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Title: Sophie Hannah's Hurting Distance as Crime Trauma Fiction

Year: 2020

Version: Accepted version (Final draft)

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Please cite the original version:

Rodi-Risberg, M. (2020). Sophie Hannah's Hurting Distance as Crime Trauma Fiction. In M. Piiponen, H. M. Mäntymäki, & M. Rodi-Risberg (Eds.), Transnational Crime Fiction : Mobility, Borders and Detection (pp. 279-294). Palgrave Macmillan. Crime Files. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-53413-4_15

Sophie Hannah's *Hurting Distance* as Crime Trauma Fiction

Marinella Rodi-Risberg

Introduction

For the last thirty years, literary trauma studies has focused on the relationship between trauma and the representation of violence, abuse, and physical and psychological torture in literature. The fascination with trauma travels across generic borders, and trauma and its effects are often depicted in crime narratives. This chapter addresses trauma's generic border-crossing movement in *Hurting Distance* (2007), a narrative of sexual trauma and emotional abuse by the British author of psychological crime fiction, Sophie Hannah. Crime novels that deal with trauma can be seen as crime trauma fiction, and Hannah's novel offers an example of such a blend because it mixes features of both genres in terms of what Martina Allen calls "generic blending" (3): not as a new hybrid genre that would depend on an essentialist model of genres, but in the sense of a "blended space, or world" in which structural and other features associated with different genres merge (13).[1] Hannah's crime thriller will serve as a case for my discussion of the representation of trauma in crime fiction and reveal how this genre may constitute an important locus for exploring and witnessing trauma and mobilising engagement in readers. In other words, crime fiction may encourage active and social involvement in readers through affective representations of trauma.[2]

The representation of trauma in crime novels has received only scant critical attention in trauma scholarship, which has mostly focused on highbrow rather than popular or genre fiction.[3] Moreover, studies on trauma fiction have often concentrated on what is claimed to be the unnarratability of trauma and highlighted innovative postmodernist strategies used to convey it in order to transmit rather than represent the phenomenon to readers. These studies often draw on Cathy Caruth's understanding of trauma as an epistemological crisis which means that it needs to "be spoken in a language that is always somehow literary: a language that defies, even as it claims, our understanding" (5). According to Alan Gibbs, fiction on trauma from the 1990s onward "may be identified as perpetuating what soon became increasingly conventional methods of representing trauma," resulting in what he dubs "the trauma genre," which emphasises "emotional affect rather than political action" (34, 2, 20). This leads to questions including how trauma and its effects are, or can be, represented in

crime fiction. What does it mean if crime fiction is viewed as a form of trauma fiction? How can trauma, which in more highbrow forms is represented in terms of aporia and defying closure, be portrayed in crime fiction where readers can often be certain of a pleasurable resolution and restoration of order at the end? How can trauma be represented in a popular culture product without it being jeopardised? How can crime fiction offer what Dominick LaCapra has termed "empathic unsettlement," the process of texts to convey a feel for traumatic experiences via working through and putting readers in an empathic mode that involves critical distance (LaCapra 78), rather than only sensational affect?

The aim of this chapter is to show that the contemporary crime novel can be an important locus for representing trauma in terms of a creative response that challenges the prevalent postmodernistic aesthetics of aporia in more highbrow trauma fiction. Informed by Gibbs's identification of a greater number of alternatives to the trauma genre formula, including the comeback of realism which may even be more effective in "jolting the reader than over-familiar postmodernist effects" (36), this chapter proposes that an aporetic aesthetics is not the only way of representing trauma to affect readers. While integrating narrative techniques of the trauma fiction genre, in its simultaneous focus on narratability, healing and resolution, *Hurting Distance* challenges the understanding of trauma as an aporia of representation. Drawing on Lucy Bond's and Stef Craps's argument that trauma studies can highlight suffering, both individual and communal, and help us understand "situations of exploitation and abuse, bring them to a wider public consciousness, and act as an incentive for . . . sustained and systematic critique of societal conditions" (141), the principal argument is that crime trauma fiction such as Hannah's novel represents traumatic experience as politically significant by mobilising affect through the themes of rape and emotional abuse as social critique. Thus, rather than a question of "emotional affect" *or* "political action" (Gibbs 20), crime trauma fiction offers *both* emotional affect through representations of traumatic experience *and* in terms of social commentary that creates political awareness in readers.

