suicide comforts and assures Rhyme that, despite his passion, joy, engagement and authority, detection is but a pastime to engage his mind while waiting for his suicide date, which enforces the reader’s ambivalent anticipation of the novel’s conclusion.

Confirming a typical characteristic of detective fiction, *The Bone Collector* fundamentally connects the detective and the villain. Seeking revenge on Rhyme for (implicitly) causing his

family's death due to the mistake he made before his accident (BC 348-349), Colin Stanton embodies three identities, which match Rhyme's three identities. First, as the bone collector, Stanton engages Rhyme in a battle of wits.<sup>156</sup> Having read Rhyme's book on investigating a crime scene, Stanton knows which details attract Rhyme's attention, such as prints, fabric or small objects, and places them strategically for Rhyme to find while avoiding others to hide his identity from the detective (441). Through such evidence, the bone collector and Rhyme communicate in the same language – ““the language of forensics”” (209) – which presents them as equal opponents.<sup>157</sup> Second, as Dr Peter Taylor, Stanton becomes Rhyme's spinal cord specialist, using his medical knowledge as a former army medical (349) to play his role convincingly. Meeting Rhyme's identity as a disabled person, Stanton/Taylor tries to talk Rhyme out of his suicidal plans – taking a pro-living position (Foreman 103) – so that death becomes a punishment for Rhyme instead of an obliging gesture to a man who *wants* to die (BC 444). Stanton's plan proves successful as Rhyme realises that he does not want to die “on somebody else's terms” (436). Third, as himself, Colin Stanton confronts Rhyme with his mistake and engages him in a surprisingly physical final confrontation between the (disabled) detective and the villain. Thus, to take revenge on Rhyme, the bone collector challenges the detective's professional skills, while Taylor focuses on tricking Rhyme into wanting to live, so that Stanton can enjoy killing Rhyme as a revenge for his family's death. All in all, Stanton materialises as a reminder of Rhyme's mistake, a flaw in the detective's cognitive extraordinariness. By embodying ““the consequence of *your* actions”” (BC 444), Stanton presents the most intimate profession-related connection to Rhyme's identity before the accident. Therefore, Rhyme's confronting and overwhelming Stanton comes equal to confronting and coming to terms with his mistake. At the same time, overwhelming Stanton in the final confrontation adds decisively not only to Rhyme's restoration as a “particularly productive contributor to society” (Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 65; see also Foreman 104) but also to the reconciliation of his disability with his profession.

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<sup>156</sup> Although Foreman similarly observes the “battle of wits” between the detective and the villain (110-111), she neglects to differentiate Stanton's three identities in relation to the detective.

<sup>157</sup> Such a communication recalls Poe's Dupin and his ability to think like the Minister D- (e.g. Rachman 21; M. S. Lee 377). However, while in Poe's stories, the detective assumes the criminal's way of thinking, Deaver inverses this connection. The bone collector assumes the detective's way of thinking, which is only possible because of Rhyme's professional performance. As a crime scene expert, he has published a book, *The Scenes of the Crime*, which has ambivalent consequences for him. On the one hand, it manifests his expert position in his profession, contributing and shaping young investigators' education (BC 23-24, 66; see also Mintz 114). It also marks his “first tentative venture back into the real world after the accident” and, thus, becomes an “emblem” of his cognitive capability, expertise and knowledge (SM 363). On the other hand, with his book, Rhyme publicly shares his knowledge not only with police trainees but also with potential criminals, such as the bone collector (BC 441). Hence, Rhyme's strength, i.e. his expert status, becomes his weakness as his book ‘teaches’ the bone collector how to meet Rhyme on mutual terms and (almost) outwit him.

The final confrontation with Stanton proves that Rhyme is no “‘pure rationality’ imprisoned in [a] dead, useless bod[y]” (Mintz 107; see also Jakubowicz and Meekosha) but emphasises his physicality (Foreman 109) and also his masculinity in light of his impairment. In a seeming impasse when Stanton seems to control the detective, Rhyme fakes a fit of autonomic dysreflexia, through which he appeals to Stanton’s identity as a doctor, whose Hippocratic oath obliges him to save, not take, lives (BC 445). Thereby, the detective outwits the villain and re-masculinises himself (see also Gates, *Detecting Men* 209). In this overpowering, Rhyme’s physicality proves to be essential. First, when Stanton leans in to check on Rhyme’s breathing, the detective bites the villain’s neck. Rhyme attacks “like a striking snake”, “growled in rage” and “shook his head, feeling the snap of bone and cartilage” in his “unbreakable” grip, “held tight and continued to crush the man’s neck, shaking, tearing the flesh like a hungry lion crazed by blood and by the immeasurable satisfaction of a lust fulfilled” – a physical situation in which Rhyme’s (literal) “*killer* lungs” and his killer jaws become powerful tools to kill Stanton (BC 446-447). Second, while Rhyme’s disability is initially presented as disadvantageous, this confrontation turns disability-associated aspects, such as a lack of feeling in the body, into a strength. The quadriplegia makes Rhyme unresponsive to the knife-stabs with which Stanton tries to defend himself as “pain was one thing to which Lincoln Rhyme was immune” (447). Hence, this brutal, bloody, even animalistic attack turns the quadriplegic detective into a physical force, which demonstrates that his identity as a detective and a person with quadriplegia are not mutually exclusive. Instead, Rhyme instrumentalises his impaired body and combines its advantages with his extraordinary mind.<sup>158</sup> Although Ria Cheyne generally criticises to read Rhyme as a supercrip – because it “risks reinforcing ableist beliefs and values” (*Disability, Literature, Genre* 63) – she recognises similarities between Rhyme’s performance in the killing scene and what Schalk defines as the “superpowered supercrip narrative” (81).<sup>159</sup> Rhyme reformulates the hegemonic ideal of embodying physical strength and prowess by demonstrating it not through his torso, arms or legs but his jaw, making use of the physical mobility he has. However, Rhyme’s compensating powers derive neither

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<sup>158</sup> Interestingly, Deaver himself seems to ignore this physical solution the case of the bone collector. When asked why he made Rhyme disabled, Deaver explained that he intended to oppose “the clichéd action heroes that we see from films” whom he criticises to “come down to a physical confrontation with the villain. So I wanted a hero [who] was forced to outthink the villain” (Spanberg). He implies that, by making Rhyme quadriplegic, he robs him of the physical prowess to oppose the criminal. However, the final confrontation between Rhyme and the bone collector proves to be as physical as such “clichéd action heroes”, which, on the one hand, might restrict Deaver’s innovation. On the other hand, it underlines the disabled detective to be a mind *and* a body.

<sup>159</sup> Foreman similarly compares Rhyme to the “super crip narrative” but contextualises this comparison in his suicidal wish: “Rhyme does not grin and look at life with a positive outlook despite his disability, a common aspect of the super crip narrative, but he does achieve great things despite his broken body” (106).

from effort, accident or luck – characteristics of the supercrip (81) – but from his quick thinking. Hence, he approaches a variation of not only the “superpowered supercrip” but also the cognitive compensation of his physical impairment frequently observed in research on the novel (e.g. Hafferty and S. Foster 191; Murray, “Neurotecs” 179; Murray, “The Ambiguities of Inclusion” 96-97). It is precisely this combination of his mind and his body, which makes him superior to the able-bodied villain.<sup>160</sup> While Gates concludes that, in the Hollywood adaptation, Rhyme is emasculated because Amelia saves him “despite the fact that he recovered his will to live, fought off the killer, and has won the girl” (*Detecting Men* 209), the original novel essentially masculinises Rhyme in presenting him as in control of his life and his seemingly uncontrollable body, through which he achieves a form of masculine disability.

Through the case of the bone collector, Rhyme comes to terms with his identity as a quadriplegic as he recognises his mind as his most distinctive characteristic and, thus, reformulates his pre-accident ideals of what constitutes a successful detective. He focuses on his forensic expertise knowledge, cognitive skills, and ability to delegate tasks onto his team to gain professional authority and independence. However, disability-related issues often interrupting his work demonstrate that the renegotiation of masculinity as a man with a disability oscillates between celebrating achievements and mourning frustrating setbacks. As the two roles of a detective and a quadriplegic are always in tension, it requires conscious decision-making and reflection to find a balance between these roles, especially in relation to a potential reconciliation with the detective’s pre-accident identity. By accepting a new case, with which Sellitto approaches him after the solution of the bone collector’s case, and pursuing his former profession as a detective again, Rhyme chooses life (and profession) instead of death, which not only presents an essential step in his negotiation of masculine disability but lays the foundation for this negotiation to continue. While curiosity killed the proverbial cat, it saved Lincoln Rhyme from committing suicide and substantiates his masculine disability. “[D]etection literally *is* life for Rhyme” (Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 59). He not only ‘lives for his work’ but he ‘lives *because of* his work’, for it is his curiosity and passion which convinces the detective to draw back from suicide for good.

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<sup>160</sup> After the confrontation with the villain, Rhyme observes that his confrontation with the bone collector “‘was hardly a fair fight’”, which alludes to his supposed inferiority as a disabled. However, adding “‘I forced myself to hold back’” (BC 451), Rhyme inverses this supposition and humorously resolves the tension between disability and able-bodiedness.

### 5.1.2.2 A Female Body to Rhyme's Mind

While Lincoln Rhyme's curiosity for the case of the bone collector allows him to reconcile his professional self-perception with his identity as a quadriplegic, the interaction with other characters supports the development of his masculine disability in personal terms – not exclusively, but most importantly by Amelia Sachs. Rhyme's female companion in crime scene investigations is represented ambivalently as she demonstrates both masculine and feminine characteristics. As such ambivalence meets Rhyme's own troubled gender identity in light of his disability, it shows him that gender is a social construction which can be adapted to individual preferences, characteristics and (physical) constitutions, such as quadriplegia. Furthermore, complementing the physically disabled male protagonist with an able-bodied female sidekick invites a romantic relationship (Foreman 111), which enhances Rhyme's masculine disability not only in professional but also in private terms.

Apart from Rhyme himself, Thom, the caregiver, is also presented in ambivalent terms of gender. He displays strong feminine characteristics, which enforce his position as a man in the stereotypically feminine occupation of a caregiver. Thom not only compares himself to Judy Garland rather than Kojak and does (stereotypically feminine) secretary work to support Rhyme's investigations (BC 75). In medically providing for Rhyme, Thom also assumes the role of a caring mother. Rhyme enforces this comparison when he calls his caregiver an "old mother hen" (27) and "Martha Stuart" because of his hospitality to guests (23), which ridicules Thom's feminine occupation as a 'nurse'. Moreover, Rhyme (self-)mockingly laments that "Thom treats me like a child", to which Thom counters that stubborn Rhyme deserves this treatment (26). As a medical person on whom Rhyme's life literally depends, Thom often has to disrespect his employer's wishes for his physical and emotional well-being, such as when admitting visitors despite Rhyme's objection (20), strictly regulating his employer's alcohol consumption (e.g. 26, 255-256) or 'teaching' Rhyme to work for the autonomy he demands, such as by using a phone through a mouth device (89-90, 238-239). With such actions, Thom seems to undermine his employer's authority, "denying Rhyme choice" and "personal power" (Foreman 126). However, upon closer consideration, Thom rather defies Rhyme's patriarchal, dominating behaviour and, thus, does *not* infantilise him but communicates on equal terms. Despite their ongoing teasing, Rhyme appreciates this behaviour and highlights Thom as one of the few persons who confronts him with his mistakes and challenges him with a different opinion instead of "walking on eggshells" (BC 264). Hence, Thom is not only an around-the-clock aide but – in addition to his medical proficiency – also excels as a friend. Wearing casual clothes instead of a (white) uniform, Thom reduces the medical environment of Rhyme's living

situation (20), while their honest interaction renders Thom more of a companion than an employee. Thom's ambivalent gender embodiment and his eclipsing of his employer's impairment allow Rhyme to recognise himself as mature, responsible and masculine, irrelevant of his quadriplegia.

A similarly ambivalent gender embodiment is displayed by Amelia Sachs due to her feminine beauty and her masculine behaviour. The novel frequently emphasises her extraordinary beauty as a woman. In addition to her "height, trim hips, fiery red hair" (BC 61), her "beautiful face" (83) allowed her a short career as a fashion model (15) before training to become a cop like her father. As a police officer, however, she experiences "misogynistic and sexist behavior" (Foreman 130). Her (male) colleagues, for example, patronise and infantilise her as they forgive her mistakes "[b]ecause Sachs was a beautiful woman" (BC 15); they are either intimidated by her beauty or try to flirt with her (326). Amelia experiences her beauty as a disadvantage not only in professional life, as it directs her interaction partners' attention to her outer appearance instead of her professionalism, but also private life, as her beauty objectifies her to potential partners (345). Self-destructive habits, like chewing nails and scratching her scalp so hard that blood strains cover her finger tips, which ended her modelling career (107-108), contrast her beautiful physical appearance (74). It seems like she willingly attacks and, thus, 'damages' her beauty as a "useless power" (326) to be appreciated for her professional skills and to compete with her male colleagues. Furthermore, her arthritis causes her chronic pain and force her to plead for a medical transfer from patrol service to a desk job in Public Affairs (BC 68). Both her self-destructive habits and the arthritis display that her beautiful body is damaged (Jakubowicz and Meekosha). Amelia identifies with Rhyme because both experience "similar marginalization" (Foreman 130) due to social misrecognition (of Amelia's beauty and Rhyme's disability) and a tiredness of (professional) life due to physical restrictions (Foreman 112, 131; see also Jakubowicz and Meekosha; Mintz 112;). Such ambivalences in terms of physical appearance are also mirrored in Amelia's behaviour.

While her beauty emphasises her femininity, Amelia's behaviour is enriched with (stereotypically) masculine behaviour. In the Hollywood movie adaptation, Gates identifies Amelia's ambivalent gender representation as she is introduced when leaving her lover after a night of occasional intercourse, a stereotypically masculine behaviour (*Detecting Men* 209). Although this scene does not exist in the literary source, the novel also masculinises Amelia's character. Since her teenage years, Amelia counterbalances stereotypical gender expectations accompanying her beauty with stereotypically masculine interests such as shooting (BC 343), car tinkering (350) and driving fast (83) – the latter of which comes in handy during the

investigations (364-366). Additionally, following her father's role model, she is a Patrol cop and engages in a masculinity-dominated field. Such masculine aspects not only counterbalance the repeated references to her beauty. Adapting her character to the genre of the police procedural, they also desexualise and, thus, distinguish her from the figure of the *femme fatale* of the hard-boiled genre of detective fiction. Amelia's ambivalence of feminine beauty, self-destructive habits and her (stereotypically) masculine profession as a cop appeal to Rhyme's professional and private sense of masculinity and create a promising foundation for working together.

Amelia's presentation as 'the body' complements Rhyme's presentation as 'the mind'. He prefers facts and physical evidence over social components, such as motive (BC 221) or witnesses' statements (354) and confirms the detective's rational (and stereotypically masculine) mind. As a (reluctant) armchair detective, Rhyme might have his mind as a powerful tool to direct the world around him, but he needs a body to physically investigate the crime scene (Jakubowicz and Meekosha; Foreman 112; Mintz 114). He becomes aware of Amelia when she stops a train and closes down a public street to protect a crime scene (BC 12-13). Although Rhyme (mis)interprets her behaviour as dedication to her profession – “I need somebody who's got the balls to stop a train in its tracks to protect a scene” (68) – she merely follows the rules as the first person at a crime scene, while counting the hours until her medical transfer to a desk job (10-15). The results of her actions – that vital evidence could be secured from the intact crime scene – and the fact that Rhyme himself started his career through a similar situation (346-347) demonstrate her potential. He needs “somebody without preconceived ideas” and “with a mind of her own” (264), whose “fresh pair of eyes” (67) would contribute a new perspective on the evidence at the crime scene and inspire new ideas for their interpretation. Although Amelia emphasises that she is not trained to read crimes scenes (and does not want to because of her medical transfer) (67), Rhyme engages her as his physical supplement, “a body to order around” (Foreman 112). Amelia runs (forensic) errands, does the legwork for the quadriplegic detective (Gates, *Detecting Men* 208; Mintz 97) and, thus, becomes the sidekick – a female Watson – to the analytic detective (Foreman 111). Receiving Rhyme's instructions via headphones, she obediently follows his directions of how, where and what to look for. This cooperation as mind and body entails different results for Amelia and Rhyme.

For Rhyme, his partnership with Amelia allows him to adapt his investigative methods to his disability. Since the quadriplegia (and reluctance at using a wheelchair) prevents him from investigating the crime scene himself, he sends Amelia to collect and bring evidence back to

his office/apartment for further interpretation. As Rhyme's physical supplement, she becomes “my legs *and* my eyes” (BC 202) and allows him to adapt the means through which he practices his profession to his physical condition. Thus, they engage in “an intense, intimate, physical connection that extends Rhyme’s body into spaces he could not otherwise easily access” (Mintz 115). Through such a merging of public and private spaces, “detection becomes strikingly embodied, phenomenological, and partnered” and turns “the crip detective [into] a uniquely corporeal figure” (100). The result is what Mintz calls a “crip-detection style” (115), through which Rhyme reformulates his professional identity in terms of his disability. He becomes Amelia’s “literal mind” who is “in charge and tells her how to think, how to process information, and how to make decisions” (Foreman 112-113). By delegating her as a physical stand-in and claiming the position of the “‘brain’ of the investigations” (Pâquet 207), Rhyme achieves masculine authority as a detective, through which he confirms Gerschick and Miller’s observations of how disabled men adapt to their physical impairment (188). Hence, such a “crip-detection style” due to the detective’s disability allows for “creative solutions” not only to the case (Mintz 116) but also to the detective’s masculinity. Amelia’s function as a physical stand-in is a requirement for Rhyme’s masculine disability in professional terms.

For Amelia, her cooperation with Rhyme to investigate crime scenes enhances her professional development. Asking her, for example, to smell a burned victim’s perfume (BC 104-105) or to cut off a corpse’s cuffed hands to save potential material in the cuffs (110-111), Rhyme pushes Amelia to her limits as a cop. He teaches her how to examine a crime scene thoroughly and preserve the evidence, how to “‘walk a grid’” (100), take the perpetrator’s point of view to reproduce his actions (105), and examine a crime scene as a three-dimensional space (101) with all her senses (103), which later on even saves her life (409). She quickly assumes his way of thinking (198-199) and even improves his methods, through which she impresses Rhyme and their colleagues (314-315). His teaching enables her to retrain from a Patrol cop to a crime scene investigator, for which Rhyme and Amelia herself discover her talent. Although she adapts Rhyme’s investigative methods, Amelia maintains her moral integrity when she refuses to cut off the victim’s hands (111). She defies Rhyme’s authority when he focuses too much on evidence and neglects to empathise with the victims (172-173, 191-194). Hence, combining Rhyme’s focus on evidence with her own care for the victims does not turn her into Rhyme’s (female) double, as Foreman argues (113). Instead, Amelia becomes the “people cop” (BC 247) she always wanted to be. While as a Patrol cop, she was “[w]alking beats, dissing back the dissers, outing druggies. Spreading respect for the law – like her father” (247), her collaboration with Rhyme allows her to save lives. Amelia rescues some of the bone collector’s

victims from underground places (181) and burning churches (369-370), which turns her into an action heroine. Such actions enforce her masculine behaviour so much that superiors include her when referring to the ““guys”” (213). She even refers to herself as Rhyme’s “legman” (307; *emphasis A.S.K.*), which increases her ambivalent gender embodiment. Amelia develops from an untrained Patrol cop and a mere “bodily vessel” of Rhyme’s commands (Foreman 113) to a self-reliant crime scene investigator with a mind and a voice of her own, who eventually becomes Rhyme’s partner in the further novels.

The fact that Amelia occasionally defies Rhyme’s authority also influences their personal relationship, especially in terms of Rhyme’s disability. When she realises that Rhyme is ““a pain in the ass to work for”” (BC 189) and that she hates him although “[i]t’s wrong to hate a cripple” (98), she does so because of Rhyme’s dominating and patronising behaviour towards her, instead of his disability (Foreman 134). Hence, his disability does not (negatively) influence Amelia’s personal impression of Rhyme. Having observed that Rhyme was “someone used to having his own way” (BC 192) – possibly due to his professional expertise as much as due to his disability – Amelia confronts Rhyme with his controlling behaviour. Calling him a ““spoiled brat””, she accuses him of impeding the investigations by engaging her as an untrained crime scene investigator whom he himself can control ““just to massage your ego”” and in compensation for his disability (223) and disabled masculinity. Hence, while her physical supplement is necessary for Rhyme’s negotiation of his professional masculinity, her strong-minded character challenges and humbles him in their personal relationship. Such a direct and honest interaction is exactly what Rhyme wants – ““somebody to tell me I’m a jerk when I act like one”” (264). Confronting him with his faults, she explicitly avoids ‘walking on eggshells’ (264) and “take[s] the gloves off” when she fights with him (124). Hence, she not only “soothes the emasculation he feels because of his disability” (Foreman 114). Similar to Thom, Amelia also treats Rhyme as a sane adult who is accountable for his behaviour which supports Rhyme in subordinating his disability to his masculine identity.

However, while Rhyme’s disability does not influence Amelia’s behaviour towards him, it is the basis for their romantic and sexual attraction towards each other. Upon their first meeting, Rhyme feels attracted to Amelia not only because of her beauty but also because she seems to feel “at ease” with his disability, opposing people’s usual reaction to his body (BC 61). While Rhyme fears her rejection and the accompanying feeling of emasculation because of his disability, Amelia’s narrative perspective displays a growing affection to Rhyme once their professional relationship improves. Her relaxed reaction at the first sight of his quadriplegia results from the fact that Rhyme is literally ‘different’. Unlike men who usually try to impress

her because of her beauty or her ex-boyfriend who ruined her professional reputation by depreciating her sexuality and wounding her femininity, Rhyme's immobile body makes her feel at ease because he poses "no threat to her" (345). Although this implies a deprivation of Rhyme's masculinity and sexual prowess due to his disability (Foreman 134), which, indeed, results in a form of emasculation, Amelia's attraction to precisely this emasculation masculinises Rhyme again; it assures him of his masculinity not despite but because of his disability.<sup>161</sup> While Foreman focuses on *The Coffin Dancer*, the second book of the series, to analyse the increasing intimacy between the two protagonists and emphasise Amelia's sexual authority as an able-bodied over Rhyme's quadriplegia (Foreman 135, 137), the first novel also includes similar, yet more subtle, situations. When Rhyme suffers a fit of autonomic dysreflexia and Amelia volunteers to assist Thom in caring for Rhyme, she "realize[s] with a start that [Rhyme's] body [is] virtually wrinkle-free. He was in his forties but his body was that of a twenty-five-year-old" (BC 318-319). While Rhyme experiences a situation of entire dependence on his caregiver, without whose help he would have died, Amelia's voyeuristic gaze fetishizes the immobile, helpless (masculine) body, which confirms Margaret Shildrick's idea of "'voyeurism, which spills over into a fetishistic focus on disabled bodies precisely as sexual'" (qtd. in Foreman 139). Their increasing affection also occasionally shows in situations of intimacy and recognition of their suitability as partners in professional and romantic terms (BC 345); in their collaboration, in which they fuse their sensory perceptions (Mintz 115); in Rhyme's habit of addressing Amelia by her last name as an indicator of his mood (BC 375), referring to her as "'[m]y Sachs'" (219), through which he simultaneously expresses professional pride of his 'student' and claims her as his (romantic) partner; and eventually sleeping in one bed (429). Hence, *The Bone Collector* already indicates Amelia's sexual power over Rhyme. As their relationship becomes explicitly sexual in *The Coffin Dancer*, Foreman observes that "[f]or Sachs, mental pleasure is better than physical pleasure as psychological intimacy counts more to her than physical orgasms" and concludes that "[s]ex is rethought

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<sup>161</sup> Amelia's attraction to Rhyme's disability could also be attributed to her biggest fear of "being trapped, immobile" (BC 10) – just like Rhyme. When she is buried alive by the bone collector (421-422), Amelia experiences this situation and compares it to his condition when "her body went numb, as numb as Lincoln Rhyme's" (422). As an able-bodied stand-in not only for Rhyme but also for the reader, she reflects the ableist belief that people with mobility impairment are "tormented" (Jakubowicz and Meekosha). However, considering his immobility as a potential for her to exercise (sexual) power over him instead of a threat, especially in the second novel of the series (Foreman 137), Amelia's increasing romantic affection for Rhyme could be interpreted as an attempt to confront this fear. At the same time, she – as well as the reader – learns to value the life with quadriplegia as a life worth living. Later in the series, Amelia proves this hypothesis. She explains that she is attracted to Rhyme because "he was a man who had complete control, *despite* the fact that he couldn't move" (CD 208). Hence, she emphasises that, from her point of view, Rhyme manages to control his body and his surroundings through his reformulated way of practising authority and control, namely through professional expertise and knowledge – through his mind.

through the disabled body in Deaver's texts" (136). Hence, it becomes evident that not only the disabled man himself reformulates his sexual means (Gerschick and A. S. Miller 189), but the partner, too, adapts to the disability. Hence, opposing the sexual pity and quadriplegia-related emasculation Rhyme experienced during his marriage (BC 345), Amelia's attraction to the detective assures him of his masculinity despite or rather because of his physical impairment, through which he approaches masculine disability in private terms.

The separation of mind and body onto two characters invites reading *The Bone Collector* from the perspective of the Cartesian dualism, which, however, proves to be superficial. According to this philosophical idea, mind and body are two distinct entities (Robinson; Foreman 107-108). Mintz criticises Jakubowicz and Meekosha's reading of Amelia as ““the body [...] through which Rhyme will redeem himself again”” and their implication that “Rhyme is a brilliant criminalist in his disabled state only because he has a functioning, supplemental body at his disposal” (Mintz 116). Following Mintz's emphasis (116), this chapter highlights that, despite their apparent presentation of mind and body, Rhyme and Amelia are *both* mind *and* body.<sup>162</sup> While Rhyme's knowledge characterises his detective identity, his severe physical impairment dominates and – from his perspective – even eclipses his masculine identity. Vice versa, Amelia's introduction as a (feminine) body is counterbalanced by her “potent intelligence” (Mintz 116), which might not match Rhyme's but still allows her to stand up against Rhyme whenever she feels subordinated by his (male) authority as ‘the mind’. While Foreman argues that Rhyme needs “someone smart enough to understand the orders he gives and with made of good enough clay that he can mold her” to maintain a patriarchal hierarchy in their relationship (Foreman 113), this argument can be refuted. Having a ““mind of her own”” (BC 264), Amelia's self-determination as a cop clashes with her required obedience to Rhyme's commands, which results in a collision of (gendered) power. Her female agency does not vanish in light of Rhyme's authority, as Foreman's argument indicates, but rather conflicts with and challenges his male domination. Foreman provides a comprehensive summary of how Deaver's Lincoln Rhyme series depicts the Cartesian separation of mind and body before arguing that “the series offers [Rhyme and Amelia's] relationship as a way to fortify [Rhyme's] disabled manhood and complete his life” (113). However, she contextualises this ‘completion’ of Rhyme's life in his sexual relationship with Amelia: “Challenging the Cartesian notion of an

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<sup>162</sup> Lili Pâquet's argument that Rhyme and Amelia “demonstrate many binaries such as disabled/healthy, male/female, and brain/body” (207) can be refuted. Instead of presenting binaries, they resemble each other in their ambivalences. Both embody aspects of mind *and* body, male *and* female, disabled *and* healthy. However, ‘healthy’ seems to be unsuitable in this context, not only as a counterpart to ‘disabled’ but also with reference to Amelia. She might be more agile than Rhyme but since her arthritis and the resulting chronic pain trouble her throughout the novel, she is similarly, yet differently restricted in her physical mobility.

autonomous subject with an inviolable body, the series' [sic!] suggests that the coming together of Rhyme and Amelia's bodies creates the new normal and functional" (133). Yet, this chapter concludes that Rhyme and Amelia complement each other not only in sexual, but also in professional and private terms because they work together as a team – a unit of mind and body.

Rhyme and Amelia essentially embody Locard's Exchange Principle. Rhyme explains this forensic theory in that "whenever two human beings come into contact, something from one is exchanged to the other, and vice versa" (BC 155). While in forensic science, this applies to the criminal leaving "'dust, blood, skin cells, dirt, fibers, metallic residue'" (155) and taking some evidence with him (see also Worthington, *Key Concepts in Crime Fiction* 36), Rhyme and Amelia also engage in such a mutual exchange; only in their case, it focuses on their learning from each other. Professionally, Rhyme teaches Amelia his methods and, thus, supports her professional development. It seems that this teacher-student interaction substantiates Rhyme's authority in their relationship as he dominates her way of thinking and shapes her professional practices – "he is so good that he can make someone else the best" (Foreman 113) – which underlines his masculine superiority and cognitive excellence in his job.<sup>163</sup> It leads to the conclusion that, as Foreman argues, "Rhyme's mental prowess in his detective work and the physical replacement that Sachs provides for Rhyme's disabled body serve as the series' ultimate resolution of the contradictions engendered by disability" (114). Although Foreman correctly observes that Amelia's (stereotypically female) compassion for the bone collector's victims counterbalances Rhyme's (stereotypically male) rational focus on fact and evidence (114), Foreman's understanding of Rhyme and Amelia's relationship proves to be superficial. Amelia proves to be not obedient but clever enough to know when to follow Rhyme's lead, accepting and recognising his expertise, and when to defy him.<sup>164</sup> Thereby, she makes him understand how important it is to be patient and comforting to colleagues, witnesses and victims (BC 193) in professional and private contexts. Rhyme and Amelia complement each other's perspective not only on the case but also on Rhyme's disabled masculinity. While his narrative perspective presents the disabled detective as emasculated, Amelia's perspective inverses this

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<sup>163</sup> In such a sense, Rhyme would gain authority only through the subordination of the female character and, thus, achieve hegemonic masculinity in Connell's original sense (77). Furthermore, subordinating the female character through directing her body would also allow him to claim authority over the investigations and, hence, take a superior position at the hegemonically charged workplace (Gerschick, "Sisyphus in a Wheelchair" 189). It seems that Rhyme "is the quintessential expression of the polarized archetype of patriarchy – the man as brain, authority and culture" (Jakubowicz and Meekosha). However, this reading can be refuted due to Amelia's self-reliant character.

