Crime Fiction as Social Critique: Rozlan Mohd Noor’s Challenge to the Dominant Rhetoric

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Abstract

In this paper, I intend to look at Malaysian writer Rozlan Mohd Noor’s Inspector Mislan series of police procedurals. I analyse how the author uses his insider knowledge of the police system to create an environment in which the dominant systems are critiqued, at the same time that ethical, justice-oriented police work is shown to be central to the proper maintenance of law and order in society. Rozlan works within the confines of the police procedural to critique not just Malaysian society, but also corruption and incompetence within the police force. It is in this ambiguity about the role of the police in society, that Rozlan’s work potentially poses a danger to that society, demanding that what the police do be examined and questioned, rather than accepted without argument.

Introduction

Police procedurals, like most detective fiction, present a kind of working towards the restoration of social order; however, they also acknowledge the ambiguity inherent within the world of policing, law and order. The Miss Marples of the detective genre solve murders in their own, apparently hermetically sealed worlds. The murders themselves are the result of personal and individual issues generally unrelated to broader society. The police procedural, however, “focuses attention on our relation (as private citizens) to the larger social network that contains us, and on any doubts and anxieties we might have about the nature of its organisation and operations” (Messent, 2010, p. 178). The idea of being contained within a larger social network implies a level of control over the individual. Social control is something of a double-edged sword: its aim is to maintain social order, but this comes with control of individual lives as well.

Any questioning of, or challenge to, that control over social order is dangerous. Asking questions about the ethics and efficacy of a police system implies a challenge to the dominant order supported by that police system. In this paper, I intend to look at Malaysian writer Rozlan Mohd Noor’s Inspector Mislan series of police procedurals. I analyse how the author uses his insider knowledge of the police system to create an environment in which the dominant systems
are critiqued, at the same time that ethical, justice-oriented police work is shown to be central to the proper maintenance of law and order in society. In this series, Rozlan works within the confines of the police procedural to critique not just Malaysian society, but also corruption and incompetence within the police force. It is here, in this ambiguity about the role of the police in society, that Rozlan’s work potentially poses a danger to that society, demanding that what the police do be examined and questioned, rather than accepted without argument. Rozlan, being a former Special Branch policeman himself, writes these books from an insider’s perspective which gives the stories and the police procedures a ring of authenticity. Rozlan also acknowledges the complexity and ambiguity of working within the police force.

The Social Role of the Police Procedural

Stephen Knight “suggests that the procedural ‘implies an audience and a set of writers who can, at last, trust the police – or some of them – to be credible operatives against crime’” (qtd in Scaggs, 2005, p. 97). Police procedurals can, then, highlight the protective aspect of policing. But as Leroy Panek suggests, from the 1970s onwards “the fact that police officers work within an organization becomes one of the chief impediments to solving crimes” (Panek, 2003, p. 164). Here the implication is that even if individual police officers might be trustworthy, there are in fact serious problems with the organization itself, leading to questions about its effectiveness in actually ‘protecting and serving’ society. Does the organization serve and protect the values of the dominant authority, rather than dealing in a just way with individual rights? In focusing on the work of the police, do procedurals become part of that dominant voice? Scaggs suggests that this is a possibility, stating that “the procedural is as much a part of the ideological state apparatus of control as the thin blue line of the police force is” (Scaggs, 2005, p. 86).

Lee Horsley, however, suggests alternate possibilities. She notes that:

Much contemporary detective fiction, both private eye and police procedural, does underwrite the values of ‘the controlling agencies of modern society.’ But there are many writers who use these forms to explore the contradictions and tension of contemporary existence, creating […] a ‘discontinuous’ tradition that in a variety of ways has challenged normative thinking…” (qtd in Messent, 2010, p. 180)

Priestman also notes the potential ambiguity within the genre, pointing to both its transgressive and conservative tendencies:

The decision by many writers to base their plots on real events in the public sphere […] often involves an intelligent rethinking of those events’ implications from credible but unexpected angles. Against the often radical implications of these diagnoses can be set a continuing, perhaps increasing, trust in the normal agencies of law enforcement as offering at least the best hope of a remedy for the ills identified. (Priestman, 2003, pp. 187-8)

Fundamentally, with characters working within the ambit of police organisations, the framework of law and order continues to be upheld. Anarchy is staved off because, even with maverick police officers, the rule of law remains to instil control. But underlying that, there can remain a challenge to the hegemony.

