

## Protest and resistance in the crime writing of Anne Perry

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### Abstract

Anne Perry writes to re-write herself, to protest women's condition, and to explore and re-imagine her own. This paper will examine how the essentialising label of evil became the established reading of Anne Perry (Juliet Hulme) and Pauline Parker and their crime, and how as a result of this vilification, protest and resistance became key provocations for Perry's adult writing. It will show how Perry uses her fiction to protest women's position generally, and as a means of resisting the label of evil and re-writing self. It will examine her crime detective fiction writing following the development of both her Pitt and Monk series, and will explore themes in her work of forgiveness and redemption through compassion and positive endeavour. It will show how Perry's books have helped create a different ending. They are a form of redemption in themselves: a re-configuring for Perry of the construction of evil to that of writer and published author.

### Key words:

*crime fiction, biography, murder, lesbianism, adolescence, evil, redemption*

### Introduction

On 22 June 1954, Honorah Parker was bludgeoned to death in Victoria Park, Christchurch, by her teenage daughter, Pauline Parker, and Pauline's school friend, Juliet Hulme. In the days after the Parker-Hulme murder, newspapers across New Zealand were ablaze with the story. Overnight Pauline Parker was arrested and 14 exercise books, including her diaries, were confiscated. The next day Juliet Hulme would also be charged with murder. The tabloids had a field day and the adolescent murderers were vilified, occasionally in hysterical fashion, by the New Zealand press. The prosecution's catch cry of 'dirty minded little girls' resounded through the media, as did psychologist, Dr Reginald Medlicott's: 'Grossly insane'. This is the polarity offered by a trial set to establish guilt or innocence on the basis of 'badness' or 'madness'. The irony was that both aspects of this dichotomy would outlive the trial and continue to fan public outrage and contempt in almost equal measure. The essentialising, all consuming label, however, was evil.

'Entries in Diary "Like An Evil Mirror"', read a headline for the *New Zealand Herald*, during the trial. 'The barbarity and hopelessly irrational confidence of the accused, their youth, and Pauline Parker's diary reflected the deterioration of the two girls "like an evil mirror"', ran the text (*New Zealand Herald*, 1954, p. 10). 'Girls Hear Murder Verdict Unmoved,' read the headline in the *NZ Truth* after their sentencing (*New Zealand Truth*, 1954, p. 20). Judge Adams, having ascertained the girls' ages, had made his pronouncement to a hushed court: 'You both being held to be under the age of 18, the sentence of the Court is detention during Her Majesty's pleasure. That sentence is passed upon each of you' (*New Zealand Herald*, 1954, p. 11). The girls would serve five and a half years in separate prisons before being released on parole in November 1959. Hulme was given a new identity and the name Anne Stewart, which she later changed to Anne Perry, when she took the surname of her stepfather William Perry.

Until 1994, the world knew Anne Perry as the writer of bestselling crime fiction, which would eventually stack up to over 26 million book sales worldwide. But hard on the tail of the

release of Peter Jackson's film about the sensational 1954 Parker-Hulme murders, *Heavenly Creatures*, came the shocking revelation that Anne Perry had started life as Juliet Hulme, the teenager convicted of jointly murdering her friend's mother. Life would never be the same for Anne Perry, and a new light was now cast not only on her life, but also about her writing. A murderer had gone on to become a celebrated writer about murder.

According to Virginia Woolf, writers create characters to avoid the confines of a single life and to experience a multiplicity of endings (as cited in Lee, 2005, p. 99). Certainly, Anne Perry resists the narrowness of one life through writing the fictional lives of her many characters, but perhaps more importantly by creating her characters and writing her novels she also makes a different outcome and ending for her own narrative. Woolf's novel, *The Waves* ends with Bernard considering 'all the un-lived selves he might have been: "those old half-articulate ghosts who keep up their hauntings by day and by night; who turn over in their sleep, who utter their confused cries, who put out the phantom fingers and clutch at me as I try to escape – shadows of people one might have been; un-born selves"' (as cited in Lee, 2005, p. 99).

Susan Sontag adds to the thinking round this theme. Through their characters, she believes, writers can explore multiple lives, re-write endings and change inevitabilities. Sontag comments on this desire to resist the limitations of life by reconfiguring possibility:

... with the enrichment of the personality, one discovers its limits, the poverty and the shackles of the self, one discovers that one has only one life, an individuality forever circumscribed, but which contains many possible destinies . . . Writing then becomes a quest of poly-personality, a way of living, diverse destinies, of penetrating others, of communicating with them [...] of escaping from the ordinary limits of the self (as cited in Ching & Wagner-Lawlor, 2009, p. 5).