<sup>164</sup> This is a lesson learned from when Amelia reported Rhyme's unofficial engagement in the case and his civilian status (BC 115-118) which caused the case to be (temporarily) taken away from him (216-224) until Amelia realises that Rhyme is the better detective and resumes their cooperation (258).

understanding. She considers him especially masculine because of his disability. Her external perception of the detective's disability counterbalances Rhyme's subjective presentation. It "emphasize[s] that specific observations about disability are not necessarily facts but perceptions – and perhaps flawed ones since perceptions frequently differ drastically between characters" (Foreman 117). Therefore, functioning as "an abled point of identification for the presumed able-bodied reader" (111), Amelia's perspective also influences the reader's understanding of Rhyme's masculine disability. Embodying Locard's Principle, Amelia and Rhyme engage not only in an investigatory unit but also in mutual dependency in their respective gender embodiments.

Although the novel often challenges gender stereotypes (for example, as Amelia's agency counterbalances Rhyme's passiveness – characteristics which are stereotypically associated with the opposite sex – and through Amelia's gender ambivalence as much as her (masculine) perception of disability), *The Bone Collector* also confirms stereotypical gender embodiments. When Amelia herself becomes a victim to the bone collector who buried her alive (BC 421), she would have died had not Rhyme anticipated the attack and sent his colleagues to help her (424). Like a damsel in distress, Amelia needs to be rescued by Rhyme's infantry (contrastingly, when Rhyme himself is attacked by the bone collector, his wit enables him to outthink and overwhelm the villain through instrumentalising his disability and rescuing himself). By using his mind to save the female sidekick and love interest, Rhyme assumes the position of the rescuer, embodying protective and heroic masculinity, even without having released Amelia himself. This confirmation of stereotypical gender roles is only brief and serves Rhyme's remasculinisation in light of his disability.

Eventually, despite all reformulated means of claiming authority, Rhyme depends on (Amelia's) support to commit suicide. Although his suicide is supposed to prove one last act of masculine authority over his life, someone has to mix the lethal drink for him. Thereby, the novel confirms the stereotypical presentation of the disabled character as dependent on external support. Although this inversion of the "gender-ability binary" seemingly confirms Torrell's second pattern – that the disabled male character empowers the able-bodied female character, challenging the stereotypical association of male agency and female passiveness (218) – this chapter has shown that Rhyme and Amelia's relationship proves to be more balanced as they challenge and improve each other. Amelia's physical supplement allows for Rhyme's reformulation of his professional identity as a disabled detective while her attraction to his physical immobility encourages him to recognise his disability as an essential aspect of his masculinity. However, despite his professional success and their increasingly intimate

relationship, climaxing in the realisation that Rhyme savours Amelia's emotional and physical proximity (BC 430), Amelia is not the reason why he eventually draws back from suicide – on the contrary. To Rhyme, she embodies a constant reminder of the life he cannot have, a life as a heterosexual man in love with a beautiful woman (452). He feels that his disability deprives him of the legitimacy to a heterosexual relationship. Rhyme believes their connection as ‘doomed lovers’ (452) to be entirely based on the case, which suggests that their relationship has an ‘expiring date’. Accepting another case at the end of the novel promises not only another professional purpose to live for. Rhyme’s condition for taking the new case – “‘I don’t work alone’” (460) – also implies an extension of his connection with Amelia and a potential to develop their romance and professional cooperation. Therefore, Amelia might unconsciously contribute to his choosing life over death and his further enactment of his newly gained identity as a disabled detective.

### **5.1.3 Conclusion**

Lincoln Rhyme’s transition from disabled masculinity to masculine disability is no linear development. Oscillating between his suicidal determination to escape the physical restrictions and his passion for his work as a forensic criminalist (Jakubowicz and Meekosha), Rhyme achieves masculine disability in a loop of negotiations. This loop includes frustrating setbacks, which are gradually worked out by merging his profession, masculinity and disability. While the beginning of *The Bone Collector* presents Rhyme in a severe, suicidal crisis because his quadriplegic identity overshadows his identity as a detective and a man, the novel’s conclusion visualises the successful negotiation of his three different identities. In professional terms, Rhyme’s pre-accident identity was based on his success and autonomy as a detective. Amelia’s support and the re-awakening passion for his profession encourage him to adapt his professional identity to his quadriplegic condition (see also Gerschick and A. S. Miller 187). He achieves professional success and individual autonomy despite and because of his disability. With Amelia as a physical supplement, Rhyme can access the crime scene in an individual manner that is in no way inferior to his performance as an able-bodied detective. Instead, Amelia improves his detective performance as her mind contributes additional ideas to interpret evidence and complements Rhyme’s focus on evidence with an empathetic component. By drawing back from suicide for good in favour of a new case (and Amelia), Rhyme prioritises his detective and masculine identity over his disability and accepts that quadriplegia is a vital part of both.

Ambivalence paves the way for Rhyme's masculine disability in private terms. Thom's and, most importantly, Amelia's ambivalent gender embodiments demonstrate to Rhyme (and the reader) that gender can be adapted to individual preferences (such as Amelia's interests in cars and police work) and conditions (such as Rhyme's quadriplegia in professional and personal contexts). Amelia's ambivalence of her extraordinary, feminine beauty and her stereotypically masculine interests shapes her personality into a character who appeals to all three of Rhyme's identities. First, as a physical supplement at the crime scene, she allows Rhyme the detective to reformulate the means through which he can claim authority and, thus, adapt his professional identity to his physical condition. Second, her attraction to his physical immobility assures Rhyme the (heterosexual) man of his masculinity in the first novel and of his reformulated sexuality adapted to his disability in later instalments. Third, their professional and private relationship built up so much trust between them that Amelia willingly supports the disabled Rhyme in committing suicide and, thus, respects his wishes, despite her own opinion of it. Additionally, her balance between recognising and defying Rhyme's authority in professional and private terms subordinates his disability to his identities as a detective and man and, thus, respects Rhyme as a mature and autonomous adult, regardless of his disability. Furthermore, Amelia's attraction to his immobility allows him to rethink his disabled masculinity and (begin to) appreciate his disability as an essential part of his masculinity. While Rhyme's identity as a quadriplegic man dominated his self as his "primary identity" (Gerschick, "The Body, Disability, and Sexuality" 89) throughout the novel, the conclusion shows Amelia encourages Rhyme to unite his three identities, which were formerly in tension with each other, into one. This unity of his identities as a detective, a heterosexual man and a disabled person allows Rhyme to approach masculine disability. He may not have entirely solved his crisis of disabled masculinity but Amelia supports Rhyme in accepting his disability as a vital aspect of his identity as a detective and his masculinity. Thus, by reformulating the means through which he approaches the ideal of masculinity he pursued (and embodied) before his accident, Rhyme comes to terms with his disabled masculinity.

For Rhyme, detection is more than a means of compensation for his physical lack (e.g. Hafferty and S. Foster 191; Murray, "Neurotecs" 179; Murray, "The Ambiguities of Inclusion" 96-97) or social contribution (e.g. Jakubowicz and Meekosha) as the case presents "a cause greater than oneself" (Mintz 95). Focussing on the social "worth" of a person (with a disability), which "is grounded in function and purpose", Foreman concludes that "detection offers Rhyme a way to solve problems in society and become a functional, productive member of society" (105). However, it is not only the "hunt for the serial killer and his eventual demise at the hands

of the detective” that “restore[s] and revitalise[s] the hero’s self-confidence and prove[s] his masculinity” (Gates, *Detecting Men* 234; emphasis A.S.K.); it is also the hunt itself. Detection and police work become means to negotiate identity in terms of social and self-understanding for Amelia’s professional recognition (Foreman 131) and for Rhyme’s masculinity. Being a detective allows the disabled detective to find himself again. He (re)connects to the (masculine) self he embodied before the accident by relying on his passion for investigations and adapting his means to pursue this passion to his disability. Thus, Rhyme bridges the gap between his identities before and after the disabling accident. He negotiates “creative solutions” (Mintz 116) to overcome and solve the struggles his disability presents to his masculinity. Hence, the “stamina, grit, and courage to contest the dual ‘problems’ of both his body and crime”, which Mintz observes in the novel (114), are the results of Rhyme’s negotiation of his disabled masculinity and characterise his approach to masculine disability.

Although Rhyme’s transition to masculine disability is not complete at the end of *The Bone Collector*, his overcoming the struggles of his disabled masculinity creates a promising foundation for his further development of masculine disability in later novels. His (personal) masculinity is encouraged by Amelia’s support as his romantic partner (by *The Midnight Lock*, they are married), thinking about having children (EC 219-220; SM 276). Rhyme’s decision to live comes along with the willingness to undergo medical treatments and corrective surgery, which might improve his condition (EC 245-246). Despite this display of his vulnerability to the surgeons – which the villain in *The Empty Chair* exploits to attack (473) – Rhyme has regained “nearly complete control of his right arm and hand” due to surgery and training in *The Midnight Lock* (35). Although the series emphasises that Rhyme’s physical condition improves steadily, which supports the stereotypical representation of the supercrip and his overcoming the disability through willpower and persistency (Foreman 99), *The Midnight Lock* contrasts this development. It concludes without Rhyme’s increasing mobility influencing his performance as a detective but, instead, presents him at ease with the disability (434). While in *The Bone Collector*, Rhyme realises that he can be a detective despite and because of his disability, in *The Stone Monkey*, he accepts that the disability essentially characterises his detective identity (SM 299): as the quadriplegia largely ‘eclipses’ his body and allows the brain to dominate his self, Rhyme becomes more “focused”, which makes him a “better detective” (Foreman 105). Although Cheyne argues the opposite – that Rhyme “was always exceptionally talented”, regardless of his disability (*Disability, Literature, Genre* 64) – the detective thus embraces his potential as a (classical) armchair detective. His main characteristics are not his body or limited mobility but his extraordinary cognitive skills. Therefore, it can be concluded

that – from *The Bone Collector* to *The Midnight Lock* – Rhyme has developed a form of masculine disability which implements his disability as an essential part of his professional and personal identity.

As the first book in the series, *The Bone Collector* sets the tone for the following instalments. It manifests Rhyme's way to masculine disability by underlining the symbiotic relationship of body and mind. Mintz highlights Deaver's statement in the preface of a reprint of *The Bone Collector*: “Aren't we really our minds and hearts and spirits before we're our bodies? Those are what let us rise to meet the challenges we face every day, whatever limitations dog us” (111). Mintz summarises Deaver in that it needs only an extraordinary mind and willpower to overcome (physical) restrictions: “To demonstrate his conviction in a disembodied and immaterial selfhood, Deaver simply paralyzes the body; to emphasize the sleuth's superior powers of intellect, he negates corporeality as a meaningful component in the formation of thought” (111). While Mintz herself argues for Rhyme's alternative means in light of his disability, this chapter has argued that – as if contradicting his own statement – Deaver complements Rhyme's mind with Amelia's body. He emphasises the body as a relevant counterpart to the mind not only in “the formation of thought” (111) but also in the formation of Rhyme's masculine disability. Mind and body work together as a unit. Instead of separating them, i.e. ‘overcoming’ the body with the mind, Rhyme's masculine disability is based on his solutions to negotiating the one through the other. Hence, instead of presenting detection as “an intellectual, rational and scientific exercise *rather than* an active physical engagement with the criminal”, as Heather Worthington claims (*Key Concepts in Crime Fiction* 31; *emphasis A.S.K.*), the novel emphasises the combination of both. Through Rhyme's physical immobility and Amelia's physical support, *The Bone Collector* underlines that detection requires the mind as much as the body.

## 5.2 Cormoran Strike: A Veteran Detective's Resocialisation

Robert Galbraith is the pseudonym under which J.K. Rowling published her crime fiction series on a mobility-impaired veteran detective. As a detective for the Special Investigation Branch of the Royal Military Police, Cormoran Strike lost a leg in Afghanistan two and a half years prior to the plot. Now, as veteran returned to civility, his post-military career as a private detective lacks in success. Set in the sociohistorical context of contemporary London, the series presents an homage to the American hard-boiled detective fiction of the early twentieth century and implements modern twists, especially when it comes to the issue of traditional gender roles and stereotypes. The ongoing series currently consists of five instalments, four of which have been turned into the BBC TV adaptation called *Strike*.

The series' first instalment, *The Cuckoo's Calling*, presents a contemporary British example of hard-boiled detective fiction. It confirms some of the characteristics Sarah Trott identifies as typical for the hard-boiled genre, such as "the dark side of human nature" ("The Detective as Veteran" 136) presented in the central case of a jealous brother murdering his adoptive sister. The most striking resemblance comes in the "diminished masculinity of the male protagonist" (Trott, "The Detective as Veteran" 136), which is manifested in Strike's war experience and his war-induced physical impairment. Both render the veteran's trauma physical. At the same time, Rowling enriches this contemporary hard-boiled novel with the modern addition of Robin Ellacott as a female sidekick, on whose support the protagonist relies in terms of his business and his identity.

Neither the series nor even the first novel, *The Cuckoo's Calling*, have been fully recognised in academic research yet. Although some articles on literary representations of disabled masculinity briefly mention Cormoran Strike as one of many examples (Pâquet 206; Mintz 95), in-depth analyses of the series are scarce. Most research focuses on Strike's veteran status considering his occupation as a detective. Sarah McLoughlin, for example, opposes the classical detective's forensic approach to crimes to experientially based epistemology. In her analysis of Strike, she argues that his experiences of his childhood and military career provide him with the empathetic and investigative methods for his private detective work (136-137). Reading Strike's missing leg as a visible mark of his military experience and his veterancy (138), McLoughlin nevertheless neglects to analyse its influence on his masculinity. Peter C. Molin questions Rowling's motivation to create Strike as a disabled veteran since his mobility impairment has little influence on the investigations and concludes that Rowling must have aimed at representing disability as war veterans' everyday experience (18). However, Molin

ignores how Strike's "conflict of identity" (15) as a veteran indeed influences his investigations and how the conflict's solution eventually supports his integration in civilian society. Janina Wierzoch excludes Strike as an example from her monograph on representations of the wars in Iran and Afghanistan in contemporary literature, drama and film because of a lacking influence of the war on the series' crime narrative (54). Although this is true for the plot development, upon close examination, it becomes evident that Strike's military experience as an SIB detective in the Royal Military Police decisively shaped his character and, hence, influences his investigations as a civilian private detective in London. McLoughlin, Molin and Wierzoch recognise Strike predominantly for his military experiences, which highlights this stage of life as an essential part of his character. The following chapter turns the focus on Strike's masculinity as a physically impaired veteran detective. It analyses how his military experience and his impairment affect his negotiation of his civilian identity and masculinity as a physically impaired veteran detective.

Gender takes on an important role in the books, which has largely been neglected in academic research so far. The only piece of research on gender in the series briefly states that Strike confirms the "stereotypically masculine private eye" while Robin "moves beyond stereotype" as she is "capable of growth" (Humann 140-141) but then focuses on a transgender character in the second books of the series, *The Silkworm*. Heather Duerre Humann observes that Rowling "play[s] with, and ultimately challeng[es], traditional views of gender – and traditional gender roles" (140), which already shows in the first book of the series. The importance of heteronormative gender roles is prominent in *The Cuckoo's Calling*. Not only do the two protagonists Cormoran Strike and Robin Ellacott enter the narrative as embodiments of stereotypical gender roles, which clash at the beginning. These stereotypes are also deconstructed throughout the novel in relation to detection and to each other. Stereotypical gender roles and internalised social expectations towards their embodiment substantiate Cormoran Strike's central identity crisis. The first part of the following chapter elaborates on how his military career constituted his identity as embodiment of hegemonic masculinity before the disabling accident deprives him of the physical integrity to sustain this image. Personal and professional struggles increase Strike's alienation from civilian society. Afterwards, the second part of the chapter focuses on his transition to masculine disability which, on the one hand, bases in his detective work, through which he reformulates his soldier identity and becomes a veteran detective. On the other hand, Robin's external perspective on his masculinity, his impairment and his professional work essentially support Strike in negotiating his professional and personal crises in order to come to terms with his civilian identity.

### 5.2.1 The Uprooted Veteran Detective

As a physically impaired veteran, Cormoran Strike embodies a contemporary example of the ‘wounded warrior’ whose identity is negotiated at the intersection between internalised social expectations, military experience and physical impairment. Among the many characteristics of a veteran returning from the army, Strike most prominently displays the alienation from civilian society caused by his military experience and his physical disability alike. Strike relies on the (able-bodied) military masculinity he embodied before the accident. Now, as a civilian, he struggles with his physical impairment in civilian society and his (voluntarily chosen) exclusion from the army. Additionally, private and professional crises, including accommodative, business and financial struggles, characterise his sense of disabled masculinity.

The first impression of Strike is created by the office door to his private detective agency and an outside perception through the eyes of the future female sidekick. Robin Ellacott is about to start her new job as temporary secretary to “C.B. Strike,” a “*Private Detective*” (CC 14). The detective’s last name is reminiscent of the verb ‘to strike’ and indicates a purposeful, forceful physical attack, which attaches a dangerous potential to the first impression of the protagonist.<sup>165</sup> Strike’s first physical appearance confirms this dangerous impression, rendering the physical attack imminent to Robin, and contradicts it at the same time. When she is about to enter the office, she bumps into Strike, or rather “[s]ixteen unseeing stone of dishevelled male slammed into her; Robin was knocked off her feet and catapulted backwards [...] towards the void beyond the lethal staircase” (14). This massive corporeality creates a tough, physical, potentially dangerous, or even lethal, appearance of masculinity. However, Robin’s further observations of Strike deconstruct this threatening masculinity. His face has been attacked as “[o]ne of his eyes was puffy and bruised, the skin just below the eyebrow cut. Congealing blood sat in raised white-edged nail tracks on his left cheek” (16). Presumably, these wounds have been inflicted on him by his ex-girlfriend Charlotte who rushed out of the office just before Robin entered. They challenge the impression of threatening masculinity by adding victimisation through a female attack. Robin describes Strike’s appearance as “massive; his height, his general hairiness, coupled with a gently expanding belly, suggested a grizzly bear” (16). Further animalistic references throughout the novel, such as “bull-like” (333) or “Rottweiler” (377), exaggerate the “dishevelled” (14) impression Strike made on Robin and

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<sup>165</sup> In *The Silkworm*, the reader learns that Strike is named after Cormoran, a giant in Cornish folklore (SW 29) which suits his massive and threatening appearance. Combined with his last name, Cormoran Strike indicates that ‘a giant strikes’ and presents him as a potent threat. In addition to his physical prowess and massive appearance, Strike’s name manifests his masculinity.

reinforce his dangerous potential. Despite the imminent threat his body poses, Strike “react[s] instinctively” (15), demonstrating a quick recognition of and appropriate reaction to the situation, and saves her from falling. Consequently, Strike presents a threat and a saviour at the same time, which renders his masculinity both dangerous and protective.

Metaphorically, this latent ambiguity refers to Strike’s former life as a detective at the Special Investigation Branch (SIB) of the Royal Military Police. Similar to other cultural representations, Strike’s first appearance, too, depicts the veteran at the intersection of a “saint or savior (and sometimes, a villain or victim)” (McVeigh and Cooper, “Introduction” 7). On the one hand, he presents a threat/villain because his military experience proves a soldier’s willingness and “capacity for violence” (Martin 18). On the other hand, he directs this violence at national threats and fights to protect his nation, which makes him a saviour. Strike’s military past is “muted but persistent” (Molin 15) as it influences the plot development only in minor terms. However, it presents a decisive part of Strike’s character and explains not only his habits, attitudes towards his clients and way of working, but also the roots of his crisis of reconciling with his civilian life and identity. As a result, a close consideration of his military experience, which is slowly revealed throughout the novel, is vital for the analysis of his disabled masculinity.

Throughout *The Cuckoo’s Calling*, it becomes evident that Strike loved life at the army for three reasons. First and foremost, it offered him an unexpected chance to connect with his late mother and her teachings. Leda Strike, a supergroupie (CC 80) to a rock star who is Cormoran’s father, included Strike and his younger half-sister Lucy in her lifestyle of drug addiction and constant travelling. Occasionally, when Leda’s frequently changing sex partners threatened the children too much, her brother Ted and his wife Joan brought them to their house in Cornwall. It was after Leda’s death that Strike decided to drop out of the University of Oxford and join the army (373). Contrasting his “complicated, peripatetic” (21) and “nomadic childhood” (217), the army offered Strike order and structure, in which discipline and respect of hierarchical structures are required to be successful. In addition to allowing him to refine his natural inclinations of being structured, thorough and tidy (46), Strike also “refound there the life he had been taught by Leda: constant uprootings, self-reliance, and the endless appeal of the new” (374). Although his mother’s lifestyle presents an undesirable childhood, it partly taught Strike survival, but predominantly equipped him with social skills, which were necessary to adapt to the frequently changing spatial and social environments (217). These skills implicitly prepared him for a military career and retrospectively enabled him to appreciate his mother’s efforts. Secondly, the army offered an alternative career path to his acceded academic career at Oxford

(although Rowling never specified his study programme). A degree from Oxford would have increased his class status, rendered him more ‘suitable’ to Charlotte, his wealthy ex-girlfriend, and raised him in her friends’ and family’s recognition (306-307). Working as an SIB detective, however, is a more physically demanding occupation, which combines his cognitive excellence, proved by having been admitted to an elite university, with his massive physique. Unsurprisingly, he has been decorated with a lifesaving medal for his military achievements (242, 365). Thirdly, combining his physical prowess with his intelligence to work for the Royal Military Police allowed him to pursue his childhood dream of becoming a detective (364, 373). Therefore, the army’s education to become as an SIB detective combines many of Strike’s constituting characteristics.

Having joined the army aged 20 (CC 374), like many young soldiers, Strike experiences a rite of passage during his military service. The army “makes men out of boys and soldiers out of civilians” (Trott, *War Noir* 10; see also Phillips 4) and shapes not only their characters and habits but also their sense and development of masculinity.<sup>166</sup> Military members’ embodied gender identity is stereotypically characterised by the “interrelationship of stoicism, phallocentrism, and the domination of weaker individuals [...], competitiveness, and heroic achievement [...]” (Higate and Hopton 433), which are also expressions of hegemonic masculinity. Throughout the ages, going to war has prevailed as a public proof of masculinity, for example, in distinction from femininity (Phillips 3-5; Kilshaw 184-186).<sup>167</sup> In her foundational text, Connell highlights the military’s importance in this context since “no arena has been more important for the definition of hegemonic masculinity in European/American culture” (213). Within this arena, physical integrity and fitness are necessary preconditions as “[m]asculinity and the veterans’ identity as a soldier were dependent upon their body and its ability to perform” (Kilshaw 173). Hence, the army turns young soldiers, like Strike, into embodiments of hegemonic, “exemplary masculinity” (173, 182; see also Messerschmidt 62). They become masculine representatives of the nation (McVeigh and Cooper, “Introduction” 3; McLoughlin 1). This hegemonic notion of military masculinity manifests in the two cultural

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<sup>166</sup> Although aware of the growing number of women in the army (e.g. Higate and Hopton 436-437), this dissertation focuses on male soldiers and the army’s influence on their gender identity.

<sup>167</sup> Each war takes place in an individual sociohistorical context, for different reasons and affects the soldiers differently (e.g. Braudy xxiii). Their cultural representations vary depending on the government’s staging of victory or defeat to the nation (see also Garland-Thomson qtd. in Boyle 98; McVeigh and Cooper, “Introduction” 7). Nevertheless, the experience of having gone to war unifies all veterans alike as they have been “expose[d] to an unprecedented uncertainty, intense and fundamentally unsettling, on an enormous scale” (McLoughlin 20). Therefore, this chapter largely neglects research’s individual focus on specific wars, such as World War I (Bourke), Vietnam War (Boyle) or the Gulf War (Kilshaw) and, instead, implements its general arguments about soldiers’ relations to masculinity, disability and war environment into the analysis of Strike’s disabled masculinity.

archetypes of the ‘wounded warrior’ and the ‘soldier hero.’ The image of the ‘soldier hero’ “has proved to be one of the most durable and powerful forms of idealized masculinity in Western cultural traditions” (Dawson qtd. in McVeigh and Cooper, “Introduction” 2; see also Connell 213; Mergenthal 191; Braudy 546-547; Bourke 14). Although reality proves military masculinity to be far more complex than these social idea(l)s of military masculinity, which have changed across history (see also Braudy), associations of male soldiers heroically fighting to protect the nation have prevailed.

In his military career, Cormoran Strike, too, approached this idealised image of hegemonic masculinity through protecting the nation. As an SIB detective, he further complements the military warrior image with a detective’s image of seeking the truth, fighting for justice and restoring order. Furthermore, authority and reputation characterised his success. He “had been able to command the compliance of witnesses and suspects; he had been [...] a man whose time had more value than most of those with whom he consortied, and who could choose when, where and how long interviews would be. [...] he had needed no uniform; he had constantly cloaked in officialdom and prestige” (CC 43-44). Therefore, Strike’s identity as an SIB detective was constituted along the ideal of the popular image of military, i.e. patriarchal and hegemonic, masculinity.

However, ambiguous reflections cloud Strike’s memory of his life in the army. On the one hand, he describes the army as “his world and he had been happy there” and he “did not regret a day of the time he had spent serving” (CC 114). Its “surface of conformity” (87) eclipses the soldiers’ individual class and social background (Bourke 251) and, despite different ranks, largely homogenises them as a group (Kilshaw 182). It also ignored his parents’ fame and treated him as one of many, which allowed him the “anonymity he craved” (Galbraith). He still feels familiar with the language spoken among the troops and connected with this life he left behind (CC 113). The environment of structure and discipline enabled him to find his place in the world. On the other hand, Strike states that he had been “both feted and detested” for his meticulousness (93) and “had not been of these people, even while among them. He had been a monkey, and then a suit, feared and disliked about equally by the average squaddie” (114). Although he loved his life at the army and rose quickly in rank, he “had never become entirely submerged” and was still detached from his comrades (87). The life he enjoyed most was characterised by isolation, even in a group which is distinguished by unity. This outsider position did not improve once he left the army and returned to society. Instead, Strike gained his military achievements and survived “at a price” (McVeigh and Cooper, “Introduction” 5), the price of his emotional and physical health.

War intrudes and often permanently changes body and soul (Kilshaw 91-92; Mintz 82) and becomes a turning point in soldiers' lives (Mergenthaler 191). It (in)visibly distinguishes the veteran who has returned to civility through physical disability and emotional trauma. Thus, it has transformative effects on the soldiers' status and gender identity (Trott, *War Noir* 10). It turns non-disabled into disabled, for example, forcing them to use prostheses (Ott 140-141) and emotionally stable into shellshocked people with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); it turns 'normates' into spectacles of otherness (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 8). Aware of their dangerous and potentially lethal occupation (Baker 46; Bourke 31-32), soldiers know about the risks which might eventually disrupt their physical and moral integrity. Tom Shakespeare's observation that "[m]uch of what is traditionally associated with masculinity is [...] generative of impairment" ("The Sexual Politics of Disabled Masculinity" 63) becomes visible in the context of war-induced disability. Here, an excessive striving for hegemonic masculinity (i.e. through physical prowess, mental strength, heroism and risk-management) can indeed lead to disabled masculinity. Therefore, "war disabilities" rather "pressur[e] traditional hegemonic notions of masculinity to be more accountable for 'extraordinary' male bodies" (Boyle 96). The military context turns disability, as a notion stereotypically associated with vulnerability (and femininity), into a display of increased masculinity.<sup>168</sup> Nevertheless, this apparent masculine connotation of a war-induced injury is not *per se* visible in any disability.<sup>169</sup> Instead, the physical impairment is potentially still negatively perceived in terms of lack and dependency, which disrupts previous, hegemonic notions and results in conflicting understandings of masculinity.

The cultural trope of the 'wounded warrior' demonstrates the ambivalent nature of war-induced disabilities. Its concept gained new prominence in the aftermath of the more recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Dolmage states that veterans, returning from these wars with physical and emotional injuries, used this term because "they did not want to be called disabled" (116). This explanation profoundly highlights contemporary culture's understanding of masculinity and disability as mutually exclusive. By rejecting the adjective 'disabled', these

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<sup>168</sup> The deep connection between war and disability is most overtly expressed in disability rhetoric. The "metaphor of battle" presents a common way of expressing the dealing with a disability or illness, such as "fighting the physical impairment" (Rapala and Manderson 172) or leading a "battle of overcoming a disability" (Dolmage 226). Considering a physical restriction as an opponent worth fighting against, disabled men 'wage a war' on their own body, performing "hardness" and reconnecting to hegemonic notions of masculinity (Rapala and Manderson 172). In a veteran's case, war often creates the disabled body and thus embeds the war within the physical self, causing the veteran to 'bring the war home'.