Crime Fiction and Trauma Fiction: Generic Blending in *Hurting Distance*

If detective fiction,[4] as Laura Marcus notes, has traditionally had a complicated part to play in relation to literature (245), then crime fiction in general may have a perhaps equally or even more problematic role in relation to trauma fiction. For instance, detective fiction has been essential to such narrative theories as poststructuralist and psychoanalytic ones; it has been used to guarantee as well as challenge the divide between literary thresholds; and it has also

marked the difference between highbrow and lowbrow fiction and the line between modernist and postmodernist texts (Marcus 245-46). Yet, because of its dual narrative structure, where the story of a crime is reconstructed in the story of its investigation (Todorov 159-60), its employment of pleasurable excitement as well as "its power to give aesthetic shape to the most brute of matter," detective fiction has been considered representative of the very nature of literary narrative (Marcus 245). Additionally, detective fiction "reassures through its rationalism" (249); in contrast, because trauma is said to cause an epistemological crisis and resist narrativisation, trauma fiction often depicts the limits of narrative through innovative avant-garde representations that foreground a fragmented, postmodern aesthetics of non-narratability and aporia to avoid desensitising readers.

Even if crime fiction is often seen as a popular and lower form of literature in contrast to trauma fiction, some parallels can be drawn between crime stories and trauma narratives. The most obvious is perhaps that also trauma fiction has the "power to give aesthetic shape to the most brute of matter." What is more, although crime narratives have been traced to mythical and biblical stories, as well as such classical texts as *Oedipus Rex* (Scaggs 7-10), Marcus traces the emergence of detective fiction to the modern era, early and mid-nineteenth century (248), which coincides with the genealogy of trauma as a feature of modernity.[5] Crime fiction also resonates with trauma fiction through its Gothic legacy (Scaggs 69) in that trauma novels such as Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), viewed by many trauma scholars as *the* prototypical trauma narrative (Luckhurst 90), often draw on the Gothic to express traumatic effects, bringing to light the dark side of modernity. *Beloved* powerfully integrates the aesthetics of the trauma fiction genre, that is, non-linear narrative, the spectral representation of trauma, and the notion of its cultural transmission (Andermahr 15). In trauma fiction, spectrality suggests the intrusion of the traumatic past into the present, an intrusion that Caruth has formulated as a haunting: "trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on" (4). Moreover, the postmodernist aesthetics of trauma fiction can be aligned with postmodernist "anti-detective" fiction which challenges the genre's pursuit of knowledge (Marcus 246). Nevertheless, as Marcus indicates, detective fiction's form is not inevitably connected to this category of the epistemological quest of modernist literature (246). Consequently, neither crime fiction in general nor trauma fiction are stable classifications, but must rather be understood in terms of the mobility across generic and formal borders.

The mobility across generic and formal borders of crime and trauma fiction in Sophie Hannah's novel can be seen as a blending of elements from each. Informed by Charles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, Martina Allen proposes that as "genres evoke worlds with the help of complexes of schemata, genre worlds are themselves already blended spaces and can in turn serve as input spaces for worlds that combine schemata from different genres" (13). Fauconnier and Turner's concept "input spaces" describes the worlds constructed in relation to genre labels, including plot structure, setting, stock characters, expected actions and end results as well as mood and moral perspectives (Allen 12). Through what they refer to as "cross-space mapping," shared elements in the input spaces are identified and contained in a specific generic space; from this space the significant aspects from the input space are extended into a blended space, which means that input spaces are neither unchangeable nor pure (Allen 12). Input spaces can be seen as mental input spaces that readers construct in relation to genres. Through such aspects as plots and characters a novel may, for instance, evoke (the world of) crime (fiction). In Hannah's novel, elements from the input spaces of crime and trauma fiction are projected onto the blended space of the novel as crime trauma fiction.