No one could have more reason to resist the limitations of a self so tragically begun, and re-configure possibility and create new destinies, than Anne Perry. This paper will examine how the essentialising label of evil became the established reading both of the girls and their crime, and how as a result of this vilification, protest and resistance became key provocations for Anne Perry's adult writing. It will show how Anne Perry uses her fiction to protest women's position generally, and as a means of resisting the label of evil and re-writing self.

## The construction of evil

After Pauline Parker's and Juliet Hulme's sentencing and imprisonment in August 1954, the case bubbled away in people's subconsciousness. There were newspaper articles commenting on the girls' life in prison and speculating on the timing and circumstances of their release. As well as regular newspaper commentary, their story would occasionally erupt in more spectacular fashion with the publication of a book, an anthology, a dictionary entry, or a feature article in a magazine. While Juliet and Pauline were in prison, the case was included in Rupert Furneaux's *Famous Criminal Cases* (1955) and in Tom Gurr and H H Cox's *Famous Australasian Crimes* (1957). (In 1958, Gurr and Cox fictionalized the case in a bestselling novel called *Obsession*.) Furneaux's preface states, 'In New Zealand we have a case which may well become world famous as the most terrible crime of the century.' His chapter on the murder concludes:

Complete egoists, they were insane only in the sense that their ideas were those of animals rather than of human beings. Their law was the law of the jungle and like wild animals they must be caged until they have shown themselves capable of living together with other human beings (Furneaux, 1955, p. 47).

Gurr and Cox's (1957) *Famous Australasian Crimes* was inaccurate in detail, but perhaps not in vision. With remarkable foresight, they wrote 'Juliet Hulme will be the one who will serve a short sentence; and it is possible that, under another name, the world in time will recognise

a writer of talent' (p. 167). Of the crime they concluded: 'the normal mind shrinks from the implications of this tragic story. In many other crimes, lessons of some sort or other are to be found. Here there is little but horror, sadness, and bafflement' (Ibid.).

The books persisted after Juliet and Pauline were released, and they continued to reinforce the notions that the teenagers were pathologically sick and evil. This took a number of forms. There were true crime books, which set out to shock and horrify the reader by revelling in the bloodthirsty details of the crime. They were also included in collected stories and dictionary entries, so there was an unrelenting stream of popular publications and reference books that focused on the crime. Their premeditation, brutality and remorselessness were always featured, while their age or any other mitigating circumstances were ignored. There was no context or compassion offered.

In 1965 the case was included in Charles Franklin's *The World's Worst Murderers*, and in 1973 in both Leonard Gribble's *The Hallmark of Horror* and Gerald Sparrow's *Queens of Crime*, which refers to the girls as 'Satan's children'. Media coverage was extensive at the time of the murder, and it continued into the 1960s.

As well as books, there were newspapers and magazines that continued to run the story in postmortem style, as if there was some major insight or revelation to be gained. A universal truth could be extracted, perhaps, about goodness and evil in contemporary society, especially in young girls. This diagnostic approach was not confined to New Zealand. In December 1954, *Time* magazine ran an article entitled 'Rebels or Psychopaths?' that tried to fashion a link between the girls and delinquency, and to fathom the ominous rise of the younger generation. 'The youth of the world today is touched with madness, literally sick with an aberrant condition of mind formerly confined to a few distressed souls but now epidemic over the earth' (*Time*, 1954, p 26).

The girls' story became symbolic of all that was taboo or fearful. In 1964 the *London Evening Standard* fanned the story into life again for British readers with an account of the murder and an examination of its frightening undercurrent of 'homosexual intensity'. Then, there was just the sheer entertainment value of something scandalously tantalising. In New Zealand the story was revived for holiday readers as part of a summer series for the *Dominion Sunday Times* in 1969.

The editorial commentary never evolved or changed much. In New Zealand the murder had become a socio-cultural touchstone, a cautionary tale for teenagers and for young girls especially. It was a moral tale, an ominous warning against intense same-sex friends that might lead to lesbianism. Conventional family values and structures were reinforced, while lesbianism was pathologised. Parker and Hulme became a focus for a deep-seated misogyny that 'Salamized' the girls, extracting them from the continuum of normal, and manipulating fear to polarise and reinforce crude, simplistic divisions of good and evil.