<sup>169</sup> Such an implied positive reading of disability might potentially have been the case depending on sociohistorical contexts. After both world wars, physically impaired and shellshocked men populated society and could thus be recognised as veterans and not just as any disabled men.

veterans avoid devaluating associations of weakness, vulnerability and dependency. Instead, using the noun ‘warrior’ implies cultural assumptions of bravery, heroism and physical prowess, alluring to a hegemonic understanding of (military) masculinity. Adding the adjective ‘wounded’, on the one hand, gives credit to their physical and/or emotional sacrifices during their service. On the other hand, “[i]n war [...] the injured man was not disabled but mutilated. He was the fit man, the potent man *rendered* impotent” (Bourke 37-38). This notion implies that the injury is not the result of the veterans’ incompetence but an external, violent assault overwhelming his defence. Therefore, “‘Wounded Warriors’ are not expected to find a cure because the wound itself is an apparatus of the state that is commodified and injected into the currency of emotional capitalism” (Martin 213). Hence, the term ‘wounded warrior’ inverses the sense of pity and incapability which the adjective ‘disabled’ would potentially evoke and turns it into an image of heroic, sacrificial masculinity for a higher cause.<sup>170</sup>

The incident of how Strike acquired his physical impairment combines several aspects of masculinity and war-induced disability, characterising him as a hybrid of the ‘soldier hero’ and the ‘wounded warrior’. Two and a half years ago, while investigating a comrade’s death, Strike lost his right calf and foot in a car explosion (CC 332). He had sensed that the vehicle was going to explode and, acting upon instinct, seized his comrade Richard Anstis to save their lives (332).<sup>171</sup> In addition to the association of “true masculinity” of such instinctive reactions (Braudy xii), this ‘heroic’ action turned Strike into a ‘soldier hero’ or ‘Sacrificing Hero’ who demonstrates his “superior *moral* courage” (Martin 129).<sup>172</sup> While the precise situation of Strike’s disabling accident is revealed in the second instalment, *The Cuckoo’s Calling* presents

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<sup>170</sup> Cultural representations of veterans, especially in U.S. American sociohistorical contexts, rely on such images as the ‘wounded warrior’ to improve the society’s perception of the war. At the same time, however, they foster stereotypes and generalisations of veterans as a heterogeneous group, whose experiences differ, and impede their renormalisation in the society they have returned to (Branham 7-10). For further reference on the ‘wounded warrior’, see, for example, Martin.

<sup>171</sup> Apart from the physical impairment, this incident has two further long-term consequences for Strike. First, it laid the foundation for a lifelong professional and private relationship to Richard Anstis, whose two-day-old son would have grown up without a father had Strike not intervened (CC 332). Second, Strike decided between life and death in this incident as saving Anstis meant to abandon the third person in the car who did not survive the accident (361). Living with the consequences of such decisions is part of a veteran’s negotiation of his military experience. Although it toughens Strike up for his detective occupation, it also presents him as emotionally burdened with such consequences of his decisions.

<sup>172</sup> However, as the bombing of the car could not have been foreseen, Strike did not willingly put himself in danger to save his comrade’s life. His heroism does not result from Strike’s bravery but his instinctive reaction combined with chance – a decisive aspect often eclipsed in the cultural creation of heroes (Martin 132). Consequently, chance made Strike a hero and chance made him disabled, which demonstrates the ambivalent nature of a war-induced disability. Such ‘hero narratives’ focus on the soldier in combat and often eclipse alternative ways of how serving men receive physical and/or emotional traumata (Branham 12). Although Strike loses his mobility in a war context, it was not during combat but in a (comparatively mundane) car explosion which could have happened to anyone in this particular context. This implies a certain hierarchy even among war-induced disabilities, which downgrades Strike’s ‘heroic’ sacrifice.

the ‘heroic’ circumstances of the disabling accident only marginally. Instead, it establishes Strike’s character as a ‘wounded warrior’, who strives against the common perception of a “pitied and marginalized” representation of war (Martin 163). It positions him between these two dominant cultural tropes.<sup>173</sup>

Significantly influenced by his injury and the resulting mobility restriction, Strike decides to end his military career (CC 87, 140) and return to London’s civilian society. Although he could have stayed in the army despite his disability – “they had been keen to keep him,” proving his success more important than his physical integrity –, the disability encourages his decision to leave the army (87). The injury disqualifies Strike as a physically active man because his body becomes unfit to weather the challenging endeavours of an SIB detective’s military investigations (Molin 17). He (probably) left before he (and his comrades) could realise that his body “[was] failing [him]” and potentially hinder his “living up to the ideal male soldierly body” (Kilshaw 177), i.e. before the mobility impairment could impede his professionalism and his work’s quality. Therefore, considered from a military point of view, leaving the army symbolises Strike’s attempt to save his (masculine) face as an SIB detective at the Royal Military Police.

However, it becomes evident that the physical impairment only partly constitutes Strike’s disabled masculinity. In an internal disability-in-dialogue approach (Hafferty and S. Foster 190), Strike’s third-person voice reveals the true reason for his leaving: “He knew that his personal tipping point was drawing nearer; that moment by which, unless he left, he would find it too onerous to go, to readjust to civilian life” (CC 87). Taking his injury as valid excuse to leave the army, Strike fears that the army might have “shaped” (87) his character ‘beyond civilian recognition’. He fears that his military identity might dominate his adaptation skills, which would result in the total submergence into the army and absolute alienation from society. Such a “tipping point” loosely refers to what Wierzoch terms “home/front – a home sphere that integrates or rediscovers traits of war” (14). Strike’s specific case inverses the allocated roles of home and front as, to him, war, i.e. the army, becomes his home. Due to his unsteady

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<sup>173</sup> Although Strike aims to hide his impairment, he alludes to the ‘wounded warrior’ associations in a brief affair with the supermodel Ciara. Neutrally telling her about his missing limb, “‘I’ve only got one leg [...] it got blown off in Afghanistan’” (CC 348), creates an ambivalent impression. On the one hand, it comes close to an excuse, warning her of the sight and his potentially lacking prowess. On the other hand, it induces a sensual form of pity, expressed by her reply “‘Poor baby’” (348). He alludes to the ‘wounded warrior’ associations of bravery and heroism and combines them with pity (see also Martin 163). Thereby, he increases his sexual appeal to Ciara, making her feel the need to care for him in an eroticised way. As with Charlotte, Ciara’s beauty and having slept with a supermodel boost his sexual self-confidence (CC 360). Having claimed her despite (or because of) his disability, hence, underlines his approach to hegemonic notions of heterosexual masculinity and masculine disability.

childhood, he feels familiar and at ease in the (usually) foreign, “unsettling, seemingly unfamiliar sphere of war” (Wierzoch 13). When his mobility impairment sparks the (un)conscious anxiety of disappointing military expectations and his fear of total alienation from civility, Strike returns to the British culture which, usually “a sphere of belonging, or home” (Wierzoch 13), to him becomes a sphere of foreignness and readjustment. Therefore, Strike’s most severe identity crisis roots in his inability to leave behind his life in the army and reconcile his masculinity with his civilian status.

Such “‘readjustment’ problems” are common among veterans (Boyle 95; Kilshaw 192) who have changed throughout their military service. As a returning soldier, Strike is “[e]x by definition, [he embodies] *having-been-ness*” (McLoughlin 1) and, similar to the formerly non-disabled man, experiences a “status inconsistency” (Gerschick, “Toward a Theory of Disability and Gender” 1265). Even two and a half years after the accident (when the novel begins), Strike still feels alienated from civilian society. Everyday situations as a civilian, such as being driven in a car (CC 332), and as a detective, such as seeing a corpse in a morgue (361), initiate flashbacks to the disabling accident, while his habits remind him of his military service in general. Leaving the army destabilises his identity as “masculine soldier, warrior, employed man, hero” and results in “a tension between the veteran’s life within civilian society and [his] previous identity as a soldier” (Kilshaw 198-199). Having embodied such a masculine representative of the nation in the army, not only his return to civilian life but also his physical disability distinguishes Strike from his civilian surrounding. Additionally, these aspects render him more dependent on help and potentially feminise, i.e. emasculate him (Boyle 95; see also Kilshaw 176-177). Strike fights with internalised social expectations of masculinity and able-bodiedness – a stoic clinging to his masculine embodiment before the accident – which further complicates a veteran’s reintegration (Kilshaw 197). In fact, reminiscent of Gerschick and Miller’s reliance on hegemonic norms (191-199) and Torrell’s first pattern of understanding masculinity and disability as mutually exclusive (217), Strike holds on to his identity as an able-bodied soldier, an embodiment of hegemonic masculinity, and rejects his new identity a physically disabled civilian.

While Strike’s injury causes this significant change in environment and status, it comes along with several ambiguities concerning social belonging and masculinity. On the one hand, the explosion might have cost Strike half a leg, but it saved him from the potentially lethal occupation abroad. It opened the possibility to return to civilian life (see also Bourke 62) and

reintegrate in society.<sup>174</sup> Disability becomes a connection between the veteran and the society to which he returns; an interpretation which superficially challenges common metaphorical understandings of disability focusing on the socially marginalising effects of physical and or neurological impairments.<sup>175</sup> On the other hand, although the disability might link him to non-military society, Strike does not return to ‘normal’. Instead, his injury and the experiences he gained in the army mark him as different from his social surrounding (Kilshaw 91; Molin 17), which enforces the common perception of disability as deviant from the norm. His military past attaches the “stigma” of veterancy, which makes him “a member of a disturbed and socially disadvantaged underclass” (McVeigh and Cooper, “Introduction” 5) and, hence, marginalises him as an outsider. With occasional phantom pain, “feel[ing] the missing foot” and “flex[ing] the vanished toes” (CC 53), the impairment constantly reminds Strike of his military “life left behind” (166). At the same time, such symptoms prohibit closure of the traumatic experiences, and impede his social reintegration.

Strike’s impairment is revealed in the context of an everyday situation. Reflecting on his relationship, financial and residential struggles, his third-person perspective draws the reader’s attention to the fact that Strike’s “recent weight gain” puts “additional strain on the prosthetic lower leg he was now resting on the brass bar beneath the table” (CC 42). Such a casual mention of the prosthetic leg in this disability-in-action presentation (Hafferty and S. Foster 191) allows the conclusion that Strike has emotionally distanced himself from the accident. Mentioning it in mundane situations, such as when he removes the prosthesis before going to bed and puts “the false leg beside his recharging mobile phone” (CC 52), shows that he has integrated the handling of the prosthesis as a routine in his everyday life. He has accepted his physical change and considers his impairment as a part of “the inadequacies of his life” (41), which contributes to but does not constitute his disabled masculinity.

Despite this acceptance, Strike relies on his able-bodied identity from the time before the disabling accident. To him, the prosthesis is a stigma (Goffman 1), which contradicts his internalised ideal of (military/hegemonic) masculinity. He understands his impairment as “a distinguishing feature he did not want to impress on anybody’s memory” (CC 115). Since the heroic and masculine notions of a war-induced impairment (McVeigh and Cooper,

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<sup>174</sup> This potentiality was often abused by malingerers who pretended to be physically or emotionally unfit to prolong or even enter their military service (Bourke, chapter two). Different forms of malingering include feigning and self-mutilation. Hence, malingerers rely on their body as a weapon, willing to inflict or provoke serious injuries to themselves to be sent home (Bourke 81).

<sup>175</sup> Arguing that disabled people are not isolated at all but are surrounded by people who care for them in physical and emotional ways, Foreman makes a similar point (180). However, it also proves applicable to the context of the war veteran, whose disability might have changed but essentially extended his life.

“Introduction” 5) do not show in Strike’s impairment, he aims to “rise above [his] present social station”, i.e. the marginalised and inferior position of the physically impaired man (Siebers 101).<sup>176</sup> By replacing the missing part of his leg with a prosthesis, which “fix[es]” his body (Ott 141), he “[aspires to belong] to a dominant social group”, that of the able-bodied, which he “stamps [...] as simultaneously normative and desirable” (Siebers 101). Strike confirms the “significance of appearance and external perception of manliness” (Gerschick and A. S. Miller 192) as the prosthesis allows him to recreate an able-bodied impression (of masculinity). With the proper treatment, the artificial leg allows him to lead an independent, self-reliant life without a caregiver or additional devices, such as crutches. It does not so much enhance his physical abilities but rather presents “a strategy for creating access or restoring function” (Ott 142).<sup>177</sup> The prosthesis supports Strike in coping with his impairment as he prevents the impairment from dominating or even becoming his “primary identity” (Gerschick, “Sisyphus in a Wheelchair” 192).

This coping strategy alludes to Erving Goffman’s idea of ‘passing’. Goffman defines ‘passing’ as “conceal[ing] information about his real social identity, receiving and accepting treatment based on false suppositions concerning himself” (42).<sup>178</sup> In Strike’s case, these suppositions are not false but rather incomplete since the impairment is an essential part of his identity, which he hides. Since Strike carefully chooses “to whom, how, when, and where” to reveal his stigma (Goffman 42), *The Cuckoo’s Calling* presents his impairment as an intimate affair which he deals with and negotiates all by himself. Transcending Molin’s argument that the reader’s attention is drawn to the leg “only in moments that reveal Rowling’s empathy and eye for detail” (16), it can be specified that these are moments of intimacy. Scenes showing

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<sup>176</sup> However, in *Career of Evil*, Robin describes Strike’s injury as a “legacy of war” which “represents bravery, adversity overcome” and, as a part of Strike’s public reputation and image, is “tied up with fame and achievement and [...] honour” (CE 212). Thereby, Robin not only realises that this book’s criminal aims at Strike himself but also emphasises his impairment as a truly masculine disability. McLoughlin similarly observes this scene (142-143) but neglects its relevance in terms of Strike’s masculinity.

<sup>177</sup> Although the artificial leg turns Strike into a hybrid of human and ‘machine’, recalling associations of a cyborg, such allusions are misleading here. Strike’s prosthesis increases neither his strength nor his abilities but merely allows him to approach his (and society’s) able-bodied norm (Ott 142). Despite the seemingly obvious connection between disability and technology, meaning that technology potentially replaces amputated body parts or grants independence, disability studies scarcely paid attention to how Haraway’s “Cyborg Manifesto” could contribute to the cultural understanding of people with disabilities. Reeve elaborates on this research gap and combines analyses of cultural representations of cyborgs in (science fiction) literature and film with sociocultural observations on how technology already enriches the life of people with disabilities.

<sup>178</sup> In the context of detective fiction, Goffman’s idea of ‘passing’ recalls the (classical) detective’s ability to disguise (such as demonstrated in the stories on Dupin and Holmes). Simultaneously, disguising the impairment also alludes to Goffman’s differentiation between the individual’s virtual social identity, “the character we impute to the individual” upon the first meeting, and actual social identity, “the category and attributes he [or she] could in fact be proved to possess” (2). Hence, by hiding the impairment, Strike manipulates both his virtual and actual social identity by aiming at an able-bodied impression.

Strike's impairment offer a glimpse into his privacy and reveal what he aims to hide. Partly due to his focus on work, partly to keep his impairment a personal affair, Strike neglects the physical and medical care for his leg and endures pain rather than admitting physical weakness and asking for medical help. Confirming a stereotypically masculine trait, he rejects effeminate associations of weakness or pity in order to pass for being able-bodied.

However, in addition to the painful adjustment of the body to the prosthesis (Siebers 203n8), neglecting the prosthesis causes Strike much trouble. It occasionally even impedes his independence as he takes its benefits for granted. As “[h]e was *supposed* to examine the skin surface for irritation every day”, which implies his neglect of this task, and treat it with “various creams and powders”, inflammation and pain are the results of his tunnel vision on his work, “forces for which [the sensitive patch of skin on his stump] had not been designed” (CC 212; *emphasis A.S.K.*). In addition to his overweight, neglecting the stump’s care causes “the shadow of a limp purely because the additional load was causing some chafing” (42). The resulting, increasingly impeding pain renders the leg unreliable as he never knows when it gives in and causes him to lose control of the prosthesis and his body. Yet, although Strike recognises early symptoms of “choke syndrome, the nemesis of amputees” (215) – dangerous vein and skin changes as a result of the incorrect handling of the prosthesis – he shuns medical help. Apart from going back to the hospital, he also “fear[s] advice to rest the leg, to desist from normal ambulation” which would mean “a forced return to crutches” (216). Impeding not only his mobility, investigative agency, independence and self-reliance, crutches would also render his impairment visible. They would attract “the stares of passers-by at the pinned-up trouser leg and the shrill enquiries of small children” (216), highlight his physical deviance (Siebers 109-110) and turn him into a spectacle of otherness (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 8). Instead of displaying his injury this publicly, Strike rather silently endures the pain of the prosthesis.<sup>179</sup>

Culture might have changed when Strike returned with a mobility impairment from Afghanistan, he returned to the familiar spatial and social surroundings of his then-fiancée Charlotte. Although they rowed and often split up to get back together before Strike’s service, they resumed their relationship upon his return (CC 302). Charlotte invited him to live with her to care for him during his rehabilitation and in order to save money for his detective agency

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<sup>179</sup> In *The Silkworm*, Strike is forced to give in to his pain. In consequence to continuously neglecting the care of his stump, he loses control over his leg and falls (SW 121). The following inflammation increases his pain and forces him to first use a walking stick, which overtly marks him as a man with mobility impairment (207), and later on even pin up his trouser leg because his knee is too swollen and hurtful to attach the prosthesis (239-240). Adapting his physique to his pain also subordinates Strike’s professionalism and enthusiasm for his work to his disability, which makes him mourn his lost physical prowess even more.

(41). Probably, it was his love for and engagement to Charlotte, which kept him from total submergence in the army (136) and, despite his success and ease in the army, attached him to civility. Similar to women after the two world wars, she assumed a stereotypically female position of a caregiver, supporting Strike's 're-masculinisation' (Boyle 95). However, contrastingly to women in romance fiction during World War I (Macdonald 60), Charlotte also becomes a provider for her disabled fiancé as it is her wealth which pays for their accommodation and wellbeing (CC 41). She supported his rehabilitation and reintegration by offering him a structured social environment with a female companion, accommodation and a prospective business, which allowed Strike to approach some aspects of hegemonic masculinity despite his disability.<sup>180</sup>

Additionally, Charlotte's extraordinary beauty compensates for Strike's disability, through which she comes close to a reward for his military service (see Macdonald 59). When she left her ex-boyfriend Jago Ross fifteen years before, "it was the most glorious moment" for Strike as he "had publicly carried off Helen of Troy right under Menelaus's nose" (CC 218). Strike claimed Charlotte like a trophy, demonstrating superiority to his rival Ross (76). After Strike's disabling accident, her character suggests to be the "princess-reward for patriotic services", for which the returned veteran has paid with physical loss and emotional distress, a trope found in romance fictions during World War I (Macdonald 59). Strike reflects that Charlotte's extraordinary beauty "acted as a counterweight to the half a leg not yet fit for a prosthesis" and "transformed him from the Man With Only One Foot to the man who had managed [...] to snag a fiancée so stunning that men stopped talking in mid-sentence when she entered the room" (SW 179). Charlotte not only underlines his masculine image of a hunter and warrior, she also reinforces his image as the sexually attractive supercrip, transcending his physical impairment through the 'beauty and the beast' trope, which Foreman observes in Deaver's *The Bone Collector* (129). Charlotte eased Strike's return to civilian society and anchored his position as a (heterosexual) man, supporting his rehabilitation in accommodative, financial and emotional terms.

However, the series proves Charlotte's impression of a devoted veteran's fiancée to be erroneous. Like a femme fatale, she "weaponizes her femininity" by both "straightforward

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<sup>180</sup> Research on and cultural representations of both world wars underline the importance of women's support to veterans who return with a physical disability and/or mental disorders, such as PTSD, and their reintegration in society. Women took over the public life while most men were at the front during World War II. After the war, however, women became the decisive agents in rebuilding the veteran's masculinity in civilian contexts. To achieve this aim, they had to return to their prewar submission to men and, thus, make room for the returned men to reclaim their "prewar masculine states of independence and sociability" (Boyle 95). War-induced disabled masculinity was 'cured' by returning to the domestic life they had left.

assault[s] on the detective's libido, [and] through the deceptive performance of feminine vulnerability" (Plain, "Gender and Sexuality" 104). Charlotte instrumentalises Strike to hurt her ex-boyfriend (CC 218) and poses a "personal threat" (Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* 77) to Strike. She lied to him about having his baby (CC 300), cheated on him (298) and becomes engaged to her ex-boyfriend only three weeks after her separation from Strike (352). Supporting her image as a femme fatale, Charlotte is an 'antithesis' to Strike. While he is naturally inclined to hunt for the truth, he describes Charlotte as "a girl who spun lies as easily as other women breathed" (53). Maybe this inclination for truth has him try to 'cure' Charlotte from this destructiveness, which renders him only more vulnerable to her lies and emotional abuses. Moreover, in terms of Strike's rehabilitation, it becomes evident that Charlotte did not welcome him back because of her devotion to him. Instead of supporting him with his private situation of healing and negotiating his military experience, Charlotte counts on his public image as 'wounded warrior' and 'soldier hero'. She "only returned to him for the drama of the situation, attracted by his injury and his medal" (238). Her wish for popularity, reflected in her wealthy family's ancestry (306), additionally distinguishes her from Strike. His parentage, a mixture of the upper and lower class, makes him an "uncategorizable mongrel" to Charlotte's family (307), and burdens him with a kind of popularity which he detests and Charlotte loves. His famous parentage, in addition to his reputation as a decorated and injured veteran, attracts Charlotte for drama's sake. In *The Cuckoo's Calling*, it is rather the veteran himself who becomes the trophy to the femme fatale who basks in his glorious reputation. She not only recurs like a "germ that had lingered in his blood for fifteen years", haunting Strike in his dreams and thoughts (298), but also increases his struggle with his disabled masculinity. Most notably, Charlotte intervenes with his rehabilitation by denying him nostalgic memories. When Strike visited the "Army Rumour Service" website, she "had reacted the way other women might had they found their partners viewing online porn" (113). The following row between them undermines Strike's authority, self-determination and masculinity and revealed Charlotte's dominance in their relationship.

Although breaking up with her cleared Strike from this almost toxic relationship, it reinforces the crises in which the reader meets him at the beginning of the novel. Ending their relationship not only deprives him of a female companion but also makes him homeless as he moves out of her flat (41). Since he cannot afford a flat of his own because of financial struggles with his business, he is forced to live in his office.<sup>181</sup> Strike has established a detective agency

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<sup>181</sup> Unlike Lincoln Rhyme who turns his apartment into an office, Strike turns his office into his apartment, which transfers Messent's argument from the person of the hard-boiled detective to his spatial surroundings: "the

as a means to reintegrate into civilian society, but his clients recognise him rather for his famous parentage. As “the extramarital accident” (205) to a supergroupie mother and a rock star father, clients and witnesses alike recognise Strike as ‘the son of’, a publicity which overshadows recognition of his own skills as a detective. This unwanted fame troubles him more in his civilian rehabilitation than his war-induced mobility impairment (Molin 15; Galbraith) since, even if he achieves civilian reintegration as a veteran, this publicity still distinguishes him from his social environment.

Additionally, his business is troubled with financial problems. Strike receives death threats (CC 39) and some of the few clients he has (60) refuse to pay for his services, which caused him to go down in “an eighteen-month spiral into financial ruin” (20). In addition to his debts (20), his famous father calls in the loan with which Strike paid for his office (41). Unlike the classical (amateur) detective who works for his own pleasure and often chooses only the most intriguing cases, Strike financially depends on his work, his clients and their solvency. Unable to afford rejecting cases because of moral quandaries, the monetary reasons make him accept John Bristow’s case to investigate his sister Lula Landry’s supposed suicide. Additionally, Strike suddenly becomes accountable to his new office manager Robin Ellacott, to whom he cannot hide his business crisis, fearing her imminent humiliating judgement (18). Being single, lacking financial reserve as much as proper accommodation and leading a poorly running business combine to a “kaleidoscope of horror” (18), which destroys any potential achievement in negotiating his disabled masculinity he might have made. It highlights that even two and a half years after the disabling accident, Strike still struggles with the social reintegration as a veteran. He confirms the “image of the veteran as a damaged loner suffering from flashbacks [...], anger and depression, [...] family breakdown” and lacking business success (McVeigh and Cooper, “Introduction” 5).<sup>182</sup> His professional and personal crises predominantly constitute Strike’s disabled masculinity.

In addition to his crises, the memory of his military life and social expectations metaphorically haunt him in the shape of a “spectre” ever since the accident (CC 114). It “urged him to consider how far he had fallen; his age; his penury; his shattered love life; his homelessness. *Thirty-five, it whispered, and nothing to show for all your years of graft except a few cardboard boxes and a massive debt*” (106). It emphasises what Strike has not (yet)

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professional and personal become indistinguishable” (Messent 38). While in Rhyme’s case, working at home enforces his fundamental identification with his profession, Strike’s living in the office underlines his social isolation as he has no other place to go.

<sup>182</sup> Although Robin presents the only person with whom Strike engages on a regular basis, he is not a loner per se. Instead, he avoids his supportive friends and voluntarily seeks social seclusion because he “could not face telling anyone” about his break-up from Charlotte (CC 53).

achieved or even lost and visualises his identity and masculinity in crisis. Fighting the spectre means fighting the consciousness of his losses and confronting his internalised social expectations. Although Strike mostly does well, he occasionally gives in to a nostalgic look back at the army and his able-bodied life as a soldier. The “Army Rumour Service site” creates a bridge back to “the army mindset [...] written in the language he too could speak fluently” (113) and reminds him of the feelings of belonging and community which he experienced in the army. Similar to a relapse, Strike browses this website in nostalgically remembrance of his sense of belonging to masculine camaraderie. Like many veterans, he “cannot simply ‘switch off’” (Trott, “The Detective as Veteran” 140) his soldier identity. This weakness “lower[s] his resistance to the spectre he could feel, now, breathing on the back of his neck” (CC 114) but also supports him in coping with the loss of his military life. When the breakup with Charlotte uproots him again, Strike relies on military habits to restructure and manage his civilian life. He eats Pot Noodles for nostalgic reasons as they “remind[ed] him of the fare he used to carry in his ration pack” and inspired “some deep-rooted association between quickly heated and rehydrated food and makeshift dwelling places” (49). Hence, “[h]abit, repetition, instinct and memory emerge as the cornerstones of Strike’s thought and behaviour” (McLoughlin 137) as they remind him of a more structured life in which he felt at ease. Wierzoch argues that “home is challenged by the exposition of war and transformed into a home/front” (Wierzoch 13), but Strike’s own “home/front” is rather a ‘front/home’ as he includes his military-induced structures into his civilian life, unable to leave the army behind.

It becomes evident that Strike is well aware of the identity and masculinity crisis he undergoes and the need for change. He realises that “[t]he strange limbo in which he was living, with Robin his only real human contact, could not last, but he was still not ready to resume a proper social life. He had lost the army, and Charlotte and half a leg” (CC 166). Here, Strike identifies the three significant aspects which constituted his identity as an able-bodied solider. First, the army represents the life he loved, which gave him a feeling of belonging and community. Second, his ex-fiancée Charlotte appealed not only to his heterosexual masculinity but also embodied his heteronormative anchor in the society to which he had returned. Finally, his leg refers to his physical integrity as a prerequisite to achieving the previous two aspects. These losses form the basis for Strike’s crisis of disabled masculinity. It was Charlotte who interpreted his browsing the army website as the core of his identity crisis: “his hankering for his old life and his dissatisfaction with the new” (CC 113). Consequently, Strike recognises that his war experience impedes his “ability to function socially and emotionally” (Trott, “The Detective as Veteran” 147) und understands that it was the disability as a result of the accident

which brought him back to civility, generating a new, yet un-negotiated identity as a civilian. At the same time, Strike is aware that he needs to accept his new life and identity. He “[feels] a need to become thoroughly accustomed to the man he had become before he [feels] ready to expose himself to other people’s surprise and pity” (CC 166). When he fights the spectre of his disabled masculinity, he realises that he “had a job [...] a paid job” (107), to which he clings in his negotiation. Although financially motivated by an advanced payment, Strike accepts Bristow’s case to focus on his work as a detective (29). Yet, Strike feels “a faint sense of impotence” at the realisation that this is “the first case he had taken since leaving the army that required more than surveillance work, and it might be designed to remind him daily that he had been stripped of all power and authority” (109). However, despite such fears and doubts in his own skills, Strike understands a paid occupation not only as a contribution to society but also an approach to a non-military form of hegemonic masculinity. In pursuit of this aim, his detective agency allows him to rely on his military education as an SIB detective, which eventually contributes to negotiating his crisis and fighting the ‘spectre’.

### **5.2.2 (Re)Civilising the Veteran Detective**

In Cormoran Strike’s coming to terms with his civilian identity as a mobility-impaired veteran detective, two aspects prove of valuable support: his profession and his (female) assistant. As a former soldier, Strike understands that “[m]asculinity is linked to work” (Kilshaw 176) and, despite his business and financial struggles, dives into his profession as a private detective. By relying on his investigative knowledge as a former SIB detective, he reconnects to his military identity and adapts it to a civilian context. In this process, his assistant Robin Ellacott supports him by proving that his mobility impairment influences neither his working identity nor his identity as a veteran detective in a civilian context.

