Independent Scholar, Sydney Australia

Rachel Franks

Poker Faces: real-life crime fiction authors give writing advice to Richard Castle

Abstract:

The ABC Studios television series *Castle* first screened in the United States in 2009. This series revolves around Richard Castle (Nathan Fillion), a best selling crime fiction writer, and Kate Beckett (Stana Katic), a Homicide Detective with the New York Police Department. The series begins with Castle being contacted by Beckett to assist with a case that sees a killer enacting murders, in New York City, that reflect murders committed in Castle's novels. As a murderer sought inspiration from the fiction of Richard Castle, Richard Castle, in turn, seeks inspiration for a new series of crime fiction novels, the Nikki Heat series, from Kate Beckett. This paper outlines how the series conforms to, while simultaneously challenges, some of the widely accepted parameters of the crime fiction genre. In particular this paper looks at the non-traditional genre-crossing that is realised as Nathan Fillion, portraying the fictional fiction writer Richard Castle, is a participant in a set of poker games playing against various real-life authors – Stephen J. Cannell, James Patterson and others – who appear as themselves and, through performance, provide writing advice to their created counterpart. This paper also looks at the successful re-imagining of creative content as a popular television show informs a series of bestselling novels that are presented as being written by Richard Castle – the Nikki Heat series based on Kate Beckett, that feature dust jacket endorsements by the real-life authors who play poker with Castle – and which serve to blur the line that separates fact from fiction.

Biographical note:

Dr Rachel Franks is an educator, librarian and popular culture researcher based in Sydney, Australia. Rachel is the Area Chair, Biography and Life Writing and the Area Chair, Fiction for the Popular Culture Association of Australia and New Zealand. She is also a Member of the New South Wales Readers' Advisory Services Working Group. She has delivered creative writing workshops and numerous conference papers based on her research in the areas of crime fiction, food studies and information science. Her work can be found in various books, journals and magazines as well as on social media. Rachel was a guest at the 2012 Sydney Writers' Festival.

Key words:

Castle – Crime Fiction – Gender – Genre Theory – Self-Insertion – Writing

Introduction

The ABC Studios television series *Castle* first screened in the United States in 2009. This very popular series, now screened around the world, is, in 2013, entering its sixth season (Huffpost TV 2013). Set in New York City this police procedural, with a difference, revolves around Richard Castle (Nathan Fillion), a best selling crime fiction writer, and Kate Beckett (Stana Katic), a Homicide Detective with the 12th Precinct of the New York Police Department. Episode 1, Season 1 'Flowers for your Grave' begins with Castle being contacted by Beckett to assist with a case that sees a killer enacting murders, in New York City, that reflect some of the murders that have been committed in Castle's novels. Castle has just published his latest work; killing his most successful protagonist, Derrick Storm, and is looking for a new challenge. As a murderer sought inspiration from the fiction of Richard Castle, Castle, in turn, seeks inspiration for a new series of crime novels, the Nikki Heat series, from Beckett. Thus, the main premise of *Castle* – the professional creator of crime stories and the professional solver of crime cases working together, with very different investigative frameworks, to bring murderers to account – is realised. There is conflict between the two characters, and an almost inevitable romance, as the crime fiction master and his muse continue to solve homicides across the City.

The Formula: complying with and challenging the crime fiction genre

In many respects *Castle* is quite formulaic; a crime occurs, the opening credits roll, the clues are gathered and the murderer is identified. For creators the formula facilitates the 'rapid and efficient production of new works' (Cawelti 1976/1977: 9). For consumers the formula fulfils the expectations that have been built up around a certain genre. Such expectations can then be refined around a particular series allowing for a descriptive designation – first the name of a genre and then the title of a series – to tell 'in advance what will transpire' (Derrida 1980: 203). In labelling a text as crime fiction readers know, in advance, there will be the committing of a crime, or at least the suspicion of a crime (Cole 2004: 11), and the story, which unfolds, will revolve around the efforts of an amateur or professional detective to solve that crime (Scaggs 2005: 59). Jacques Derrida asserted that: 'as soon as genre announces itself, one must respect a norm' (1980: 203).