Clinical publications reinforced the notion of evil to specialist audiences, the premise being that there was something uniquely evil about this murder that linked it to the world's most horrific crimes. In his 1955 article, 'Paranoia of the Exalted Type in a Setting of *Folie à Deux*: A Study of Two Adolescent Homicides' in the *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, Medlicott compared the Parker-Hulme murder 'to cases like that of Albert Fish, who mutilated and murdered children' (Glamuzina & Laurie, 1991, p. 110). In this article, Medlicott often used the word 'evil'. He wrote of the girls' 'morbid preoccupation with evil', the point where 'they openly embraced evil', and 'the crowning of evil' when Diello became Emperor of Borovina in one of their ceremonies. He was convinced that the girls were lost souls. 'In earlier times one would have said they had become "possessed" by evil spirits' (as cited in Medlicott, 1955, p. 217). In 'An examination of the necessity for a concept of evil: Some aspects of evil as a form

of perversion', written by Medlicott and published in the *British Journal of Medical Psychology* in 1970, he universalised these claims arguing in a medical forum for a concept of evil, especially as it pertained to the Parker-Hulme case (Medlicott, 1970).

It was not until 1991, and Julie Glamuzina and Alison Laurie's *Parker & Hulme: A Lesbian View* that a proper attempt was made to put the actions of the girls and the response to the Parker-Hulme murder in a socio-historical context. The lesbian view announced in the title gave the book a special significance to this community, but many of the points it raised were pertinent to all New Zealanders. If Glamuzina and Laurie sparked a new interpretation of the murder, then Michelanne Forster's play *Daughters of Heaven*, first performed in 1993, and Peter Jackson's film *Heavenly Creatures*, released in 1994, made it popular. Both the play and the film examined context and provocation, allowing audiences to see events from the teenagers' perspective.

Peter Graham's book, *So Brilliantly Clever*, released in 2011, however, returned to the narrow-minded arguments of 1950s misogyny. In it he retried the girls finding them both 'bad' and 'mad', re-emphasising unhelpful polarities from a prosecutor with-a-case-to-win's point of view.

'I have lived with being demonized for so long that it is part of what I expect to be found,' Anne Perry said in an interview in 2011. It would be far too simplistic to argue that Anne Perry's adult life has been constructed as a protest or entirely in resistance to this label of evil. However, it would be equally naïve to overlook its significant impact. Writing has been an extension of her imaginative life, a vehicle for her drive and ambition, a way to advance herself as a single woman without formal education or a history she could comfortably claim, but it was also a means of dealing with the way she felt she was perceived. Anne Perry's writing is more than just simple crime stories; spiritual and philosophical complexities thread their way through her books and characters. There are resonances between the 1954 Parker-Hulme murder and Perry's crime detective fiction writing, which has offered her an opportunity to explore ethical issues and dilemmas, and a strategy to resist the labels of 'mad', 'bad' and *evil* that have become synonymous with her life.

## Protest and resistance in the writing of Anne Perry

Anne Perry's literary career began in 1979, with the publication of *The Cater Street Hangman* – at this time she was 39 years old. For years she had struggled to be published, writing manuscript after manuscript. There were stories set in medieval England using Arthurian legend; there were stories about the Crusades, the English Civil War, the French Revolution; there was a science-fiction thriller, and an allegorical fantasy, but nothing that brought her the almost instant success of the crime detection genre.

In *The Cater Street Hangman* Perry's central characters were Charlotte Ellison and Thomas Pitt, a detective. She set her story in London and built her plot around a murder within an upper class family. The family is Charlotte Ellison's, and the victim is her older sister, Sarah. The Ellison household is ruled over by Charlotte's papa, Edward, a true Victorian patriarch. Charlotte can steal only glimpses of the newspaper, because it is considered inappropriate reading for a young lady. This means she must either flout the house rules by appealing to Dominic, Sarah's husband, or discreetly slip into Maddock's pantry and read the newspaper there.