#### *5.2.2.1 Adapting the Soldier Identity*

Cormoran Strike’s military habits not only structure his everyday life but also characterise his role as an investigator for civilian society. His identity as a civilian detective is strongly influenced by his military past as his experiences provide him with the relevant investigative methods and military authority. For example, Strike takes advantage of his military rank. Through a “combination of fast talk, intimidation and the flashing of genuine, though outdated, official documentation”, Strike gets access to restricted areas due to his “air of easy confidence,

by the words ‘Special Investigative Branch’, by the pass bearing his photograph” (CC 376). Strike’s military rank and authoritative nature open him doors to proceed with his investigations and to develop masculine disability. In applying his military investigative knowledge to civilian context, Strike reformulates and adapts his military experiences. Eventually, this professional focus supports him in coping with his crises and makes society accept his services, through which Strike comes to terms with his civilian identity as a veteran detective.

Strike’s military-induced disability recalls characteristics of the hard-boiled genre of detective fiction. The subgenre emerged when, during World War I, American crime fiction authors began to “question the traditional ‘rules’” and “argue against the traditional form of the British detective novel” (Trott, “The Detective as Veteran” 134). The adjective itself, ‘hard-boiled’, derives from the military context and reflects young men’s development of a “tough, hard-hitting, and cynical form of behavior” which the war taught them (Trott, *War Noir* 10). Veterans have decisively influenced the subgenre’s development. Most notably, Raymond Chandler experienced war and military life first-hand and used his protagonist Philipp Marlowe as a canvas on which to project and through which to negotiate his traumatic experiences (Trott, *War Noir* 198-200).<sup>183</sup> In Marlowe, Chandler created the prototype of a veteran detective who “embodies the stresses and frustrations of war’s aftermath” in American society and presents “a war veteran traumatized by the ever-present and unyielding symptoms of PTSD” (Trott, *War Noir* 201). Based on this fundamental characterisation, it comes as no surprise that later fictional investigators were similarly “troubled by traumatic events beyond [their] control” and “[c]oping with a personal trauma” (Trott, “The Detective as Veteran” 132-133); a hard-boiled tradition which is still visible in contemporary literature.

In Strike’s case, his personal (bodily) trauma manifests in his amputated leg and the prosthesis while his ‘traumatic events’, however, refer only marginally to the disabling accident. Instead, it was leaving the army, where he was “a ‘real’ man in a very masculine world” (Worthington, *Key Concepts in Crime Fiction* 122), which caused his sense of disabled masculinity and alienation from civilian society. Although his military experience might mark him as different from society, it also turns Strike into an embodiment of “having-been-ness” (McLoughlin 1), which positively raises him above society. His military career drew him abroad, exposed him to foreign cultures and taught him (life and survival) skills. The experience supported his maturing and cognitive development, which grants him a certain authority over

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<sup>183</sup> Probably, Rowling aimed to achieve a similar effect by providing her male alias Robert Galbraith with a military background to establish the author’s credible “familiarity with the procedures of the army detective branch” (McLoughlin 135). Despite the resulting romantic notion of authorship, such an allocation contrasts and upgrades her own second-hand knowledge of veterancy based on research and interviews (Galbraith).

the society to which he returns (McLoughlin 109-110). It turned him into a masculine protector of society, whose knowledge provides the necessary means of re-establishing structure and order.

His mobility impairment, social estrangement and personal crises characterise Strike as a typical hard-boiled detective. He is “a professional investigator who works for a living” and maintains the self-reliant, independent and “self-employed status of a private eye” (Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* 60). Additionally, what Trott highlights as characteristic for the veteran detective – that he is driven by “a desire for accomplishment and recognition” (“The Detective as Veteran” 131) – is also true for Strike. His detective work allows him to create an identity and reputation for his own sake in order to distinguish himself from his father. However, what really drives Strike is his passion for the job itself, initiated by his uncle Ted’s detective stories.<sup>184</sup> They inspired him to “help police with their inquiries” (CC 364) and reinforced his inclination to “winkle the truth out of the smallest conundrums” (53). Becoming a detective of the Special Investigation Branch (53) after the Royal Military Police’s training allows him to live his childhood dream.<sup>185</sup> His “‘code’” is not only the “desire for accomplishment and recognition” (Trott, “The Detective as Veteran” 131) but also the passion for the job itself which is shaped in the army: “the familiar soldierly state of doing what needed to be done, without question or complaint” (CC 49). Highlighting the author’s play with genre conventions, this complements the hard-boiled (veteran) investigator with the enthusiastic commitment to his profession of the classical detective.

Instead of giving up fighting as a soldier, the veteran detective merely shifts his area of protection from a national to a civilian context. Having investigated and solved crimes on a national scope in the army, Strike offers the knowledge and experiences he gained during his military career to London’s civilian society. As a private detective, he now fights for the rights

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<sup>184</sup> Strike’s childhood idea pictured the detective as “a noble and disinterested citizen volunteering to give up his time and energy to assist the police, who issues him with magnifying glass and truncheon and allowed him to operate under a cloak of glamorous anonymity” (CC 364). Strike’s aversion to popularity might result from his understanding of a private detective’s inconspicuous and observant nature (see Scaggs, “Double Identity” 133). He needs to fit in with his environment, which is to become ‘invisible’ and not to attract attention while tailing people, for example. Such an understanding potentially also influenced his decision to replace the missing part of his leg with a prosthesis in order to ‘blend in’ with the able-bodied society.

<sup>185</sup> His sister Lucy (romantically) argues that Strike’s decision to become a detective was motivated by their mother’s death. While the police decided that Leda’s death was due to an overdose of heroin, Strike recognised the inconsistencies of this conclusion with his mother’s habit of consuming cannabis, but his young age denied him any authoritative recognition in the investigations (CC 373). Lucy believes this infantilisation and the poor investigations of Leda’s death to be the reason why Strike “was driven to investigate other deaths in an eternal act of personal exculpation” (373). However, this would imply a “personal quest” (Worthington, *Key Concepts in Crime Fiction* 123), a personal vengeance on any murder committed, which Rowling negates. Instead, she anchors detection in Strike’s identity and thereby renders him more realistic instead of focusing on a romantic ambition for investigations.

of the individual who engages his services for investigations of deceitful partners or other such social disruptions on a more personal scope. Thereby, Strike still confronts and ultimately corrects disruptions of social order and harmony (Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* 61), still embodies a protector of society.

Strike achieves this aim by relying on his SIB knowledge and experience. While his fighting experiences as a boxer (CC 300-301) and a soldier assure the reader of his physical toughness, his successfully accomplished training and excellent performance as an SIB detective in the Royal Military Police emphasise his intelligence and resilience. The techniques he learned during his service have been approved on the national scope of investigations and almost guarantee the quality of his detective work on a societal scope. Although he practices a self-reliant occupation now, he still clings to the “high and rigorous standard” of investigation (32) and sticks to the “protocols of the Criminal Procedure and Investigation Act” (107). Applying attitudes, skills and investigative techniques to his detective work in the civilian context of London’s society, the military detective training constitutes Strike’s methods and investigative techniques, which have become not only habits but a set of concrete, pre-set criteria which structure his work. His quick observation of his surroundings, comprehension of connections and adequate reactions manifest in his protective attitude. Established by his military background, “[h]abit, repetition, instinct and memory emerge as the cornerstones of Strike’s thought and behaviour” (McLoughlin 137) and characterise his identity not only as an SIB but also as a civilian detective: “Both by inclination and by training, because he owed himself respect quite as much as the client, he proceeded with the meticulousness for which, in the army, he had been both feted and detested” (CC 93). This military-induced professionalism additionally eases his conscience towards the trust of his customers. Treating his clients respectfully despite personal doubts (93, 107) proves Strike to be an honest, reliable and empathetic detective.

Deriving from his personal as much as from his professional past, Strike’s empathetical skills and intuition complement his forensic methodologies. The experience of “non-belonging” in his “nomadic childhood” (CC 217) taught him the social skills necessary to adapt to constantly changing spatial and social circumstances (McLoughlin 138). Additionally, since “[i]ntuition, or instinct, is an awareness that is the product of experience, a skilled way of ‘reading’ developed through having read similar ‘subtle signs’” (McLoughlin 140), Strike’s gut feeling is the result of military training, which has taught him to rely on his instinct, such as when Strike rescues lives, such as his own and Anstis’s in the car accident (CC 332) as well as Robin’s in the staircase (15). Strike’s investigations as a veteran detective prove to be driven

by empathy and intuition rather than cognition (see also McLoughlin 138). During the interrogation of witnesses, for example, he listens closely, reading their statements, faces and bodies (see also McLoughlin 137-138). Being “used to playing archaeologist among the ruins of people’s traumatised memories”, Strike “had made himself the confidant of thugs; he had bullied the terrified, baited the dangerous and laid traps for the cunning” (CC 93). Thus applying a “range of methods of elicitation, that is, from digging to reassurance to intimidation to ambush (the military flavour of these skills is unmistakable)” (McLoughlin 137), Strike finds out which spots to hit to encourage witnesses to speak freely (CC 150). He engages them in an “untrammelled flow” (32), during which they disclose more information than they are conscious of (315). Such information retrospectively only proves valuable because Strike has learned to read between the lines in order to recognise inconsistencies in their statements and the overall sequence of events during the questioning.

It is precisely this combination of his military investigative methods and his knowledge of human nature through which Strike solves Lula Landry’s death. Although the CCTV footage’s quality does not give away any specific identities, Strike’s “prolonged staring” and his familiarity with the army’s bad-quality night vision cameras in the army allow him to make out certain shapes which add to the perpetrator’s identity (CC 173-175). Moreover, Strike trusts in his instinctive suspicions (398) and proves Bristow’s story to be erroneous. Reconstructing the murder based on the experiences he gained in his military career (see also McLoughlin 138), Strike ultimately confronts the killer with his solution. Combined with his observations of stolen clothes, proven alibis and, most of all, “[m]otive, means, and opportunity” (CC 429), his skills make him realise that the killer is John Bristow himself. Furthermore, Strike and Bristow’s shared past further substantiates Strike’s deductions. Understanding Bristow as a jealous (adoptive) brother also reveals that Charlie, Bristow’s brother and Strike’s childhood friend, did not die in an accident on a summer holiday (22), but that Bristow killed him out of jealousy (433). Therefore, the solution to the central case comes as a combination of professional investigative methods and Strike’s prior (and personal) knowledge of the client, connecting his past and present.

Strike’s detective work not only corrects social deviances and restores harmony, it also enables him to find stability in his chaotic life. When all other aspects of his life seem to break away, leaving him dangling without a social anchor, he relies on detective work as a constant in his life. Appealing to his natural inclinations of being meticulous (CC 50, 107), “methodical and thorough” (32), the military has taught him how to support his reliable gut instinct with physical evidence (McLoughlin 25). Similar to the army, detective work offers him “order,

form and structure; all key components of the desire to comprehend individual experiences and understand one's sense of 'place' within a specific environment" (Trott, "The Detective as Veteran" 133). As "[m]asculinity is linked to work" (Kilshaw 176), detective work enables Strike to recreate his military masculinity in a civilian context and allows him to find a place in a civilian society. By adapting his SIB knowledge to a civilian context, Strike reformulates his military masculinity almost independently of his mobility impairment.

Although the prosthesis causes him increasing pain and trouble, it eventually proves exceptionally supportive in the final confrontation. As the case progresses and his focus on his work intensifies, Strike increasingly neglects the care for his stump, which similarly intensifies the pain in his leg. When he falls due to the unbearable pain at the end of the novel, the following "fiery pain in both the joint and the end of his stump" makes him feel "as though it was freshly severed" (CC 413). Challenging his physical ability, the pain prevents him from attaching the prosthesis again (420). In such cases, his impairment is visible (to him as well as to others) and truly impedes his independence. Nevertheless, in the final confrontation, Strike gains advantage from his prosthesis. Due to the unbearable pain, he merely leans on the unattached prosthesis under his trouser leg, making it unreliable and insecure (435). The pain and the prosthesis clearly mark Strike as (apparently) inferior to the able-bodied and armed villain Bristow. However, Strike's boxing skills gain him the upper hand in their brawl, although Bristow's knife scratches him frequently (438). When it threatens to injure Strike seriously, the detective "seize[s] the prosthetic leg beside him and [brings] it down like a club on Bristow's face, once, twice—" (438), which eventually stops the killer.<sup>186</sup> In this situation, the prosthesis serves as a *dis ex machina*. Inspired by Horace's *deus ex machina*, which provides paramount support to solve the problem in a decisive moment in the shape of a "god in the machine", Dolmage applies this image to disability. Here, disability is "a type of plot or narrative device, a structure and an action" which is "often used at the end of a film or a book to wrap things up" (56). The prosthesis extends Strike's natural physical strength as a resolving tool to overpower Bristow. Although Strike's impairment has little importance for the development of the investigations,<sup>187</sup> this usage of his prosthetic leg essentially contributes to his negotiation of his civilian identity. Instrumentalising his prosthesis, a detachable part of his body, as a weapon (see Kilshaw 173), Strike "improvise[s] on the use of [his] prosthesis" and thereby "tinker[s] with [its] social

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<sup>186</sup> Although McLoughlin (138) and Molin (17) similarly highlight this scene, they neglect to interpret it in terms of Strike's acceptance of his impairment.

<sup>187</sup> McLoughlin claims to realise a correlation between his increasing pain and approaching the solution – "As his pain intensifies, and as though in direct relation to it, empathy and intuition lead him to the solution of the mystery" (138) – probably assuming Strike's pain to make him more emotional. However, she neglects to give textual evidence for this conclusion.

meaning” (Siebers 110): He inverses disability and ability, weakness and strength, turns a disadvantage into an advantage, and literally achieves a form of masculine disability as a civilian veteran detective.

Solving Lula Landry’s murder marks his successful ‘debut’ as a veteran civilian detective, but meeting Jonah Agyeman enables Strike to come to terms with his disabled masculinity as a war veteran. Agyeman is a lieutenant of the Royal Engineers in Afghanistan who, having survived similar traumatising experiences, connects to Strike on a profoundly intimate level: “a bond that no civilian could understand” (CC 441), that of a ‘band of brothers’. As Lula’s biological brother and heir of her fortune (425), Agyeman is summoned from Afghanistan to London after Strike’s solution of Lula’s death. Agyeman’s new fortune brings along its own crisis of new financial liberty in addition to “the horrible and ever-present knowledge of how his millions had come to him” (444). More importantly, however, Agyeman’s air of being out of place (442) reveals to Strike how deeply immersed a soldier can be, obeying and subordinating the personal life to the army’s authority (441). When Agyeman learns that he had a biological sister who left her financial legacy to him, he is confronted with a different life. Although even a civilian would probably be overwhelmed by such a revelation, an insight like this initiates a crisis of expectations to the serving soldier. It transports him to the intersection of his duties to the army, including his loyalty towards his comrades, and to his family, including a part of his family so far unknown (441). These understandings demonstrate to Strike what might have become of him had he missed his “personal tipping point” and totally submerged in the army’s “surface of conformity that made it easier to be swept along by the tidal force of military life” (87). Meeting Agyeman comes close to meeting Strike’s non-disabled self, had the accident not deprived him of the physical prowess to live up to the army’s and his comrades’ – but foremost his own – expectations of military masculinity. Although his impairment and experiences set him apart from civilian society, Strike understands that leaving the army was the right decision. Agyeman displays how the military can swallow the individual, by neglecting, or even excluding, potential social anchors supporting the reintegration and readjustment to civilian life.

Thereby, Strike comes to terms with his identity as a veteran with a war-induced mobility impairment. He understands that the prosthesis is a necessary prerequisite for his independent lifestyle as well as his performance of able-bodied masculinity. If he wants to keep this self-reliance and maintain the impression of physical integrity, he has to accept medical support and treat his stump properly in order to guarantee its reliability. After meeting Agyeman, Strike has an appointment at the Amputee Centre to receive medical help for his sore leg (CC 448-449).

In *The Silkworm*, Strike subordinates his pride (i.e. his impression of physical prowess and a normative body image) to his profession. The neglected stump and the increasing pain force him to use a stick and pin up his trouser leg, which clearly shows the missing part of his leg (SW 239). However, he rather displays his impairment than having to stay at home and not be able to work. The second instalment shows him more confident of his physical appearance than the first one. While Strike's physical impairment and his empathetic, honest character deconstruct the threatening and patriarchal features of his first impression at the beginning of the series, these scenes directly oppose these features. In seeking medical help and displaying his impairment, Strike publicly admits the vulnerability and confronts the military notion of soldiers' "absence of weakness and emotions" (Kilshaw 174). He abandons such army ideologies for the sake of his civilian identity. He learns to understand the pain and the disability itself not as signs of weakness but as (in)visible "sign[s] of his veterancy" (McLoughlin 143), proving his experience as a significant part of his identity and, even though ignorant passers would not understand, as a display of his masculine (military) disability.

As a veteran detective, the successful solution of the case earns Strike public reputation for his work, which paves the way for his social reintegration as a veteran detective. His combined experiences of his military training as an SIB detective and his insight into human nature – the "experientially based epistemology of the veteran detective" (McLoughlin 143) – prove successful means to allow for civilian acceptance of his services, which essentially manifests the veteran detective's reintegration into civilian society. By "'re-normaliz[ing]' the traumatized", creating "a re-functioning citizen" and "re-form[ing] masculine identities", society should supportively include the veteran (McVeigh and Cooper, "Introduction" 5). Having successfully solved the case of Lula Landry's supposed suicide, Strike receives positive public reputation which reinforces his social acceptance and reintegration. The fame that follows guarantees him more clients and financial upsurge which substantiate his position in society. Strike regains the "power and authority" he lacked before (CC 109) as he has "*become a name*" (449). He has transformed his identity from 'the son of' to 'the one who solved' and has people recognise him for his own achievements, reducing his father "to a mere footnote to his story" (SW 14). His masculinity is further increased as his new media representation 'advertises' his success with a picture of him as a soldier (CC 445-446) and, thus, embeds Strike's military past into his civilian present, truly turning him into a veteran detective. The financial boost makes him employ Robin permanently, repay his father's loan and expectantly await his future. Consequently, Strike adapts his soldier mentality of stoically "doing what needed to be done, without question or complaint" (49) and the obedient and duty-devoted

attitude commonly associated with military men to a civilian context. Thereby, he finds a way out of his business, financial and identity crisis and reformulates his military identity as an SIB detective into a civilian veteran detective.

#### *5.2.2.2 Female Support for Social Reintegration*

Apart from social reintegration as a civilian detective, femininity also supports Strike's transition to masculine disability. A female companion to the veteran presents an additional anchor in civilian society who engages him in a heteronormative relationship. In Strike's case, his focus on his work requires female support on a professional level in order to sustainably support his transition to masculine disability. This support comes in the shape of Robin Ellacott, Strike's temporary secretary and detective assistant, whose legwork and independent initiative promote Strike's investigations and prove her not only a competent office manager but also a natural talent in detective work. Ultimately, Robin's contribution to his detective agency reinforces his professionalism as much as his negotiation of masculine disability, while her own gendered representation changes along with her professional activity for and with Strike.

At the beginning of the novel, the reader's first impression of Robin focuses on her embodiment of a traditional gender role. She is "a pretty girl; tall and curvaceous, with long strawberry-blond hair" (CC 12). Her recent engagement to her long-term boyfriend Matthew and her romantic inclination uplift her mood and provide her with confidence for the first day at Strike's office (13). Her mind digresses to wedding preparations, such as buying magazines, reflecting on her (female) friends' reactions to her engagement and domestic issues (45-46). The "exquisite pleasure she actually felt at the thought of her own [...] paradise" (47) summarises her happiness and excitement for the wedding. Robin occasionally displays hints of female obedience to her future husband as she relies on Matthew's advice and often relates his opinion to her own reflections on Strike, her job and her potential future in the detective agency. Initially, Robin is assigned to Strike as a temporary secretary for a week whose job is to check emails, receive calls, look after clients and arrange meetings. She upholds his professional image by offering beverages to the clients (38) and exercising his tasks of online research (26). Robin voluntary signs a confidentiality agreement, an administrative detail which Strike neglected (46), which displays her honesty, professionalism and loyalty to her new employer. Apart from her increasing curiosity for the criminal case, she proves to be a supportive office manager to Strike, which presents her in an occupation stereotypically associated with femininity in support of professionally superior masculinity and highlights her embodiment of old-fashioned gender stereotypes.

Complementary to Robin, Matthew upholds a stereotypical masculine, even patriarchal role. Despite Robin's representation of their happy relationship, it becomes evident that Matthew acts as her authoritative voice of consciousness and 'reason'. As Robin moves from Yorkshire to London to live with Matthew (CC 60), he tells her how to behave in London to not appear "vulnerable" in the metropolitan space (12) and occasionally even reprimands her like a child (122). Matthew's emotional support abates once he realises that Robin's new job involves research for a (male) private detective. Although Strike saved Robin from falling down the stairs upon their first encounter, Matthew disapproves of the fact that Strike does so by "grabbing a substantial part of her left breast" (15), which was unwilling, yet necessary to rescue her. This incident shapes Matthew's opinion of Strike (73) as transgressive and a potential threat to his and Robin's relationship. Patriarchally acting up, Matthew devalues Strike by not only highlighting the "depravity" of Strike's apparent homelessness (77) but also ridiculing him and his profession, calling him a "charlatan", a "waster" (140) and a "fake", reminding Robin that "being a private detective was a far-fetched job, like astronaut or lion tamer; that real people did not do such things" (184). However, by depreciating Strike, Matthew also ridicules Robin's occupation, rejecting it as a "proper" job and making her feel "as though her worth had been impugned" (73). He ignores Robin's increasing enthusiasm for her tasks and wants her to quit Strike's employment to assume a job in human resources. Trying to convince Robin into quitting, Matthew denies Strike the recognition as a man because of his social status and "far-fetched" (184) occupation as a private detective.

Strike's massive impression upon his first appearance challenges the stereotypical gender roles displayed by Robin and Matthew. While Robin embodies stereotypical female characteristics, she observes the patriarchal and threatening characteristics in Strike's tough masculinity. Added to her comparison to a "grizzly bear" (16), her observations of his masculinity de-humanise and hyper-masculinise him at the same time. Strike's disability, however, is not mentioned here. Their literal clash of gender stereotypes positions both characters as opposing poles of the stereotypical gender binary of physically strong, threatening masculinity and weak, victimised femininity. However, similar to how Strike's facial injuries (the scratches in his face and his amputated leg) relativise his hyper-masculinity, Robin drops her impression of patriarchally victimised and oppressed femininity throughout the novel. Although Robin and Strike's first meeting is characterised by the shock of their collision and Strike's unintended act of harassment by grabbing her breast, their further relationship maintains a (mostly) professional nature.

Strike himself makes sure to maintain a professional relationship to Robin. Despite his occasional attraction to her, he respects her personal affairs and recognises her recent engagement as a professional boundary right from the beginning of their acquaintance. He understands the engagement ring as a “neat full stop: this far, and no further”, allowing him to “show off” with his skills (CC 69, 359) and highlighting his masculinity (and physical integrity) with references to his boxing career (71) without any romantic advances to Robin. Apart from recovering from his exhausting relationship with Charlotte, Strike is “aware of his susceptibility as a newly single and isolated man” (Galbraith). Keeping his personal affairs to himself – such as his social isolation, his crisis and his physical impairment, of which “he stood in no need of her sympathy” (CC 140) – Strike focuses on his work. Agreeing to this unspoken mutual understanding, he and Robin strictly separate private and professional matters.

Nevertheless, Strike and Robin’s professional cooperation is challenged by several different aspects which blur the boundary of private and professional issues. Robin gains involuntary, yet also occasionally curiosity-induced, glimpses into his privacy. Right on her first day, she understands that his recent break-up forces him to live in his office for which she “feel[s] desperately sorry” and, comparing his situation to her own “paradise” with Matthew (CC 47), pities him. Strike’s living situation also brings along many embarrassingly private situations, such as oversleeping (219) or accidentally exposing his belly (221). Additionally, a client’s gossip introduces Robin to Strike’s famous parentage, causing her to do some research, embarrassingly conscious about her transgression of their boundary (78-80). Considering his war experience, Strike himself tells Robin about his service in Afghanistan, but he does not specify his injury (140). It is through his sister Lucy that Robin learns about his leg injury (and about the questionable circumstances of his mother’s death), which makes her feel “even sorrier for Strike than she had done before” (242). She summarises her observations as follows: “His marriage – or, if they had not been married, his live-in relationship – had failed; he was sleeping in his office; he had been injured in the war, and now she discovered that his mother had died in dubious and squalid circumstances” (242). Identifying the same reasons for Strike’s miserable situation (i.e. his homelessness, the break-up, the disability), and adding his mother’s death, Robin confirms Strike’s disabled masculinity from her (female) outsider perspective.

These insights into his private life embarrass Robin (CC 242) as much as Strike. After Lucy’s visit, Strike can no longer pretend that Robin does not know about “the painful subjects” constituting his crisis (243). As his secretary, Robin has to know about his business struggles (18), the death threats (39) and the legal dispute with his father (41), whereas his personal crises are none of her business. Strike fears to lose his authority as her employer because the

professional boundary increasingly crumbles and unfolds his disabled masculinity to his secretary. These insights cause exactly what Strike aims to avoid: Robin pities him (47, 242), which undermines his masculinity and emasculates him from a female perspective.<sup>188</sup> Nevertheless, similar to Strike, Robin respects her employer's privacy too much to voice such thoughts to him and, instead, focuses on her work.

Investigating criminal cases presents the common ground for Strike and Robin's relationship. For both, it was a childhood wish to pursue such a career. While Strike started his education when he joined the army, Robin "never confided in a solitary human being (even Matthew)" (CC 14). She never precisely states why she did not tell anyone about her "her lifelong, secret, childish ambition" (14), which creates the impression that she is ashamed to admit it. A potential reason could be that detective work contradicts her (and Matthew's) traditional gender assumptions, which deems detective work as an improper occupation for women; an assumption which crime fiction author P.D. James implemented in the title of one of her novels on a female investigator, *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman* (see also Gavin 264). Rowling, herself, aligns detection (and detective fiction) with masculinity in choosing a male alias to cover her popular name. Rowling's male alias (temporarily) allowed her the liberty to dive into (fictional) detective work, but Robin represents the opposite: She apparently feels limited by the social 'unsuitability' of detection and femininity, which silences her about her true passion and makes her assume the more 'gender-conform' profession of a secretary.

After the initial "unnerved and antagonistic" (CC 16) start and Strike's dismissive attitude towards her because he neither expected nor can afford a temporary secretary at the beginning of the novel, Robin demonstrates her support to the agency. Strike appreciates her initiative and thoroughness as a secretary (38) and recognises her investigative potential, which is why he increasingly tasks her with more research complementing his investigations. In addition to joint planning (181), online research on and arranging meetings with different witnesses or suspects, Robin accompanies Strike to crime scenes (65-67). She becomes an important support in the investigations, which decisively contributes to Strike's uplifted mood (8, 106). Genuinely interested in "the interior workings of other people's minds" (78), Robin contributes valuable knowledge to Strike's and her understanding of witnesses, which she acquired in her unfinished

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<sup>188</sup> While such reflections happen only between the lines, the only specific mention of the discrepancy of disability and gender comes as Strike recollects how he drove a car. He felt "emasculated" (CC 376) because his leg impeded the manual transmission of Charlotte's car. Lacking such terminology to indicate Strike's dealing with the physical impairment in specifically gendered terms, *The Cuckoo's Calling* leaves it to the reader to understand Strike's impairment as severe or marginal in Strike's crisis.

studies of psychology at university (296).<sup>189</sup> Intuitively knowing what Strike learned in his army education, Robin occasionally assumes different identities and, thereby, extends Strike's empathetic approach to witnesses' interrogations with an intuitive, spontaneous and even more emotional way to gather necessary information undercover (e.g. 185-190). Her observational skills (65-66) and intelligence make her see the connection between the tasks and witnesses' statements while her initiative motivates her to independently undertake further relevant steps, such as interrogations or additional research. This legwork speeds up Strike's investigations as they, for example, reveal Jonah Agyeman's identity much quicker than if Strike would have done the necessary research all by himself (353-354). He recognises Robin's acting, interrogating and researching skills, calling her a "luxury" (38), "genius" (220), "a mine of useful information" (297) and "brilliant" (355) and values her as "an asset that it would be impossible to replace" (448). She develops her skills throughout the series by complementing Strike's methods to her investigative skills and through applying her own intuition while learning from Strike (e.g. 282-283).<sup>190</sup> Robin's excellent work in *The Cuckoo's Calling* lays the foundation for her education as an assistant detective.

Robin's complementary investigative services render her more than a female 'Watson' figure, as she even calls herself in *The Silkworm* (SW 197). Rowling states that Robin "conform[s] to the classic notion of a Watson" as she reflects the reader's position in the narrative. Her interested questions about Strike's methods and results force him to make explicit what happens in his head (Galbraith). Moreover, her emotional approach to the case and self-determined initiative elevates her above the 'Watson' sidekick character. Robin proceeds to an assistant detective whom Strike eventually engages permanently (CC 448). After her decisive contribution in *The Silkworm*, Strike even pays for her surveillance course in order to develop her natural skills (SW 452), educating her to promote her as his (almost) equal partner in *Career of Evil*. Thus, being increasingly involved in the agency's cases throughout the series, Robin is able to live her childhood dream of doing investigative work.

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<sup>189</sup> *Career of Evil* reveals that Robin dropped out of university because she had been raped (CE 145-146). The events in this book recall the experience and her long rehabilitation and recovery afterwards. While the reader retrospectively amends his impression of Robin (McLoughlin 143), Robin's history highlights her similarity to Strike. Both have experienced physical damage and underwent the challenge of physical and emotional rehabilitation afterwards, as Strike found support in his fiancée while Robin retreated to her parents' home to recover. Instead of having the two characters follow a (stereotypically) gendered way of coping with their respective trauma (for example, by opposing Robin's emotional rehabilitation with Strike's immediate return to work to distract himself from his impairment), Rowling emphasises Strike's emotionality as an essential aspect in his coping process.

