

# British Public Television Police Drama: an Ordo-Baroque Template for European Complex Governance (with a Case Study of the BBC Meta-Police Series *Line of Duty*)

---

CAIUS DOBRESCU

University of Bucharest/Faculty of Letters, 5-7 Edgar Quinet Street, Sector 1,  
Bucharest, 010017, Romania. Email: [caius.dobrescu@g.unibuc.ro](mailto:caius.dobrescu@g.unibuc.ro)

In this article, Elizabethan and Jacobean Baroque drama is considered as a comparative, structuring reference and as a control parameter for understanding contemporary British public television police drama as a genre in its own right. The argument for its autonomy and specificity lies not primarily with formal arguments, but with its intimate connection with representations on government and governance, as practices and world-models aimed at the management of complexity. Starting from the above, I premise that the public police drama format is highly relevant for Europe at large, not only as a fictional means of comprehending complex government, but as an emerging forum of actual public deliberation on the means and goals of complex government. The logical extension of the current study would be a future analysis of the manner in which the suggested template of police drama was absorbed in the continental television and government culture. For the moment the argument is restricted to pointing out the premises offered by the British original format for a poetics of complex order and of multi-level governance essential for the configuration of a European political imaginary.

## **Police Drama: the Baroque Connection**

Police public drama can be construed as a distinct television genre, essential for understanding the connection between public arts and government. The genre contains all the basic elements of regular crime narratives, hence the *police* component. But rather than *along* the lines of an investigative procedure, these elements are structured *around* one or several tensional nuclei, which stand for the *drama* component.

The *public* aspect derives from the nature of production, i.e. funding and logistics provided by a public institution, but principally from the effort of concurring with a public issues agenda.

I will explore the hypothesis that, beyond focusing on matters of obvious and stringent general concern, police drama is the main form of representing the process of government in the public imagination. The reflection (mirroring) of governance in police public drama is simultaneously a reflection (reasoning) on the social, political, cultural, psychological, and first of all moral determinations and consequences of government. This is especially so in its most complex manifestations, frequently referred to, in the frame of European theoretical debates, as ‘multilevel governance’ (Benz *et al.* 2016).

I will also explore the mutual (and, for the most, probably unintended) affinities between murder mysteries and Elizabethan and Jacobean Baroque drama.<sup>1</sup> The plots of Baroque drama, especially in its Elizabethan and Jacobean form, are more often than not premised on homicides to an extent that seems to justify the association of (historical or typological) Baroque with the notion of hardboiled. Murder is mainly represented as an output of court intrigue (with Shakespearean history plays as the most spectacular example), but it may also occur in bourgeois milieus (e.g. the anonymous *Arden of Feversham*, first published in 1592), insistently recalling the social background of modern crime fiction. Even more relevant than the licence of piling up victims of violent death is the fact that some of the most prominent Baroque tragedies can be reshaped as murder *mysteries*, as peremptorily proven by recent film and publishing experiments.<sup>2</sup>