The news, as always, is terrible. It is 20 April 1881 and Benjamin Disraeli has just died: 'Her first thought was to wonder how Mr. Gladstone felt. Did he feel any sense of loss? Was a great enemy as much a part of a man's life as a great friend? Surely it must be. It must be the cross thread in the fabric of emotions.' Anne Perry opens with this powerful reflection on

friends and enemies, and continues, throughout the novel, to make searching and profound comments about human behaviour. She explores power and sexual inequality, incisively giving the most misogynistic lines to the women who police patriarchal boundaries. She considers class difference and poverty, and lack of education and opportunity. She shows how greed and callousness may cause human deprivation, but also how this is maintained by those who turn their backs or live in unfeeling ignorance.

She is most cuttingly critical, however, of the hypocrisy of established religion. There are few characters more abhorrent than the pompous Reverend Prebble, who is called on to minister to grief-stricken friends and family after a series of apparently random garrottings of young women whose flesh and clothes are ripped in a sexually perverse manner. Prebble, who believes that women and sexuality are evil, is hopelessly insincere. His poor wife, Martha, convinced by his fundamentalist reading of Genesis, is filled with self-loathing and hatred.

In conducting his interviews, detective Pitt finds himself increasingly attracted to the independent and forthright Charlotte. She at first openly despises Pitt, but comes to realise that his slovenly working-class persona is only superficial, and that it is the person inside who counts. This epiphany is the beginning of her maturation as a character. At the end of the novel she agrees to jump the social divide and join Pitt in penury as the wife of a detective.

Feminism had generated room for a fully-functioning female detective. In the early decades of the twentieth century, women were on the 'cosy' margins of the genre: wifely, like Dorothy Sayers's Harriet Vane, Ngaio Marsh's Agatha Troy and Margery Allingham's Amanda Fitton; elderly, like Agatha Christie's gossiping sleuth, Miss Marple; or fashionably imprudent, like Christie's Prudence Cowley of the Tommy and Tuppence series. These characters were traces of oestrogen in a testosterone-driven field. But by the 1970s the world had changed, and detective fiction needed to change, too. Now women protagonists needed to drive plots and define action, not act as adjuncts, victims or shrews.

It was a perfect pairing: Hope Dellon and St Martin's saw the market opportunity, and Anne Perry created Charlotte Pitt. *The Cater Street Hangman* had at its core the explosive implications of murder on a family – the suspicion, the revelation of infidelity, the death, the grief, the shame – which were at the heart of Anne Perry's own story, and had an amateur detective in Charlotte Pitt who had parallels in appearance and personality to her own. She knew about these things intimately and could tap into them easily. She could populate her imagination with these characters, watch them change and evolve, and she could test them against an ever-shifting panorama of issues, dangers and dilemmas.

In Charlotte, she created the strong self-determining woman she wanted to be. Through her female protagonist she explored the feminist issues that irked her most. Her writing about women's position is oppositional and challenging of the patriarchy. As Priscilla Walton and Manina Jones, writing about hard-boiled women detectives, argue, the female detective 'actually "normalizes" a certain brand of feminism for readers who would not ordinarily read in this way' (as cited in Howe & Jackson, 2008, p 6). Although Charlotte is a century and half a world away from being hard-boiled, she does normalise women as powerful figures who define and influence public as well as private outcomes.

Anne Perry's novels are a form of protest against the position of women in the world. Although they are set in Victorian England, there is an uncanny sense that not much has changed. Or at least that things have changed less than we would like to believe. *Paragon Walk*, Perry's third Pitt novel, exposes the unequal treatment of women in a subtle yet potent way. It opens with Inspector Pitt at the mortuary, staring down despondently at the body of 17-year-old Fanny Nash. She is an upper-class girl who has been raped and murdered on Paragon Walk. What kind of rapist stalks this elegant, tree-filled area of Regency roads and parks? Whose instincts could be base enough to

bring down an innocent? Or is she an innocent? These are the questions this inquiry must answer.

Charlotte's incendiary personality soon reveals the prejudice and pretence beneath the brittle etiquette of privileged London. She is stunned by what she hears at an elegant luncheon:

'Are you saying that Fanny somehow invited her attack?' Charlotte asked frankly. She felt the ripple of amazement in the others and ignored it, keeping her eyes on Miss Lucinda's pink face ...

'Well, really, Mrs. Pitt, one would hardly expect such a nature of thing to happen to a woman who was – chaste!'