Inspector Mislan as a Hard Boiled Policeman

My aim in this paper is to look at how dominance and hegemonic control are presented and dealt with in Rozlan Mohd Noor’s Inspector Mislan series. This series manages to question and
to some extent disrupt dominant society, while also offering some tenuous hope for the restoration of order through honest and ethical police work. By way of contrast, we can look at how the police are portrayed in Barbara Ismail’s *Kain Songket* series, set in 1970s Kelantan, in which the ‘detective’ is Mak Cik Maryam, a *songket* trader revelling in Kelantan’s traditionally matriarchal social framework. The police are represented by a new young Inspector from Perak, who is out of his depth in Kelantan and ultimately depends on Mak Cik Maryam to solve the crimes through her insider knowledge of local culture and society. The focus really is on there being a person who understands how this society works, who is therefore able to get it back on track when disruption threatens. There is an assumption that there is an ideal social order, which must be restored. Special Branch officer Inspector Mislan, however, is a more dangerous and threatening character despite his high position within the framework of law enforcement. He represents a danger to the restoration of order, if that order is itself corrupt.

Rozlan first came to notice in 2010 with his novel *21 Immortals: Inspector Mislan and the Yee Sang Murders*, which was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers’ Prize for Best First Book (Southeast Asia and the Pacific region). He followed this up with *Inspector Mislan and the DUKE Expressway Murders (DUKE)* in 2011, and *Inspector Mislan and the Utube Serial Rapes (UTube)* in 2012. All these novels centre on Inspector Mislan, a dedicated and focused investigator who chafes against the restrictions placed on him by bureaucracy and cronyism. Inspector Mislan’s approach to policing perhaps recalls something written in the 1970s by Mai Sjowall and Per Wahloo in their Martin Beck series of police procedurals:

> He was not even certain he wanted to be a good policeman, if that involved being a dutiful person who never deviated one iota from the regulations. He remembered something Lennart Kollberg had once said a long time ago. ‘There are lots of good cops around. Stupid guys who are good cops. Inflexible, limited, tough, self-satisfied types who are all good cops. It would be better if there were a few more good guys who were cops.’ (Sjowal and Wahloo, 2011, p. 6)

This implies that following the regulations, as implied by the adjectives ‘inflexible’ and ‘limited’, is not likely to always be the ‘right’ course of action. Those who chafe against the regulations are, perhaps, the good guys – those who “may represent the larger state, but […] also stand apart from it. For they are, or can be, motivated by their own set of moral and social values” (Messent, 2010, p. 180). In this, the maverick police officer who ignores, or even rejects, normal regulations comes close to another kind of detective, “the lone PI of hard-boiled fiction” (Scaggs, 2005, p. 90).

Raymond Chandler’s definition of the hard-boiled private investigator, henceforth abbreviated as PI, as “a complete man and a common man and yet an unusual man […] a man of honour” (qtd in Scaggs, 2005, p. 56), can in many ways refer to challenging figures within the police procedural genre, the ‘good guys’ who are not necessarily ‘good cops’. But where the lone PI does not necessarily serve the state, and therefore is able to function to some extent by his or her own moral code, the police detective must of necessity work within a system that may well be corrupt or in some other way unsatisfactory. The hard-boiled PI, as Scaggs notes, “answers to nobody but him- or herself” (2005, p. 60), whereas the police detective is “part of the state apparatus of the police force” (Scaggs, 2005, p. 89). But still, that complex and painful ambiguity remains for those who continue “serving the interests of the dominant social order,
even when they are painfully aware of how repressive and unjust the order whose interests they serve can actually be” (Scaggs, 2005, p. 96).

The police detective cannot help but be part of the state apparatus, but as Messent suggests “they are, or can be, motivated by their own set of moral and social values” (Messent, 2010, p. 180). Leroy Panek suggests an even more specific job for the police detective which seems at odds with his or her imbrication within the state structures of law and order: “…one of the police hero’s jobs becomes keeping sensitive and complicated investigations out of their [politicians] hands” (Panek, 2003, p. 162). This adds an interesting new wrinkle to the debate, suggesting as it does the need for the police to find some kind of workable balance between serving the dominant state, and serving the needs of law, order and justice. Clearly, then, there is room within the police procedural and the figure of the police detective to question, if not challenge, accepted social and authoritative structures.