1. The notion refers, intuitively, to the dramatic literature produced during the reigns of Elizabeth I (1558–1603) and James I (1603–1625), an epoch seen today as dominated by the towering achievements of William Shakespeare (1564–1616). But what Anja Müller-Wood (2007) expressively calls ‘the theatre of civilized excess’ is eloquently illustrated not only by The Bard’s tragedies, such as the iconic *Hamlet* or *Othello*, but also by Christopher Marlowe’s (1564–1593), *The Jew of Malta*, *Edward the Second*, *Faust*, *The Massacre at Paris*; Thomas Kyd’s (1558–1594) *The Spanish Tragedy*; George Peele’s (1556–1596) *Edward I*, *The Battle of Alcazar*; John Fletcher’s (1579–1625), *The Knight of Malta*; John Webster’s (1580–1632), *The White Devil*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, and so on. Such Baroque tragedies stage, in domestic or exotic attire, sophisticated and cruel eye-for-an-eye schemes, that more often than not trigger a cycle of revenge, or fatality. These arch-themes of classical tragedy receive a flamboyant rhetorical treatment, with the famous rule of the three unities (of time, location, and action), sacrosanct (at least in theory) in French Classicism, being defied, if not defiled in all possible manners. Scholars intensely debated on the ethos of these plays, with opinions ranging from seeing them as mainly driven by the logic of artistic and commercial competition (Yachnin 1997, Müller-Wood 2007), to considering them involved with a political-philosophical agenda to the point of deserving the qualification of ‘tragedies of state’ (Lever 1987 [1971]; Wikander 2005). From the perspective of intellectual history, they were seen, in an equally controversial manner, as nurturing either radical, to wit republican (Dollimore 1989; Howard 1994), or conservative, prudently-monarchist persuasions (Montrose 1996). What is generally accepted by all contending parts is that Elizabethan and Jacobean drama had a significant impact on the emerging civic society of the epoch, and that it promoted theatre, assumingly for the first time in early modern history, to the condition of a forum of public debate.

2. For instance, the 2001 BBC film *Othello* written by Andrew Davies and directed by Geoffrey Sax, which casts the eponymous Shakespearean character as Commissioner of the London Metropolitan Police. Random House, which supports the *Hogarth Shakespeare Project* premised on the adaptation of famous Shakespearean plays to novels with contemporary settings, published in 2018 a crime-fiction re-fashioning of *Macbeth* by Norwegian author Jo Nesbø, and commissioned for 2021 a

If we reverse the angle, we can easily observe that modern murder mysteries are also resonant with cardinal Baroque procedures and devices, such as breathtaking changes of perspectives (both narrative and ethical) similar to Baroque significant ‘deformations’; the science of exercising wonder and stupefaction over the audience (Langdon 2018, 44–45); the use of redoubling and parallelism (i.e. between the police and the criminal world, or between plotlines) as forms of structural, internal mirroring; and plays of hypotheses and appearances (masques beneath masques) generally placed under the figurative emblem of the ‘red herring’. Actually, given their possibilities of narrative extension, as novelistic or television series formats, modern crime fictions are able to manage mental spaces according to the labyrinthine recipes of Baroque imagination to a much higher degree (and, possibly, effect) than Baroque tragedies themselves.

This catoptric installation of sorts, i.e. the mutual mirroring of Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy and public television drama, is not set up in order to elucidate questions of genealogy. Not that such interests would be irrelevant, but they require a different context and different means. The effect that I expect to derive from this interplay of reflections is the simultaneous change of the dominant scholarly perception on the Baroque/neo-Baroque, and on the social-aesthetic function of police public drama. The mutual ‘mirroring’ is meant to point to the partially convergent search of both forms of drama, beyond their highly different mental and social contexts, for a poetics of government which I propose to call *ordo-Baroque*.<sup>3</sup>

In other words, the association of Baroque drama with contemporary public television police series could bring to prominence a poetics centred on the practical-moral imperatives of administration and government, instead of the much more popular versions of the *neo-Baroque* succinctly exposed by Omar Calabrese, perhaps the most influential proponent of the concept: ‘It is easy to say what “neo-Baroque” consists of: a search for, and valorization of, forms that display a loss of entirety, totality, and system in favor of instability, polydimensionality, and change’ (Calabrese 1992 [1987], xii). From the angle of the poetic government of the *ordo-Baroque*, significant form emerges from the interplay between the presumed consistency of Law, and its continuous specification in the variegated forms of the world of life, i.e. of real people interacting in actual situations, on various levels of uncertainty and risk. What I call the *ordo-Baroque* implies an ethical thrust that distinguishes it from the epistemic, world-view-centred approach of neo-Baroque theories.

British police drama seems to construe police officers as avatars of the noble lead characters of tragedies. They have to face basically the same dilemma as classical

similar re-working of *Hamlet* from American murder mystery author Gillian Flynn. To this we may add, for the sake of the criminal atmosphere, the plethora of contemporary works of fiction developed around the unsolved murder of Christopher Marlowe.