<sup>190</sup> Although McLoughlin correctly observes that Robin develops her detection skills "through professional courses in countersurveillance [...] and books" (141), Robin inevitably learns through accompanying and observing Strike.

Opposing Matthew's lack of interest in and devaluating opinion of her work, Strike's appreciation and her success boost Robin's self-confidence. Throughout her detective work, she gains enough confidence to confront Matthew with his devaluating behaviour and lacking support for her fascination in her work. She not only stands up against his ridiculing comments about her work but also accuses him of "blackmailing her [...] with his constant harping on the money she ought to be bringing in, and his insinuation that she was not pulling her weight" (CC 350-351). Robin "dread[s] the tedious bloody job in human resources" (350) that Matthew wants her to take, which would earn her more money but not spark her current fascination as an assistant investigator. She does not care about the little salary Strike pays her but is convinced that "[t]o prove, to solve, to catch, to protect; these were things worth doing; important and fascinating" (184). She insists on making her own decisions (371) and increasingly relies on her own opinion of Strike (389). Her permanent engagement at the end of the first novel marks her successful transition from her initial representation of a stereotypically obedient fiancée to a self-reliant female investigator on the rise, gaining not only more confidence in her abilities but also transgressing her (and Matthew's) seemingly limited understanding of gender roles.

This increasing professional involvement and success causes Robin to become estranged from Matthew. Since she spends more time with her employer than with her fiancé, Matthew jealously accuses Robin of romantic feelings for Strike. She tries to appease Matthew by assuring him of their professional relationship and his unattractive physical appearance: "'Matt, honestly, if you saw him... he's enormous and he's got a face like some beaten-up boxer. He is not remotely attractive. I'm sure he's over forty, and... [...] he's got that sort of pubey hair'" (CC 240-241).<sup>191</sup> Additionally, she lies to him about her activities and whereabouts when taking care of the drunk Strike (302) and does not want to let him in on her job-related joys (77) or worries anymore (350-351). The novel hints early at the potential change of their well-ordered "paradise" of a love life (47). The shadow falling on Robin's engagement ring metaphorically eclipses Matthew once she enters the detective agency (14). A "fragment of frozen pea caught in the setting of her engagement ring" (73) represents the spoilt perfection of their happy relationship. Hence, Robin's professionalism challenges her private life.

At the same time, Robin's competence and professional focus reformulate Strike's idea of women. Her "bright, professional and considerate" character (191) counterbalances his sister

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<sup>191</sup> It has to be underlined that, here, Strike's impairment is not part of this list as Robin is still ignorant of it. Considering Matthew's jealousy and patriarchal claim to Robin, Strike's disability might probably be the ultimate argument to convince him of Strike's physical, cognitive and gendered 'unfitness'. While in Matthew's restricted understanding of gender roles, a physical impairment might truly emasculate Strike, Robin's impression of Strike does not change after she learns about his injury.

Lucy's worried and occasionally intrusive behaviour and Charlotte's selfish character. He likes Robin's respectful decency and confidentiality in terms of his private life, turning a blind eye to his personal crises in addition to her work-focused company. When visiting a boutique to interrogate witnesses undercover, Strike recognises not only Robin's investigative talent but also her femininity. The green dress she presents to him draws his involuntary gaze to her body and to her attractiveness – “[n]ot beautiful; nothing like Charlotte; but attractive, nonetheless” and “sexy” (191-192). He becomes aware of the imminent danger of a “weird intimacy”, a romantic tension between them which could destabilise “the precarious balance that must be maintained for his own sanity” to keep their relationship professional (191-192). However, before Robin's permanent employment at the end of the novel, Strike gives her the dress as a leaving present (446-447). Such a present celebrates her contribution to the solution of the case, but, simultaneously, is awkwardly romantic and even sexually charged as Strike acknowledges her femininity and attractiveness in this dress. When Robin decides to stay in his detective agency, the dress represents these charges which, from now on, not only linger between them, reinforcing Matthew's jealousy, but also continuously increase throughout the series.

Despite their effort, both Strike and Robin often trespass their professional boundary. Robin's frequent insights into his privacy peak in an involuntary involvement in his personal affairs when Charlotte calls to inform Strike about her engagement (CC 295). Charlotte tasks Robin to deliver this private news in her position as his secretary, forcing her to transgress the silent boundary between her and her employer. Charlotte's information confirms Strike's recent break-up as a contribution to his disabled masculinity and increases Robin's sympathy for him. Strike's subsequent drinking excess, in which Robin follows him, without being asked, to “make sure you're OK” (299), dismantles their boundary even more as the drunk Strike deliberately displays his private relationship with Charlotte (300-303). Robin's unsolicited care results from her feelings of involvement and responsibility because she received Charlotte's call (297). Her empathetic nature makes her willingly ignore the professional boundary to look after Strike. While Strike recovers from this drinking excess, Robin stands in for Strike by undertaking some of the investigations on his list (305). She manages a delicate balance of discretion about her employer's privacy and her professional focus on their work. Although this implies that Robin benefits from Strike's weakness, this weakness does not relate to his physical impairment. Her initiative is not motivated by the wish to infantilise him or surpass his patriarchal professionalism. Instead, Strike's temporary indisposition opens the possibility for her to pursue her childhood dream of doing investigative work and focuses on their cooperation and the continuity of the detective agency.

The decreasing professional boundary between Strike and Robin, in addition to her increasing engagement in the case, motivate her to raise subtle claims on Strike and the case. She is excited to tell Strike about her findings on Jonah Agyeman and disappointed when he is not at the office: “Where was he? What was he doing? Why was he acting up to Matthew’s accusations of irresponsibility?” (CC 349-350). This interior monologue displays her feelings: “She was here, holding the fort, and he was presumably off chasing his ex-fiancée, and never mind their business... *his* business...” (351). Briefly forgetting about her position as Strike’s secretary and unofficial assistant, Robin is carried away by the pride of having found out about Jonah Agyeman, which allows her a feeling of involvement in the case. At the same time, accusing Strike of neglecting his job in favour of his private affairs gives her the air of a jealous girlfriend, communicated only through body language, and further violates the professional boundary between employer and employee (351-352). Even in a professional context, their relationship becomes more personal; a theme which increases throughout the series, raising the question of whether they might end up as a couple or not.<sup>192</sup>

Robin’s focus on their professionalism makes her ‘forget’ about Strike’s sexuality. Throughout the series, he has changing relationships with women, which are all sexually rather than romantically motivated and end because he neglects them for his work. In *The Cuckoo’s Calling*, Strike’s brief affair with supermodel Ciara reminds Robin that he is a human being, to whose holistic impression she adds heterosexual potency (348). Although Strike does not tell her about his affair verbally, Robin’s curiosity and attentiveness make her realise the “boast” in his voice (360), which leads her to the logical conclusion. Interestingly, only briefly after this addition, she fundamentally distances her opinion from Matthew’s, seeing Strike no longer “through Matthew’s eyes” and recognising his authenticity (389). Possibly, Strike’s heterosexuality completed her impression of him as a masculine human being, complementing his professional competence with physical needs. It counterbalances his professional with a private identity and enforces his masculine impression on Robin.

Robin’s figural narrative situation presents an outside perspective on Strike as the detective protagonist, which occasionally confirms, but also contrasts his inside perspective on his disabled masculinity. Strike is presented as threatening in the opening scene of *The Cuckoo’s*

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<sup>192</sup> In the course of the series, Strike and Robin recognise each other in increasingly romantic terms which further complicates her relationship with Matthew. Interfering in Robin and Strike’s professional relationship, Matthew deletes Strike’s messages from Robin’s phone, thus, instrumentalising their tension because of Robin’s dismissal due to unprofessional behaviour (CE 460-461). *Lethal White* elaborates on Robin and Matthew’s failing marriage because of dishonesty, infidelity and distrust, resulting in divorce, and on Strike and Robin’s increasingly protective and romantic feelings for each other, peaking in an accidental kiss (LW 235). However, their professional responsibility always prevents them from admitting their feelings for each other.

*Calling* only because the reader follows Robin's perspective in this scene. Her impression of Strike's tough and threatening masculinity shapes the reader's initial understanding of the detective. Throughout the novel, it becomes evident that his disability is irrelevant to Robin's opinion of him. Although she occasionally pities her employer because of the sheer number of difficult situations he has to handle, Robin has already gained an idea of him before she learns about the disability. She understands his physical impairment to be contributing to his crises, not causing them and, thus, shares Strike's own opinion of his impairment. Being either ignorant of his disability (at the beginning of the novel) or actively ignoring it, Robin's female perspective assures the reader of Strike's masculinity. Robin highlights his massive physicality, such as upon their first encounter (CC 16) or observing him in a suit, looking "like a rugby player en route to an international: large, conventionally smart" (139). Furthermore, learning about Strike's military past and his (yet unspecified) injury opposes "Matthew's impression of a charlatan, or a waster" (140) and, instead, adds capability, bravery, knowledge and resilience to her idea of his masculinity. Appreciating his experience and physique (without knowing about the prosthetic leg), Robin's third-person perspective contrasts Strike's representation of disabled masculinity and, instead, establishes a masculine impression of the detective. Throughout the series, such incidents repeatedly oppose Strike's depreciating, desperate and vulnerable self-perception with hegemonic notions of masculinity. Consequently, Robin represents society's perspective on Strike as a detective and a man. Not noticing his physical impairment, she confirms what Strike aims at – to give the impression of able-bodied and civilian masculinity – and solves his second identity crisis.

In conclusion, Robin's professionalism, involvement in the case and mere presence contribute decisively to Strike's social reintegration for four reasons. First, Strike considers her as "his only real human contact" (CC 166), connecting the socially alienated, "newly single and isolated" (Galbraith) veteran to civilian society. As she is the only long-term female in his closer surrounding who connects to him on a professional and personal level, Strike is keen to keep their relationship professional to avoid unnecessary romantic tensions and awkwardness during their cooperation. Second, Robin's support facilitates the case's solution and, thus, also the agency's financial and reputational rise. The resulting flow of customers secures a financial basis for Strike, which not only guarantees her own regular payment (CC 445) but also manifests the veteran's social reintegration. Third, in the final confrontation with the villain, Robin's intuition saves Strike's moral integrity. When he repeatedly hits Bristow with the prosthesis, she interferes in the soldier's violence, reminding him of his moral as a civilian and saving him from committing a murder. Thereby, she leads the ex-soldier back to civilian life.

Last, being (largely) ignorant of Strike's famous parentage as much as of his identity before his impairment, Robin appreciates the detective for "his work, ethics and intelligence" (Galbraith), his resilience, pride, self-reliance (CC 242) and his thoroughness (358). Her outside civilian perspective on his invisible impairment assures Strike of his masculine impression, which decisively supports him in negotiating his crises.

Throughout *The Cuckoo's Calling*, Robin and Strike deconstruct their initially embodied gender stereotypes. While Strike's impression of hyper-masculinity is relativised by crises of social reintegration, struggles with the physical impairment and his famous parentage, Robin develops from a stereotypical secretary to a self-reliant and permanently employed assistant detective. Thereby, she does not "destabilize the strength of Strike as the main detective and character in the series" (Álvarez 22) but rather complements the detective protagonist with a female companion in professional, personal, but essentially equal terms.

### **5.2.3 Conclusion**

Molin argues that *The Cuckoo's Calling* is "an exploration of catastrophic combat disability" (16), but it is rather a story of a veteran facing several crises of identity and social belonging. Since Cormoran Strike's disabled masculinity is constituted by his alienation from civilian society, he arrives at masculine disability through his social and professional reintegration into London's society. Focusing on his work, he achieves this transition through reformulating his military identity and offering his military knowledge to individual clients, thus adapting his skills as an SIB detective to a civilian context. Although the war itself does not immediately prompt the plot (Wierzoch 54), Strike's military experiences decisively influence his detective performance and shape the narrative as much as his character's development. Moreover, Robin Ellacott's secretarial and detective work not only allows her to develop into a competent assistant but also enables her to support Strike in overcoming his financial and business crises. Facilitating the case's solution, she contributes to the public awareness and social recognition of Strike and his detective services, which rewards him with social rehabilitation and integration. What formerly separated him from civilian society – his military past – now becomes his most distinguishing feature as a veteran detective and contributes to his masculine disability.

In the course of his professional reintegration, Cormoran Strike's example of negotiating his physical impairment in masculine terms demonstrates what Gerschick and Miller term the "reliance" model (187). Clinging to his former identity as a soldier and military detective, he reformulates how he can re-enact the masculinity he embodied before the disabling accident,

that of a hegemonically masculine soldier detective. Apart from adapting his soldier identity to a civilian context, Strike achieves this aim by dedicating much energy (and endures much pain) to creating (and maintaining) an image of able-bodied masculinity. By hiding his impairment, Strike avoids potentially discriminating and emasculating reactions from his social surroundings to be recognised as close to his pre-impairment embodiment of masculinity as possible. In this negotiation, Robin's third-person narrative perspective as a female civilian provides an external point of view on the male veteran detective's impairment. Her initial ignorance of Strike's impairment, her professional focus on her individual work and their cooperation grant him the "great rewards [of] being considered normal" (Goffman 74), which confirms his social passing as an able-bodied man in pursuit of hegemonic ideals. Therefore, Strike's passing as able-bodied enforces a (hetero)normative and able-bodied hierarchy in society. Although Rowling thus highlights disabled and able-bodied physicality as two opposing poles, defying the variations between them, Strike's example highlights that "[p]retending to be able-bodied is one way of performing normalcy, of inserting oneself in society and escaping the alienating experience of being disabled" (Siebers 118). Ultimately, she presents how the veteran detective can achieve reintegration into civilian society through concealing his war-induced physical impairment, which presents a way of negotiating disabled masculinity that is just as valid as any other.

Living with a mobility impairment constitutes the new normal to Strike. It adds to but does not cause his sense of disabled masculinity. Instead of "let[ting] his wound define him" (Molin 18), he masters his passing for able-bodiedness and defies any potentially resulting restrictions. Through this masculine handling of his injury by reducing its visibility, Strike and Robin's external (female) assurance render his injury a masculine disability. It becomes evident that complementing the well-researched interface of detection and veterancy (McLoughlin 114) with the categories of masculinity and disability contributes to a holistic understanding of Strike as a veteran detective with an impairment in a civilian context. Thereby, Rowling indeed presents a veteran's "day to day reality of living with a disability" (Galbraith) and the shaping but "not wholly consuming" marks and experiences of his military past by subsuming his impairment under more pressing social issues (Molin 17-18). As an essential part of Strike's identity, the impairment remains a prominent topic in all five novels. Although Strike still neglects to care for his stump properly, which still occasionally impedes his mobility and the investigations (e.g. LW 201), it becomes increasingly normal for Strike to temporarily abandon the prosthesis, use crutches and pin up his trouser leg in public (e.g. SW 239; LW 206). Therefore, the series' further development underlines that negotiating an impairment is a

process with many phases of ups and downs. In *Troubled Blood*, it almost vanishes behind the central investigations altogether, which shows that Strike (and Robin) further proceeds in coming to terms with his impairment. This development underlines that the impairment “is, ultimately, not the biggest deal of all: life still retains possibility after disability” (Molin 18). Strike’s impairment becomes an underlying fact, (literally) lingering in his every step. As a result, the end of *The Cuckoo’s Calling* already suggests that “[d]isability doesn’t get solved” but presents “the ongoing foundation of work and self” (Mintz 116). By accepting and increasingly implementing the care for his impairment in his everyday routine, Strike arrives at his identity as a civilian.

### **5.3 Danny Sinofsky: The Blind Detective and Sexual Compensation**

In Annie Solomon’s *Blind Curve*, the reader accompanies the police detective Danny Sinofsky when he suffers an accident on duty which leaves him visually impaired. Here, the detective himself is the victim of the plot’s central criminal act, inverting (stereo)typical characteristics of genre and gender alike. Danny’s visual impairment shatters his sense of masculinity as he considers his sight the fundamental condition for his masculinity, which results in a felt emasculation. He compensates for his visual impairment by emphasising his physical abilities, such as his sexuality in relation to Martha Crowe, his mobility instructor and love interest. However, this results in an extreme overcompensation and peaks in a ‘near-rape’ scene, which becomes the turning point Danny’s negotiation of disabled masculinity. Through the alternating narrative perspectives of Danny and Martha, *Blind Curve* depicts how Danny, with Martha’s professional and affectional support, slowly develops from relying on hegemonic masculinity (especially in sexual terms) to a form of reluctant tolerance of his visual impairment until he finally displays masculine disability as a visually impaired detective.

The connection between detective fiction and vision is inherent in the detective genre. However, Ernest Bramah’s Max Carrados and Clinton H. Stagg’s Thornley Colton, two contemporaries of Sherlock Holmes, present what can be considered the first visually impaired detectives. They challenge the genre-inherent (and cultural) metaphor that sight means understanding, as it generates knowledge and insight. Such is evident in expressions such as “‘I see’ [which] means *understand, think of, imagine, consider, create*” (Mintz 26; see also Bolt,

*The Metanarrative of Blindness* 18).<sup>193</sup> The logical conclusion would be that a blind detective might be unqualified as an investigator due to the visual impairment since “perception [...] is ‘intrinsic to investigation’” (Munt qtd. in Mintz 53). Indeed, the absence of sight, i.e. blindness, “is associated with ‘irrationality,’ lack of preparation, confusion, and an inability ‘to judge or act’ along normative lines” (Bolt qtd. in Mintz 26; see also Rodas 122; A. Hall, *Literature and Disability* 96). Hence, the person with visual impairment becomes an embodiment of “epistemological inferiority” (Bolt qtd. in Mintz 27). Additionally, this inferiority is further highlighted as blindness also implies the absence of “independence, intellectual acumen, morality, and productivity” (Caeton qtd. in Mintz 27), which deprives the blind man of hegemonic characteristics of masculinity. Consequently, blindness, associated with darkness, dependency and passivity, seems to stand in direct contrast to the cultural associations of a detective and his masculinity, who is considered to embody independence, self-reliance and the ‘light’ of knowledge. Nevertheless, fictional representations of blind detectives highlight that perception is not limited to sight. Instead, they rely on and demonstrate superior skills with their auditory, olfactory and haptic senses, which invites, for example, the ‘supercrip’ narrative of “the blind detective with extraordinary hearing” (Schalk 81-82). By shifting their perception to other senses, blind detectives not only come close to the allegorical personification of Lady Justice, being “undistracted by adornment, uninfluenced by display” (Rodas 122).<sup>194</sup> They also have “access to levels of awareness and understanding that do not pertain to seeing individuals” (Mintz 26), which renders their methods more intuitive (29). Moreover, they expertly and “graceful[ly]” navigate the world with the aid of “animals, canes, other people” (29), through which they almost blend in with their sighted social environment. They are “blind people who behave as if they are not blind, even though the accoutrements of blindness make difference unignorable” (57). They are presented in perfect control of their visual impairment in professional terms from the first page.

Unlike in the cases of Carrados and Colton, the reader of *Blind Curve* accompanies Danny Sinofsky through the incident in which he experiences his visual impairment for the first time. The following coping process in professional and private contexts is characterised by his rejection of the impairment, relying on hegemonic characteristics of masculinity, and the

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<sup>193</sup> For further reference on the metaphorical meaning of blindness in culture and/or language, see, for example, Schor, Rodas or Vidali.

<sup>194</sup> Lady Justice is the allegorical personification of moral and justice, depicted as a blindfolded female figure holding a sword and a balance to represent the fair treatment of people. Bruce Alexander’s *Blind Justice* refers to this allegory. Its blind gentleman protagonist Sir John Fielding investigates criminal mysteries in Georgian London. Its first-person narration by a ‘Watson’ figure, namely the boy Jeremy Procter who assists Fielding, excludes this novel from the corpus of this dissertation.

resulting frustration, epitomised in his disabled masculinity. Unlike the extraordinarily skilled blind detectives Colton and Carrados, Danny's step-by-step negotiation of his visual impairment renders his coping process more 'human' and comprehensible for the (sighted) reader.

Since *Blind Curve* has not yet received any academic recognition, the subsequent analysis draws on ideas of blindness in detective fiction (Mintz chapter two) and concepts of the "metanarrative of blindness" in literary representations (Bolt, "The Blindman in the Classic"; Bolt, *The Metanarrative of Blindness*) to highlight that the novel reproduces stereotypes. In his disabled masculinity, Danny (over)compensates for his visual impairment with emphasised physicality, especially sexuality. While David Bolt presents the emasculated and the hypersexual blind figure as usually distinct tropes of literary representations of disability (*The Metanarrative of Blindness* 79), the following chapter highlights how Danny proves these tropes to be not mutually exclusive but fluid by developing from the emasculated to the hypersexual blind man. Moreover, *Blind Curve* is no pure detective novel because the investigative plot often vanishes behind the developing romance between Martha and Danny, which is why the following chapter also draws on the ideas on disability in the romance genre (Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre*; Cheyne, "Disability Studies Reads the Romance"). As a "romantic suspense novel" (Solomon), this genre-hybrid dime novel represents stereotypical gender roles, such as active male and passive female characters. Yet, it inverses them through Danny's blindness, making the male character dependent on his sighted female companion. Adding a decisively gendered reading of the detective's blindness, the following chapter complements the predominant focus of existing research on the blind detective's investigative methods (such as Mintz's) with a focus on how the visual impairment affects his gender identity in terms of hegemonic masculinity. It argues that Danny's sexuality and heterosexual relationship with the female sidekick Martha are the essential means through which he develops from relying on (sexual) masculinity to reformulating his masculine and professional ideals before he eventually achieves his masculine disability in private and professional contexts.

### **5.3.1 The Blind Detective Between Emasculation and Hypersexuality**

Cultural stereotypes which turned into literary tropes (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 11) surround the figure of the blind man and manifest in characters such as Danny Sinofsky. *Blind Curve* draws on the literary and cultural history of metaphorical meanings attached to masculinity and visual impairment. Bolt summarises these metaphorical meanings in what he terms the "metanarrative of blindness", i.e. "the story in relation to which those of us who have

visual impairments often find ourselves defined, an overriding narrative that seems to displace agency” (*The Metanarrative of Blindness* 10). Some of such ‘narratives’ support the following analysis, such as the “blindness-darkness synonymy”, according to which people with visual impairment do not perceive light but are ‘stuck’ in darkness (Bolt, *The Metanarrative of Blindness* 21), and the “blindness-castration synonymy”, which summarises emasculating effects of visual impairment (51-52).<sup>195</sup> As a formerly sighted, self-reliant and sexually active detective, Danny’s disabled masculinity is characterised by both ‘narratives’ as notions of helplessness, vulnerability and emasculation accompany his coping process. Understanding himself incapable of exercising his profession as a detective as well as feeling at odds with his accustomed sense of masculinity, Danny channels his physical prowess in the embodiment of the hypersexual “groping blind figure” (Bolt, *The Metanarrative of Blindness* 76-79).

Through an *in medias res* beginning, the novel immediately opens the discourse of disabled masculinity. The first page introduces the reader not only to Danny himself, a police detective on an undercover mission to reveal illegal gun selling. It also mentions his neck pain, caused by a hit on the head during “a routine drug sweep” in a bar two nights previous to the plot’s beginning (BlCu 1). Now, during a shooting, Danny’s vision begins to blur and eventually leaves him blind (5-6). Although the reader does not witness the very moment of the disabling accident (the hit on the head), he or she shares the protagonist’s point of view when the consequences of this accident hit him. In this “disability-in-action” approach, the reader “become[s] actively involved in the interpretation of the action” (Hafferty and S. Foster 191). Danny’s flickering vision initially makes the reader believe that he suffers from dizziness or might lose consciousness, but it is only a brief distraction which the reader almost overlooks. Only when Danny’s vision flickers again, and he exclaims, “‘I can’t see a fucking thing’” (BlCu 6), the reader realises that the “complete darkness” (5) means that Danny loses his vision. Witnessing the protagonist’s sudden transition from a sighted to a blind man creates a certain intimacy between the reader and the protagonist, which taps into the affective potential of disability in literary representations.<sup>196</sup> It highlights “the felt engagement with disability”,

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<sup>195</sup> Bolt clarifies that “light does not cease to exist, but simply remains unseen by a minority of people whose visual limitations are classed as impairments” (*The Metanarrative of Blindness* 21). Alice Hall states further that blindness is “a spectrum of variation in visual acuity, rather than in binary opposition to sightedness” (*Literature and Disability* 94). Considering it as ableist to align blindness with darkness, the following chapter nevertheless sticks to using darkness in reference to blindness and, thus, follows the novel’s use of the stereotypical allocation. Although this enforces an ableist analysis of the novel, it contributes decisively to its richness in metaphorical references to blindness and sexuality.

<sup>196</sup> In real life, blindness rarely comes as suddenly as depicted in *Blind Curve*. In most cases, it is rather a process in which vision gradually decreases (Rodas 118-119). The novel presents Danny as part of a small percentage of people whose vision is gone completely (see Bolt, *The Metanarrative of Blindness* 69) and, hence, instrumentalises the suddenness with which the blindness occurs in an extreme form for a dramatic effect. As a blind character,

which, Cheyne argues, is “the key to romance’s potentials with regard to disability representation” (*Disability, Literature, Genre* 160). In addition to the genre relation, in *Blind Curve*, it also applies to the situation in which the protagonist undergoes the transition from authoritarian to vulnerable, from temporarily able-bodied to disabled, from sighted to blind. The novel presents the (newly) disabled protagonist as an object of pity and compassion, enforced through Danny’s figural narrative situation. In his immediate reaction to the sensorial change, Danny mourns the loss of his sight and (in his opinion) also his masculinity, which allows (fictional) insight into the masculine “status inconsistency” (Gerschick, “Toward a Theory of Disability and Gender” 1265) accompanying an acquired (physical) disability.

The medical details of Danny’s blindness reveal that his so-called cortical blindness is the consequence of a stroke on the head (BlCu 7). The nurse explains that Danny “‘tore [his] vertebral artery’” which caused a blood clot that travelled “to one of the posterior cerebral arteries and fragmented, plugging up your cortex” (7). The blindness is caused because “‘the messages from your eyes can’t get to the cortex, which is where they’re interpreted. It’s called a bilateral occipital stroke’” (7). Understandably, these details overwhelm him and “slid over him like so much fog” (7), making his body react in shock, with increased heartbeat, shaking hands and slow reaction to other people (7-8). The fact-oriented medical explanations oppose Danny’s emotional response to his new visual impairment and evoke feelings of pity and compassion, emasculating the male protagonist right in the first chapter. Danny’s only concern at that moment is whether the blindness is temporary, a hope the nurse hesitantly confirms (8) and to which Danny clings. Rejecting the blindness, he argues that “[g]uys like me don’t have strokes” (7). Thus stressing his physical health and masculinity, he emphasises the ‘absurdity’ that a healthy man could suffer a stroke and neglects the fragility of physical health (Adams et al., “Disability” 5; A. Hall, *Literature and Disability* 168; Gerschick, “Toward a Theory of Disability and Gender” 1264; Shakespeare, “The Sexual Politics of Disabled Masculinity” 63). Thereby, the introduction manifests Danny’s negotiation of his disabled masculinity due to visual impairment as the novel’s central topic.

The sudden loss of sight reveals Danny’s ocularcentric attitude towards blindness, which ranks vision above other senses and presents an essential aspect of his masculinity.<sup>197</sup> He

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Danny confirms the “binary logic [of blind and sighted] that is emblematic of Modernism” (Bolt, *The Metanarrative of Blindness* 70; see also A. Hall, *Literature and Disability* 94).

<sup>197</sup> Bolt argues that, due to its sight-privileging attitude, ocularcentrism is “thought of as the baseline of assumptions, the very foundation of the metanarrative of blindness perhaps” and, as a consequence, develops the term “ocularnormativism” to describe its “effect: the perpetuation of the conclusion that the supreme means of perception is necessarily visual” (*The Metanarrative of Blindness* 14). Although Bolt does not explicitly refer to

confirms and relies on the metaphor of sight as knowledge, associated with verbs such as “*understand, think of, imagine, consider, create*” (Mintz 26). Additionally, Danny not only believes but initially also experiences that his blindness deprives him of “independence, intellectual acumen, morality, and productivity” (Caeton qtd. in Mintz 27), which challenges his professional self-reliance as a detective. In addition to the stereotype that blindness “is associated with ‘irrationality,’ lack of preparation, confusion, and an inability ‘to judge or act’ along normative lines” (Bolt qtd. in Mintz 26; see also Rodas 122; A. Hall, *Literature and Disability* 96), blindness is also connected with darkness. As a former sighted person, Danny relies on his sight as a “measure by which all other [sensorial perspectives] are judged” (Bolt, “The Blindman in the Classic” 48). He frequently refers to his visual impairment as ‘darkness’ (e.g. BlCu 12, 19, 49, 53), which confirms Bolt’s observation that “it can only be from the subject position of people with vision that darkness looks like blindness” (Bolt, “The Blindman in the Classic” 48). Predominantly allocating darkness as a threat, he describes it as “complete” (BlCu 5), “total” (126) and “eternal” (304). He perceives himself as a prisoner in an overwhelming, ever-present “thick, black nothingness” (268). Thereby, Danny reproduces those negative stereotypes and primary beliefs about the seemingly overwhelming and consuming nature of visual impairment: “That blindness holds its victims in thrall, that it extinguishes their light, their capabilities, their possibilities; that blindness is darkness, imprisonment, death” (Rodas 127-128; see also Bolt, “The Blindman in the Classic” 48). Danny believes that the disorientation, lacking control of his environment as well as mobility and, most importantly, his dependence on Martha’s help deprive him of essential characteristics of his previously approached ideal of hegemonic masculinity.