Rozlan’s Inspector Mislan is one of the ‘good guys’ who tries to fight crime, corruption and injustice, but is often hampered or obstructed by the very framework within which he functions. He is dangerous because he will not accept these obstructions. But to what extent does he succeed in really unsettling the structure of authority – he represents potential danger, but how effective is that danger likely to really be?

**Good Cop/Bad Cop**

On the back cover of *21 Immortals*, there is a quote from Jonathan Swift: “Laws are like cobwebs, which may catch small flies, but let wasps and hornets break through”. In all three of his Mislan novels, Rozlan puts the Inspector in a situation in which law enforcement and society at the higher levels seem to be actively working to let the wasps and hornets break through the webs. The novels create a quite complex, layered picture of law enforcement – Rozlan critiques it, as he does certain aspects of society. But he also, through Mislan and his team, reinforces the value of a dedicated and ethical police force to the people.

He highlights the importance of the team, particularly Mislan’s dependable Sergeant Johan; the pathologist Dr Safia, with whom he soon enters into a relationship; and his immediate boss Samsiah, who supports him because of their mutual awareness of the incompetence of those above them, as well as of the need to serve justice. In this he reflects Ian Rankin’s assertion that the police procedural “at its purest […] should be about a team – real-life police-work is very much a team effort” (qtd. in Messent, 2010, p. 177). Rozlan’s focus on the team also reflects his own experience as a policeman. Even loner inspectors must depend on the backup provided by the ordinary constables and sergeants, the lab techs, etc. What Rozlan highlights in his novels is that there are different types and levels of teamwork, as well as two types of policing. In Mislan, his immediate boss, and the team he relies on, we see a group who often behave in independent, maverick ways (led by Mislan), but who are fundamentally ethical and law-abiding; they are the ‘ideal’ of policing in that their focus is on justice for the victims and punishment for the criminals.

Rozlan is careful to establish Mislan as a competent policeman; when we are introduced to him in *21 Immortals* he is just coming off “a twenty-four-hour shift, during which he handled two homicides and one armed robbery” (Rozlan, 2010, p. 7). Rozlan also includes a lot of details about actual police procedure; for example, he explains how twenty-four-hour reports are lodged, and shows Mislan actually doing so after his initial survey of the murder case. He is, therefore, embedded as a vital, functioning part of the machinery of police procedure.
He is also portrayed as part of a quite smoothly-functioning, efficient team. At the murder scene, he banters with Chew, the forensics team leader, and Johan, his sergeant. But in the midst of this banter they work together quickly and easily. This sense of teamwork is even stronger with Samsiah, who frequently has to go to bat for Mislan when his unorthodox approach angers his superiors. In *21 Immortals*, for eg., she out-maneuvers another inspector who is trying to get Mislan thrown off the case so that he himself can take over and protect his cronies. She does so at risk to her own position, but tells Mislan that “if there’s to be a face-off between Major Crimes and other departments, please remember I’ll do the fighting. That’s my shit; yours is to solve crimes” (Rozlan, 2010, p. 147). She shows herself to be working for the team, doing her job by clearing the field for them to do theirs.

Although part of a team, Mislan is also a maverick who sometimes oversteps the boundaries of what is strictly legal, in order to get results. In *21 Immortals*, he “wonders if he should take another step across the line without checking with his boss. He has just been warned by his boss about this, but the maverick in him wants to take control” (Rozlan, 2010, p. 171). He uses violence against a fellow policeman who is trying to interfere with Mislan’s investigation (Rozlan, 2010, p. 189). In *Duke*, Johan accuses him of lying to the investigating officer, but he responds “I did no such thing! She asked a question and I answered it truthfully. However, she did not ask the right question” (Rozlan, 2011, p. 148). In *UTube*, stymied by outside influence when on the verge of solving the crime, he does something that is illegal, strictly speaking, to ensure that he can find some other way to see to it that the criminals are punished.