3. I understand ‘public’ mainly as ‘of public use and interest’ rather than as ‘publicly owned’. Consequently, the *ordo-Baroque* poetics I propose for public police drama would also fit series produced by private operators on the British audio-visual market (e.g. ITV, with *A Touch of Frost*, or *Inspector Morse*, with its successful spin-off *Endeavour*). The point I would make is that the BBC managed to impose an authoritative fictional representation of the ethos of public service, and implicitly of governance, that shaped (or was in tune with) the collective imagination to a degree that commanded the long-term compliance of independent, commercial television.

tragic figures. On the one hand, they are posited as morally superior, be it even on the simple premise that they are granted the privilege of carrying guns, or more precisely of being, in principle, enabled to kill under the protection of law. But this very position puts them under the huge pressure of witnessing human misery and cruelty at their worst, which either absorbs them into cynicism and greed, or infects them with Baroque melancholy, under the modern guise of psychic depression. Actually, the law enforcer does not embody Justice, but the human condition, the allegorical human being subject to fatal physical and moral degradation/corruption. Police drama also offers the most detailed and elaborate artistic representation of the manner in which rational bureaucracy is confronted with its own limits and blind spots. The fallibility of the procedures, rules, categories applied on the diversity of real life situations and persons, on the one hand, and the fallibility of the human agents that are dispensing justice, on the other, have distorting effects on the ideal model of law enforcement. The various drifts from ‘straight’ public service generate a whole range of ethical *imbroglios*, or ‘ornaments’.

The seminal Machiavellian advice on connecting government and dramatic representation was that the spectacle of power should generate astonishment, as a blend of fascination and fear. That is to say, power should blind the spectator and thereby hide its own weaknesses. Yet the inheritance of Baroque drama, in spite of its spectacular load of physical and mental violence, decidedly tends to the opposite direction, i.e. to a dramatic representation of government that doesn’t hide, but exposes, sometimes even ostentatiously, indecision and vulnerability (Ornstein 1960; Ribner 1962; Müller-Wood 2007). The Baroque Elizabethan and Jacobean drama brings to the fore the rupture of the bond of trust between rulers and subjects by staging examples of pathological cruelty. Whenever such examples are chosen from among Renaissance tyrants of Italian city-states, we can sense a polemical infatuation with Machiavellian political teachings (Roe 2002; Hadfield 2004; Redmond 2009).

Contemporary British public television drama series go to extreme lengths in presenting police work and its subsequent investigative procedures as a metonym for justice, and of the dispensation of justice as a metonym for governance in general. With the same movement, they also offer an equivalent of the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama’s explorations of the immanent limits of power<sup>4</sup> by pitting police work against its own procedural and moral blind spots. The ordo-Baroque poetics of government is a narrative strategy aimed at comprehending this dynamic complexity.

In this spirit, I will concentrate on one of the most telling examples of the manner in which the public eye of television drama focuses on who supervises the supervisors of public legal and moral order. I am going to explore *Line of Duty*, a series written by Jed Mercurio, initiated in 2012, that has gone through five seasons, with a sixth, and presumably last, originally announced for 2020 (Nicholson 2019; Robinson 2020; Ling 2020). The first three seasons were produced by BBC 2, then from season

4. ‘A monarch was frequently reminded by dramatists of his or her duties to the people, a tradition of political literature that was modified and expanded by the advent of the commercial theatre’ (Hadfield 2004, 34).

four on (2017), the series was taken over by BBC 1. What makes this show a highly suitable example for my above tenets is that it is a self-reflexive police drama, which can be described as meta-investigative, in its close following of the activity of the (fictional) AC-12 unit – an acronym that stands for ‘anti-corruption’. Every season uncovers a serious case of deviation of the policing means from their legally and morally sanctioned goals (with ramifications going up to the top echelons of the public force), minutely investigated by Superintendent Ted Hastings and his aides-de-camp, Detective Inspector Kate Fleming and Detective Sergeant Steve Arnott.