Hurting Distance, Hannah's second novel in the DS Charlie Zailer and DC Simon Waterhouse series, adopts the conventions of the crime thriller with its dark atmosphere, representation of violence and concern with processes of the mind. However, the novel is also a trauma narrative in its preoccupation with the consequences of a traumatic past. Further, as in the crime thriller, the story is grounded in the characters: Naomi Jenkins, a successful businesswoman and sundial designer, who was raped three years earlier by a stranger at a stag night live rape party; her married lover Robert Haworth; and his wife Juliet. In contrast to the police procedural, the detective takes a back seat to the main character; Naomi's first-person narration is addressed at Robert/the reader and alternates with the third-person narration of Detective Sergeant Zailer, who is in charge of the case, or someone from her team. The novel also highlights the characters' emotional lives and the motives of the criminal (whydunit in addition to whodunit). In this narrative, however, the line between victim and perpetrator is blurred. Moreover, as often with crime thrillers, the story is political and subversive in that it challenges societal attitudes about rape, the categorisation of victim, and victim-blaming.

The novel also conforms to the well-known trajectory of trauma fiction. Scholars have in the last decades tried to delineate the specific narrative strategies employed to represent trauma, and what Gibbs refers to as the "trauma genre" is informed and defined by what he labels "trauma genre criticism" (31). "Trauma is an inherently emotive experience," affect is

"intrinsic both to the traumatic experience itself and the witnessing thereof" (Rodi-Risberg and Höglund 114), and trauma genre criticism is invested in the idea that trauma should be transmitted rather than represented. Thus, it clearly defines the narrative techniques used, including the disruption of linear time and repetition to replicate traumatic memory and evoke affect in readers. For instance, Anne Whitehead stresses that "the impact of trauma can only adequately be represented by mimicking its forms and symptoms, so that temporality and chronology collapse, and narratives are characterised by repetition and indirection" (3). Laurie Vickroy similarly suggests that trauma fiction can communicate trauma because it simulates "the rhythms, processes, and uncertainties of trauma within the consciousness and structures of these works" (xiv) and creates the already mentioned "empathic unsettlement" in readers. *Hurting Distance* corresponds to the tradition of trauma fiction because a present painful event reminds the protagonist of old hurts. That is, Robert's disappearance brings the trauma of Naomi's rape to the surface after a period of latency; the novel then examines the various phases of her coming to terms with it.

The book begins with a worried and confused Naomi as she realises her lover will not show up for their weekly date. Three days after the disappearance, however, Naomi goes to his house although she had promised never to do so, and suffers a panic attack as a result of something she sees in his lounge window; she falls down in the grass "paralysed and breathless" for how long she does not know (14). What "sent [her] body into this state of emergency" was that she saw "something terrible through the window, something so unimaginably terrifying," but she is unable to "say what it was" (14). According to Juliet, Robert ended the affair, but Naomi does not believe her and fears Juliet has done something terrible to him after he had told Juliet about their affair saying he will leave her. Repetition is deployed in *Hurting Distance* on the plot level through the flashbacks that Naomi suffers from and that also disrupt narrative chronology. Naomi suffers from flashbacks to what she saw because what she saw is connected to the trauma of the rape: "Another bright flash," she "fight[s] off vivid memory flashes—like movie stills—from what happened to [her] before" (199). Naomi's mind repeats the trauma she is unable to face or understand, and the flashbacks can be seen as unconscious efforts to confront her fears and master the affect of the initial experience. Two thirds into the novel, she faces these fears in a nightmare: she sees both a man (the rapist), cutting off her clothes, and the theatre where she was raped, and realises that this house is what she saw in a miniature form in Robert's living room, a pottery ornament made by Juliet.

Naomi is hounded by what she cannot initially confront, which means that there is a feature of haunting in the flashbacks she experiences. In terms of generic blending, this haunting aligns the novel with both crime and trauma fiction via the Gothic: the novel includes haunted houses, sexually violated women confined therein, and characters pursued and unsettled by their past secrets. Like the Gothic novels which modern crime thrillers also originate from (see Scaggs 15-16), *Hurting Distance* portrays the return of the repressed in terms of the past crime of rape that haunts the present. The crime paradigm influenced nineteenth-century fiction by Charles Dickens and Charlotte Brontë whose work centered on arcana and their revelation (Marcus 246), and allusions to Brontë abound in Hannah's novel: Hannah's use of intertextuality here suggests the dangers of women's entrapment within oppressive power structures of society. In Gothic and crime novels alike, hiding past secrets protects the characters in the present (Scaggs 16). In fact, in contemporary crime thrillers in general, the haunting return from the past endangers the present lives of the protagonists who therefore strive to conceal their past at all cost (Scaggs 66-67), which is similar to trauma fiction where the main characters must keep the trauma at bay to move on with their lives. "Concealment" was all that mattered to Naomi after the rape because she thought she would be able to handle "a private trauma better than . . . the shame of people knowing" (Hannah 125, 126). Thus, Hannah's novel draws on Gothic conventions to consider contemporary issues, including dominant discourses of victim-blaming.