It is argued here crime fiction is especially compliant in respecting the norms of genre, that the occurrence of a crime, usually murder, offers a very dramatic announcement. Furthermore, a significant body of work has emerged dedicated to defining the crime fiction genre and sub-genres resulting in labels such as clue puzzle, hardboiled, police procedural and thriller amongst many others (Franks 2011). Superimposed upon the most basic convention of the crime fiction genre, and a 'taxonomic exuberance' (Derrida 1980: 206) to define sub-genres, is a suite of elements that crime fiction readers have come to anticipate. These elements include: the investigation of ideas of right and wrong; that from 'previous experience and from certain cultural conventions associated with this genre that ultimately the mystery will be fully explained' (Zunshine 2006: 122); and the issues of gender that are enacted through male and female investigators.

The treatment of gender within *Castle* is quite extreme because power is reallocated from Beckett to Castle in both the personal and professional spheres. It has been suggested that, while the characters within this television series are stereotypes that have all been seen before, there are sufficient quirks to ensure they all appear fresh and new (Dawn 2013). The reality is the gross reinforcement of conventional gender roles. Joy Palmer acknowledges that gender does not offer a stable category of meaning (2001: 55) but for feminist crime fiction scholars – including Kathleen Gregory Klein who notes 'detective fiction follows rather than parallels social reality' (1988/1995: 1), with not all changes being positive, and Sally Munt's work which unpacks gender within the genre by playing on the title of P.D. James' *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman* (1972) by asking is it 'an unsuitable genre for a woman?' (1994) – gender is a serious matter of concern within crime fiction. Moreover, gendered issues persist despite recent decades witnessing the emergence of many strong women protagonists, created by women writers. Palmer questions if such characters serve as 'patriarchy's patsies' (2001: 57) as these works often fail to challenge an 'ultimately conservative position on criminality and social deviancy' while men are often relied upon to complete the narrative (2001: 57-58). This reinforces a trend of women not being 'allowed to go through to the end' and male characters being required to resolve a case (Knight 2004: 40).

In *Castle* authority, on the surface, resides with the woman investigator Kate Beckett. It is she who is employed by the City of New York, who is determined and intelligent, who carries a badge and carries a gun. In contrast Richard Castle is self-employed, engages in juvenile behaviour, his adjunct status with the 12th Precinct reinforced by a bulletproof vest displaying the word 'WRITER' instead of 'POLICE'. The authority is, however, shifted to the male investigator, as it is Castle's actions and input that are regularly critical to the solving of a case. Castle's male-ness is continually asserted, likewise is Beckett's female-ness: the double-entendre of the name Nikki Heat – the novels written by Castle based on Beckett – focusing on her as a woman and not on her as a police officer. The sexualisation of the relationship confirms this as the 'marriage plot now dominant, the male character is granted control; both the fictional plot and the social reality guarantee his dominance' (Klein 1988/1995: 40). The names Castle and Beckett are also, as seen in the tabloid treatment of celebrity couples, conjoined as 'Caskett' within the series further diminishing not just Beckett's professional status but also her personal identity.

Gender, alongside the stories about what is right and what is wrong, and the consistent resolution of every crime committed within the series indicates that *Castle* belongs to the genre of crime fiction. As Derrida has pointed out though:

> [...] a text would not *belong* to any genre. Every text *participates* in one or several genres, there is no genreless text, there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging (1980: 230).

Derrida is correct in suggesting a single text does not belong to a single genre. *Castle* can be utilised as a simple case study to prove this point. It would, for example, be a relatively straightforward task for consumers and critics to label this series as crime fiction and suggest it belongs to this genre. The series, through compliance with a

formula commonly associated with crime stories certainly enables the self-identification of *Castle* as crime fiction. A closer inspection reveals this television series, as well as the novels the series has inspired, do, in fact, participate across a range of genres challenging any claim that *Castle* belongs exclusively to the crime fiction genre. The participation of *Castle* in numerous genres, from readily assumed to more surprising crossovers, can be seen in a brief examination of one aspect of the series: the poker games Richard Castle plays against real-life authors.