Mislan’s forays outside the boundaries of strict legality, however, occur in the service of ensuring that justice is done. In other situations, he and his team make sure to stay strictly within the boundaries. For example, when the prime suspect in *UTube* is brought in, his lawyer immediately starts citing his high position, as well as making demands about how his client is to be treated. Detective Superintendent of Police (DSP) Mala, who is in charge of the interrogation, fends him off by repeatedly citing the law, as well as by refuting the lawyer’s claims to expertise when he says that there is precedent for him to be in the room when his client is being interviewed (Rozlan, 2012, p. 237). In *Duke* Senior Assistant Commissioner of Police (SAC) Burhanuddin promises someone influential that he will “update them as a favour” but Samsiah refuses, saying “I don’t think it’s appropriate for me or my officer to divulge information pertaining to it at the present moment, especially to interested non-personnel” (Rozlan, 2012, p. 220). Here, their insistence on following strict procedure is motivated by a desire to get their work done without social or political influence; indeed, Mislan declares that his ignorance about politics and power is what allows him to do his job (Rozlan, 2011, p. 25). The team are mavericks, then, in the sense that they refuse to play by society’s rules. Given that most of those at a higher rank are shown to be deeply enmeshed in a net of influence, power, cronyism and favours, Samsiah’s and Mislan’s refusal to work within that system is threatening to those who do work within it.

The other layer of policing represents a different kind of teamwork, and is best represented by Mislan’s and Samsiah’s superior, SAC Burhanuddin, a sometimes comically incompetent publicity seeker whose primary motivation often seems to be to serve the needs of those who have influence in society, even if that means undermining (or even completely derailing) the ongoing investigation. Teamwork, to him, seems to mean that the entire police force will serve his demands. In *21 Immortals*, Mislan describes him as “just another arse-kissing-pen-pusher who is full of it, and a publicity junkie who decorated his office walls with...
framed newspaper clippings of himself” (Rozlan, 2010, p. 47). He has no experience fighting crime “except from watching television” (Rozlan, 2010, p. 47) – an assessment which is shown to be hilariously true in *UTube*, when he declares that some complex piece of online monitoring must be possible because “I’ve seen it done on NCIS. That agent, McGee and Abby, they can track anything on the net” (Rozlan, 2012, p. 43). So eager is he to be seen to be effective that he promises the impossible without taking into account the consequences – indeed, without showing any apparent awareness that there might in fact be consequences. When an influential family’s lawyer demands something that is probably not legally possible, Burhanuddin states that “My Head of Legal and Prosecution is looking into that possibility, and I’m sure he’ll come up with something” – a statement which earns him a glare from his Head of Legal and Prosecution (Rozlan, 2012, p. 47).

While these incidents are amusing, his eagerness to be, as Mislan suggests, an arse kisser, is potentially dangerous to the solving of crimes in a just and satisfactory manner. And here, we come to another central idea which also functions on two levels – the restoration of social order. As a policeman, Mislan’s prime motivation is to apprehend the guilty party and remove him or her from society – thus restoring society to good working order, in which individuals are able to go about their daily lives unimpeded. Burhanuddin, however, seeks to restore a different kind of social order – the status quo, in which the rich and powerful remain rich and powerful, and are untouched by the normal operations of law and order. As Mislan notes in *DUKE* (and recalling Leroy Panek’s remark about keeping the police work out of the hands of the higher-ups), politics has crept into policing (Rozlan, 2011, p.194).

By highlighting Burhanuddin’s obsession with making sure that the needs of the rich and powerful are met, Rozlan manages to critique the way in which the police force functions to protect certain elements, rather than meting out justice in an even-handed way. In *DUKE*, for eg., there are two murder victims, but only one is wealthy and influential – the second murder victim seems to count for virtually nothing and is all but ignored in the rhetoric spouted by Burhanuddin. Can this police force be trusted to take care of the needs of ordinary people, then? It is up to Mislan to do so, and Rozlan shows us that Mislan makes it a point to visit the family of the second murder victim to assure the grieving mother that her daughter did not commit suicide.

Mislan and his colleagues have to find ways around the obstacles thrown in their path by those forces which strive to maintain the status quo of the powerful and influential. But it becomes clear that they always have to resort, to some extent, to subterfuge. In *21 Immortals*, for eg., Mislan is thwarted by “adversaries who were far too formidable for a frontal assault”; Samsiah, however, finds a way to move the case “out of the reach of the OCCI” (Rozlan, 2010, p. 302), so that it will continue to be investigated by people outside the circle of influence. In *UTube*, when incriminating documents are spirited away, Mislan drops a word in the ear of an investigative journalist, to make sure that public pressure is applied. Thus, one is brought back to Panek’s assertion that “the fact that police officers work within an organization becomes one of the chief impediments to solving crimes” (Rozlan, 2012, p. 164).