As noted above, in addition to evoking the world-constructs of the crime thriller, *Hurting Distance* also incorporates elements of trauma fiction. In contrast, what Gibbs has dubbed trauma genre criticism has often ignored most of the popular and mainstream representations of trauma that have appeared since the 1980s and 1990s, including those in crime fiction. The idea that trauma is representable only through innovative avant-garde narrative devices marginalises other literary modes and genres. For example, Vickroy's study on trauma fiction omits texts which do not emphasise formal experimentation, testimonial effects and the representation of defense mechanisms and symptoms characteristic of traumatic memory (xi); it also distinguishes between "sensationalized" and "more authentic" representations of trauma (229, n. 6). Sonya Andermahr notes that trauma fiction has partly been constructed as diametrically opposed to mainstream and popular cultural forms which means that "literary experimentation is valued as a means of resisting the supposed domestication and hence numbing of traumatic effects"; nevertheless, trauma fictions of various kinds use trauma to create different responses in readers, even "pleasure" (15, 27). Additionally, arguing that trauma texts should mimic traumatic experiences is, as Gibbs notes,

debatable simply because the affect that a trauma text transmits to readers differs according to contextual factors as well as reader "disposition" (28). The implication is that one cannot take sensitive readers for granted (Rodi-Risberg 114). The problem here is also that when these narrative strategies become over-familiar—hence no longer innovative or shocking—they lose the political impetus of the earlier texts such as *Beloved* (Gibbs 77). Furthermore, if the trauma paradigm is based on the assumption that, in Andermahr's words, "formal radicalism and difficulty equates to political radicalism," then such genres as middlebrow fiction, including crime novels that represent trauma, may be relegated to a marginalised position by critics and disparaged simply on account of the explicitness of their narrative pleasure in relation to an aesthetics of trauma that foregrounds aporia and incomprehensibility (19). As a result, the "political radicalism" of these works may be overlooked by scholars and critics.

If, as Gibbs argues, realist depictions of trauma may be more effective in affecting readers than the by now overused postmodernist aesthetics (36), then such crime narratives as Hannah's thriller *Hurting Distance* with its psychological realism may constitute an important blended space for representing trauma and offering a more profound dimension of social critique. In addition, if affect to a great extent can no longer be mobilised through the narrative conventions of the trauma genre which may have lost their capacity to shock readers, a socially conscious crime novel may provide a space for encouraging reader engagement and for politicising social questions.

Crime Trauma Fiction and the Affective Politics of Speakability

Part of today's crime fiction that represents trauma, including Hannah's novel, is middlebrow in that it aspires to the avant-garde by employing some of the tropes of highbrow trauma fiction, but presents these more accessibly. Recently, mainstream and popular or genre fiction have also been recognised as significant loci for representing trauma (see Andermahr; Luckhurst). Providing readings of works including Stephen King's Gothic novels, Roger Luckhurst proposes that reading popular fiction is a kind of "surrogate public history" in its attunement to contemporary concerns (98). Referring to the deluge of mainstream fiction emerging toward the end of the twentieth century that focused on trauma, he observes a significant concurrence of narrative techniques, tropes and formal and generic conventions between the innovative fiction of Morrison and King's popular Gothic. These techniques include "narrative anachrony as a symptom of buried trauma; belated revelation that regressively rewrites the significance of motifs; discordance that is reintegrated to find

different levels of concordant narrative coherence" (105). Further, according to Luckhurst, the great outpouring of low-, middle-, and highbrow fiction devoted to trauma, in turn, demonstrates that "if trauma is a crisis in representation, then this generates narrative *possibility* just as much as *impossibility*" (83). Informed by Luckhurst, Andermahr insists on seeing middlebrow trauma fiction as an important space for representing trauma, especially women's traumas, as "a liminal category" that is situated between highbrow and commercial fiction. As such, it "draws on the resources of literary fiction and shares some of its audience, while at the same time its close relation to the mass media means that it is particularly well attuned to the *Zeitgeist* of contemporary issues and cultural anxieties" (19). Consequently, as opposed to the aporetic novels of the trauma genre as outlined by trauma genre criticism, middlebrow texts, including those who use some crime fiction conventions, "encourage, not alienation, but shared listening, and a witnessing of suffering and pain" (19).