Poker Faces: playing a game and playing with genre

One of the key differences between the two central characters within *Castle* can be seen in how they approach problem solving: Beckett discusses issues with her colleagues; Castle plays poker. The men who play poker with Castle include Stephen J. Cannell, James Patterson, Michael Connelly and Dennis Lehane. Nathan Fillion portrays the fictional fiction writer, Richard Castle, as a participant in these poker games, while the various real-life authors – all of whom can be described as giants of crime fiction and of storytelling – appear as themselves. Viewers who are aficionados of crime fiction know these real-life authors well, or at least know of them, while they learn about Richard Castle as the series progresses. Each episode offers new insights into Castle's character. It is worth noting Castle's official author biography, for the Nikki Heat series of novels, reads:

> Richard Castle is the author of numerous bestsellers, including the critically acclaimed Derrick Storm series. His first novel, *In a Hail of Bullets*, published while he was still in college, received the Nom DePlume Society's prestigious Tom Straw Award for Mystery Literature. Castle currently lives in Manhattan with his daughter and mother, both of whom infuse his life with humor and inspiration (dust jacket *Naked Heat* 2009).

The poker games that are played serve to disturb the traditional boundaries of the real and the imagined as the real-life authors, through performance, provide meaningful, if often playful, writing advice to their fictional counterpart. These games also demonstrate how *Castle* participates in an assortment of genres: not just the crime fiction genre. The concept of genre crossover is not new but such inter-weavings are often acknowledged as genres in their own right such as the paranormal novel which crosses over into the romance novel is now referred to as paranormal-romance. The crime fiction genre regularly engages in crossovers as seen in crime-romance (as exhibited through the romance between Castle and Beckett), crime-adventure and crime-science fiction to name but a few.

There are only a few poker games to analyse, while the games themselves are very short, running for only a few minutes each. This lack of material is, predominantly, due to scheduling issues and the willingness of authors to appear on screen. In an interview, the creator of *Castle* Andrew Marlowe, advised his own taste in mysteries 'runs more to Agatha Christie and Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe', but went on to say:

> I'd love to see Stephen King in one […]. The last time we approached [King's] reps, there wasn't that level of interest, so [there were]

> complications with scheduling. What people don't realize is that these guys are really busy and that selling books these days is a full-time job, and they're often on book tour (Marlowe in Gray 2010).

Marlow also stated he hopes to incorporate a game where women are also players but explained this has not happened yet because: 'Some of the ladies we have approached have not been excited about going in front of the camera' (Marlowe in Gray 2010). A game with women players may assist in counter-acting the traditional gender roles that are promoted through *Castle*'s two central protagonists.

Castle often discusses the cases he is working on with Beckett at these poker games under the guise of writing another book: the fact being further disturbed as the fiction, is itself another fiction. Overlaid upon these boundary distortions, challenging what is true and what is not; is a set of genre crossovers that can be extracted from a review of the dialogue that drives these poker games. These crossovers are not unexpected for a television series. Jason Mittell has written that: 'Every aspect of television exhibits a reliance on genre' (2001:3) but, as Brian Woodman explains, genre theorists have 'exploded the previous understanding of television genres as fixed, text-based categories, and have begun to reconceptualise genre as a fluid process informed by production and audience' (2005: 939). What is unexpected, in the case of *Castle*, is the mix of these crossovers.

Creative Practice: crime fiction and the crime fiction writing guide

The first, and most obvious, crossover is crime fiction-writing guide. A key theme of the poker games is what makes crime fiction the type of fiction it is: the hallmarks of the genre. The creative writing guide and, more specifically, the creative writing guide for crime fiction writers is becoming increasingly prevalent. The core concept of such materials is to guide writers through the development of character, setting and story. This advice is also available through the poker games played in *Castle*.

In 'Flowers for your Grave' both Cannell and Patterson complain about the lack of a twist, a crime fiction staple. Cannell and Patterson also make reference to the determined investigator advising: 'That's what your story needs – the character who thinks the kid's innocent keeps digging until he finds the truth.' As the absence of the twist is lamented, its presence is celebrated when Castle talks about his latest case in 'Deep in Death'. Cannell says: 'It's a pretty good story, Ricky. Yeah, it's got a big opening, major twist.' Connelly agrees, even though he claims: 'I gotta say, I saw that whole drug mule thing coming.' A similar conversation takes place at the poker game in 'A Deadly Game'. Cannell is animated about Castle's work: 'A murder in the middle of a spy game where nobody knows what's going on? I like that.' Connelly nods in agreement: 'The Ukrainians are a nice twist.'

