



Introduction: Detective Fiction and Borders

Manina Jones

Abstract. The guest editor of this theme issue of *Clues* provides an overview of the issue, including essays on Saradindu Bandyopadhyay, Carlos Bulosan, Agatha Christie, *Calling All Cars*, *Criminal Minds: Beyond Borders*, Japanese crime fiction, Ausma Zehanat Khan, Henning Mankell, China Miéville, Miguel Pajares, and David Heska Wanbli Weiden.

In an era when economic, political, and cultural boundaries are being reshaped and rethought as a consequence of contemporary and historical geopolitical conflict, flows of information, trade, and migrant people, the contributors to this theme issue of *Clues* consider the relationship between detective fiction and borders. Since the 1990s, border studies as an interdisciplinary field experienced a “mercurial” rise in the social sciences, while a concerted interest in borders and bordering processes has come more recently to literary and cultural studies (Wilson and Donnan 3). As political geographers David Newman and Anssi Paasi recognize, though, boundaries are “part of the *discursive* landscape of social power, control and governance” (196; emphasis added). They assert that “the construction of boundaries at all scales and dimensions takes place through narrativity (186). Border lines, in other words, have an intimate association with story lines. Indeed, Franco Moretti has argued in his *Atlas of the European Novel* that the popular historical novel as it emerged in the nineteenth century was *the* symbolic form of the nation-state itself, because it responded to a cultural need to understand emergent territorial distinctions that could not be directly grasped through experience, transforming them into a story and offering a sort of “phenomenology of the border” (35). As Mark Salter avers, although borders may take a wide range of imaginative and tangible forms, there is something distinctive about the *state* border—“and that is the possibility of appealing to law” (Salter 5).

To understand the ways in which such borders are culturally conceived, codified, negotiated, and transgressed, then, it makes sense to turn to the detective story, whose plots,

Manina Jones, a member of the Clues Editorial Board, is professor and chair of the Department of English and Writing Studies at Western University in Ontario, Canada.