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Order and Disorder: Rational Acumen and Emotional Incompetence in the Television Detective Story

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Abstract

'Order and Disorder' examines the relationship between emotional disorders and the exquisite rationality of contemporary televisions detectives as portrayed in such series as *Monk* (USA), *House* (Fox), and *Cracker* (ITV). Television heroes who combine both emotionality and rationality would seem a more integrated form of human characterization. However, the permitted configuration of emotion and reason is highly constrained. Theirs is an ongoing struggle between thinking and feeling, in which rationality is their gift and emotionality, depicted as illness, is the constant curse that both threatens and enables their gift.

These characters' conflicts become a barometer for contemporary attitudes about emotional disorders, which continue the common Western motif that intellectual or creative genius must suffer simultaneously from emotional madness. Such characters raise important questions. How, precisely, is mental illness able to aid and abet powers of rationality? In what ways can one be brilliant but 'emotionally incompetent'? What are the mechanisms by which emotional disorder can exist simultaneous to but without disruption of consummate rational professionalism?

In order to consider these questions, the chapter turns to scholarly analyses and critiques of the relationship between reason and emotion in Western philosophy since the Enlightenment. Assessed, in particular, are notions of the possibility of 'pure' rationality, measured against all that such conceptualizations necessarily must exclude or deny. Finally, using textual analysis of key scenes, the chapter explores how these issues are addressed and managed in the television series under discussion. The conclusion reached is that these detectives require and, in fact, demonstrate considerable emotional competence in their professional activities, but the narrative contexts in which they perform actively work to deny that this is the case.

Key Words: Emotions, emotional disorders, mental illness, madness, reason, rationality, television detectives, police genre.

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1. Introduction

Consensus exists that the detective story comes to fruition in the nineteenth century with the publication of Poe's 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' in 1841 and 'The Purloined Letter' in 1845, followed by Conan Doyle's first Sherlock Holmes tale in 1887.[1] Bennett argues that considerable critical attention has been devoted to the detective story precisely because its origin in time and its social sources can be pinpointed. He describes the genre's genesis in '[i]deologies of individualism, of science and rationality; the development of the city; the development of police forces and related forms of surveillance.'[2]

In an influential account, Bloch traces the derivation of the detective story to the previous century, to the development in the mid-1700s of the evidentiary trial with its demands for the kind of proof that evidence and deliberation provide.[3] Sumser argues that the detective story is the result of Enlightenment empirical science and principles of cause and effect, in the model of Francis Bacon. 'It was this idea that the truth could be found by looking and exploring and testing that was required before the mystery genre could develop.'[4] Similarly, Thompson describes detective fiction as positioned 'within the historical context of Enlightenment societies….guided by Enlightenment values and judicial procedures.'[5]

Here I would like to explore one of the origins cited by Bennett – rationality – in order to weigh the legacy of the Age of Reason's structuration of reason and emotion on the detective narrative. I consider a particular strand of the detective genre in which the central character embodies, simultaneously, impeccable rationality with irrational emotionality. Specifically, my examples are the American television series, *Monk* (USA, 2002-2009) and *House* (Fox, 2004 to 2012), with some references to Britain's *Cracker* (ITV, 1993-1996). Although *House* is a medical show I include it here because it is structured like a detective mystery in which the culprit is the elusive disease that must be tracked down through symptoms that function as clues. David Shore, the creator of *House,* indicates that Sherlock Holmes was a key inspiration for Gregory House, indicated by the play on their surnames.[6]

One tradition of the television detective formula follows lead characters who are intended to represent reason in its purity, with no emotions exhibited by the detectives or, supposedly, included in the narrative. Examples of this tendency include *Dragnet* (1951-1959; 1967-1970) and *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (2000 to present), the latter in particular with the Gil Grissom character.[7] Being wholly professional in this formula means, first, that emotions do not intrude upon the business of crime-solving and, second, that the detective is represented as having no, or the most minimal, personal life. Personality, in the sense of feelings, quirks, desires, and aversions are largely absent because they are perceived, like emotionality, as flaws and biases.

However, an alternate, more contemporary approach to television detection focuses on the personalities and personal lives of the lead characters as crucial parts of the narrative. Shows in this grouping are premised on a conflict within the central character in which professional brilliance is displayed along with serious emotional damage and an unsuccessful personal life. In these cases, the meanings and pleasures provided by internalized character conflict are at least equivalent to the dramatic satisfactions derived from the cases solved. It is the struggle between reason and emotion that renders these characters and their turmoil both complex and fascinating.