Motive, another essential component of any crime fiction story, is also explored in 'Deep in Death'. Castle advises: 'So, we've explained the money, the gadgets and the briefcase. The only thing we can't explain, why was he killed?' Patterson suggests that: 'Maybe that's because you're looking in the wrong place. If I was writing this, the murder would have nothing to do with the spy game, except that it gave the killer

an opportunity to act.' Connelly agrees: 'Knowing that the trappings of the game would cover his tracks. […] I'd spend more time looking at your victim and less time looking at the game.' It is in this episode that Cannell provides what is, perhaps, the best advice given in this series: 'Look, Rick, as much trouble as we go to with these novels, there's only three reasons to commit a murder: love, money and to cover up a crime.' This instruction can be found, though not so succinctly, in many of the creative writing guides dedicated to the crime fiction genre.

Writer's Block: crime fiction and the creative writing guide

In *Castle* discussions around writer's block are often a cover for another type of creative block: one in which Castle and Beckett are having problems solving a case. Writer's block is also addressed in many creative writing guides. Some practitioners doubt the existence of these blocks but authors including Dianne Doubtfire recognise that for some writers there are occasions where 'there are no words, no new ideas' (1978/1998: 90).

As Beckett goes over clues with her colleagues and stares at the murder board, Castle turns to authors for investigative inspiration. Indeed, Castle believes that all cases are a story. In 'Flowers for your Grave' the solution seems too neat and Castle complains to Beckett that the wrong man has been charged with murder because it makes a terrible story, nobody would buy that book. Beckett counters this is not a story; this is real life. So, Castle takes the case to a poker game under the guise the case is the plotline for his new novel: 'I'm working on this thing. It starts with a famous author. Some psycho starts staging murders like the way he does in his books.' Castle goes on to explain: 'So, crime scenes are clean. Doesn't leave any fingerprints, doesn't leave any DNA. But the psycho writes the author a fan letter with his prints all over it. Well, that leads the cops to his apartment where they find enough evidence to convict him.'

Cannell asks: 'And then?' Castle advises: 'That's it.' Patterson complains: 'That's terrible. No wonder you're blocked.' Cannell takes it further: 'And here's another thing, the guy doesn't leave his prints at the scene of the crime, but he sends a letter with his prints on it? You lost me there.' Castle knows that the story does not work and digs further, eventually unmasking the real killer. This reinforces the advice provided in guides that focus on the development of plot as a force that 'correlates images, events and people' (Tobias 1993: 5): in crime fiction if the plot does not work then the characters and the setting cannot be expected to work either.

Competition: crime fiction and the business manual

Perhaps the most surprising crossover is crime fiction-business manual, generated out of a recurring theme across these poker games of competition. In 'Flowers for your Grave' Patterson is pleased that Castle has decided to stop publishing Derrick Storm novels, saying: 'Castle, I'm kind of glad that you killed off Storm. Less competition.'

There are also explicit comments around money, and how much each of these authors makes, with gentle jibes made during the games. These comments explore ambition,

competition and success while acknowledging the risk of failure. For example, in 'Flowers for your Grave' Patterson challenges Cannell to raise the stakes: 'Cough up some of that TV money and you'll find out' while Cannell criticises Castle for deciding not to write more Derrick Storm novels: 'You know, you never should've killed off Storm. That was a big mistake. I would've retired him. Or crippled him. The man was money' and 'my boy, Shane Scully's going to be fuelling my private jet long after people have all forgotten about Storm.' Patterson, well known for his prolific output, agrees: 'You don't see me putting a bullet through Alex Cross' head.'

In 'Deep in Death' Castle works hard to convince both Cannell and Connelly, who have written, in real life, about murder and poker to help him into a high steaks poker game as part of a case he is working on with Beckett. Cannell thinks such a move is a bad idea: 'What, are you nuts? Those are crooks and killers down there.' Connelly agrees: 'Look, Ricky. Doing the research is one thing, but the Russian mafia? The Triad? You tangle with those people, and all the best sellers in the world are not gonna protect you.' Castle knows they speak the truth but returns to the theme of money to argue his point: 'I know, I know. I don't plan on tangling. I'm just gonna be another rich, bored thrill-seeker looking to try my luck down there.'