Crime fiction's mobility across the literary and generic borders of trauma fiction not only encourages the shared witnessing of trauma through reader engagement, but may, like Hannah's crime trauma fiction novel, also offer a space for social critique through affective depictions of traumatic experiences. *Hurting Distance* does this by depicting sexual violence as a politically significant issue, stressing the importance of speaking about gendered violence in public, and offering a comment on how violence against women is typically discussed and represented in society.[6] In Hannah's novel, although it has been three years since the rape, Naomi has not told anyone she has experienced sexual trauma: despite this, the novel's prologue consists of her anonymously bearing witness to it on a website for individuals who have been raped, and being aware of how her post does not conform to the expected behaviour of the "rape victim":

> I will never tell anybody my so-called story, which means there will be no justice, no punishment for those who deserve it. Sometimes that thought is pretty hard to take. Still, it's a small price to pay for not having to spend the rest of my life being thought of as a victim. Sorry, a survivor. . . . On the 'What Is Rape?' page of your site, you list a number of definitions, the last of which is any 'sexually intimidating behaviour'. You go on to say, 'No physical contact needs to have taken place—sometimes an inappropriate look or comment is enough to make a woman feel violated.' When I read that, I wanted to hit whoever wrote it.
>
> I know you'll disapprove of this letter and me and everything I've said, but I'm sending it anyway. I think it's important to point out that not all rape victims have the same mindset, vocabulary and attitudes. (1-2)

Naomi’s reaction does not correspond to predicted behaviour according to therapeutic discourses which stress telling, or to trauma discourse in the media informed by the self-help industry where the victim is transformed into a survivor (see Rothe 4).

Both Naomi’s refusal to relate the attack rather than it being unspeakable and unremembered and the novel’s emphasis on a variety of reactions to trauma challenge the poststructuralist aesthetic theory of aporia in that the novel underscores speakability and plurality. The novel’s failure to meet the generic expectations of the trauma fiction genre, in turn, reveals the political aspect of generic blending; as Allen points out, “a text’s failure to adhere to our generic expectations leads to the foregrounding of these expectations, which renders them accessible to rational critique” (15). Thus, Hannah’s novel correlates with the work of an increasing number of trauma scholars in the 2000s who critique the notion of trauma as unnarratable and something that always produces dissociation or amnesia (see Pederson; Balaev). This has resulted in new ways of reading trauma: for example, drawing on Richard McNally’s work, Joshua Pederson discredits the notion of an inherent belatedness in trauma, non-narratability, and that traumatic memory differs from other kinds of memory. Pederson particularly emphasises the distinction between being unable to recall an event and refusing to recount it (337). In contrast to earlier trauma genre criticism, he shows that trauma critics should attend to the text itself rather than aporias and look for proof of heightened detail in addition to seeking descriptions of trauma in which time, ontology or physicality are warped (338-40).

Additionally, as also research demonstrates, Naomi’s behaviour is not unusual as most women who have experienced sexual violence do not tell anyone (Healicon 61). In staying silent, they avoid being categorised as victims while retaining an extent of “agency and control,” although they “may feel fraudulent or anticipate both exposure and eventual confrontation with the trauma that will supposedly catch up with [them]” (Healicon 113). This is what happens in Hannah’s novel; Naomi has chosen silence to avoid being categorised as a disempowered victim and to cope with her personal trauma. She is, nevertheless, forced to face her past when she fears something has happened to Robert. The novel is feminist in depicting rape from the perspective of the woman who has experienced it; thus, the novel follows in the footsteps of earlier feminist crime fiction which, as Maureen Reddy notes, connects the crime to wider social problems that are related to the oppression of women (see Reddy 201). By foregrounding rape as a serious topic of exploration, the novel also criticises what Healicon refers to as rape culture’s normalisation and trivialisation of sexual violence

(2-3). Charley Baker even contends that Hannah's novel clearly shows "the lack of social change regarding rape" since the late 1960s and 1970s (Baker 68).