**Contemporary Social Critique in the Inspector Mislan Series**

Another, and very important, layer of critique comes from Rozlan himself, in the choice of subject matter – particularly in the case of *21 Immortals* and *UTube*. What Rozlan does, through the crimes Mislan is charged with solving, is to bring up issues pertinent to contemporary
Malaysian society, and to provide an approach to them that does not support the official rhetoric. This implicit challenge can be seen as being dangerous, or threatening, to the kind of control that is exerted through the discourse of law, religion and morality.

In *21 Immortals*, Rozlan brings in the possibility of gang involvement in the murders. Gang-related crime is certainly a hot-button issue in Malaysian society. As recently as February of 2017, the news was filled with stories of 5 VIPs being “nabbed over their involvement with violent gangs” (Gangsters Financed VIPs: Malaysian Police, 2017). The arrests, according to the Bukit Aman Criminal Investigations Department director, led to “at least 23 cases, involving six high-profile murders” being solved. While I cannot attest to the truth or falsity of this claim, the rhetoric does point to the restoration of order through police action. In May 2017, the police again declared that the arrest of a number of gang leaders “would curb problems on gangsterism (We have identified gang leaders in the country, deputy IGP says, 2017). Again, the rhetoric points to restoration of order – an idea underlined by the IGP’s assertion that the police are aware that schoolchildren are being targeted, and the implication that because of this knowledge, they are in a position to safeguard the children. Rozlan, however, undermines this rhetoric by providing a more nuanced response to the whole notion of gang-related crimes and violence. Are gangs being used as a kind of scapegoat to create the appearance of the restoration of law and order?

In *21 Immortals*, a whole family (husband, wife, young son) is discovered murdered, but with no sign of violence. They are eerily staged, as if they are sitting down to a celebratory dinner of *yee sang*. It is quickly discovered that the father was a former gang member, who was responsible for the arrest of several of his fellow gang members. Almost immediately, the higher-ups decide to characterise the crime as a gang-related revenge killing. This ‘solution’ not only neatly solves the crime, but it also contains it, in the sense that if it is motivated by a desire for revenge, then it is not something that is going to contaminate parts of society outside the range of gang activities. Thus, the status quo is maintained, and the threat to public order is negated.

However, Rozlan disrupts this narrative by rejecting any suggestion that the gangs have been successfully brought to heel. Take, for eg., his description of Petaling Street, the Chinatown area where Mislan goes to meet a former head of the victim’s gang:

> Petaling Street is now a tourist destination. The government has now declared it so by creating covered pedestrian malls and some cheesy cityscapes. From five in the evening till about two in the morning, the street is closed to vehicles and lined with stalls from end to end. The changes are cosmetic and the underlying heartbeat is just as dark as before. Although the authorities do not acknowledge it, Petaling Street is still a triad hotbed. (Rozlan, 2010, p. 81)

This description goes right to the heart of the possibility that the containment of gang violence is nothing more than a veneer – the authorities have not really been able to keep the streets ‘clean’.

Rozlan also rejects the possibility of random viciousness on the part of the gangs; nor does he believe that they would create the macabre dinner scene with the dead bodies. The gang approach is far too straightforward and, he suggests, honourable for that. Four Finger Loo, the ex-gang-leader whom Mislan speaks to, underlines this idea of honour and a strict code of conduct:
“You don’t know us, do you? We don’t do families or children. They’re sacred. We’re from the old school; we live and die by our oaths, not like the punks you have now. They’re not triad, they’re just common thugs, punks...” (Rozlan, 2010, p. 84).

This code of conduct is reinforced by the gangster’s insistence that they would never stage such an elaborate death scene; instead, because the victim “was a diseased dog”, they would have killed him openly and violently in the street; he declares that “Even the roadside drain would have been too good for his carcass” (Rozlan, 2010, p. 84). This modus operandi is borne out by the fact that Four Finger Loo is later slaughtered violently in the street, because he is perceived to have betrayed his former gang. If the gangs operate in this way, the insistence on pinning the crime on them speaks of a desperation to pin the guilt somewhere vaguely plausible, simply in order to deflect attention from the real culprits. Rozlan’s presentation of the ‘honourable’ gangs and the too-convenient rush to make them seem guilty, unsettles the public rhetoric of the restoration of law and order, and brings these kinds of reports into question.