The link between earnings and output, an important theme within the business manual, is identified in 'A Deadly Game' when Patterson advises Castle: 'Personally, I'd spend more time writing and less time hanging out with your cop friend. I mean, really, Ricky. Just one book a year?' Cannell supports Patterson: 'Kind of thin, Rick.' In 'The Dead Pool' Connelly makes the same point, a little more bluntly, when a new player joins a game: 'You know what I did after I wrote my first novel? I shut up and I wrote twenty-three more.' One of the ultimate prizes for the crime fiction writer, the film adaptation, is also discussed as a form of competition in 'The Dead Pool'.

Real Life: crime fiction and the self-help manual

There is also some advice for real-life scenarios, similar to the advice found in self-help manuals designed to assist people through processes from building relationships to dealing with grief. In 'Deep in Death', after Castle convinces Cannell and Connelly to help him into a, dangerous, Triad-run poker game, Cannell says: 'You must really like her.' Castle tries to avoid the comment but Cannell is persistent: 'That police detective of yours. Look, Rick. There's only one reason that you'd be dumb enough to go down there, and that's to impress a girl. Why don't you cut yourself a little slack and just buy her some flowers?'

The real-life authors also comment on the idea of the burden of fame. In 'The Dead Pool' Castle takes fellow fictional fiction writer, début novelist Alex Conrad, to a poker game. Conrad is overwhelmed by the idea of playing poker with crime writing legends: 'It's really awesome to meet you guys. I am a, uh, huge fan.' Connelly's response is gruff: 'It's not a book signing, kid. We're here to play poker.' The poker game in this episode also looks at how grief is acknowledged, and the different ways that we deal with the loss of a friend. After Cannell's untimely death in 2010, Conrad goes to sit down and is stopped by Castle: 'That's Cannell's seat.' Lehane explains: 'That's the rule. We lose a member, nobody sits there for a year'.

Poker Faces: guest appearances and self-insertion

There are some significant creative manoeuvres generated as a result of these author appearances. Concentrating on crime fiction, the genre has witnessed many examples of guest appearances including Stephen King who appears as a minister in *Pet Semetary* (1989), John Le Carré who appears as a guest at an MI6 party in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (2011) and Lee Child who appears as a police officer in *Jack Reacher* (2012). These guest appearances offer a single rather than a recurring role and in each instance the authors do not appear as themselves but as a minor character. This is different to the real-life authors who appear not only as themselves in *Castle* but also appear on multiple occasions. The manoeuvre here is not one of curiosity for the viewer but one which is integral to individual episodes and an overarching narrative that allows *Castle* to present more than a series of stories: it presents a series of conversations that articulate how this television program participates in the crime fiction genre while also participating in a range of other genres.

Self-insertion is another mechanism that facilitates the appearance of an author, including crime fiction authors, but within a text rather than on the small or large screens. One of the better-known crime fiction self-insertions is Agatha Christie's Ariadne Oliver, a woman who reflects many of the author's own opinions and traits, including a distinct distaste for her most famous creation. Agatha Christie grew to dislike Hercule Poirot (Cook 2013: 92) while Ariadne Oliver 'wrote detective stories with a foreign-born hero, Finnish Sven Hjerson, whom she came to detest' (Barnett 2006: 79). Both women also shared some physical features, a mild feminism and a 'fondness for apples' (Barnett 2006: 79). There is a form of self-insertion in *Castle* with the show's creator revealing that Beckett is closer to who he is but Castle is closer to who he would like to be, claiming: 'There's a lot of wish-projection in the Castle character, while in real life I'm a little more like Beckett – too serious for my own good' (Marlowe in Dawn 2013).