The novel stresses the importance of speech in trauma: in the process of reporting Robert's disappearance to the police and feeling they do not take his disappearance seriously, Naomi also reports her own rape, casting Robert in the role of the perpetrator/rapist in an effort to convince the police to look for him. Naomi's reporting the assault stresses speakability: "the word [rape] I've avoided for three years. It gets easier with each repetition" (Hannah 68). Naomi's statement to the police about her affective experience of trauma is written with a profusion of details which also stresses narratability rather than aporia. Pederson indicates that writers often describe trauma "with excessive detail and vibrant intensity" because "we may need more words—not fewer—to accurately represent its effects in text": therefore, "readers looking for representations of trauma may turn not to textual absence but to textual overflow" and, because the memory of trauma frequently involves several bodily senses "victims may record not only visual cues, but aural, olfactory, tactile, and gustatory as well" (339). Most of the elements of traumatic memory are apparent in Naomi's statement; she possesses an acute memory of the experience rather than dissociation or amnesia. Her memory includes visual, tactual and auditory cues: the rapist forced her with him with the help of a knife, which "had a hard, black handle about three inches long and a blade that was about five inches long," and the car he kidnapped her in "was black," probably "a hatchback" (Hannah 77); when they arrived at the chalet where the party was held, she "could tell from the feel of the ground beneath [her] feet" that they entered the building, and she "saw that [they] were in a small theatre" (79); she also observed "it was getting darker outside" as he cut her clothes off, and then she "heard the sound of lots of people's footsteps" before she was raped orally, vaginally and anally (79, 80). Consequently, Naomi's traumatic memory is described with a copiousness of words and as involving several senses.

Various conventions of the crime fiction genre also influence the portrayal of trauma in Hannah's novel: like in the majority of crime novels which are structured by hauntings where a past secret and its discovery explains apparently unexplainable incidents and occurrences in the present time (Scaggs 16), *Hurting Distance* integrates the narrative device of a delayed disclosure of a hitherto undivulged past secret. As in trauma fiction, the representation of trauma also influences the narrative trajectory, as the depicted trauma disrupts chronological time, and "belated revelation . . . regressively rewrites the significance of motifs" (Luckhurst 105). After Naomi has delivered her statement to the police, Simon finds Robert unconscious but alive in his home, while Charlie is away on holiday in Scotland

where she has an affair with the owner of the holiday resort, Graham Angilley. The narrative then goes back in time to where Robert and Naomi met one year earlier at a service station which Naomi thinks is a coincidence. Robert's role in Naomi's trauma ultimately becomes clear, however: through the above mentioned website a similarity between Naomi's story and those of other rape survivors emerges, and Charlie and Simon finally track down a serial rapist who exploits successful single career women and organises live rape parties; Graham Angilley, Robert's brother with whom Charlie had an affair. Moreover, Robert himself knew about Naomi's rape and was also an accomplice.

Hannah's novel not only highlights that trauma is speakable but also that silence is dangerous. Rape is as much a psychological crime as a physical one: shame and silence can be as detrimental as the rape experience itself, making the woman vulnerable for retraumatisation. Naomi learns that Juliet, too, had been raped by Robert's brother, and that Robert made the raped women love him to get within what he called hurting distance for the purpose of destroying them later. Naomi believes Robert told Juliet, before she bludgeoned him, that he knew all along that she had experienced sexual violence, and then raped her himself. His plan did not work with Sandy Freeguard, a woman Graham raped and whom Robert began dating afterwards. Unlike Naomi and Juliet, who were too ashamed to report the rape to the police or tell anyone, Sandy "didn't shrink into herself and make it her life's work to hide her sordid little secret," but "told the police, joined support groups" (Hannah 338). She did not "feel ashamed," nor did she "try to conceal anything" (339). Motivated by thoughts of revenge, Naomi thinks about killing Robert in the hospital and is, thereby, forced to confront and understand Juliet's suffering. Here it is possible to talk about LaCapra's "empathic unsettlement." Naomi first believed that Juliet tried to kill Robert because he was going to leave Juliet for her and that it was out of character for Juliet whom Robert had described as weak and dependent on him; however, she comes to understand that Juliet, like she herself, is resilient. Hannah's novel matches feminist crime fiction where the female villain, as Reddy indicates, "is never a seductress in search of power and money" but "a woman trying to end or avenge her own victimization," as in Juliet's case, or she is "a patriarchal enforcer" (198), as illustrated by Graham's wife Steph, who enables the live rapes.