Danny’s disabled masculinity is characterised by denial and clinging to the hegemonic ideals of masculinity he embodied before his accident. He displays what Gerschick and Miller term the ‘reliance’ pattern, in which men with physical disabilities rely on internalised “ideals of predominant masculinity, including physical strength, athleticism, independence, and sexual prowess” (191). Due to his stoic character, Danny tries to prove that the visual impairment does not affect his masculinity and independence. He opposes the thought that the blindness could be permanent by insisting on its being “‘temporary’” (BlCu 11). When asked if it was permanent, Danny replies: “‘Not if I have anything to do with it’” (15), believing that he could not only overcome but cure his visual impairment if he is only resilient enough. He, for example, stubbornly crosses the street without assistance, being nearly run over (20, 55). Hence, although

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Solomon’s *Blind Curve*, his observations provide supportive means for the analysis of the novel’s visually impaired detective.

Danny tries to maintain the impression of embodied hegemonic masculinity, “nothing can change this basic fact of difference, centered in the body, not constructed in language, or by culture or imagination” (Rodas 117). His desperate but unsuccessful attempts to confront his visual impairment by relying on the hegemonic notions of his former identity as a sighted man reinforce, rather than compensate for, his increasing dependence on external support.

While his eyes do not give away his impairment (e.g. BlCu 10-11, 35, 55), Danny’s movements display his ‘inexperience’ and lacking trust in his other senses, which render his invisible impairment visible. He feels like “[o]ne big, fat, blind joke”, “helpless and angry” at his uncontrolled movements (23). Danny blends in with the sighted society until he moves and, thus, distinguishes from the ‘classical’ blind detective of the early twentieth century. Unable to perceive his surroundings, he falls (e.g. 12) or knocks things over (e.g. 23-24). Despite the support of his mobility and orientation instructor Martha, Danny is still too attached to the world of the sighted. Although he achieves some successes – for example, he becomes more sensible to noises (e.g. 50), learns to use his hearing to recognise voices and the respective speakers (e.g. 15), while his olfactory sense introduces him to his conversation partner before he or she said a word (e.g. 50) – Danny needs to learn to rely on these senses before he can implement them for investigative purposes like Carrados and Colton. Only later in the novel, Danny slowly instrumentalises his senses in investigating the crime against him, such as giving olfactory evidence about his attacker (193). However, these unconventional methods and relatively insignificant achievements are not enough for him: “Only dogs experienced life through their noses. Dogs and him and the rest of the blind world” (263). Such an alignment deprives not only himself but also other people with visual impairment of their status as humans (Bolt, *The Metanarrative of Blindness* 73-74) and highlights his (felt) inferiority to sighted people (Rodas 122). Therefore, while other ‘accustomed’ blind detectives turn their heightened sensory awareness into extraordinary powers (Mintz 26), ‘newly-blind’ Danny is preoccupied with dealing with his visual impairment in more basic terms, i.e. integrating it into his sense of (masculine) self.

Relying on the masculinity he displayed before the accident, Danny is eager to maintain his independence as much as possible. Confirming Bolt’s observation, Danny “refuses to accept his blindness and seeks to revive his sight by internalizing the notion that it is necessary” (“The Blindman in the Classic” 46) as he relies on sight as essential to his (gender) identity. He rejects any supportive devices for his adjustment to life as a blind man, such as a cane. Although a cane could increase his independent mobility significantly, he believes that a cane would “‘advertis[e] his weakness’” (BlCu 258), of which he is ashamed (45). The expressions

‘advertising his weakness’ or “‘vulnerability’” (153) are used repeatedly throughout the novel and highlight that the supportive devices would be visible signs of his disability and dependency, which would turn him into a ‘spectacle of otherness’ (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 8). When meeting his friend and colleague Jake Wise, Danny is “[s]cared to show up anything less than the man he used to be” (BlCu 180) and denies the disability as a part of his identity. However, the first, most imminent consequence of his visual impairment is that Danny is sent on medical leave, as the impairment makes him (temporarily) unfit to pursue his profession as a police detective. He is assigned Martha Crowe, a mobility instructor, to teach him how to adjust to his blindness (8) in terms of his usual lifestyle and pursuing his profession, though which he eventually reconsiders his masculinity.

However, in professional terms, Danny does not believe in a successful negotiation of his occupation. Deprived of his vision, he believes “his career [to be] over. He couldn’t imagine what he could do without eyes” (286). He relies on the identity he displayed before the accident, that of a police detective who loved his job (85) and experienced success as well as his colleagues’ appreciation for his work (285). Since “he’d invested everything into being a cop” (49), Danny believes sight to be “the guarantor of control” (Mintz 57) in his occupation as a detective. His belief that there is “[n]o such thing as a blind cop” (BlCu 49) throws him into a severe identity crisis. Although investigating his own case, i.e. the attacks on his life, initially “revve[s] him up” (55) as it distracts him from this crisis, such a “performance of normalcy is at once reassuring and strange” (Mintz 57). It is strange because it makes him aware of how his investigative capabilities have changed because of his visual impairment. For example, he has to ask Martha to describe the attacker at his house while he himself, the actual victim of the attack, cannot give evidence (BlCu 54). Additionally, when his police colleague asks Danny to leave his gun because “‘You can’t use it, Danny’” (70), this colleague unwillingly confirms Danny’s fear of being unable to pursue his career further. This official denial of his occupation comes close to an emasculation in professional terms, with the gun as a phallic symbol for control, prowess and capability. Giving it away deprives Danny not only of an essential part of his identity but also confirms his marginalised status as a blind man. While he previously provided for his sister and her children (e.g. 19), Danny now feels unable to live up to this responsibility (290) as he is even unable to protect and provide for himself.

Martha Crowe supports and challenges the negotiation of his disabled masculinity. Professionally mediating between sighted people and people with visual impairments, Martha teaches Danny how to adjust his lifestyle to his blindness. As Danny mourns his lost independence – “he’d never be free again unless he got his sight back. Always helpless. Always

dependent on someone” and “it kill[s] him” to admit that he needs support (BlCu 19) – Martha has a hard time convincing Danny of the opposite. Accompanying the male disabled character with a female able-bodied character recalls Torrell’s second pattern of literary representations of disabled masculinity, in which disabled masculinity is used to empower femininity (218-219). Danny’s visual impairment enhances Martha’s sightedness, which, following Torrell’s pattern, challenges “the patriarchal conception of masculinity as able bodied and femininity as disabled” (218). Additionally, Martha is not only sighted but, as it is her profession, also competent enough to teach a blind man how to deal with his visual impairment, which renders her superior to him in several ways. Through small yet mundane achievements in adjusting to his blindness, such as ““getting around [his] own house”” (BlCu 48) or pouring himself a cup of coffee (98), he slowly manages to deal with his visual impairment, thus proving her competence. Although her bossiness and occasional hard confrontation with his visual impairment annoy and infantilise him, he even comes to appreciate Martha for her commitment (116). During their increasingly personal and intimate relationship, Martha also becomes involved in Danny’s investigations of how and why he went blind. Ironically, while her professional role is supposed to increase Danny’s self-worth, it achieves the opposite effect: He considers himself not only dependent per se but also being dependent on a woman who is an “unarmed and untrained civilian” presents “his own private horror flick” (126). Moreover, as an eyewitness to the repeated attacks on his life, Martha and her sightedness increase Danny’s dependence and make him realise that, despite small achievements in handling his visual impairment, he is “helpless, blind” (50) when it comes to a physical attack. Being neither in charge nor the leading force in the investigations is an “emasculating, humiliating” experience for him (127) as it contradicts his pre-blindness belief that independence and self-reliance are essential to hegemonic masculinity.

Danny’s disabled masculinity peaks in a melancholic attitude and frustration. The melancholia with which he reflects on his professional situation is characteristic of the trope of the blind man (Bolt, “The Blindman in the Classic” 48): Danny displays what Sigmund Freud calls “a profoundly painful dejection, an end of interest in the outside world, an inhibition of all activity” (Freud qtd. in Bolt, “The Blindman in the Classic” 46). While meeting such feelings of inability with aggression against inanimate objects (BlCu 49), he also has suicidal thoughts, ostensibly justified in the belief that “death is preferable to life with a visual impairment” (Bolt, *The Metanarrative of Blindness* 114). When he holds his gun, he reflects that it “wouldn’t take but one squeeze of the trigger” to end his life in darkness and “he’d be free” (BlCu 49). Although such reflections on self-determined suicide demonstrate male agency and the power

to choose between life and death, they also reduce the (masculine) resilience to confront and manage the permanent sensorial change. With his professional career ended and his independence gone, Danny believes that he has “no future” (BlCu 304). The potential permanence of his condition, the pity he fears to receive and admitting the increasing dependence on a woman contribute to his feeling of emasculation.

While Danny’s sexuality constituted a significant characteristic of his understanding of masculinity before the accident, the visual impairment metaphorically emasculates him. As a “‘playboy’” (BlCu 95), frequently changing, non-committed relationships with women proved Danny’s “sex life [...] to be one thing he never worried about” (76) as it assured him of his masculinity. Additionally, he “never went to bed alone. If he didn’t have a woman for company, he had his North American minirevolver, a five-shot .22 Magnum, which he never slept without” (24). Danny constantly surrounded himself with either his gun or women. Now, being visually impaired, “[f]or the first time in he couldn’t remember when, he was unarmed”, which makes him feel “[n]aked, exposed, his dick shriveled in humiliation” (24). This unequivocally highlights not only his weapon as a phallic symbol of his masculinity (see also Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* 78) but also explicitly displays the consequences of his helplessness. Bolt summarises the metaphorical emasculation of people with visual impairment in the ‘blindness-castration synonymy’ (*The Metanarrative of Blindness* 51-52), according to which eyes are the “means of expressing desire” (59). Since “looking masculinizes” (Garland-Thomson qtd. in *The Metanarrative of Blindness* 52), “the removal of or visible injury to the eye or eyes may be unconsciously perceived as a form of castration” (57). Danny emasculates himself due to his destroyed self-worth as he drowns in self-pity (and arrogance) at the loss of his sight and independence (BlCu 80-81), mostly rejecting Martha’s support as a chance to reformulate and adapt his masculinity to his visual impairment.

Despite this self-emasculation, sexuality becomes the essential means through which Danny negotiates his disabled masculinity. Using his reliance on his pre-blindness (hegemonic) masculinity as a coping strategy (Gerschick and A. S. Miller 194), Danny focuses on the fact that his sexual urges are unimpeded by his visual impairment. Sexuality becomes a means through which he reconnects to his pre-blindness masculinity, which nevertheless develops ambiguously throughout the novel. At first, Danny turns on the charms on Martha in order to negotiate his disabled masculinity through his (sexual) attractiveness: “If he couldn’t be a cop anymore, he was still a man” (BlCu 94-95). Danny’s romantic approaches to her oppose further notions of emasculation in sexual terms, which the novel often introduces with the words “blind or not”. He believes himself to be “still irresistible to women”, reassuring himself of his

masculinity (101), underlining that his (invisible) impairment does not decrease his attractive appearance. Furthermore, making Danny aware of Martha's admiring gazes, Jake Wise remarks that “[b]lind or not, you can't resist” to make a pass at her (221), assuring Danny that he can still be the “playboy” he was before his blindness (95). Most importantly, Danny assures himself that “he could still please a woman” (174). Although he kisses her because he wants to, Danny admits that “[w]hen I kiss you I think I can almost see. Everyone kisses in the dark. [...] I'm as good as I always was” (144). Selfishly focusing on negotiating his visual impairment, he is ignorant of Martha's emotional response: “a cold wave of reality” (144). Danny claims the active and dominant part for himself, reducing her to an instrumentalised object. Thus, he ‘corrects’ the previously reversed gender roles and restores a patriarchal gender binary, which contributes to the ‘healing’ of his disabled masculinity.

However, when Martha actively approaches him in romantic and sexual ways, Danny understands her behaviour as part of her professional aim to support his recovery. Despite his increasingly sincere affection for Martha, he rejects “[t]his woman who had somehow gotten to him in a way no one else ever had. This woman whose job it was to teach him. To make him feel better about himself” (BICu 174). While his rejection might be genuinely justified because of his respect and appreciation for her, feeling that their cheap hotel is an unsuitable environment to give in to his desire, Danny's explanation is linked to his refusal of people's compassion: “I know what you're doing. A little therapy for the blind man you feel sorry for” (175). Although Martha's body invites Danny to prove his sexual prowess as a man, the pity he presumes to be her motivation counteracts his self-reassurance of his sexuality and emasculates him again.

Compensating for his visual impairment through his sexuality eventually escalates when Danny briefly believes that his vision has returned, resulting in an overcompensation through hypersexuality. He ‘sees’ pictures of the bar where he received the hit on the head and believes that his eyesight has eventually recovered. However, Martha tries to rationalise his experience (“You saw a bar in Sokanan. We're here in Manhattan”), making him understand that this “visual memory” and “leftover from when you could [see]” does not mean that his vision returns (BICu 224-225). Danny perceives the way she explains the situation to him – “[a]s if he were a child, a crazy person” (22) – an infantilisation depriving him of his adulthood and his saneness because of his euphoria about an unrealistic hope of recovery. In response to this infantilisation, pity and deprivation of hope, he becomes angry, violent and “rigid with wanting to smash her and her words. Smash something. Anything” (225). In the following explicit scene of sexual intercourse, Danny uses sex against Martha and, thus, compensates for his blindness

in sexual terms.<sup>198</sup> His hands practise what Bolt calls the “monstrous grip” (*The Metanarrative of Blindness* 78-79) by “grab[ing] her hand and use[ing] it to pull her close”, leaving her no space and claiming her body by “mov[ing] fiercely over her, kneading, pressing” (BlCu 228). Through his demanding and dominating behaviour, Danny confirms the trope of the hypersexual, “groping blind figure”, embodying lecherous and molesting connotations of blindness (Bolt, *The Metanarrative of Blindness* 76-79) and displaying an “animalistic lack of control” (68). Neglecting Martha’s feelings, channelled through his third-person narrative perspective, he sexually abuses her in a manner that comes close to rape. It is only due to her returned sexual interest in him that she does not stop him (BlCu 228). Danny subordinates Martha and turns their intercourse into a play of power. This ‘sexual assault’ functions as a valve through which Danny releases his frustration. The blind man’s grope, through which he expresses a temporary hypersexuality, briefly re-masculinises him and, thus, aims at a “validation of himself as a man” (Gerschick, “Sisyphus in a Wheelchair” 199). In this scene, *Blind Curve* inverses Torrell’s pattern. Instead of empowering the female able-character, disabled masculinity subordinates her. Danny seizes an advantage from his impairment – his self-pity which makes him believe that his visual impairment absolves his every behaviour (BlCu 48; see also Rodas 123) – to oppress the female, able-bodied character. Thus, Danny’s character again aligns with the ‘reliance’ pattern, which “does not challenge, but rather perpetuates, the current gender order” (Gerschick and A. S. Miller 203).

Violent sexuality is the peak of Danny’s sense of disabled masculinity and results in regret. Understanding that his visual impairment is permanent, he sees his pre-blindness masculinity falling apart, which ‘blinds’ him to potential means of reformulation. His visual impairment “prevent[s] [him] from seeing, from using [his] best judgment” (Rodas 123) to level his compensating actions. He reflects that “[h]e’d never taken a woman in anger. Never. Then again, he’d never been blind before” (BlCu 230) – a realisation which comes with deep regret and disgust at himself – through which he again tries to rationalise his behaviour. He overcompensates for his emasculated self-perception, ranking his masculine validation above social relationships, which demonstrates how deep the visual impairment shattered his ‘before’ identity. Danny develops from the emasculated blind man, summarised in the blindness-castration synonymy (Bolt, *The Metanarrative of Blindness* 51-53), to the hypersexual blind man (76-79).

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<sup>198</sup> Although the novel uses the verb ‘to grope’ frequently throughout the plot, this scene is one of the few incidents in which it actually takes on a sexualised meaning. In most other cases, the verb refers to Danny’s hands seeking their way around his environment, indicating insecurity and helplessness rather than sexual aggression.

Despite the initial regret, the ‘near-rape’ scene becomes a turning point in Danny’s negotiation of his disabled masculinity. Martha’s silent withdrawal from him indicates that his selfish tunnel vision of compensation undermined her feelings and femininity. He abused her as a person to whom he developed a fondness exceeding his gratitude for her support. Apologising for his indecent assault on Martha, the accompanying regret sparks a more thorough negotiation of his disabled masculinity: a “cognitive shift” of what constitutes masculinity (Gerschick and A. S. Miller 188) and his ocularcentric and ocularnormative attitude. It turns his (unseeing) look inward on himself (see also Rodas 125), where he reflects on Martha’s words that his visual impairment does not excuse his misbehaviour. Martha’s almost instant forgiveness – “I cannot resist you” (BlCu 232) – makes him realise that, since his physical condition allows him heteronormative sexuality, compensating through (hyper)sexuality is unnecessary. Henceforth, he recognises and appreciates Martha for her feelings, while their romantic relationship paves the way for Danny’s transition to masculine disability.

### **5.3.2 A Shift of Perception**

The emotional relationship with the female sidekick and her profession as a mobility instructor fundamentally supports Danny in approaching masculine disability in personal and professional terms. She teaches him the skills how to ‘behave’ as a blind man and, thus, supports his development from relying on sight to (re)appreciating his other senses, through which he reformulates hegemonic ideas of masculinity. Danny achieves what Mintz calls a “redistribution of perception”, which results in a “remapping of bodily cognition” (32). In this negotiation, “every instance of *sensing* is an important moment of figuring out” (33), not just the details of his own case of why he has been attacked, i.e. in terms of his profession as a detective. Sensing also becomes the primary means of Danny’s investigation of what constitutes sexuality and masculinity with a visual impairment. Therefore, he experiences not only a “cognitive shift” (Gerschick and A. S. Miller 188) but also a shift of perception in terms of his private and professional masculinity. Interestingly, while other disabled detectives often need to implement their disability into their professional identity first before accepting it as a part of their private identity, Danny Sinofsky needs to understand that the visual impairment does not deprive him of hegemonic characteristics of masculinity. To him, it is essential to achieve masculine disability in his private identity first before applying this newly gained confidence to his profession as a detective.

### 5.3.2.1 When a Woman Loves a (Blind) Man

As a “romantic suspense novel” (Solomon), *Blind Curve* confirms the romance genre’s definition, which centres on the developing and struggling love story of the two protagonists, offers a “happily ever-after ending” (Cheyne, “Disability Studies Reads the Romance” 38) and contains an “explicit exploration (and often celebration) of sexuality and sexual pleasure” (Cheyne, “Disability in Genre Fiction” 191). With Danny as the main protagonist with visual impairment, *Blind Curve* aligns with Cheyne’s research on romance novels featuring protagonists with disabilities and alludes to the “‘segregation’ of ‘sex and disability’”, which deprives people with disability of sexual desire and desirability (*Disability, Literature, Genre* 40; see also “Disability Studies Reads the Romance” 37-39). In the romantic and sexual relationship between the sighted and the blind protagonist, the novel challenges this segregation. Martha’s love and sexual interest in him reassure him of his attractive masculinity, making him reformulate not only his hypersexuality but ultimately also his professionalism and understanding of hegemonic masculinity. The reciprocal dependence of both protagonists eventually solves not only Danny’s but also Martha’s crisis.

The character of Martha Crowe, a 32-years-old spinster living with her paraplegic father, directly contrasts Danny’s (hyper)sexual masculinity. Struggling with her outer appearance, she believes that her thick black hair and “large eyes, wide mouth, strong nose, long jaw” make her look like a “Wicked Witch” or “Scare Crowe”, nicknames with which she struggled in school (BlCu 30). While Danny embodies a protective position to his sister, Martha takes on a victimised role since she has been left by her mother in childhood, planting in her the belief that she is not loveable (297-298) and decreasing her self-confidence to a minimum. Although she has a high opinion of her character, Martha repeatedly emphasises her lacking physical attractiveness, which seems to make her unworthy of Danny. Danny’s visual impairment and Martha’s complexes render both characters damaged in their own way. A romance between these two characters implies not only several aspects of compromise and negotiation but also mutual support in rehabilitation as a part of the ‘one saving the other’ trope.

Martha has been educated to understand a newly blind person’s experience. Contrasting Danny’s unprepared confrontation with his visual impairment, she is presented as an expert, a “‘rehab teacher and an O and M instructor – Orientation and Mobility’” (BlCu 11). By, for example, exercising tasks blindfolded, she has learned how to move without vision herself (153-154). Although such artificial blindness is still a poor comparison to actual visual impairment, she is competent enough to teach Danny how to appreciate and rely on his senses. Her confidence in Danny’s successful adaptation to his visual impairment is justified in her

professional assessment that as “someone who’d been sighted all his life, [he] ha[s] a much better feel for the physical world” than people born blind (40). Based on her professional experience, her confidence renders her a reliable source of reassurance in terms of rehabilitation. It supports Danny in negotiating his disabled masculinity and eventually arriving at masculine disability.

Although Martha is eager to maintain a professional distance to Danny (e.g. BlCu 104), her professionalism clashes with her feelings for her patient for two reasons. First, the increasing intimacy in their cooperation complicates their relationship. Teaching him how to perceive the world through his remaining senses, she leads him with her body (e.g. 72) or demonstrates haptic movements by, for example, placing her hand on his (e.g. 97). In addition to being put in protective custody together, such physical contact changes their relationship. It makes Danny aware of her femininity and renders Martha’s behaviour awkward towards him, which alludes to the second reason. Since their shared time at school, Martha has had a crush on Danny, although back then, he barely noticed her apart from occasionally protecting her from bullying (41). When they meet again as adults, Martha’s crush is revived. However, seizing advantage of his blindness and poor memory, she does not reveal herself as a former schoolmate and lies about her age. Pretending to be fifty-eight (40) and aiming at making herself unattractive to Danny, she tries to maintain their professional relationship and, at the same time, protect herself from Danny’s possible romantic approaches, which she fears she could not resist (e.g. 82, 101, 115). His nickname “Sin”, abbreviated from his last name Sinofsky, takes on a metaphorical meaning in their romantic relationship. Diving into him, on the one hand, would be a sin to their professional cooperation as therapist and patient, while, on the other hand, it would threaten Martha’s emotional wellbeing because she fears his rejection if he realised her poor looks. Martha’s integrity as a therapist eventually succumbs to the sensual temptation embodied by Danny.

Despite – or rather because – of Danny’s visual impairment, staring, looking and essentially gazing mark fundamental aspects in the relationship between the two protagonists. Stereotypically, “‘looking masculinizes,’ from which it follows that the inability to look emasculates” (Garland-Thomson qtd. in Bolt, *The Metanarrative of Blindness* 52). Being deprived of his eyes, through which beauty is stereotypically perceived, the blind man is also deprived of the ability to experience erotic pleasure from the gaze (Bolt, *The Metanarrative of Blindness* 52; Bolt, “The Blindman in the Classic” 39). Therefore, blindness robs the man of the devices through which he exercises power over the object of his stare. It castrates him (see Bolt, “The Blindman in the Classic” 41-42) and turns him from an active starer into a passive

staree (Bolt, *The Metanarrative of Blindness* 52). At the same time, it allows the female, sighted character to claim the active part of the starer. In *Blind Curve*, Martha's sightedness allows her to gaze at Danny's muscular body (BlCu 10, 12, 200) as an "unseen spectator", who expands her "authority" over Danny as the "seen spectacle" (Bolt, "The Blindman in the Classic" 41). As such, since "ocularcentrism aligns with scopophilia" (Bolt, *The Metanarrative of Blindness* 54), she gains sexual, "voyeuristic pleasure" not only from looking at his masculinity but also from his inability to "stare back" (Mintz 28). She enjoys this "tortured pleasure" to admire his physical appearance "[w]ithout his knowing" (BlCu 42) as her (female) gaze sexually objectifies Danny.<sup>199</sup> This confirms Bolt's psychoanalytic observation that "the blindman's disempowerment creates a spectacle that not only empowers but also arouses the unseen spectator" ("The Blindman in the Classic" 34). Danny's blindness does not impede Martha's admiration (as she has already loved him before the accident) but rather enhances her affection as he cannot judge her outer appearance. His visual impairment gives her enough confidence to approach him romantically and sexually, which eventually works out after several setbacks. Ultimately, *Blind Curve* challenges the gender allocation in Bolt's observation that "eyes are sexy in their appearance, especially in women, and sexy in their function, especially in men" (*The Metanarrative of Blindness* 66). Thus, alluding to Laura Mulvey's concept of the (male) gaze exercising power over the objectified (female) body, Bolt aligns women with (passive) appearance and men with (active) looking as well as the "seeing-knowing synonymy" (*The Metanarrative of Blindness* 18-19). Since Danny's eyes are "useless" (BlCu 10-11), the allocated gender roles to the positions of the starer and the staree are reversed in *Blind Curve* in favour of the (sighted) female character. The novel only partly confirms Torrell's pattern of literarily representing disabled masculinity to empower the female character (218-219).

However, it is not just Martha's sightedness but also her (narrative) perspective, an external perception of the blind man, which emphasises Danny's masculinity. Presenting him as the object of her desire, she compares him to "a caged tiger" held back by darkness (BlCu 12) or "a sleek panther" (BlCu 90). Such comparisons to predators render him a threatening hunter.

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<sup>199</sup> Although his eyes might not be able to see, Danny's own gaze also plays a role in the novel. As a person who has been sighted for most of his life, he is "socially conditioned to face his interlocutor" (BlCu 36), which is why he turns his head in the direction of people's voices. While his gaze is often off-centre at the beginning of the novel (e.g. 64), Danny improves in directing it correctly (309) until, finally, he is able to direct "his gaze more or less on [Martha's] face" (359). While this continuous improvement symbolises his increasing adaption to and handling of his visual impairment, the fact that he 'gazes' at all positions him as a potential threat in terms of the male gaze, although not in a conventional sense. Instead, the 'near-rape' scene demonstrates that he exercises his masculine power physically, turning his male gaze into the blind man's grope and hypersexuality, through which to subordinate the female object of his focus.

Emphasising his capability of protecting and giving her a sense of security in his presence (52, 85), Martha complements Danny's masculine image with considerate and guarding characteristics. What she desires most about Danny are his turquoise eyes. Despite their blindness, they are “[c]lear and transparent as the Caribbean. And healthy-looking. No injury marred the lids or sockets. Nothing at all to signal they were useless” (10-11). Danny's “healthy-looking” eyes hide his blindness and, thereby, negate the psychoanalytic notion that “the removal of or *visible* injury to the eye or eyes may be unconsciously perceived as a form of castration” (Bolt, *The Metanarrative of Blindness* 57; *emphasis A.S.K.*). Appearing to be uninjured, his eyes enable him to sustain his impression of intact masculinity and control over all of his senses. Hence, they confirm Bolt's idea of “ophthalmocentrism”, in which he summarises the instrumentalisation of vision and eyes for normative sexual purposes and desire (*The Metanarrative of Blindness* 13, 53). To Martha, Danny's “healthy-looking” eyes make him appear as the man with whom she fell in love, which disproves the metaphorical castration of the blind man (58). The invisibility of his visual impairment maintains his masculinity.

Despite the empowering potential of the female gaze, Martha's self-consciousness and devotion to Danny undermine the empowerment she could gain from his visual impairment as much as from her professional competence. Her affection for Danny harms her professionalism and her little self-esteem as a woman. Instrumentalising Danny's blindness to her own advantage underlines her weakness in two aspects. First, she deceives Danny about her age to keep him at distance (BlCu 40) and protect herself from his potential passes at her (115) – a weak attempt to trick her self-discipline into a professional relationship. Second, she prioritises her own wishes over her professionalism and her patient's recovery and independence. When Danny claims independence as he wants to resume his job in order to trace his attacker, she enumerates his incapacities: ““You've refused to learn the cane, so you can't even get around by yourself. You can't handle money, you can't tell the time. You don't even know how to cross a street safely. How are you going to investigate this by yourself?”” (217). While this time, it seems that she has sincere doubts about his safety, the next time, she points out his incapacities to tie him to her: ““You can't tell time, you can't shop for food, you can't—’ [...] A tremor shook her. He was really going” (292-293). Highlighting his dependence on her as a sighted person, Martha abuses Danny's visual impairment as an excuse for her to stay with him. Although she might be right about his less advanced skills as a newly blind man, she is ready to hurt him, as “[h]e felt as though he'd been bitch-slapped. Beaten down by the one person he trusted” (217). Ultimately, she proves to be ‘blinded by love’ and opposes Danny's literal visual

impairment with a metaphorical embodiment of one of the several metaphors of blindness in a cultural understanding and language.