Through a structural convolution which appears simultaneously as quintessentially Baroque, ridden with moral significance, and touching on vital resorts of government and governance, *Line of Duty* presents investigators investigating investigators. But, most relevantly of all, its understanding of police work, and through it, metonymically, of complex governance, is in manifest affinity with the moral and psychological tensions of Baroque drama. This is what I will attempt to point out, through the successive survey of thematic areas identified by two accredited Baroque symbolisms: the mirror and the labyrinth.

### Spectacular Anamorphoses and Specular Estrangements

According to a famous account by Jurgis Baltrušaitis (1977 [1969]), anamorphosis (which literally means ‘deformation’, but in this context connotes meaningful, even revealing deformation), is the major determining feature of the Baroque imagination. Even if this is much easier applicable to the field of visual arts, a connection to drama structures is relatively at hand. Tragedy as such, in its classical Aristotelian demeanour, can be retrieved as a seminal process of anamorphosis. It looks at heroes, i.e. at characters who should represent the norm for and be the object of *encomia*, of public poetic praise, from an angle that distorts their original composure. Baroque tragedy further accentuates this anamorphosis through its habit of attributing to its central characters the basest instincts leading to tyranny. But this accrued taste for representing morally deformed characters preserves, in a suggestive/negative manner, a sense of quest for righteous and virtuous government.<sup>5</sup>

The use of the quintessentially Baroque motif (and device) of the deforming mirror could count as a particular instance of anamorphosis. Police drama in general offers the opportunity of siding organized crime with crime fighting in an ironic analogy that suggest a play of mirrors. In this meta-police drama, investigative intelligence and procedural abilities are distorted to the point of being turned against themselves. Since the bible of the series rests on investigating investigators, *Line of Duty* offers the spectacle of highly trained detectives using their experience, skills and talents not in order to catch criminals, but to escape the rightful enforcement of law by their anti-corruption fellow detectives. The most powerful intimation of

5. ‘... the mere fact that [Shakespeare] expressed a tragic view of life and deepest pessimism, in an age of national ascent and economic prosperity from which he himself profited so much, is evidence of his social responsibility ...’ (Hauser 1992 [1951], 140).

dramatic Baroque specularity is to be found in the frequent procedural scenes that bring together, on opposite sides of the interrogation table, highly trained police officers. The crux of screenwriter Jed Mercurio's subtlety resides in the manner in which the polarity hunter–hunted, detective–culprit, innocent–guilty is rhythmically inverted.

The most spectacular and specular confrontation of this sort is located in the fourth episode of the fourth season (Mercurio 2017). Its suggestive title is 'Moral Superiority' and it climaxes with the interrogation of Detective Chief Inspector Roz Hartley, suspected of murder. Which, in fact, she has committed, but under conditions of self-defence that are in themselves a telling example of the reversibility of the perpetrator–victim statuses, but that she cannot reveal without devastating consequences. At the beginning Roz gives the impression of having been caught on the wrong foot, and of yielding under the amount of evidence gathered against her. But then comes the tipping point: her composure of submission and anxiety fades out and she confidently and ironically reverses the odds by targeting the motives of the leading investigating officer. Actually, she conducts a sharp and articulated attack against her nemesis, Superintendent Hastings, that includes allegations of sexist attitudes and affiliation to Masonry (the latter poignantly and memorably dismissed as 'the mafia of the mediocre' – Mercurio 2017, 51). The subtlety is that, while being highly exaggerated, all these allegations cannot be automatically dismissed as false, therefore putting even Hastings' close and admiring collaborators Arnott and Fleming in an awkward situation. On the chess board of the investigation, Roz's manoeuvring in her favour of gender equality policies is an astute strategic move. But on a deeper psychological level, it indirectly reveals the bitterness she has accumulated in her struggle through the ranks as a black female police officer. Her restrained but radiating scorn is both acted up and deeply authentic.