Again, the pokers faces offer a point of difference: a new type of creative manoeuvre. As argued above these real-life authors, who appear as themselves to provide writing advice, are not conforming to the mainstream concept of the guest appearance. Similarly, these authors are not the fulfilment of a self-insertion process. Cannell, Patterson and others present their own opinions and display their own traits but this occurs in plain sight rather than under the cover of a character created for the purpose of communicating these opinions and traits. Most importantly these appearances are achieved via invitation not their own initiative. Neither are they an author surrogate, an unintentional insertion, these appearances are deliberate and well planned.

The Nikki Heat Novels: a creative manoeuvre or just clever marketing?

In addition to the poker games discussed briefly above, this paper also looks at the novels, all of which have featured on bestseller lists, that are presented as being written by Richard Castle – the Nikki Heat series of novels based on Kate Beckett, that feature dust jacket endorsements by the real-life authors who play poker with Castle – and which serve to further blur the line that separates fact from fiction. Of special interest in a discussion of these novels is the narrative frame. Such frames

accompany every text (Frow 2006: 28) but the frame for *Castle*, constructed out of a range of paratextual devices – advertising, book covers, dedications and endorsements – is very elaborate. This is an attempt to specify 'genre expectations' (Berlatsky 2009: 164) and declare the books belong to the crime fiction genre despite only participating in this and other genres.

There are, to date, five Nikki Heat novels: *Heat Wave* (2009), *Naked Heat* (2010), *Heat Rises* (2011), *Frozen Heat* (2012) and *Deadly Heat* (2013) all with Richard Castle presented as the writer of these works, including an author biography and a glossy author photograph. It is worthwhile noting these novels are published at the rate of just one per year in a reflection of the criticism, directed at Castle, by Patterson in one of the poker games: 'I mean, really, Ricky. Just one book a year?' This reinforces the timeline of creative output defined on screen. Yet it is Patterson who provides the endorsement on the front cover of *Heat Wave*, enthusing: 'Castle hasn't lost it. *Heat Wave* looks like another bestseller for the thrillmaster. It's hot!' Cannell provides a second endorsement, for the back cover, playing with the idea of Castle's work with Beckett, being for research purposes for his next book, stating: 'Rick Castle must have been doing his research because Nikki Heat has the unmistakable ring of truth. This book is gold. Couldn't put it down! I'm getting jealous.' In another reference to Richard Castle's research at Kate Beckett's place of work is the novel's dedication that reads: 'To the extraordinary KB and all my friends at the 12th.' The subsequent additions to the series all present similar paratexts.

In the series *Castle* Richard Castle is a bestselling crime fiction author, the novels published by Hyperion Books, a house owned by ABC Studios, realise this fiction as a fact. The books have all been made available in hardcover, have all made bestseller lists including the lists for the *New York Times* and *USA Today*, and are all completely in character. Richard Castle also has his own website in addition to his own author pages of the online outlets for major book retailers such as Barnes & Noble and Amazon while Nathan Fillion appears at book signings and recently hosted the Writers' Guild of America West Coast Awards Ceremony (Writers' Guild 2012).

The relationship between fact and fiction can be complex (Arnold 2007) this complexity can be seen in how these books present a fictionalised account of the television series *Castle*: as if the characters and the stories of the show are 'real' and only the derivatives are 'fiction'. This offers another genre crossover: the crime fiction novel and the fictional autobiography. Donna Lee Brien has, in her work on autobiographical and biographical writing, examined how readers can feel 'conned' if they realise the author is lying to them (2002). Of course the fictional autobiography makes no claim of truth. For these works the line that delineates fact and fiction is even more distorted as, while the Nikki Heat novels are purported to be fiction based on fact, both the fiction and the fact are inventions: we do not expect either to be true.

Yet numerous efforts are made to encourage viewers and readers to willingly engage in the suspension of disbelief (Coleridge 1817/1852: 442): if we believe, temporarily at least, in the television series will we not also believe in the novels? Elisa Galgut argues there are dossiers, or sets, of beliefs and each person is able to hold multiple dossiers of belief (2002: 194): can this be applied to a fictional television series and

the fictionalised novels which are based on that series? *Heat Wave* certainly aims to demonstrate the similarities between Richard Castle and Kate Beckett of the televised fiction and Jameson Rook and Nikki Heat of the printed fiction:

> Mystery sensation Richard Castle, […], introduces his newest character, NYPD Homicide Detective Nikki Heat. Tough, sexy, professional, Nikki Heat carries a passion for justice as she leads one of New York City's top homicide squads. She's hit with an unexpected challenge when the commissioner assigns super-star magazine journalist Jameson Rook to ride along with her to research an article on New York's finest. Pulitzer Prize-winning Rook is as much a handful as he is handsome. […] (dust jacket).