2. The Disordered Television Detective

Adrian Monk (Tony Shalhoub) and Gregory House (Hugh Laurie) are rational geniuses who also embody emotional aspects that are very literal forms of disorder. In these characters, reason and emotion are in constant, active, and irreconcilable struggle. Elsewhere I have argued that in such a dichotomized, internal dynamic, emotion is almost always represented as 'the problem.' Further, both shows suggest that emotional disorder is the price Monk and House must pay for their intense brilliance.[8]

Adrian Monk suffers from obsessive-compulsive disorder and assorted phobias. His illness resulted in his discharge from the San Francisco Police Department. However, his brilliance as a detective leads to his ongoing freelance work as a consultant for the SFPD. The series draws attention to the debilitating nature of severe OCD, particularly the intense anxiety and fear it provokes, the time and energy required for OCD-related activities, and the inability to function successfully in professional, social, or personal capacities.

Anxiety disorders, which is how OCD is classified in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV), are emotional disorders not illnesses of reason. They are not, in themselves, accompanied by visual or audio hallucinations or other symptoms we associate with disconnection from a commonly shared 'reality.' Indeed, one of the more interesting aspects of those who suffer from OCD is the awareness that their behavior is abnormal or excessive but the accompanying anxiety compels them, nonetheless, to perform their OCD-related activities.

Adrian Monk exhibits three classic symptoms of OCD: first, symmetry and ordering; second, obsessions and checking; and third, cleanliness and washing.[9] Although not explicitly specified in the program, we could assume that a symptom like symmetry and ordering might aid Monk's intellectual capacities in that it enables him to see patterns or breaks in patterns. He is able to rapidly assess what has been added, what is missing, or what is out of place at crime scenes or in other people's behaviors. But it is less clear how obsessions and checking, cleanliness and washing, or any of his specific phobias, for example, heights,

crowds, and physical contact might enhance rather than diminish his intellectual acumen.

Yet the series is built on a long-standing Western motif which links emotional disorders with enhanced creativity or genius. The program repeatedly suggests that Monk's OCD fuels or somehow purifies his intellectual powers of reason. The character, Monk, is a combination of excessive rationality and excessive emotionality, the latter represented by his OCD, and we are meant to understand that his extreme emotionality is somehow essential to his exquisite powers of reason.

Similarly, Gregory House, as a fan website describes him, is 'an observational genius with the ability to see a pattern in small things and draw conclusions from that,' providing a description of both House and the rational process.[10] House has an unspecified mood or personality disorder and, additionally, for much of the series he is addicted to Vicodin.

In keeping with the traditional Western view, both *Monk* and *House* treat reason and emotion in their main characters as antithetical yet corollary categories. Reason and emotion can never be reconciled or productively co-exist, yet disorder is necessary for the operations of exceptional reason. Further, much of both programs focus on how the lead characters manage the reason/emotion dichotomy. And neither series attempts to explain how, precisely, damaging emotionality might abet or actively enable brilliant rationality.

It is also worth noting that neither of these characters suffer their emotional difficulties in isolation or with quiet forbearance. They are depicted as singularly difficult, self-absorbed, immature, and socially isolated individuals. Monk is fearful, paranoid, selfish, and often petty. He has an emotional disorder that simultaneously causes emotional disorder in his relationships with other people. House is cruel to others, disdainful, misanthropic, and either coldly indifferent or overtly hurtful to patients and colleagues. He is a miserable person in both senses of the term: in how he treats others and in what his own existence is like.

I would like to mention one more program that fits into the model I've been describing: ITV's *Cracker*. For this, I turn to a scholarly analysis provided by Glen Creeber. Creeber describes *Cracker's* lead character, Fitz (Robbie Coltrane), as a 'masculine archetype' of the hard-boiled detective, 'relying almost wholly on reason to understand and decode the world around him.'[11] So, in his considerable professional skills as a forensic psychologist for the Manchester Police Force, Fitz is a controlled individual, driven by rationality, not emotionality. Yet, once again, Fitz's more disastrous personality and personal life are a crucial part of the show's narrative. He is an alcoholic, chain-smoking, compulsive gambler whose wife has left him because of his affair with a female colleague, a police officer. As the brilliant forensic psychologist says to his wife, 'Emotionally, I'm incompetent.'[12]

Cracker, then, also follows how its lead manages – or more accurately, fails to manage – the reason/emotion distinction, upon which all three series base their narratives. On the one hand, Creeber sees Fitz's rational and emotional halves as sharply segregated so that the character is 'compelled to acknowledge the *personal* problems in his life and address areas of *private* experience not usually associated with' the detective or police genre.[13] On the other hand, both Creeber and the program attribute Fitz's intellectual brilliance *to* his emotional problems, so that Fitz uses 'his own dark turmoil to "crack" the mind of a murderer.'[14]

The depiction of these three lead characters raises interesting questions. How, precisely, might a person use intense emotional disorder or 'turmoil' to become a more rationally ordered and brilliant person? How exactly does one go about being 'emotionally incompetent' yet a genius professionally? What are the mechanisms by which emotional disorders as a form of mental illness or madness can exist simultaneously to but without disruption of consummate rational professionalism? Not only do the disorders fail to harm these characters; their illnesses are necessary components of their ability to function at exceptional intellectual levels.