Specular interplay may also generate intimately ambiguous relations between investigators and investigated. A most emphatic example is the bond created between Detective Sergeant Arnott and his counterpart John Corbett, a police officer working undercover as 'John Clayton', who is suspected by AC-12 of having gone rogue. Even after Corbett/Clayton's admission that he ordered the assassination of fellow officer Maneet Bindra in order to keep his place in the criminal hierarchy, Arnott's revulsion is obscured by the fact that he recognizes himself in the other's rage against the machinery of intra-police corruption he hopes to expose by pursuing his undercover inquiry to its final end (Mercurio 2019, 47). At the peak of this ambiguous relationship the viewer is incapable of telling who is playing whom; who is the tool and who the mastermind.

The trope of mirroring offers the opportunity of representing government as a process that can metabolize its own opposite, organized crime and corruption. At the same time, following the representational logic of Baroque mirroring, it could be inferred that television itself, as a public service, and thereby as part of the governing process, mirrors itself in the representation of complex governance delivered by police drama series of its own device.

### Labyrinthine Labours

The labyrinth is probably the archetypal Baroque motif, theme and symbol. But it is not easily connectable to drama, least of all to government. The recovery of the motif in neo-Baroque theories attempting to explore the ‘spirit’ of our time was done preferentially from an (anti)epistemic perspective. The labyrinth, as metaphor of the radical critique of metaphysics, is presumed to express the gap between consciousness and world, between phenomenon and numen, it is projected as a meandering vagrancy through a maze of completely illusory ‘ultimate’ principles (Degli-Esposti 1996; Baler 2016). If at all associated with drama, this touches not on its force of articulation, but on the dramatic situation of feeling lost in the world (Egginton 2010). If associated with government, the labyrinth would rather connote the Kafkaesque, essentially impenetrable, ‘celestial’ bureaucracy.

These theories ignore an important dimension of the labyrinth. In her explorations of the classic and early Christian roots of this symbolism, Penelope Reed Doob uses a tripartite taxonomy according to which a ‘metaphoric labyrinth’ can be interpreted as a sign of: (a) complex artistry; (b) inextricability or impenetrability; and (c) difficult process (Reed Doob 1990, 64–94). While (a) and (b) can be easily reconciled with influential visions of the Baroque,<sup>6</sup> or the neo-Baroque (Degli-Esposti 1996; Baler 2016; Egginton 2010), (c) appears to have faded from the screen of cultural theory. But it is precisely to this last axis, or layer of meaning, ‘difficult process’, that we should resort in order to reconstruct the bridge between the Baroque spirit and the ordo-Baroque poetics of public police drama.

In order to proceed with this line of argument, let’s consider Reed Doob’s elaboration of the notion of ‘difficult process’:

The labyrinth as a metaphor for learning seems to be related to concepts of perception and thought as intrinsically labyrinthine processes involuted, circuitous, doubling back at blind alleys or enforced turns, working by trial and error or by successive approximation. (Reed Doob 1990, 82)

Actually, government as such also comes into the question, in the context of the analysis of Virgil’s *Aeneid*:

The poem dwells on labors of various sorts: works of suffering, achievement, and art. The psychological and physical labors of Aeneas, his companions, and his descendants are necessary to build Rome, whose characteristic art will be government (6.851–854), bringing order to chaos. (Reed Doob 1990, 229)

An ordo-Baroque poetics of government, intentionally or not, associates the labyrinth not (only) with ethical and epistemic puzzlement, but (also) with a meandering (in the sense of difficult) accumulation of collective and personal experience (keep in

6. Peter N. Skrine defined the Baroque itself as the ‘interlinked facets of a vast and maze-like subject’ (Skrine 1978, viii–ix). Another reputable treatment of the centrality of the labyrinth symbolism since early modernity, can be found in Hocke (1987 [1957]).