Nathan Fillion portrays Richard Castle who is reimagined, by Richard Castle, in a novel as Jameson Rook while Stana Katic portrays Kate Beckett who is reimagined, by Richard Castle, in the same novel as Nikki Heat. The novels also reflect other aspects of the television series, including plotlines and secondary characters, reinforcing the idea the series is fact and the novels are fiction. The result is the successful re-imagining of creative content as a popular television show informs a series of bestselling novels. This is a creative manoeuvre and a clever marketing ploy as fans of one format, the series or the novel, will more easily engage with the other format and so generate increases in audience numbers and book sales.

Frozen Heat differs slightly, from earlier novels, in that there are no endorsements and the dedication is more subtle than previous efforts: 'To all the remarkable, maddening, challenging, frustrating people who inspire us to do great things.' This is a reference to the episode 'Always' in which Richard Castle first declares his love for Kate Beckett. This dedication is intended as a private token but is, in fact, quite public as while only 'Beckett is going to know the true meaning of that dedication and what it means to the both of them' (Jennings 2012) anyone who has seen the episode and reviewed the book will make the connection. *Deadly Heat*, the most recent novel, also lacks endorsements but features other paratextual devices to reinforce the fiction circulating around the fiction.

Conclusion

Castle is a multi-award winning television program – winning fan-based and industry prizes – that blurs the traditional lines that work to separate fact and fiction. Instead of a series of demarcation disputes, the formula works well and continually opens up opportunities for play. Of particular interest in *Castle* are the issues of gender and the way the series participates in a variety of genres. Also of interest is the distortion of the boundaries that delineate fact from fiction that can be seen in the poker games played by Richard Castle with real-life authors and the series of bestselling novels, presented through a highly stylised narrative frame, as being written by Richard Castle and based on Kate Beckett. It is surprising to note that, despite the general popularity of *Castle* as well as a more active and passionate fan base the series has been able to establish, there is little that has been written on this television program. This paper is an attempt to redress the absence of scholarly attention on a series that has much to offer to the fields of creative writing and of popular culture.

List of works cited

Arnold, Josie 2007 'Meeting the Platypus: when fact equals fiction' in *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Programs* 11:2, at http://www.textjournal.com.au/oct07/arnold.htm (accessed 10 December 2013)

Barnett, Colleen 2006 *Mystery Women: an encyclopaedia of leading women characters in mystery fiction*, Scotsdale, US: Poisoned Pen P

Berlatsky, Eric 2009 'Lost in the Gutter: within and between frames in narrative and narrative theory' in *Narrative* 17:2, 162-87

Brien, Donna Lee 2002 'Being Honest about Lying: defining the limits of auto/biographical writing' in *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Programs* 6:1, at http://www.textjournal.com.au/april02/brien.htm (accessed 10 December 2013)

Cawelti, John G. 1976/1977 *Adventure, Mystery and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture*, Chicago: U of Chicago P

Castle, Richard 2009 *Heat Wave*, New York: Hyperion

Castle, Richard 2010 *Naked Heat*, New York: Hyperion

Castle, Richard 2011 *Heat Rises*, New York: Hyperion

Castle, Richard 2012 *Frozen Heat*, New York: Hyperion

Castle, Richard 2013 *Deadly Heat*, New York: Hyperion

Cole, Cathy 2004 *Private Dicks and Feisty Chicks: an interrogation of crime fiction*, Fremantle: Curtin UP

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor 1817/1852 *Biographia Literaria: or, biographical sketches of my literary life and opinions*, 2nd ed, New York: William Gowans

Cook, Cathy 2013 *The Agatha Christie Miscellany*, Stroud, UK: The History P

Derrida, Jacques 1980 'The Law of Genre', in Avital Ronnell (trans) *Glyph*, 7, 202-32