3. The Demands of Pure Rationality

To see if they could shed some light on this mystery, I revisited the works of feminist philosophers like Alison Jaggar, Genevieve Lloyd, and Susan Bordo. These scholars were concerned, in particular, with the masculine nature of modern rationality and the accompanying exclusion of women or anything deemed feminine in nature. However, what they say about gender also has bearing on the reason/emotion relationship because of the long-standing, historical association between femininity and emotions.

These theorists share the belief that reason and emotion became so rigorously dichotomized only in the seventeenth century with the advent of the Enlightenment.[15] In an important essay, first published in 1989, Jaggar outlines a series of conceptual progressions leading to the modern view of emotion. From the seventeenth century on, reason was believed responsible for the production of objective, scientific, and universal understandings of reality. This 'modern redefinition of rationality required a corresponding reconceptualization of emotion.'[16] In order to obtain objectively accurate accounts of both the human and natural worlds, rationality needed to be dispassionate: capable of withstanding subjective impurities that skewed or tainted systematically logical results.

Accordingly, emotions were demarcated as the location of subjectivity and bias, thereby becoming the harmful antitheses of reason. 'This was achieved by portraying emotions as nonrational and often irrational urges that regularly swept the body, rather as a storm sweeps the land.'[17] In structuring emotion as a distinct realm infiltrated by subjectivity and irrationality, reason could be preserved as its uncontaminated dichotomy – the site of authentic detachment and disinterest.

Bordo and Lloyd attribute this change specifically to Descartes, although they note that this is a somewhat limited reading of his work.[18] Nonetheless, they acknowledge that 'the dominant cultural and historical renderings of Cartesianism' are best known for positing a radical dualism between mind and body, reason and emotion.[19] Those elements which lie outside the specialized, abstract, universal truth-seeking practices of rational order become its opposite. Bordo describes this opposite as that which 'Descartes assigned to the shadows,' including imagination and feeling.[20] Lloyd calls reason's opposite a 'muddled zone' of 'confused, sensuous awareness' taken up with the 'emotional complexities and practical demands of ordinary life.'[21] Faith in the processes of reason is exemplified by political historian Eric Hobsbawm who has said, 'I believe that one of the few things that stands between us and an accelerated descent into darkness is the set of values inherited from the eighteenth-century Enlightenment.'[22] This is a belief shared by Monk and House who represent, in their emotionally disordered aspects, the risk of 'descent into darkness,' of falling into the shadows, prevented only by the values of their reason.

Let me make three further observations about these analyses of reason's opposite. First, the 'muddled zone' of that which is consigned 'to the shadows' is enormous, consisting of everything but this tiny kernel of pure reason. Second, most scholars exploring modernity's Age of Reason have focused on its conceptualization of rationality rather than considering the nature and operations of the neglected and excluded of reason, including emotion. Third, a tendency exists among scholars to view the Enlightenment configuration of reason and its shadows as obsolete.

For example, Linda Nicholson, writing in 1999, describes such a view of reason as an 'older model' that has been 'challenged in many respects,' although she acknowledges that it still exerts influence in certain quarters.[23] In 1987, Bordo called 'the Cartesian promise of absolute epistemic objectivity and ultimate foundations for knowledge,' 'ideals which have run their course.'[24] Yet I would argue that in popular culture, and in popular imagination more widely, this starkly polarized model of the reason/emotion dynamic continues not only to exist but to dominate. In other words, a fundamentally Cartesian understanding of rationality, and that which it neglects or excludes, has not yet been replaced by an alternative conceptualization that makes more contemporary sense. This is why I believe it is valid, even necessary, to turn to the legacy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to make sense of certain forms of the contemporary detective story.