mind the classical *labores*, ‘works’), with the deposit, the archive, and with the slow, at times indisputably and unavoidably painful birth of a good (or at least satisfactory) polity.<sup>7</sup>

Much like Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre, murder mysteries and crime fiction offer an effective mediation between drama and the Baroque imaginary of the labyrinth, which otherwise seem structurally opposed. The investigative narrative accommodates both the need for intensity and closure of classical tragedy, and the reduplications, detours, and *rallentando* techniques of Baroque narratives. The labyrinthine pattern of the investigation approximates the ramifications and networking of the thinking process, which implies doubt, self-contradiction, successive adjustments, recoiling, radical reversals, or simply dead ends. Consequently, murder mystery plots consist of several courses of inquiry, which seem to refer almost directly to what Reed Doob’s terms ‘multicursal’ (i.e. with more than one exiting solution) labyrinths (Reed Doob 1990, 11).

The metaphorical and operational connection between detection and navigating a labyrinth is notoriously made in ‘The Garden of the Forking Paths’, a Jorge Luis Borges’ 1941 story (Irwin 1994). But the theme gathers a special nuance in the context of a meta-police drama such as *Line of Duty*. The multiplication of plot lines, for instance, is emphasized by the multiplication of the investigators themselves. The series develops multilevel and intertwining investigations carried out by regular police detectives, simultaneously with the meta-detectives that investigate the former (at times with intra-AC-12 suspicions that further split the investigation), while suspected/suspended officers conduct their own parallel inquiries (or counter-inquiries, if they try to cover tracks) in order to (honestly, or onerously) exculpate themselves. At the same time, the fact that the AC-12 team has to periodically retrace the steps of previous investigations, be they recent or distant in time (the later situation verging on the subgenre of ‘cold cases’), evokes the experience, typical of traveling through a maze, of repeatedly crossing the same ‘straits’.

The alternation between dynamic, hardboiled and slow-paced sequences of events is pervasive in all five seasons of *Line of Duty*. Moreover, the realistically rendered force interventions of the police prove more often than not inconclusive or fail completely. This contradictory rhythm suggests advancement in a tortuous unknown territory, where firm decisions, though unavoidable, are likely to mire one even deeper in the unknown (and sometimes in utter ridicule). The experience of being ‘lost’ in the labyrinth of an investigation also connects to another Baroque motif: illusion. The continuous play of appearances (innocents that seem guilty, and vice versa) climaxes on converting the experience of the maze in a haze of moral judgement. The recurrent confrontation of investigative rules and procedures, as well as the general human deductive capacity, with their own limits, points, as already stated, to the blind spots of the policing process, but, at the same time, these blind

7. Somewhat in the same vein, Jan Baetens notes, in his review of Ndalianis (2004), that ‘Neo-Baroque’s “chaos” is not the contrary of classicism’s “order”; the former is, on the contrary, to be analyzed as a more complex instance of the latter’ (Baetens 2005, 72).



spots are presented as tests that punctuate a difficult, but not senseless labyrinthine roadmap.<sup>8</sup>

### Police Drama: The European Connection

Most probably, police drama was synthesized as a distinct genre in the UK on the premises of the domestic tradition of reflecting complex social ordering through dramatic structures (represented in the above by Baroque tragedy, but, of course, not reducible to it), and also of the British primacy in the creation and development of detective and murder mystery fiction. To this we should add the decisive favouring condition of a 'Baroque' public television, open to experiments that lead to what is commonly called 'quality TV', i.e. the complication of popular genres and formats to the level of turning them into vectors for nuanced social and moral judgements (McCabe and Akass 2007).