Martha's dependence on Danny's visual impairment is her predominant weakness: "the misery of the blindman is integral to the happiness of [...] the sighted woman" (Bolt, "The Blindman in the Classic" 49). Once the lie about her age is revealed (BlCu 113), she believes that her lacking attractiveness is still hidden behind his 'dead' eyes. Increasing her "voyeuristic gratification" (Mintz 28) and arousal by his disempowerment (Bolt, "The Blindman in the Classic" 34), her cowardly hiding behind his visual impairment gives her the confidence to approach him romantically and sexually. However, throughout their romantic relationship, Martha's biggest fear is that Danny might regain his sight: "If he could see, he could see her" (BlCu 226). Although she is aware of her selfishness, she fears he might reject her because her plainness might match neither his attractiveness nor his taste in women (225-226). For that reason, she does not stop Danny's sexual assault. She contents herself with being a stepping stone for Danny's compensation, almost masochistically enjoying his hypersexual grope, which grants her intimacy and desirability. She does not care "that he was needy and couldn't see and if he could he would never turn to her in this way. Not that he was using her, because she was using him. She didn't even care that the pretense was childish and born of her own delusions" (228). Similarly, she later on fears that, once the case of who attacked Danny is solved, he would leave her. To get "one last memory" with him, she begs him to neglect any feelings and treat her like one of his non-committed relationships (325-328). Although this implies an abuse of her feelings for him and her femininity, she readily lets him use her for his own self-assurance (228). Through sacrificing her little self-esteem, she boosts Danny's masculine disability.

In such self-deprecation, Martha reverses a decisive convention in fictional romances featuring characters with disabilities. Usually, disabled characters display feelings of being "unworthy of the nondisabled partner's love" (Cheyne, "Disability in Genre Fiction" 193). In *Blind Curve*, however, it is Martha, the able-bodied, i.e. sighted, character, who fears the blind, i.e. disabled, character's rejection because of her outer appearance. Her lacking beauty, hence, is reminiscent of an impairment which limits her self-esteem (Gerschick, "The Body, Disability, and Sexuality" 92). In addition to Danny's unchallenged confidence in his sexual effect on women, especially on Martha, her self-induced inferiority allows him a certain degree of remasculinisation. This narrative corrects the initially reversed stereotypical roles of staring and complements the blind detective's weakness with an even weaker female character. Therefore, inversing Torrell's second pattern (218-219), *Blind Curve* undermines the sighted female character's potential empowerment in favour of patriarchal stereotypes.

Despite her self-deprecation and selfishness, Martha's teaching has compensating effects on Danny as she shows him to rely on his haptic sense. Danny comes to appreciate his other senses. The "redistribution of perception" (Mintz 32) Martha teaches him allows him to 'see' her through his senses of smell and taste (BlCu 234), but predominantly through his touch (92). The result is a redistribution of how to perceive beauty. Danny becomes fond of Martha because of her smell (47, 76, 117) and considers her beautiful through his haptic sensation (235-236). Ignoring her descriptions of her outer appearance, he rather feels that "[s]he was warm and sweet", picturing her body through his touch (231-232). This scene challenges the ophthalmocentric notion that "eyes [are] the means of expressing desire" (Bolt, *The Metanarrative of Blindness* 59). Instead, it turns voyeuristic into tactile pleasure as it manifests touch as the predominant means of expressing desire, through which Danny and Martha reach the "undreamed-of pleasure" inherent in the romance genre (Cheyne, "Disability in Genre Fiction" 192). In contrast to Danny's claiming possession of Martha's body in the near-rape scene, here, he comes to appreciate her touch and body as embodiment of her soul to reinforce their connection.

Through this refocusing of his senses, Danny also negotiates and reformulates what constitutes his sexuality. While he previously expressed his sexual masculinity in a hard, rough and dominating manner, Danny now challenges the threatening potential of the blind man (Bolt, "The Blindman in the Classic" 37-38). Instead, he turns the blind man's violent grope into a sensual touch and transforms into a provider of sexual pleasure. Reformulating his frustrated and desperate reliance on sexual domination, Danny focuses on Martha's instead of his own pleasure, through which the novel confirms what Gerschick and Miller observe in socioeconomic research on disability negotiation (189-190). Therefore, Danny adapts his sexuality not (only) to his visual impairment but also to Martha's fragile self-esteem, becoming considerate of her feelings (for him) and her sexual needs. By eclipsing vision (hence, also rationality) and focusing entirely on touch and sensation, Danny's visual impairment displays the erotic potential of his 'darkness'. Additionally, by switching off the light, both Martha and Danny meet each other on visually and sexually equal terms (BlCu 240); "[n]o talking. No seeing. [...] No thinking. [...] Just feeling" (231-234). This equalising "freedom" of darkness liberates both to give in to their desire, "[a]s though invisibility gave permission to do anything, feel anything. No judgement, no shame or insecurity. Just pure sensation" (234) on both sides. Both gain what they desire as Martha enjoys this intimacy and desirability, while Danny eclipses his misery: "And for the first time in days he forgot he couldn't see. [...] Forgot fear and doubt and helplessness and embraced the darkness, the pleasure of her body so keen and

sharp it lit up his soul” (237). By eclipsing his disabled masculinity, this erotic negotiation of his visual impairment allows Danny to accept his visual impairment as a potent aspect of his sexuality and validate his masculinity (Gerschick, “The Body, Disability, and Sexuality” 90), which manifests a step toward his masculine disability.

Danny’s admittance and expression of his feelings for Martha come along with his reformulated sexuality. She becomes the light opposing his ‘darkness’ in several ways. On the one hand, her competence as a rehabilitation teacher brings the metaphorical light of knowledge in handling the visual impairment in everyday life. On the other hand, by admitting his feelings for her, “[s]omething opened inside him, a huge heavy door letting in light and air and welcome where there had only been darkness” (BlCu 232). She lightens up his ‘darkness’ (235, 237) and makes him feel “whole and strong once more” (243). Despite such a sentimental – and stereotypical feminine – expressions, Martha’s love and teachings enable Danny to turn his look inside. He finally gains the insight that his visual impairment does not hinder him in expressing his masculinity in hegemonic ways.

While enjoying a form of reconstructed masculinity in a familiar, private space, secure from humiliating stares or embarrassment, Danny experiences a severe setback once he enters the public space as a detective. He, for example, avoids eating in public to prevent embarrassing situations revealing his insecurity and depriving him of his masculine professionalism. More importantly, after meeting with a contact person in which Martha communicates her vision through headphones to Danny, who passes for a sighted person, both are attacked. When Martha is threatened, the urge to protect her exposes his vulnerability as his undirected, uncontrolled hits give away his disorientation and helplessness (BlCu 267-269), which destroys his newly gained confidence. This scene proves his reflections that, although darkness allowed him to “pretend” equality with Martha, “[i]t didn’t. It never would” (241). Dealing with the humiliating experience, Danny “pushe[s] through the darkness, stumbling, groping, every step a leap of faith into thick, black nothingness”, displaying his shattered confidence in his masculine disability. He realises that he was “[w]orse than useless” and “was going to get her killed” (268). From his perspective, being unable to protect Martha and guarantee the sense of security she feels in his presence emasculates him more than his blindness. To both Martha and Danny, touch comforts them through the emotional aftermath of the attack (269) but Danny returns to his sexuality as a successfully reformulated part of his masculinity. Although their sexual connection becomes a refuge to which they retreat to deal with their fears, turning sex into a means of negotiation, Danny does not reconcile with his emasculating experience. Instead, he realises that “the sex had been about forgetting”, its passion deriving from “such intense

desperation to wipe out the memory of fear" (277). Thereby, he gains insight into the fact that his sexuality alone is not sufficient for his masculine disability.

The humiliating and emasculating experience of not being able to protect his love interest makes Danny understand that his independence is not advanced enough to entirely compensate for his lacking vision in an unknown, public and ocularnormative setting. Combined with his patriarchal understanding of gender hierarchy, this backsliding in the negotiation of disabled masculinity confronts Danny with two choices. Either he stays with Martha and accepts his ongoing dependence on her, or he rejects her to focus on developing his independence as a visually impaired man. Being unable to protect her, he believes himself to be no suitable, 'worthy' partner (BlCu 287) and rejects her because he "can barely take care of [him]self, how can [he] take care of someone else?" (328). With this decision, Danny initiates the "ritual death", a narrative device in the romance genre, in which the character with impairment perceives him- or herself as a potential burden to the able-bodied partner and draws back from the relationship (Cheyne, "Disability in Genre Fiction" 193). Additionally, Danny wants to avoid Martha getting hurt because of his vulnerability (BlCu 310, 328), which contributes to his decision. He decides that he "would not live that way, at the mercy of other people's compassion" (311), which presents the core argument of his disabled masculinity and, hence, motivates his resilience to confront any signs of dependence. Consequently, the 'ritual death' resembles a crossroad in the negotiation of masculinity and disability in the romance genre. Danny's decision for his independence is a conscious step towards independence and masculine disability. He comes to terms with his visual impairment first, before entering a permanent relationship with a partner. As a decisive part of regaining his independence, he enters the public space, resumes his profession as a detective and, thereby, challenges his capabilities as a blind man and detective.

#### *5.3.2.2 A Newly Blind Detective*

In the course of investigating who attacked him and caused his visual impairment, Danny achieves several successes in implementing his blindness in his profession. At first, he holds on to his ocularnormative investigative methods and relies on Martha's vision. In several situations, she becomes his eyes, such as when she witnesses the attacker (BlCu 54, 280) and describes the spatial and social environment (127, 256-260). When meeting with a contact person, Danny and Martha are connected via headphones, increasing their intimate connection by fusing their senses. Although these scenes still demonstrate his reliance on sight, Danny is willing to reformulate his ways of exercising his job. He further learns to adapt his newly gained

skills to investigative purposes, such as giving evidence about the attacker's scent (193), learning to handle a computer for people with visual impairment (255) and displays increasing routine in 'seeing' new environments through touch. However, he still prefers to do this without spectators in order to preserve his dignity (301). Danny eventually becomes confident enough to step out into the public sphere. In this process, his blindness becomes central in the revelation, overpowering and, ultimately, identification of the villain.

Danny realises that he has to accept and subordinate his visual impairment to his profession as a detective. Backed up by police protection, he presents himself at a public event to reveal his whereabouts to lure the attacker out of his hiding (293, 301-303). Thus, he not only becomes "the cheese to catch a rat. He was bound to get bit" (301) but also allows being used as a "poster child" in a governor's re-election campaign (302). Aiming at provoking another attack on the blind detective as an "easy target" (312), such a public display of his visual impairment alludes to stereotypical social associations of vulnerability and helplessness (on a narrative and metanarrative level). While Danny directed his efforts at hiding his 'weakness' from others so far, this instrumentalisation marks a decisive moment in his transition to masculine disability. Additionally, after the governor's speech, in which Danny stars merely as a mannequin (315), he wants to take a picture in which Danny, as the visually impaired man, is supposed to be seated. While the actual reason for this instruction is that Danny's height overtops the governor's, putting a powerful politician in a (masculine) inferior position, the underlying message refers to the displayed inferiority of people with (visual) impairment. Fighting this image, Danny insists that "I'm not going to look like I can't stand on my own two feet" (317). In contrast to the feeling of emasculation when he had to abandon his gun, this resistance to public subordination demonstrates Danny's independence and self-esteem when he literally stands up for his visual impairment. Overcoming his felt inferiority, he confronts his fear of 'advertising' his visual impairment in favour of a higher purpose – attracting his attacker and finally gain clarity about his disabling accident. Therefore, Danny accepts his visual impairment and instrumentalises it in his profession, through which he approaches masculine disability.

Danny's cautious attempts to use his other senses disable his investigation. He gets to know Andrew Robard, the governor's chief of staff, who interrogates Danny on how his blindness occurred. In this context, another visual memory shows Danny the situation moments before he suffered the stroke to the head: "The restroom door opening. If he hadn't turned his head, he wouldn't have lost control of the crowd. There would have been no fight. No punch. No stroke. No blindness". Asking himself why "his brain was clobbering him with that key moment of distraction" (BlCu 315), it later becomes evident that it was the conversation's topic and

Robard's voice which triggered this (visual) memory. Apparently, Danny's brain unconsciously connects the voice with the location, indicating that Robard is involved in Danny's hit on the head. However, having relied too much on his sight in this crucial moment before being hit, Danny himself is unable to understand this connection. Instead, he is merely puzzled at the visual memory and quickly abandons any second thoughts, which gives Robard the chance to hunt down Danny at his own house to eliminate the detective. The blind detective's inability to understand 'his brain's hint', adapting to his visual impairment, thus, prolongs the investigations unnecessarily.

While Danny cannot purposefully implement his visual impairment in the public sphere, Robard's night-time attack at Danny's house finds the detective in a familiar environment, which enables Danny to outwit the villain. The space mapped in his head (BlCu 334) and his experienced touch enable the blind detective to navigate around the furniture and move independently, which equals the opponent's condition. Additionally, Danny remembers Jake Wise's words comparing the detective's visual impairment to an exercise in their shared time at the Special Forces, where they were "locked up in a dark closet, no weapons, forced to fight their way out using anything except sight to do it" (190). In order to confront the villain on equal terms, Danny has to "even out the playing field", which he achieves by removing the fuses (334). In the dark, the blind man (stereotypically) gains an advantage over his sighted antagonist, which allows Danny to control the situation. "Who would have ever thought the darkness would be his friend?" (339). He similarly 'disables' the villain by robbing him of his sight, forcing him into darkness to gain an advantage from his (comparatively advanced) experience in handling a lack of vision. Danny adapts the circumstances to his benefit and now uses "everything else" (336), most notably his auditory and haptic senses.

While moving through his touch, Danny relies on his hearing to confront the villain. Martha supports Danny as she keeps Robard talking, which enables Danny to locate the villain, despite a severe gunshot wound inflicted by the villain. She puts herself at risk and Danny in control of the situation before she faints, leaving Danny to prove his independence (BlCu 337). Being eager to protect Martha from further harm, "everything inside him shut down, leaving only his ears alive" (340). Through this focus on his hearing, Danny is able to locate Robard's exact position and overwhelm him with his superior physical constitution and strength. Danny's experiences in moving and searching without visual support grant him a decisive advantage over the villain. He "groped beneath him" and gets hold of a pair of scissors with which he kills Robard (340). Thus, the combination of the detective's physicality and his negotiated perception skills grants him the upper hand in the final confrontation. The verb 'to grope'

suggests of Danny's successful negotiation of his disabled masculinity. In the final confrontation – the most decisive moment of the plot – it implies that Danny relies on his haptic perception. He implements his perception skills into his working techniques: He moves through his touch and he ‘sees’ through his hearing, but he acts through his physical strength. By defeating the antagonist Danny succeeds as a blind detective, through which he achieves his masculine disability.

Danny makes sense of his visual impairment in the incidents' denouement. He learns that Kokir, the attacker Martha identified at Danny's house, was a mere sidekick to Robard. Robard and Kokir plotted a terror attack at the bar where Danny exercised the routine drug sweep. Fearing that the detective might have witnessed their planning, Kokir attacks Danny to prevent him from giving them away. The observant detective is the “epistemological link between seeing and knowing” (Mintz 26). In attacking the investigating detective, the villains acted to eliminate him as an instance of “invasive surveillance” (29), recognising the detective as an authoritative institution of sight and knowledge. Although Danny understands that he was attacked because he presented a potential danger to the villains – a potential compliment to his professional competence – he still clings to the ocularnormative attitude that only sight makes him a good detective: “If he could see now, their [Robard and Kokir's] faces might have jarred some memory. But he couldn't see. Couldn't ID either of them” (BlCu 348). Thereby, he fails to understand the repeated attacks after his accident not only as attempts to finish the job (348) but also as an ongoing affirmation of his dangerous potential as he still could remember and arrest them. Although he later claims that he would “know that bastard's voice anywhere” (349), this is the case only *after* he has learned that Robard is the true villain and knows what to look – or rather, listen – for. Danny probably would have recognised Robard sooner if his other senses had been as sharp then as they are now and, thus, could have prevented Martha's severe injury. His ocularnormative conviction caused him to fail as a blind detective and as a man, which proves that those few days – from becoming visually impaired until now – are not enough time to accept the new impairment and negotiate a fundamental sense of masculinity.

This insight motivates the protagonist's rethinking in professional terms. Abandoning his previous reliance on the hegemonic ideals of his masculinity before the accident, Danny reflects that “whatever battle he'd fought with pride and humiliation seemed ridiculous now” (BlCu 342) in light of Martha's injury. Despite occasional scenes of accepting the visual impairment, such as recognising a cane's potential advantages (300) or teaching his colleague how to lead a blind man (342), Danny realises that Martha got hurt only because of his lacking independence, which correlates with his ongoing rejection of his visual impairment (350). This ultimate insight

motivates accepting and implementing his visual impairment. However, it takes another eight additional months for him to achieve this aim.<sup>200</sup> During that time, he undergoes a training for people with visual impairment (BlCu 358). Building on what Martha has taught him about navigating the world without sight, Danny learns, for example, how to expertly use a cane. Thereby, he not only fundamentally accepts to display his visual impairment publicly but also reconstructs his independence, through which he connects to an essential characteristic of his pre-blindness masculinity and embeds it in his masculine disability.

Reformulating his masculine ideal of sight as “the guarantor of control” (Mintz 57), he understands that a blind detective’s success is based on the “uncoupling of epistemology from physical vision and the extension of ‘mind’ across both bodies and objects” (44). Consequently, Danny further develops his skills to rely on and ‘see’ through other senses. Professionally, he is now “‘running the department’s CIs and teaching investigative techniques’” (BlCu 360). Although not explicitly mentioned in the novel, it can be assumed that, having experienced himself, for example, how to identify people through scent and hearing, Danny probably implements his newly gained and sharpened sensorial awareness into his teaching. Thereby, he might highlight the importance of relying on all senses when investigating, without being biased through maybe overhasty judgment because of visual distraction (Mintz 25-26; Rodas 121). Teaching how to properly “pay attention” (Rodas 122), he probably encourages his students to abandon an ocularnormative approach to their investigations and, instead, develop a more intuitive way of investigating. Thereby, Danny’s visual impairment allows him an expert position as a teacher, which manifests his professional and masculine dominance. As a blind detective, he is now confident and competent enough to pass on the insights and lessons his visual impairment taught him to a sighted audience. Consequently, by accepting professional support in order to reformulate his independence, hence temporarily admitting dependence, and redefining lacking vision as a potential advantage in investigative techniques, Danny comes to terms with his visual impairment, reformulates his hegemonic ideals of (sighted) masculinity and finishes his negotiation of masculine disability in a professional context.

Danny can turn to his private sphere again to resume his masculine disability in a romantic partnership only after this successful, professional implementation of his visual impairment. He returns to Martha as a self-confident, independent man and successful detective and finds her independent herself. After her recovery, she not only quit her job and bought a house for herself.

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<sup>200</sup> The plot of *Blind Curve* spans only a couple of days, which is, realistically, far too little time for a former sighted person to get used to, accept and implement his visual impairment into his everyday life and profession as well as his understanding of masculine identity. The narrative’s jump to some months after the incidents indicates that both protagonists have developed in the meantime.

Furthermore, having had the short intimate relationship with her teenage crush Danny gave her with the self-confidence to accept the ‘flaws’ of her physical appearance. As both protagonists now have accepted their respective ‘impairment’s, their shared future lies ahead of them as Danny proposes to Martha (BlCu 363-364). The implied a life-long commitment assures Martha of her femininity as well as desirability. Furthermore, in a scene confirming another stereotype of romance fiction, Danny remembers her and her outer appearance from school. He complements his sensorial impression of Martha with her actual face. While this was Martha’s biggest fear, his proposal proves that he accepts her as she is. In fact, he proves what Bolt observed in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*: “The tenor of such a union is that one partner’s lack in conventional outward beauty is not an issue when the other lacks the sense by which it is perceived” (“The Blindman in the Classic” 36). Moreover, Danny ranks Martha’s appearance lower than his sensorial image of her since, as a blind man (BlCu 366). Therefore, Danny ultimately resolves not only his own but also Martha’s impaired gender identity, through which he claims a dominant, powerful and masculine position in their relationship.

Once Danny successfully achieves professional masculine disability, he resumes the personal masculine disability in sexual and romantic terms. Consequently, the “ritual death” (Cheyne, “Disability in Genre Fiction” 193) of his romantic relationship with Martha, in which he chose his professional identity, was necessary for the detective to reconstruct his self-reliance, prioritising his career and personal independence before turning toward a romantic relationship. In this decision, the novel highlights the renegotiation of male independence as a necessary precondition regarding self-worth, despite unconditional female affection. Professional and personal identity as a detective and man with visual impairment are in balance now and correlate. Through developing his independence and professional perspectives, Danny ‘heals’ his disabled masculinity and, thus, displays a detective’s priority of work over private life.

### 5.3.3 Conclusion

*Blind Curve* challenges the importance of sight in detective work. Having lost his vision, Danny Sinofsky believes to be deprived of his independence, sexuality and masculine dominance, three essential characteristics of his pre-blindness masculinity, and struggles with a feeling of emasculation. However, the novel’s elaborate romance between Danny and Martha allows insight into how a received visual impairment affects not only the detective’s professional but also his personal life. Romance and sexuality serve as decisive factors influencing the negotiation of masculine disability.

While Danny traces his disabled masculinity back to his lacking vision, Martha's professional competence and her affection for Danny support him in refocusing on his other senses. In his negotiation, Danny fights his feeling of emasculation by demonstrating his physical and sexual dominance overcompensating for his felt inferiority and insufficiency. He develops from the trope of the emasculated to the hypersexual blind man. Following the "seeing-knowing synonymy" (Bolt, *The Metanarrative of Blindness* 18-19), Danny's blindness here becomes a "narrative prosthesis" (Mitchell and Snyder) as it metaphorically refers to his intolerance of a non-hegemonic embodiment of masculinity. He is 'blind' for a potential reformulation of his independence, focuses on hiding his visual impairment and holds on to the little hope for a cure. Hence, Danny relies heavily on his hegemonic ideal of masculinity. Nevertheless, while his physical prowess allows him to connect to his pre-blindness identity as a sexually active man, Martha's hurt feelings after the 'near-rape' combined with her affectionate and professional support enable Danny to let go of his previous ideals. It initiates a rethinking of masculinity in which he transforms his sexually charged grope into a sensual touch. Therefore, she enables the blind protagonist to turn his look inward on himself, reflecting a common assumption about visual impairment (Rodas 125), and open up to potential renegotiations of what constitutes masculinity. Accepting the permanence of his visual impairment and learning to use the cane, Danny comes to terms with his new identity as a blind man and gains insight through a look inside. He overcomes his crisis and achieves the transition from disabled masculinity to masculine disability.

In private terms, Danny depends on Martha's assurance of his gender identity as much as she depends on him. Martha relies on Danny's blindness to feel desirable as a woman. Similarly, Danny relies on Martha's emotional and professional support to reconstruct his sense of masculinity. Reformulating his masculinity and approaching masculine disability, he learns to trust and use his other senses, most of all his sense of touch (Mintz 43), through which he explores the furniture he needs to avoid and the devices with which he interacts. Achieving to move independently around the house, cook his own meals or eat without spilling neither food nor drink supports Danny's confidence in his slowly recovering independence. Furthermore, Martha's unconditional love and devotion to him, because of his visual impairment, allow him not only sexual dominance as a man but also enables him to reformulate his idea of what constitutes sexuality. Accepting touch as the predominant means to express desire and deriving erotic pleasure from her satisfaction instead of his own creates a new form of sexuality. His newly gained confidence for independence in the private sphere is the precondition for him to

enter the public sphere of his profession as an investigator and prove his masculinity as a blind detective.

As a blind detective, Danny abandons his ocularnormative attitude and embraces his visual impairment as a new approach to his profession. Implementing his haptic, auditory and olfactory senses into his investigative methods ultimately ‘opens Danny’s eyes’ to creating a more intuitive way of investigating, through which he reformulates his profession as a (blind) detective. By becoming a teacher of such investigative techniques, he arrives at a similar ‘expert’ position as Thornley Colton and Max Carrados. He ‘grows into’ the techniques of investigating (and coping) with the visual impairment that Colton and Carrados display right from the beginning of their stories (Mintz 25-26). Thereby, *Blind Curve* demonstrates that a blind detective’s investigative skills are no extraordinary gifts, as Mintz observes with Colton and Carrados (26). The novel rather emphasises that a blind detective’s skills and his sense of masculine disability are the results of a time-consuming and exhausting negotiation of visual impairment in a professional and private setting. Instead of separating the detective’s professional and personal identity, the novel highlights the interrelationship of these two roles. While the professional negotiation largely happens between the lines, i.e. in the eight-month gap, the novel focuses on the personal, private negotiation through the female sidekick and love interest.

Throughout the novel, Danny and Martha are simultaneously empowered and infantilised. Compared to Danny’s (felt) dependence, infantilisation and emasculation, Martha embodies a superior position. In addition to her professional competence as a mobility and orientation instructor, through which she teaches Danny to handle his visual impairment in everyday life and recreate his independence, her ability to see, in general, and gaze at Danny, in specific, also raises her above the blind man. However, due to her complexes concerning her appearance, she willingly abandons her potentially superior position. This self-deprecation enables Danny to save her like a damsel in distress physically and, more importantly, emotionally. Diving into a romantic relationship with him bolsters Martha’s self-confidence and soothes her fears. This reciprocity results in the partners’ mutual dependency on providing each other with their desires regarding gender and, specifically, sexuality.

Although the “ritual death” (Cheyne, “Disability in Genre Fiction” 193) initiated a detachment from their mutual dependency, suggesting that each character comes to terms with the respective struggles individually before they reunite, what *Blind Curve* ultimately confirms Torrell’s second pattern (218). The novel displays the patriarchal message that masculinity – even disabled masculinity – needs to be complemented with weak femininity. It is only

Martha's devotion and willing self-depreciation that re-masculinises Danny. The novel confirms the stereotypical trope that "the love of a nondisabled partner [is] the solution" not only to the 'problem' of disability (Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 145) but also to the accompanying struggles in terms of masculinity. Although *Blind Curve* initially challenges many stereotypes by reversing them, eventually, it 'corrects' them in favour of patriarchal masculinity. As such, the female character undermines her supposed empowerment to subordinate to the male character to suit him. The novel exaggerates the detective's role as a protector in masculine terms by rendering him a blind detective who is able to provide masculine protection to the female character despite his visual impairment, which results in old-fashioned, outdated and almost sexist gender representation. Consequently, *Blind Curve* displays the need to solve disabled masculinity not just in terms of a detective's masculine identity but also in romantic terms.

## 5.4 Chapter Conclusion

The protagonists of Deaver's *The Bone Collector*, Galbraith's *The Cuckoo's Calling* and Solomon's *Blind Curve* combine characteristics of the classical and hard-boiled traditions of detective fiction. Lincoln Rhyme stands out as a classical detective, defining himself through his cognitive extraordinariness. Cormoran Strike's identity as a veteran detective aligns him with the hard-boiled tradition. Danny Sinofsky is a police detective working for the local police department. All protagonists show the hard-boiled detective's physicality and sexuality, paradoxically not despite but because of their physical impairment. Focusing on their disability involves focusing on their bodies, which counterbalances the analysis of (exclusively) rational characters in classical detective genre (Foreman 24). This combination manifests "disability as a cultural marker of identity" (5). More importantly, it humanises the detective protagonists and highlights that they are not just investigators who live exclusively for their work, but are also private persons with individual needs and struggles. Disability affects not only their bodies but also their sense of masculinity, which (stereotypically) bases on Western social ideals of hegemonic masculinity. In applying Gerschick and Miller's patterns of negotiating disabled masculinity (i.e. reliance, reformulation and rejection) and Torrell's idea of reinscribing masculinity in the disability, this chapter has shown that the three protagonists negotiate their disabled masculinity with a focus on their profession as a detective and the support of the female sidekick, through which they develop masculine disability.

These three examples of contemporary literature prove that the adult male detectives with an acquired physical impairment are characters in two transitions. First, they suddenly change from a (temporarily) able-bodied to a disabled person as a result of an unforeseen accident. Apart from the physical change, this disruption also causes an identity crisis. The physical restriction prevents the disabled person from living up to their internalised social expectations of (hegemonic) masculinity, which shatters the core characteristics of their masculinity. In this phase of disabled masculinity, the (fictional) protagonists rely heavily on their identity before the accident in which they were approaching an embodiment of hegemonic masculinity, confirming Gerschick and Miller's findings in socioeconomic contexts (191-199). In their disabled masculinity, the protagonists oscillate between independence and dependence (Lincoln Rhyme), threatening and weak impressions of masculinity in military and civil contexts (Cormoran Strike), hypersexuality and emasculation (Danny Sinofsky) as expressions of their identities before and after the disabling accident. They feel alienated from society and from themselves since the disability contradicts their understanding of masculinity. Furthermore, they see themselves as unable to achieve the same performance as before the accident because the disability makes their lives unbearable to live (Lincoln Rhyme) and restricts their feeling of (social) belonging (Cormoran Strike) as much as their sexuality (Danny Sinofsky). The frustration stemming from this sudden "status inconsistency" (Gerschick, "Toward a Theory of Disability and Gender" 1265) results in suicidal thoughts (Rhyme and Danny), hiding their disability to pass as able-bodied (Strike) and overcompensating the feeling of emasculation (Danny).