Towards the novel's end there is a narrative effort to create on a plot level what Luckhurst refers to as "concordant narrative coherence" in trauma fiction (105). Through Robert's death, the novel moves toward resolution, but there is no straightforward happy ending. Robert's death is temporally sequenced: a connection is made between his birthday on 9 August and his death as expressed in the dateline on a sundial that Naomi designs for

Inspector Proust. "Each date has a twin . . . at some other time of the year," Proust explains to Charlie (Hannah 362). For 9 August, the twin is 4 May when Robert dies. Naomi believes Robert's death means it will be over, but the novel suggests she has not completely recovered from the trauma; on Thursdays, she continues to visit the motel where they had their weekly rendezvous.

My reading of *Hurting Distance* proposes that it is possible to read the mobilisation of affect in the context of a fictional trauma as sociopolitical. The novel's emotionally distressing features render readers secondary witnesses to the trauma resulting from the rape and emotional abuse. The events force readers to acknowledge Hannah's social critique on victim-blaming because overlooking it is both depolitical and unethical. The scenes of violence and trauma encourage readers to identify with Naomi and to consider injustice, perhaps even to work actively to solve social issues. At the very least, novels such as Hannah's can open up a space for discussing social problems. What Andermahr proposes about women's middlebrow trauma fiction is true also of Hannah's novel; one "cannot assume from the form they take that such texts produce a 'numbing' effect, which represents an unethical response to trauma, any more than we can in the case of more literary texts," but "all trauma fictions invoke trauma to produce readerly responses of various kinds" (27). *Hurting Distance* engages readers, who through imagination can experience the trauma represented; in this way the novel may spur engagement and active witnessing.

Conclusion

Hannah's novel employs similar narrative techniques for representing traumatic experience as the trauma genre, including bringing it to the surface after a period of latency, focusing on the effects on the protagonist's present life and her efforts to come to terms with it. Nevertheless, the reader can also rely on a certain degree of pleasurable resolution at the end as often in the crime fiction genre. Crime fiction has to do with experiencing dangerous situations by proxy, but the reader can often be certain of the restoration of (social) order. This makes it a safe way of being exposed to trauma for readers (Dodd 5), while the narrative stays faithful to the tradition of the crime genre. Trauma may push the crime stories' generic boundaries, but does not completely alter the generic form which is not stable to begin with. *Hurting Distance* demonstrates how trauma narratives can be rendered mobile across genres and that representations of trauma need not be compromised by the format or conventions of crime fiction. Crime trauma narratives such as *Hurting Distance* may even offer a form of

"empathic unsettlement" rather than mere sensational affect if they do not represent trauma as mere entertainment, but mobilise affect through themes and depictions of violence as well as through generic blending, that is, combine elements from trauma fiction with the conventions of the crime novel. "While a culture of sentimentality is indeed suspect insofar as feeling is made to function as a substitute for political action," Bond and Craps indicate, "empathy with the pain of others can also serve as a motivation for working towards genuine change," and they mention the #Metoo movement against sexual harassment and assault of women "which wed mourning to militancy" as an illustrative example of "how trauma and meaningful activism are not necessarily in contradistinction to each other" (141). Contemporary crime narratives such as *Hurting Distance* can be viewed as an important locus not only for representing trauma, but also for offering a productive and blended space for acknowledging suffering through the ethical witnessing and politically engaged reading of uncomfortable scenes of violence. Consequently, crime fiction's capacity for dealing with complex social and political issues combines with its appeal to a wide readership.

NOTES

1 For a critique of hybridity in genre studies, see Allen.
2 The notion of "affect" in this chapter refers to the affective nature of traumatic experience.
3 To date, only few scholarly texts have been written on crime fiction as trauma fiction. One exception is Leanne Dodd in "The Crime Novel as Trauma Fiction" where she explores crime fiction as a "subset of trauma literature" (1).
4 In this chapter, detective fiction is viewed as a subcategory of crime fiction. While Hannah's story differs from prototypical detective fiction narratives (e.g. the whodunit or the police procedural), it has a crime and detection plot, and it is part of a series featuring police detectives.
5 For example, in literature dealing with industrial urban society, such as the work of Walter Benjamin, Paris was seen as a city of unexpected traumatic experiences and shocks (see Luckhurst 20).
6 Andermahr's study is one of the few that actually deals with trauma in women's middlebrow fiction, including Louise Doughty's crime thriller *Whatever You Love* (2010).

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