Nevertheless, by shedding light on the Baroque-ness of police work, British police drama conveys a vibrant image of governance that transcends the differences between UK and the continent. It presents the difficult processing of a specific case in the memory of the public institution, which is to say that police drama, as a public art, offers an expressive mimesis of institutional learning. Governance is performed as a slow, difficult, but decided reinstatement of order, as a maieutic of current decency. One of the distinctive features of police drama, that makes it particularly replicable, or at least attractive, for continental Europe at large, is its attempt to retrace laws and procedures to their real origin, which, more often than not, is lived experience.

The letter of the law (and of every imaginable set of regulations or procedural drill) is meant to be categorical and final; it should convey a clear and uncompromising volition (a fiat). But British police drama delivers a poetics of law and government resonant with the fluid, anamorphic nature of actual legal cases. The tension/connection between positive law and real life is a challenge for European societies, and for the European project in general. Therefore, the expressive and imaginative solutions given to this conundrum in the British context through the genre of public television police drama remain significant and inspiring in the broader frame of European devolution, or multi-level governance.

Moreover, police drama might make the case for an understanding of public arts not only as forms of critical reflection on government abuse, but also as part and parcel of actual government, at least because they have a privileged access to streams of confidence and self-confidence that are vital for the process. 'Confidence' refers here to the bond between the public institutions and the public, while 'self-confidence' refers to the degree in which men and women working in public institutions believe in their mission.

8. Still, this is an actual roadmap, meaning that it leads to a way out and a solution. This stress is essential in sharply distinguishing my view on the representation of policing in *Line of Duty* from its exclusive understanding in terms of 'unfettered bureaucracy', as expressed in Jimenez-Morales (2017).

The logical extension of the current study would be a future analysis of the manner in which the suggested ordo-Baroque poetic government has been actually absorbed in Scandinavia, France, Italy, Spain, Germany, the Netherlands, and so on. It should also inquire whether, and in what forms, the genre was adopted in Eastern Europe (where the totalitarian legacy still weighs heavily on the perception, if not the actual functioning of police and policing). But for the moment, the argument was restricted to pointing out the resources offered by the British format for building a poetics of complex order, of multi-level governance that could prove instrumental to the configuration of a European political imaginary. Set in this perspective, the exploration of the origins and estimation of the ordo-Baroque cohesive potential of British police drama becomes an enterprise of European scale and import. And this, in spite of the objective irony that this awareness emerges at a time when Great Britain had officially left the European Union.

### Acknowledgements

This publication is part of ‘DETECT. Detecting Transcultural Identity in European Popular Crime Narratives’, a project that has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 770151. The publication reflects only the author’s view, and the Agency and the Commission are not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

### References

- Baetens J** (2005). Review of Ndaliansis (2004). *Leonardo* 38(1), 71–73.
- Baler P** (2016) *Latin American Neo-Baroque: Senses of Distortion*, translated by McGaha M. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Baltrušaitis J** (1977 [1969]) *Anamorphic Art*, translated by Strachan WJ. New York: Abrams.
- Benz A, in cooperation with Heinz D, Hornig E-Ch, Fischer-Hotzel A, Kemmerzell J, Petersohn B** (2016) *Constitutional Policy in Multilevel Government: The Art of Keeping the Balance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Calabrese O** (1992 [1987]) *Neo-Baroque: A Sign of the Times*, translated by Lambert C. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Degli-Esposti C** (1996) Sally Potter’s *Orlando* and the neo-baroque scopic regime. *Cinema Journal* 36(1), 75–93.
- Dollimore J** (1989) *Radical Tragedy*. London: Harvester.
- Egginton W** (2010) *The Theater of Truth: The Ideology of (Neo) Baroque Aesthetics*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Hadfield A** (2004) *Shakespeare and Renaissance Politics*. London: Arden Shakespeare.
- Hauser A** (1992 [1951]) *The Social History of Art, Volume II: Renaissance, Mannerism and Baroque*, translated by Godman S in collaboration with the author. London: Routledge.
- Hocke GR** (1987 [1957]) *Die Welt als Labyrinth: Manierismus in der europäischen Kunst und Literatur*. Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt.