Not only does Miss Lucinda Horbury think Fanny provoked and therefore probably deserved her attack, but she assumes, as do her companions, that men have different sexual proclivities and therefore should be less stringently judged. Miss Horbury also suggests that Fanny's rape and murder might amount to a disgrace or slur on her poor brother and his family:

'Disgrace!' Charlotte was too angry even to try to control her tongue.

'I see it as a tragedy, Miss Horbury, a terror, if you like, but hardly a disgrace.'

This sexually unequal world might be dominated by men, but in Anne's stories disenfranchised women often use its power vicariously to disable and sometimes even destroy their female competitors. Sexual competition between women is a principal theme of *Paragon Walk*, as Fanny's sister-in-law Jessamyn Nash and Selena Montague vie for the illicit attentions of a 'beautiful Frenchman', Paul Alaric. Their power lies in attracting and entrapping men by their sexual allure; their victory lies in telling people about it 'preferably one by one and in the strictest confidence[.] Success without envy was like snails without sauce – and, as any cultivated woman knew, the sauce is everything!'

As the investigation into rape, murder and sexual misconduct proceeds, it is viewed by a range of people acting and speaking from their positions in a rigidly hierarchical society sharply divided by class and gender. Anne's detective seems to be an obvious exception. If Charlotte is a New Woman, then surely Pitt is a New Man, but he is also a man who has married above his class. Their class difference is time-honoured and profound in its effect on the balance of their relationship. Charlotte brings with her the knowledge of upper-class custom, along with the power and prestige of her family connections. If Pitt is not overtly grateful, then he at least knows the value of her contribution.

Equally, Charlotte and Emily are less than purely altruistic campaigners for women's rights. Their consternation begins with their *own* sense of frustration at being cosseted, shut away from the events of public life, politics and men. Charlotte and Emily are central characters but, unlike Pitt, their actions are not legitimised by established authority, so, although their motives may be blemish-free, their methods are highly suspect. They lie without a conscience – and exceedingly well – and assume false identities and other people's clothes with the least encouragement. Because they are breaking codes and conventions, their operations are more covert than Pitt's and therefore sometimes more dangerous for them and society.

For about a decade Anne Perry published one book a year with St Martin's Press, who had the world rights to her books. She produced 10 books in total before she was able to become more self-determining. It was her agent Meg Davis that worked out the solution to create an entirely new series, specifically for a more lucrative contract with Random House's Ballantine imprint. 'And providentially Anne had this thing in a cupboard that was *The Face of a Stranger* – the concept for Monk, a new series detective who is a recovering amnesiac' (interview with Davis, 2010). Meg remembers Anne's original idea had been that, at the end of the first book, Monk discovers

[h]e did in fact commit the murder and he has got to go underground and then as an underground private investigator he can take hopeless cases and sort them out by other means, so it is actually a very interesting format premise (Ibid.).

Leona Nevler, her editor at Ballantine, on the other hand, was reluctant to make Monk a murderer at all. Finally she vetoed the idea completely. Meg remembers her rationale:

[She] felt that Americans wouldn't cope with that kind of darkness, so it had to turn out that he had left the guy for dead but in fact didn't literally kill him, and weirdly for the Americans that lets him off the hook and everything's fine. But it does mean that he can walk away and still be a member of society and solve crimes on a more traditional footing (Ibid.)

The Monk premise provided a perfect psychological landscape in which Anne Perry could locate her own reflections on the struggle between good and evil and the many situations that make this absolute polarisation inappropriate, fluid, even accidental. The Pitt series, to date, had been a measured examination of subjects on which Anne Perry took a relatively liberal position: feminism, marriage, the family, poverty, religious hypocrisy, incest, rape, prostitution and homosexuality. But she understood how it *felt* to be Monk. She knew about choice, consequence, and what it was like to see, in other people's eyes, the monster that is their perception of you. If she had been allowed to make Monk a murderer, his life would have been a fictional projection of hers. But Leona Nevler and Ballantine were not brave enough to trust that American readers would accept a murderer as a likeable, positive person.

*The Face of a Stranger* opens on 31 July 1856, in a London hospital where Monk has lain close to death for three weeks. As consciousness dawns, he realises he can remember nothing. He does not know how he got there or even who he is. 'Panic boiled up inside him again and for a moment he could have screamed. Help me, somebody, who am I? Give me back my life, my self!' He has no past, no identity: he is no one. But he does have an innate sense of self-preservation, so he keeps this knowledge to himself. Revealing his amnesia will only make him vulnerable, and somewhere back in the dark recesses of his damaged mind he knows vulnerability is dangerous.