Returning to Bordo, 'For Descartes there are only two possibilities: absolute certainty or epistemological chaos, that is, purity or corruption.'[25] Here we have the establishment of further Cartesian dualities (along with mind/body, reason/emotion), such as certainty or chaos, purity or corruption, sanity or madness. From Bordo again: '[W]hat seizes the Cartesian imagination is the

possibility of *pure* thought, of *pure* perception…. the knower must be purified too…of all the bodily distractions and passions that obscure our thinking.'[26]

The urge for purification demands a world of order that is sharply distinguished from disorder. As professed by Alexander Pope, 'Order is Heaven's first law.'[27] Disorder is its opposite, the other, that must exist in order to demarcate the boundaries of order. However, for disorder to be effective in its task of demarcating order, it must remain visible so that we are continually assured that it is apart, at a remove. Disorder must be segregated but kept close at hand to indicate two distinct realms, as the ongoing guarantor that disorder is not impeding upon the pure order of rational thought. Disorder cannot be eliminated once and for all but must remain a presence that actively creates that which it is not. The opposite must remain present.

Here we have the detective as warring self, in a genre designed to display and act upon principles of rational order. The emotional aspects of Monk, House, and Fitz become enhanced to corrupted excess in order to prove – perhaps what is really being proven in these series – that their perfected rational selves remain intact through demarcation and separation, no matter how great the threatening disorder. So the neglected and excluded of reason – the threatening disorder – must be embraced by the detectives' weaker but absolutely necessary other halves.

What I am suggesting is that the depiction of emotions as 'the problem' is something of a cover or a guise to conceal that which is actually being protected. Instead, it is the prevailing conceptualization of reason as rational coherency and rational purity that poses 'the problem' because it demands the excision of emotions and many other aspects of ordinary social existence. Emotionality must be the antithesis of rationality, not because of something about emotions per se but due to this particular fantasy about the nature of reason which fails to adequately explain so many phenomena in the human world. Rather than finding a paradigm with greater explanatory power, reason is spared or saved by rendering the troubling world-bits that refuse to 'fit' either as wholly absent or, in the instance of our detectives, as damaged, intrusive and outright pathological. These detectives represent the unreasonable demands of pure reason.

4. The Muddled Zone

To examine how this configuration of reason and emotion plays out, I'd like to look at specific examples from the programs: first *House* and then *Monk*. Gregory House is famously misanthropic. Often, he refuses to talk to, or even meet, the patients he is treating. In the show's pilot, a member of his medical team asks, 'Isn't treating patients why we became doctors?' House responds, 'No, treating illnesses is why we became doctors, treating patients is what makes most doctors miserable…. If you don't talk to them they can't lie to us, and we can't lie to them' ('Pilot'). For House, people are not capable of telling the truth; even if they are not purposefully lying they may be lying to themselves or simply not

know the truth. This leads to House's credo, repeated over the course of the series, 'Everybody lies,' which, in turn, takes us to the next step in his belief system, 'Humanity is overrated' ('Pilot'). People, for House, are a mass of inaccuracies and distortions: they do not operate upon the principles of rationality. Therefore, they must be negated, becoming part of the neglected and excluded of reason.

In House's logic, in order to believe that the terms of his world make sense, the rationally inexplicable must be absent or at a remove. In its place, people's diseases become the focus of his attention because they are rational to the degree that they progress on a scientifically determinable path. House's emotional difficulties, particularly the anti-social behaviors that effectively isolate him from others, enable him to work, think, and exist in an illusory world of rational coherence and rational purity devoid, among many other things, of having to consider people qua people.

Thompson, one of those writing on the origins of detective fiction, argues that in the early stories the central characters exist in self-sufficient rationality by keeping emotions and the entire social world at bay.[28] He quotes the words of Sherlock Holmes from *The Sign of Fear*: '"It is of the first importance," he [Holmes] said, "not to allow your judgement to be biased by personal qualities. A client to me is a mere unit – a factor in a problem. The emotional qualities are antagonistic to clear reasoning."'[29] As noted earlier, the creators of *House* acknowledge that Sherlock Holmes was an important model in the development of their lead character. One commonality they share, apparently consistent over more than a century, is that both characters enable rationality to function by disabling everything that does not fit into the rarefied model of pure reason. Their paradigm of reason reduces the permissible existing world to only that which conforms to rational observation and analysis. The character of House does so in quite a literal manner in not only banning the human factor from his thoughts but also by striving to eliminate people, such as patients and their families, from his working practices as well as from his personal life.

For his part, Adrian Monk lives in San Francisco, a city with which he has enough trouble dealing. However in one episode, an important lead brings him and his colleagues to New York City ('Mr. Monk Takes Manhattan'). Monk is immediately thrown off balance by the dirt on the city streets, the smells, the 'relentless' noise of traffic, sirens, construction, people talking and shouting, and the equally relentless crowds who constantly surround him and collide into him. The visual overstimulation of neon lights and ads in Times Square, of city pigeons flying around him, of witnessing a man urinating in the subway station all disorient him. Monk's pronouncement on New York is: 'I can't do this. I can't really function here. It's too much, too much.' The line, 'It's too much, too much,' resonates because we all feel that way sometimes. But the more important point here is what Monk must exclude in order for his intellectual gifts to function properly.