This chapter focused on the second transition, from disabled masculinity to masculine disability. In this development, the detectives accept their impairment as a permanent physical change in the way they embody and live their masculinity. Since the disability is permanent, a 'cure' to the condition is limited to emotional and psychological coping. Instead of rejecting hegemonic characteristics of masculinity, the analysed protagonists reformulate their means of approaching the (hegemonic) masculinity they embodied prior to the accident by adapting them to their respective physical impairment (Gerschick and A. S. Miller 187). In other words, according to Torrell, they "reinscribe themselves as masculine" (219).<sup>201</sup> This transition

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<sup>201</sup> How the narrator highlights his disability and how much importance he ascribes to it in his private and professional life depends on how long ago the disabling accident was. If it happened several years previous to the plot, he often represents the disability matter-of-factly while still expressing frustration because of his physical condition. If it happened only shortly before the plot (or even in the plot), this new impairment significantly dominates the story and indeed constitutes his "primary identity" (Gerschick, "The Body, Disability, and Sexuality" 89). In both cases, the detective renegotiates his understanding of what it means to be masculine in the course of the investigations and comes to terms with his identity as a disabled man.

requires conscious reflection of social and internalised gender expectations, especially (but not exclusively) of the “key domains of hegemonic masculinity: work, the body, athletics, sexuality, and independence, and control” (Gerschick, “Sisyphus in a Wheelchair” 189). Hence, quadriplegic Lincoln Rhyme regains (professional) independence and authority by delegating tasks, trusting a physical stand-in for crime scene investigations and (re)appreciating his cognitive skills and professional expertise. Cormoran Strike arrives at his identity as a veteran detective by, on the one hand, adapting his SIB knowledge to a civilian context and, on the other hand, appreciating his prosthetic leg which allows him to pass as able-bodied in an able-bodied civilisation when he hides his amputated leg under trousers. Danny Sinofsky’s hypersexuality, with which he overcompensates for feelings of emasculation due to his visual impairment, causes him to rethink his masculinity and motivates him to refocus on his remaining senses for perception. He abandons his ocularnormative attitude, (re)appreciates his other senses and temporarily accepts dependence to increase his professional and personal independence. Consequently, the exemplary detectives do not let go of hegemonic characteristics, but rather renegotiate their means of regaining access to the “circle of legitimacy” of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 79). By re-establishing their self-worth in light of their respective impairment, they achieve masculine disability.

Therefore, the term ‘masculine disability’ implies a form of overcoming through a new focus on masculine characteristics – a process which, according to Torrell, is repeatedly understood as enforcing “overcoming disability” as a “damaging stereotype” (220). Such a stereotype occurs “when the analytical emphasis is on the portrayal of disability *in absence of considerations of gender*” (220; *emphasis A.S.K.*). However, as the term ‘masculine disability’ implies a gendered understanding of disability, this chapter has shown that the ‘problem’ the disabled detectives need to overcome is not the disability itself. Instead, it is the “estrangement” from their body, masculinity and social norms as a part of their “post-traumatic struggle” following the disabling accident (Murray, “Neurotecs” 180), which *can* be negotiated and overcome. Therefore, focusing on detective work with the support of a female sidekick enables the disabled detectives to achieve masculine disability as it allows them to reconnect to the professionalism and sexuality they demonstrated prior to the accident.

As the disability occurred during detective work, it comes as no surprise that the detective work essentially supports the negotiation of disabled masculinity. Mintz observes that the detectives’ disabilities often “occur on the job”, which “confer[s] a specific legitimacy upon the sleuths, denoting heroism, often dedication to a cause greater than oneself” and signals to the reader that “they can ‘take it’” (95-96). However, despite such an emphasis on capacity,

dedication and persistency, the notion of heroism can be excluded. Being detectives, these protagonists have accepted the potential risks of their profession rather than deliberately putting themselves into (additional) danger. Rhyme knew that the building, in which he investigated the crime scene, was unstable; Strike was aware of the potentially lethal risk of being at war; Danny was attacked because, as a detective, he threatened to uncover instances of social deviance. Additionally, the sudden transition from temporarily able-bodied to disabled demonstrates the “flexibility of disability [...] which, unlike gender or race, any human being can join at any stage in their lives” (A. Hall, *Literature and Disability* 168). This flexibility underlines a temporarily able-bodied person’s fear of becoming disabled and demonstrates the acceptance that, before the accident, the disabled detectives’ bodies and masculinities were fragile and now, after the accident, their masculinities need renegotiation. Given the interwoven nature of the profession and the disability, the detective work proves a promising field in which the protagonists can negotiate their disabled masculinity. Resuming their work and adapting their investigative methods to their new physical constitutions allows the disabled detectives to reconnect to their ‘before’ identity as able-bodied men. Danny redefines his methods in recognition of his senses other than sight. Rhyme and Strike concentrate on their cognitive skills, a typical way in which a physically impaired detective compensates for his disability (e.g. Hafferty and S. Foster 192). As such, Rhyme re-appreciates his cognitive excellence as his most distinctive characteristic (and Amelia as his physical and empathetic supplement). Strike applies his military SIB knowledge to a civil clientele, following the military’s (and his internalised) practices. Thus, detection presents a purpose to which these disabled detectives dedicate their energy and through which they achieve “closure” not only concerning the central mystery (Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 80), but also concerning their disabled masculinity. By focusing on their abilities instead of their inabilities, these disabled detectives involve their disability into their detective identity, which contributes to achieving masculine disability.

Ultimately, the detectives accept their disability in professional terms when it becomes the essential means for restoring social order in the context of their investigations. All three chosen disabled detectives use their disability in the final confrontation with the villain. When the bone collector tries to stab him, Rhyme’s quadriplegia makes him immune to pain, turning his immobility into invulnerability. Cormoran Strike uses his prosthetic leg as a weapon with which he stops John Bristow. Seizing the advantage of his advanced haptic perception due to his visual impairment, Danny Sinofsky darkens the room to confront the villain in circumstances, in which the latter’s ocularnormative attitude becomes a weakness. Hence, the detectives are

triumphant *because of* their physical impairments. While Gerschick observes that a disability often “overshadows almost all other aspects of one’s identity” (“The Body, Disability, and Sexuality” 89), implementing it into their investigative methods enables the disabled detectives to focus on their identity as investigators. Succeeding as detectives with a physical impairment, the protagonists accept their impairments and challenge their (internalised) ableist assumptions of disability as passive and dependent. Disproving such social assumptions, this implementation not only (re)establishes the disabled detectives as “achiever[s] as well as protector[s] of society” (Mintz 112; see also Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 65). They also learn that their physical impairment dominates neither their detective nor their masculine identity; instead, it is a part of both. Subordinating their impairment to their professional identity, the disabled detectives understand that their distinctive position in society does not derive from their physical impairment but rather from their investigative expertise. Consequently, before restoring social order and stability, the disabled detectives need to restore their personal order and stability by accepting their disability in masculine terms.

The various social relationships of the disabled detective presented in the novels counterbalance the protagonist’s initial retreat from society to deal with his disabled masculinity as a ‘lone wolf’ (Mintz 116). His relationships to male characters often oscillate between rivalry and comradeship. More importantly, the female assistant proves to be supportive in his transition to masculine disability as she appeals both to his professional identity as a detective and to his heterosexual masculinity. Cooperating with Amelia as a physical stand-in at the crime scenes, Rhyme resumes his professional independence and adapts his detective identity to his quadriplegia. Robin assures Strike of his able-bodied impression as a veteran detective and, hence, supports his masculine self-perception in a civilian society. As a mobility and orientation instructor, Martha is predominantly a caregiver who teaches Danny how to regain his independence in everyday life, which he transfers to his profession. All three female sidekicks additionally develop into a love interest for the disabled detective. The underlying (sexual) attraction to the detective despite (or, in Amelia’s case, because of) his disability demonstrates to the detective that the disability does not restrict his heterosexual potential. Thereby, the female character supports his acceptance of his disability as a part of his heterosexual masculinity, which thus also allows him to see himself in a heteronormative partnership and implement the disability in a ‘desirable future’.<sup>202</sup> While Danny and Martha’s relationship finds a happy ending in the conclusion of the one-off novel, the romantic tensions between Rhyme

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<sup>202</sup> For further information on how disability is perceived as part of a ‘desirable future’, see Cheyne (*Disability, Literature, Genre*, chapter five).

and Amelia as well as Strike and Robin present an ongoing theme which unfolds throughout the series and along with the detective's development of masculine disability. Therefore, the female sidekick supports the detective in prioritising his (hegemonic) characteristics of masculinity over his disability in professional terms as a detective as well as in private terms as a heterosexual man.

While masculinity ultimately 'triumphs' by overshadowing disability as the primary identity, femininity proves to be more ambiguous. On the one hand, complementing the disabled male (protagonist) with an able-bodied female (sidekick) challenges the stereotypical "gender-ability binary" of masculine agency and female passivity, which confirms Torrell's pattern of female 'empowerment' in light of disabled masculinity (218). On the other hand, this female 'empowerment' as able-bodied is undermined by the male's cognitive and physical dominance in *Blind Curve*. Although Danny physically depends on Martha to exercise their professions, his hypersexuality dominates the female sidekick's agency. Despite occasional resistance, she readily subordinates herself to the male counterpart in professional and personal devotion. Contrastingly, *The Bone Collector* and *The Cuckoo's Calling* represent the gender roles more equally. Despite superficial allusion to a similar undermining of female agency in *The Bone Collector*, Amelia often challenges Rhyme's authority and domination, through which she contributes to subordinating the disability to Rhyme's identities as detective and man. Apart from contributing to Strike's masculine disability in *The Cuckoo's Calling*, Robin's cooperation with Strike also enables her to develop into a self-reliant character herself to oppose her fiancé's patriarchal mindset. Therefore, Torrell's pattern should be expanded to include more ambivalent female characters in narratives on disabled masculinity.

While focusing on the disabled detective's narrative perspective allows insight into disabled masculinity, Foreman argues that, in *The Bone Collector*, "other focalized characters' descriptions [of the disabled protagonist] reproduce a damaging narrative of disability", enforcing his own negative representation of himself (117). However, especially the female sidekick's perspective provides an additional point of view and invites the opposite conclusion. Her focus on the detective's strengths, abilities and masculine impression contradicts his pitiful and self-deprecating internal focus on his disabled masculinity. Amelia's appreciation of Rhyme's masculinity and strengths, on the one hand, eclipses the disability from her idea of Rhyme; on the other hand, the disability also physically attracts her. While Cormoran Strike is constantly aware of the prosthesis attached to his amputated leg and struggles with his feeling of social alienation, Robin's ignorance of the prosthesis assures him that he successfully passes as able-bodied, which consolidates Strike's position in civilian society. Similarly, while Danny

fights his feeling of emasculation, Martha's admiration for him is unimpeded by his visual impairment. By communicating her opinions to the disabled detective, the female sidekick motivates (the reader's and) the disabled detective's understanding of himself as masculine, which contributes to his achievement of masculine disability.

Consequently, the disabled detectives analysed in this chapter overcome the alienation they feel from their masculinity prior to the accident. They do so by, firstly, implementing the disability into their profession and, secondly, accepting the disability as a part of their heterosexual identity. Both adaptations demonstrate that the disability does not entirely eclipse their masculinity prior to the accident, but that this identity can be achieved by reformulating the means through which the protagonists attain it, which confirms Gerschick and Miller socioeconomic observations. Rhyme, Strike and Danny merge their different identities as a detective, a man and a disabled person and, thereby, challenge the contradiction between masculinity and disability. In their negotiation process, they understand that the aim is not to be either the one or the other, but about combining these different identities and accepting them as not 'that' different. In an interplay between negotiating their professional and personal identities, these disabled detectives accept themselves as holistic beings with their impairment. Therefore, *The Bone Collector*, *The Cuckoo's Calling* and *Blind Curve* add another nuance to what Torrell calls "the alternative masculinities of disabled men" (217). Instead of constituting entirely new understandings of masculinity, these disabled detectives approach a re-enactment of the masculinity they embodied before their accidents. They successfully reformulate the means through which they achieved this masculinity (i.e. profession and heterosexuality) in recognition of their disability and, thus, achieve masculine disability. Expanding on how Gerschick and Miller's coping patterns apply to literary representations of disabled detectives, future research should investigate how disabled detectives reject expectations of (hegemonic) masculinity altogether in favour of creating diverse standards of what constitutes masculinity.

While medical articles in disability studies focus on the *problem* of disabled masculinity and give only theoretical answers, the protagonists in these literary texts demonstrate embodied (fictional) *solutions* to the "dilemma of disabled masculinity" (Shuttleworth et al.), which constitutes the novels' 'aesthetic appeal'. Due to its inherent need for a solution, the genre of detective fiction, hence, proves to be especially suitable for investigating potential solutions to disabled masculinity. Through the detective's transition from disabled masculinity to masculine disability, the (assumed able-bodied) reader acquires an insight into the 'double mystery' – that of the central case and that of the protagonist's disability (see also Foreman 2; Mintz 114). Even in a series, the first instalment presents the protagonist's identity crisis and suggests a solution

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at the end of the novel. Although the crisis and the accompanying negotiation might never be complete, as backsliding is a part of the ‘journey’, the novels’ conclusions establish the protagonists as detectives with a female partner and, thus, suggest professionalism and heterosexuality as parts of the solution. Hence, it is not the disability per se that “*endures*” (Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 79; see also Mintz 102) and is “the ongoing foundation of work and self” (Mintz 116), but its negotiation in professional and personal contexts.

## 6. Conclusion

This dissertation analysed the triangulation of detective fiction, masculinity studies and disability studies. It combined the strands of literary and cultural disability studies, as suggested by Cheyne (*Disability, Literature, Genre* 170-171), connected them with current research on disabled masculinity and applied them to the framework of contemporary detective fiction. Since detective fiction is considered to be an inherently male genre (e.g. Gates, *Detecting Men* 7; Worthington, *Key Concepts in Crime Fiction* 41; Plain, “Gender and Sexuality” 102), but masculinity and disability negate each other in sociocultural understandings (e.g. Shakespeare, “The Sexual Politics of Disabled Masculinity” 58-59; Shuttleworth 166; Torrell 211), the question arises as to whether the disabled detective is bound to fail in negotiating his masculinity and in obtaining social recognition as a man. Although most fictional texts featuring a disabled character still reproduce numerous stereotypes (Murray, “The Ambiguities of Inclusion” 100), current research agrees that the disabled detective challenges structural stereotypes of detective fiction, disability and masculinity.<sup>203</sup> Contrary to the expectation of disability as a disadvantage, “disability makes for a distinctive detective” (Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 56; see also Jakubowicz and Meekosha). Disability is “positioned less as an obstacle than as a generative force which encourages or enables alternative (and productive) ways of thinking and working” (Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 56; see also Dolmage 145; Mintz 12). Thus, “[t]he conditions [...] don’t get in the way of unravelling the mystery. They *are* the way” (Mintz 170). Therefore, a common conclusion in current research is that the disabled detective demonstrates his capabilities and potentials *because of*, rather than *despite*, his disability, through which he is able to solve the case (e.g. Hafferty and S. Foster 192; Murray, “Neurotecs” 186; Foreman 180; Mintz 7; Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 56).

While current research focuses on how disability affects the detective’s investigations, this dissertation analyses how detective work initiates and influences the disabled detective’s negotiation of his masculine identity. It argues that detective work presents a means of engaging in a socially acknowledged and masculine field, and challenges common and potentially discriminating assumptions about disability. Therefore, detective work structures the social world, overcomes its “moments of instability” (Foreman 1) and also provides structure and

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<sup>203</sup> Murray states that stereotypical representations of disability continue even in contemporary literature, with authors reproducing “narratives of overcoming or sentimentality; crude stories in which disability is equated with criminality or social difference; wondrous tales in which physical or cognitive difference produces awe in fellow characters (and indeed readers)” (“The Ambiguities of Inclusion” 100). Some of these narratives have been highlighted in this dissertation, such as the character with an ASD-like disorder confirming eternal childhood or compensating for the impaired body with a focus on the mind.

stability to the disabled detective himself. Turning the social deviance of the ur-detectives Dupin and Holmes into neurodiversity and physical impairment, the texts on disabled detectives analysed in this dissertation add disability as a social category to the detective's identity. During their investigations, these protagonists implicitly explore their own understanding of masculinity in light of their respective disability and develop an individual, empowering, inclusive gender identity, which this dissertation captures in the term 'masculine disability'. The term highlights strengths, capabilities and potentials of disability instead of shortcomings, dependences and weaknesses. Thus, masculine disability emphasises that disability is not only a supportive means in the disabled detectives' investigations but also a fundamental, yet not defining, aspect of their masculine identity.

The dissertation differentiates between protagonists with a neurodivergent condition, i.e. a developmental disorder that unfolds since adolescence, and adult protagonists who suffer an accident in adulthood that leaves them physically impaired. The different points of time in which the disability occurs influence the disabled protagonists' course of negotiation. Christopher in *Curious Incident* and Lionel in *Motherless Brooklyn* have already developed a neurodiverse condition when they turn to detective work. Despite largely unsuccessful investigations, their social performances as detectives, strongly influenced by their self-referential reliance on genre conventions of detective fiction, teach them to value the masculine characteristics of their neurodiversity. Such confidence leads Christopher and Lionel to eventually reject the detective framework in favour of other fields of masculine identity formation, i.e. mathematics, in which Christopher further develops his mathematical masculinity, and comedy, in which Lionel substantiates his freakish masculinity. Therefore, detective work supports them in developing and growing into these individual forms of masculine disability. In *The Bone Collector*, *The Cuckoo's Calling* and *Blind Curve*, the respective protagonists Lincoln Rhyme, Cormoran Strike and Danny Sinofsky transition from disabled masculinity to masculine disability. While the novels' beginnings present them in a phase of disabled masculinity, in which they mourn the loss of their able-bodied identity as a professional detective and (heterosexual) man, the detective work enables them to overcome the crisis. Adapting to their individual physical condition, they reformulate the means through which they achieve independence and a will to live (*The Bone Collector*), social belonging (*The Cuckoo's Calling*) and sexuality (*Blind Curve*) in professional terms (i.e. through their work) and in interpersonal, (hetero)sexual terms (i.e. through the female sidekick). Thereby re-enacting their masculine identity before the accident in a reformulated way, they overcome the struggles with their disabled masculinity and achieve masculine disability. Like in other areas,

such as competitive sports, detective work constitutes a social “*performance*” through which the disabled individuals improve their own and society’s perception of the disability (Manderson and Peake 231). Detective work not only compensates for the physical ‘lack’ (e.g. Hafferty and S. Foster 191; Murray, “Neurotecs” 179; Dolmage 39-40; Murray, “The Ambiguities of Inclusion” 96-97; Mintz 165). It also allows them to (re)connect to the professional identity they embodied before the accident, and adapt their sense of masculinity to their disability. Consequently, these neurodiverse and physically impaired detectives rely on the masculinity associated with detective work (e.g. Messent 85-86) and, through their performances as detectives, recognise their individual masculine potentials in their disability. While both groups of disabled detectives confirm the pattern of (re)inscribing masculine characteristics in their disability (Torrell 220), the physically impaired detectives also reformulate their masculine self-perception (Gerschick and A. S. Miller 187; Torrell 220-221). Ultimately, masculine disability presents a positive outlook at the end of standalone novels or constitutes a (new) status quo for the further instalments of a series.

In addition to emphasising the detective’s masculine disability as the answer to the research gap of the triangulation of detective fiction, masculinity studies and disability studies, this dissertation highlights three further insights into these individual research areas. First, in terms of detective fiction, it argues that focusing on the detective’s negotiation of his disabled identity creates an additional story. Complementing the two stories of detective fiction – the story of the crime and the story of its investigation (Hühn 453-454; Todorov 295-297) – the narrative of how the disabled detective negotiates his identity in light of his disability is an essential part of a third story. Adding to the (usual) focus on the detective’s professionalism, this story presents him as a private person, revealing intimate details of not only his personal background but also his neurological constitution and corporeality: “[post-World War II] [d]etectives now have backgrounds and baggage” and are “socially embedded” (Plain, “Gender and Sexuality” 106). While in the second story of detective fiction, i.e. the detective’s investigations, the detective aims to “ascribe meaning to the [crime] by finding the missing links to the accepted patterns of reality” (Hühn 454), the third story ascribes meaning to the detective’s personality, linking his actions of the present to potential reasons and experiences of his past and individual identity. However, unlike the second story, which usually constitutes the main plot in detective fiction, the author can choose to keep the detective’s personal background hidden (see also Hühn 459-460). Thereby, the third story can become an additional mystery in detective fiction, contributing to the detective’s aloofness, such as Holmes’s genius conveyed by Watson’s hero-

worshipping.<sup>204</sup> In either the first- or third-person narrative, the third story can also be merely alluded to through reflections, flashbacks, attitudes or in interactions with other characters. Similar to the second story (Hühn 458), it is up to the reader to collect, chronicle and interpret these “literary affordances” (Tougaw 132) to piece together the detective’s personal story. The detective’s disability and its negotiation in terms of his professional and masculine identity essentially humanises the detective.

Second, the disabled detectives analysed in this dissertation develop masculine disability as an alternative form of masculinity. They combine the seemingly incompatible categories of masculinity and disability and generate an inclusive understanding of disability as a gendered experience. Superficially, it might seem that these disabled detectives perpetuate conventional, occasionally even hegemonic, ideas of masculinity (Torrell 220), which would result in what Judith Butler calls the “sedimentation of gender norms” due to repeated performances of similar gender acts (*Gender Trouble* 191; see also Manderson and Peake 234). However, the disabled detectives (re)negotiate their sense of masculinity in light of their neurodiversity or physical impairment. Masculine disability confirms that “alternative masculinities of disabled men” challenge hegemonic masculinities (Torrell 217). Embodiments of masculine disability present what Connell and Messerschmidt call “nonhegemonic patterns of masculinity”, which they define as “well-crafted responses to”, for example, “physical disability” (848).<sup>205</sup> The concept of masculine disability recognises not only the agency of subordinated groups of masculinity (848) but also the individuals’ choice of how to define their personal idea of alternative – or nonhegemonic – performance of masculinity. In different situations, the disabled detectives might admit weakness or demonstrate strength and willpower; re-enact pre-accident masculinity in pursuit of hegemonic conventions of masculinity or develop an individual understanding of masculinity; reject the disability or adapt their everyday life to it. Thereby, the disabled detectives demonstrate not only ““how else we can know”” (i.e. as their disability creates an “alternative epistemology”) but also ““how else we can *be*” (Mintz 201). Thus, the first- or third-person narrative perspective of the disabled detective emphasises the negotiation of his masculinity as a highly personal and individual ‘journey’. It is no linear process but involves setbacks, depending on situations, interactions and other social as well as individual

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<sup>204</sup> The hidden story of the detective’s personal background can even become the main plot of a story if the detective suffers from amnesia. The detective protagonist in Cornell Woolrich’s *The Black Curtain*, for example, has lost his memory and is accused of murder, which blurs the boundaries between the first, second and third stories of detective fiction.

<sup>205</sup> Such alternative masculinities also answer Shakespeare’s call for “models” to “reject hegemonic masculinity” and “redefine masculinity in less oppressive, more open, more acceptable ways” (“The Sexual Politics of Disabled Masculinity” 63-64).

dynamics. By tracing such nonhegemonic, individual forms of masculinities in literary representations and emphasising their relation to conventional forms of masculinities, this dissertation highlights that ‘deviance’ is relative.

Third, ‘deviance’, i.e. neurological and physical impairments, are highly individual constitutions. They might resemble some general definitions and diagnoses, but essentially, they are as “‘unique as a snowflake’” (MB 82). While detective fiction is often associated with the identification (and correction) of the Other in society (e.g. Michael Cohen 150; Jean Anderson 256), the disabled detective’s narrative perspective offers the potential to recognise one’s individual ‘deviance’ – “the other within us” (Jean Anderson 259). The texts analysed draw the reader’s attention to the fact that everyone occasionally displays individual idiosyncrasies and that physical integrity is fragile and can be temporary – as demonstrated in the term ‘temporarily able-bodied’ (e.g. Foreman 271; Adams et al., “Disability” 5). The conclusion of Jeffery Deaver’s *The Midnight Lock* supports this argument as Rhyme reflects that “there was no such thing as normal. Who on earth had that perfect physical and mental incarnation that piloted them about flawlessly every minute of every day? Disabled is a continuum. We each have a spot on that vast bandwidth” (ML 434). The texts previously analysed endorse Mintz’s hope that disability in the genre of detective fiction might “open toward the possibility of something other than clichés and norms” (Mintz 200; see also Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 163). Disclosing the detective’s personal background, the third story elaborates on how the disability developed or how the accident happened; how the detective’s initial deals with the disability and how society reacts to it. Therefore, disability is presented as a lived experience and a condition which affects every aspect of life but – counter-intuitively – can open new opportunities rather than restrict potentials.

Femininity plays an essential part in the development of masculine disability. Although the analysed novels have shown that femininity supports such a reconciliation of masculinity and disability, the specific roles of the female characters need to be differentiated. Relative to the female as a love interest, carer and professional partner, masculine disability is neither subordinate nor inferior to femininity. Despite some scenes in which either the disabled detective or the female character proves to be more dominant than the other, all in all, they equally challenge and support each other in both professional and private terms. As a result, the detective negotiates his masculine disability and the female character develops self-reliance. Such mutually supportive developments lead to a relationship of equality between masculine disability and femininity. In contrast to the female sidekick, the mother figure wants to protect rather than expose the disabled character from stressful situations, subordinates her own to his

needs and bends to his idiosyncratic power, such as in *Curious Incident*. Although such behaviour could be interpreted as inferior femininity to masculine disability, it rather demonstrates a mother's loving protection of her child. Hence, the relationship between masculine disability and femininity depends on the individual characters' roles towards each other.

This dissertation has scrutinised how (young) adult detectives with a developmental disorder and adult detectives with an acquired physical impairment negotiate their disabled sense of masculinity. Both groups present the extremes on a whole spectrum of different manifestations of disabled masculinity in detective fiction. Further research could investigate how a different acquisition of disability might allow further insights into the intersectionality of disability and gender (or other social dynamics, such as class and race) that contribute to identity formation. For example, it might be interesting to investigate the negotiation of masculinity with a physical disability acquired in adolescence. Dennis Lynds's series on Dan Fortune might be a promising starting point as the protagonist lost a hand during an act of juvenile delinquency. While an accident resulting in a disability is often understood as negatively changing one's life, Fortune's accident sparks a positive change. At a young age, it already caused him to reflect on his life, abandon his criminal undertakings and become a police detective.<sup>206</sup> Such texts potentially connect to early (French) detective fiction, such as the criminal Eugène Francois Vidocq, who becomes an investigator (Schütt). In the case of Sid Halley, the protagonist of Dick Francis's series, a horse racing accident cripples his left hand, which is eventually amputated, forcing him to change his profession. He becomes a detective only as a second choice (Plain, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*). Furthermore, some novels present their protagonist with an *acquired* cognitive disorder rather than a *developmental* disorder. For instance, after having cracked his skull, Jeff Resnick, the protagonist of L.L. Bartlett's series, develops a heightened sensory awareness of committed injustice, which takes on almost superhuman notions, enriching the detective with traces of the fantasy genre. In the middle of the eponymous series, Howard Engel's protagonist Benny Cooperman wakes up to *alexia sine agraphia*, through which he loses the ability to read, although he still can write. As Engel himself suffered from this precise disorder and projected it onto his fictional detective protagonist in *Memory Book*, further academic research could connect genre writing, i.e. in Engel's novel or the whole series on Cooperman, and life writing (e.g. Frank; Couser). This

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<sup>206</sup> When analysing the novels on Dan Fortune, Cherrell Green's article on how "negative life events", such as (violently) acquiring an impairment, "may serve as positive turning points" (287-288) might be a promising starting point to support the fictional representation of coping strategies with socioeconomic research.

combination might give insight into the representation of neurodiversity by an author with first-hand, real-life insights into living with the represented cognitive disorder.

Further research could investigate masculine disability to other genre contexts. Genre is “a vitally important factor in disability representation, shaping how authors depict disabled bodyminds, how they are interpreted, and the feelings they are likely to evoke” (Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre* 168). It can be expected that, similar to the detective genre, the underlying gender conventions in genre fiction also influence the male disabled characters’ representation, behaviour and potential negotiation of their masculinity as well as other (non-disabled) characters’ perception of their disability. Deeper insights could be gained not only in terms of genre (169) but also concerning gender conventions in genre fiction. As Ria Cheyne pointed out that “[a]nalysis of the representations of disability in genre fiction illuminates representational habits in all kinds of fiction” (*Disability, Literature, Genre* 168), it would be interesting to identify masculine disability shows in other genres, such as romance, science fiction and horror (see for example Cheyne, *Disability, Literature, Genre*).

Future research could further investigate the spectrum of masculinities in detective fiction. It could be analysed how disabled detectives not only reformulate but even reject expectations of (hegemonic) masculinity altogether in favour of creating individual standards of what constitutes masculinity, as Gerschick and Miller imply in their rejection pattern (199-202). For example, non-hegemonic detectives with disabilities invite the question of how LGBTQ characters with a neurodiverse or physical condition negotiate their gender identity. First analyses could concentrate on Tony Fennelly’s Matt Sinclair series, as it features a protagonist who is an epileptic, homosexual, aristocratic sleuth suffering from occasional amnesia after epileptic fits. As homo- and transsexuality presents a fairly recent focus in detective fiction (e.g. Plain, “Gender and Sexuality” 108-109; see also Humann), analysing the specific negotiation of gender identity in light of the respective condition in a specific class environment could further broaden the field. Further research should reconcile disability with other identities, such as the masculine and professional identity. Consequently, investigating the disabled – or ‘defective’ – detective contributes to a more inclusive community characterised by (the acceptance of) human diversity.

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## 8. Honour Pledge

Hiermit versichere ich, dass ich die als Dissertation vorgelegte Abhandlung in keinem anderen Verfahren zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades oder als Prüfungsaarbeit für eine akademische oder staatliche Prüfung eingereicht habe. Darüber hinaus versichere ich, dass ich die Arbeit selbstständig verfasst, keine anderen als die von mir angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel benutzt und die den benutzten Werken wörtlich oder inhaltlich entnommenen Stellen kenntlich gemacht habe.

Koblenz, im Dezember 2022

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