Doubtfire, Dianne 1978/1998 *The Craft of Novel-Writing*, London: Allison & Busby

Franks, Rachel 2011 'May I Suggest Murder?: an overview of crime fiction for readers' advisory services staff' in *Australian Library Journal,* 60:2, 133-43

Frow, John 2006 *Genre: the new critical idiom*, Abingdon, UK: Routledge

Galgut, Elisa 2002 'Poetic Faith and Prosaic Concerns: a defense of suspension of disbelief' *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 21:3, 190-99

Gray, Ellen 2010 '*Castle's* Poker Game Features Real Life Authors', in *Philadelphia: Philly dot Com*, at http://articles.philly.com/2010-10-04/entertainment/24999694_1_poker-game-latest-book-richard-castle (accessed 14 August 2013)

Huffpost TV 2013 '*Castle* Renewed: ABC Re-Ups Hit Drama for Season 6', in *Huffington Post*, at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/10/castle-renewed-season-6_n_3148816.html (accessed 20 August 2013)

Jennings, Kate 2012 'Dedication for *Castle* Tie-In Book 'Frozen Heat' Revealed', in *Examiner: Arts & Entertainment*, at http://www.examiner.com/article/dedication-for-castle-tie-book-frozen-heat-revealed (accessed 20 August 2013)

Klein, Kathleen Gregory 1988/1995 *The Woman Detective: gender and genre*, 2nd ed, Chicago: University of Illinois Press

Marlowe, Andrew W. (Writer) Bowman, Rob (Director) 2009 *Castle: Flowers for your Grave*. Burbank: ABC Studios

Marlowe, Andrew W. (Writer) Bowman, Rob (Director) 2009 *Castle: Deep in Death*. Burbank: ABC Studios

Marlowe, Andrew W. (Writer) Bowman, Rob (Director) 2010 *Castle: A Deadly Game*. Burbank: ABC Studios

Marlowe, Andrew W. and Grae, D. (Writers) Bleckner, Jeff (Director) 2011 *Castle: Nikki Heat*. Burbank: ABC Studios

Marlowe, Andrew W. and Pyken, Matt (Writers) Halohan, Paul (Director) 2011 *Castle: The Dead Pool*. Burbank: ABC Studios

Marlowe, Andrew W. and Miller, Terri Edna (Writer) Bowman, Rob (Director) 2012 *Castle: Always*. Burbank: ABC Studios

Marlow, Andrew W. in Dawn, Randee 2013 '*Castle* Thrives on Romance, Nathan Fillion's Dedicated Fans', in *Variety*, at http://variety.com/2013/tv/features/castle-thrives-on-romance-nathan-fillion-fans-1200330509/#!1/castle/ (accessed 20 August 2013)

Marlowe, Andrew W. in Gray, Ellen 2010 'Castle's Poker Game Features Real Life Authors', in *Philadelphia: Philly dot Com*, at http://articles.philly.com/2010-10-04/entertainment/24999694_1_poker-game-latest-book-richard-castle (accessed 14 August 2013)

Mittell, Jason 2001 'A Cultural Approach to Television Genre Theory' in *Cinema Journal*, 40:3, 3-24

Munt, Sally R. 1994 *Murder by the Book? feminism and the crime novel*, London: Routledge

Palmer, Joy 2001 'Tracing Bodies: Gender, Genre and Forensic Detective Fiction' in *South Central Review*, 18:3-4, 54-71

Scaggs, John 2005 *Crime Fiction: the new critical idiom*, London: Routledge

Tobias, Ronald B. 1993 *20 Master Plots (and how to build them)*, Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books

Woodman, Brian J. 2005 'Escaping Genre's Village: fluidity and genre mixing in television's *The Prisoner*' in *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 38:5, 939-56

Writers' Guild of America 2012 '*Castle* Star Nathan Fillion Set to Host 2013 Writers Guild Awards West Coast Show', in *Writers' Guild of America*, Los Angeles: Writers' Guild of America, at http://www.wga.org/content/default.aspx?id=5108 (accessed 14 August 2013)

Zunshine, L. 2006 *Why We Read Fiction: theory of mind and the novel*, Columbus, US: Ohio State UP