In 21 Immortals, Rozlan deals with a general sense of social corruption. In UTube, however, he targets a particular social issue which was in the news a few years ago – namely the issue of pengkid or ‘tomboys’. According to Jakim (the Malaysian Department of Islamic Development), the term pengkid refers to females “whose appearance or image is like that of a man”; this definition encompasses not just dressing but also ‘male’ behaviour, and may include (and eventually result in) lesbianism (Damis, 2008). A fatwa was issued against Muslim women dressing and behaving in what was perceived as a ‘masculine’ way, the aim being to educate them out of this “social ill”. Malaysian authorities, particularly among Muslims, exert a great deal of control over personal expressions of identity, more so when religion and gender choices are involved. While social pressure is felt to some extent by all those with non-conforming gender identities, there is more pressure on Muslims because official or legal pressure can also be brought to bear. There is no room for debate about gender identities at the official or authoritative level.

To contest this rigidity could be considered dangerous or challenging, but this is what Rozlan does in UTube. In this novel, a number of women are raped, and videos of their rapes are then uploaded to UTube. All the victims are found to be lesbians. There is a group at work here, operating under the belief that they must ‘save’ these disgusting, deviant women through corrective rape. The mastermind behind this group is eventually revealed to be an educated man, an academic and former member of a well-known think-tank, ISIS (Institute of Strategic and International Studies). Because he is not just a crazed, lone-wolf, anti-lesbian vigilante, but someone who functions comfortably within the higher levels of society, he therefore can be seen to represent a controlling, authority-exerting society which seeks to police and regulate individual expressions of identity. Indeed, Rozlan bolsters this idea of authoritative control of gender identity by bringing up the idea of government support for ‘homosexual rehabilitation centres’ (BN Lawmaker Moots Gay Rehab Centre, 2012). This control then seeps into broader society, in an ignorant and generalised way. One of the investigators, Deena, is asked if she is ‘one of them’, simply because of her hairstyle, her dressing, the way she talks, as if she is ‘one of the men’. Deena fights back, branding the man as judgmental and “typical” of society, labelling her “Just because I dress or act differently, and not the way you, and people like you, want me to” (Rozlan, 2012, p. 253). In this, Mislan himself is not innocent.

Rozlan portrays a kind of evolution in Mislan’s behaviour here. His initial reaction to one of the rape victims is crude and unsympathetic. He asks her if she has a “man” problem (Rozlan,
2012, p. 92). His furious colleague Sherry forces him to rephrase the question in a less combative way. Eventually, as the investigation progresses, he finds himself more and more horrified by the rape videos, and gets to the point when he confronts a suspect who declares that their “lifestyle is against the teaching of Islam”; to this, Mislan responds “It’s their lifestyle. Who appointed you the guardian of their lifestyle” (Rozlan, 2012, p. 157).

Rozlan’s danger to society here lies in his refusal to follow the dominant discourse which, firstly, posits homosexuality as a sin against religion and society, and secondly, takes the position that anyone who declares himself or herself a champion of religious law then has the tacit right to exert control in order to ‘correct’ the deviant individual. Rozlan’s presentation of Inspector Mislan and the people with whom he works most closely, tends to put them on the side of justice and what is morally ‘right’. Since the entire team comes to view the rape victims as individuals who need justice, rather than as deviants, the novel’s readers are also probably primed to take that viewpoint as well. Rozlan thus undermines accepted notions of deviancy, religiosity, and so on.

**Conclusion**

But the question is just how dangerous these novels and their leading character really are. Perhaps the final judgment on that can be summed up in this conversation between Mislan and Samsiah, from *21 Immortals*:

“What you think doesn’t count for anything. You know what’s going to happen; he’ll come in with a powerful crony, give us a prepared statement, and that’ll be the end of the case.”

“No way, I’m not letting that happen.”

“Yes, way. They’ll not be coming up to you, they’ll be going up there,” she says pointing up, indicating the OCCI. “You or I will not be part of it, and will only be duly informed. You know how these things work.” (Rozlan, 2010, pp. 272-273)

This sense of helplessness is underscored by the fact that in only one of the three novels (*DUKE*) do they get their culprit. In the other two novels, they must scheme in order to push their investigations towards a satisfactory conclusion. And it is significant that we do not see that satisfactory conclusion being reached – it is hinted at, at best. Perhaps what this series of novels leaves us with is the hope (coming as it does from someone who was an insider in this system) that ethics and justice do still form core values in the policing of the nation, despite obstructionist efforts assailing them from all sides.

**References**


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