- Howard JE** (1994) *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Irwin JT** (1994) *The Mystery to a Solution: Poe, Borges, and the Analytic Detective Story*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Jimenez-Morales M** (2017) Unfettered bureaucracy, narrative collapse: postmodern enemies in *Line of Duty*. In McElroy R (ed.), *Contemporary British Television Crime Drama: Cops on the Box*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 98–109.
- Langdon H** (2018) The baroque sublime: the affective power of landscape. In Beaven L and Ndalianis A (eds), *Emotion and the Seduction of the Senses, Baroque to Neo-Baroque*, Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, pp. 43–62.
- Lever JW** (1987 [1971]) *Tragedy of State: A Study of Jacobean Drama*. London: Methuen.
- Ling T** (2020) When is *Line of Duty* series 6 on TV? What's it about? Who's in it? *Radio Times*, Wednesday, 1 April. Available at: <https://www.radiotimes.com/news/on-demand/2020-04-01/line-of-duty-6/> (accessed 15 April 2020).
- McCabe J and Akass K** (eds) (2007) *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond*. London and New York: I.B. Tauris.
- Mercurio J** (2017) Script for *Line of Duty*, Series 4 – Episode 4. Available at: <http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/writersroom/scripts/Line-of-Duty-S4-Ep4-Post-Production-Script-UK-TX-Version.pdf> (accessed 15 April 2020).
- Mercurio J** (2019) Script for *Line of Duty*, Series 5 – Episode 2. Available at: <http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/writersroom/scripts/Line-of-Duty-Series5-Ep2-Post-Production-Script.pdf> (accessed 15 April 2020).
- Montrose L** (1996) *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Müller-Wood A** (2007) *The Theatre of Civilized Excess: New Perspectives on Jacobean Tragedy*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi.
- Ndalianis A** (2004) *Neo-Baroque Aesthetics and Contemporary Entertainment*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Nicholson R** (2019) 'It makes you go: Oh my God!' – how *Line of Duty* broke the laws of police shows: as BBC One's award-winning drama returns, Vicky McClure and co discuss the secrets behind its success. *The Guardian*, 23 March 2019. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2019/mar/23/it-makes-you-go-oh-my-god-how-line-of-duty-broke-the-laws-of-police-shows/> (accessed 15 April 2020).
- Ornstein R** (1960) *The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Redmond MJ** (2009) *Shakespeare, Politics, and Italy: Intertextuality on the Jacobean Stage*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate.
- Reed Doob P** (1990) *The Idea of the Labyrinth from Classical Antiquity through the Middle Ages*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- Ribner I** (1962) *Jacobean Tragedy: The Quest for Moral Order*. London: Methuen.
- Robinson A** (2020). *Line of Duty* series 6: cast, episodes, air date, plot and everything you need to know. *Digital Spy*, 18 March 2020. Available at: <https://www.digitalspy.com/tv/a27302777/line-of-duty-series-6-cast-episodes-trailer-air-date-plot/> (accessed 15 April 2020).
- Roe J** (2002) *Shakespeare and Machiavelli*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer.
- Skrine PN** (1978) *The Baroque: Literature and Culture in Seventeenth-Century Europe*. London: Methuen; New York: Holmes and Meier.
- Wikander MH** (2005) Something is rotten: English renaissance tragedies of state. In Bushnell R (ed.), *A Companion to Tragedy*. Malden and Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 307–327.

**Yachnin P** (1997) *Stage-Wrights: Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and the Making of Theatrical Value*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

### **About the Author**

**Caius Dobrescu** is a Professor at the University of Bucharest (Theory of Literature, Cultural Studies). He has written on literature and politics in Communist and post-Communist societies and on the interaction between the conflicting understandings of the notion of 'bourgeois culture' and the evolution of literary modernity from a global comparative perspective. As a Fulbright scholar affiliated with the Committee on Social Thought of the University of Chicago he has conducted research on terrorism and literary modernity.