On his release from hospital he finds his rooms at 27 Grafton Street, meets his housekeeper, Mrs Worley, and discovers himself for the first time in the mirror. The face he sees looking back is a strong one. He is dark with a 'broad, slightly aquiline nose, wide mouth ... eyes intense luminous gray in the flickering light. It was a powerful face, but not an easy one. If there was humour it would be harsh, of wit rather than laughter.' He estimates that he is anywhere between 35 and 45 years old. But it is in the reaction of others that he begins to see the inner man. Colleagues are frightened of him: they cower at his cruelty and despise his single-minded, selfish ambition. No one cares and no one likes him.

But is this really fair? After all, he thinks, 'he was hearing only one side to the story – there was no one to defend him, to explain, to give his reasons and say what he knew and perhaps they did not'. His greatest fear, as he returns to work with the Metropolitan Police Force and begins to unravel the deadly bashing of Major Joscelin Grey, is that he is the murderer himself. It would not surprise Runcorn, his superior officer at work. He feels some immense unspoken animosity towards Monk that is not entirely untangled, even at the end of the book.

Runcorn guesses Monk's amnesia, and consequent lack of identity, by spotting gaps in his memory. Towards the end of the book, Monk tells Hester Latterly (who later becomes his wife), a usually independent, sometimes acerbic woman, about his amnesia. Although throughout Monk's murder case they squabble often, she is completely sympathetic about his missing memory:

How extraordinary – and terrible. I do not always like myself completely – but to lose yourself! I cannot imagine having nothing at all left of all your past – all your experiences, and the reason why you love or hate things.

Hester is the light side to Monk's darkness. Perhaps in that respect she is rather too ideal, but she does possess a challenging, perceptive quality that Anne Perry admires, and like Charlotte she is part of her re-writing, of her 'quest for poly-personality'. Hester has a heartfelt contempt for hypocrisy and incompetence, and will not suffer fools. 'She was highly intelligent, with a gift for logical thought which many people found disturbing – especially men, who did not expect it or like it in a woman.'

For Anne Perry, amnesia in the Monk series is a convenient means of revealing things retrospectively, a perfect device for the detective fiction writer because it leaves tracts of information obscure and suspenseful. But it is not amnesia or the matter of forgetting that you have murdered someone that ignites her interest: this is short-lived and sensational. What matters to her in *The Face of Stranger* is Monk's loss of self, the absence of a personal history and therefore an identity – the lack of a voice to explain – and the horror of seeing himself through others' eyes as brutal, cruel and *evil* even when he, as much as Perry, *has* to resist this paralysing assessment and believe that this is only one picture and that life 'contains many possible destinies'.

## Conclusion

Perry writes to re-write herself, to protest women's condition, and to explore and re-imagine her own. In the Pitt novel *Ashworth Hall* Perry presents us with Justine, a flawed woman who has lived as a high-class prostitute and has attempted to kill her former lover-come-client to stop him revealing her past to her young fiancé, Pier. In the end Justine must confess her former life and her murderous intentions to Pier, who ultimately forgives her. 'We bring a lot of our griefs upon ourselves ... It doesn't make it hurt any less,' is Charlotte's response, who will not accept that Justine is fundamentally evil, and is prepared to give her another chance. Justine's promise to Pier and Charlotte is this: 'I shall have to prove to you that I am what I am trying to be. There is no point in saying I am sorry over and over again. I will show it by being there, every hour, every day, every week, until you know it.' *Ashworth Hall* offers a powerful commentary on forgiveness and redemption through love and positive endeavour, and it is what Perry asks for her characters and herself. Her books have helped create a different ending. They are a form of redemption: a re-configuring of the construction of evil to that of writer and published author.

*DR JOANNE DRAYTON's The Search for Anne Perry was released in Australasia and Canada in 2012, was an NZ Post Book Award finalist (2013), and is due for release in the USA in 2014. Her Ngaio Marsh: Her Life in Crime (2008) was a Christmas pick of the Independent when it was released in the UK in 2009. Her other biographical subjects include Frances Hodgkins, Rhona Haszard and Edith Collier. She has curated major exhibitions and publishes in art and design history, theory and biography.*

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