The concept of reason that Monk embodies falls apart with any distractions or lack of predictability, like the human factor and emotions. Monk has to reject these things because they spoil the illusion of obtainable rational purity. For his form of rationality to function at all, other life factors – indeed, the greater part of life – must be excluded. As the show's theme song tells us, 'It's a jungle out there, noise and confusion everywhere.' Therefore, the goal is to keep the noise and confusion 'out there,' away from the inner realm of the mind.

Monk and House reject what are, to their minds, the 'chaotic' factors of existence because those elements undermine their very narrow, limited concept of rationality. Further, the elements they perceive as unruly and chaotic are, in fact, entirely ordinary – including dealing with other people or common events such as encountering or having feelings. The concept of reason by which they operate must negate huge aspects of the world if it is to function as intended. Such a notion of rational coherency and purity can only 'explain the world' if it eliminates significant portions of that world. Our detectives enact a fantasy inner world of the mind without noise or confusion.

However, for those of us who live here in the muddled zone, we know that this claim of rational purity is an impossible ideal, explaining why it must be so constrained and managed. In the same New York episode of *Monk*, the detective is so disoriented that he becomes separated from his group and gets lost in Manhattan. Trying to find him, his assistant Sharona (Bitty Schram) explains to a New York City cop that, in situations like this, Monk 'gets very overwhelmed and can't think straight,' thereby specifically linking worldly disruptions to the failure of his intellectual faculties. The cop's reply to Sharona is: 'You're describing half the people in this city.' In fact, she's describing everyone. Instead of pure reason, we all exist in a muddled zone with something more akin to compromised reason.

5. Emotional Competence

Having said this, each of these shows also tacitly acknowledges the impossibility of the same ideal they promulgate. Although all three characters – Monk, House, and Fitz – are meant to operate from pure reason, their abilities are firmly dependent on emotionality. Contrary to Fitz's contention, professionally he is *not* emotionally incompetent. He could not interrogate people with the supreme skills he displays if he were not able to understand them psychologically, including their weaknesses, their desires, and their emotional needs. After all, he is portrayed as a brilliant psychologist. Here we can also return to Creeber's observation that Fitz uses 'his own dark turmoil to "crack" the mind of a murderer.' The dark turmoil referred to is Fitz's ostensibly radically detached personal issues which he can apparently call on when professionally helpful but otherwise keep from intruding upon his intellect. In fact, Fitz's process in interrogating culprits is two-fold. He achieves his remarkable confessions by, first,

recognizing the emotional makeup of the person he is questioning and, second, manipulating those emotional weaknesses and desires by pushing the suspect's buttons until he or she cracks from the emotional pressure.

House, too, operates on the basis of emotionality just as much as rationality. Indeed, it is his emotional acumen that enables him to deftly analyze and goad his medical team and his patients into providing the answers he needs. In the episode, 'Sex Kills,' House comes upon his colleague and best friend, Dr. James Wilson (Robert Sean Leonard) buying a box of chocolates from a gift kiosk in the hospital. House asks him, 'Who's the lucky woman?'

Wilson: My wife.
House: No, I don't want to know who gets the chocolates. I want to know who you're having an affair with.

Wilson denies an affair, explaining he is buying the chocolates as a gift to express affection for his wife. House contradicts him, insisting 'Gifts express guilt.' Here we witness House's keen scrutiny of others; for whom the chocolates are bought fails to interest him, only *why*. Further, House believes he perceives something in Wilson's action and demeanour that speaks more to uneasiness than to affection for his spouse.

Periodically throughout the episode, House returns to the subject, predicting that Wilson will confess his affair to his wife, surmising that he hasn't yet done so, and otherwise needling him on the matter, while Wilson continues to steadfastly insist that House is wrong. Finally, at episode's end, Wilson shows up at House's apartment, a packed suitcase at his side. House has been proven correct in his perception there was something troubling in Wilson's gesture of gift-giving, although he is mistaken about some – but not all – of the specifics. House believes Wilson has shown up needing a place to stay because the latter informed his wife about his affair, as House predicted he would.

House: You idiot. You told her.
Wilson: She told me. Things have been crappy at home lately. I figured I wasn't spending enough time with her. I figured…. Turns out you're right, it's always about sex. She's been having an affair.

If gifts do not always express guilt as House contends, nonetheless he has been perceptive enough to realize that the gift in this instance signals something amiss. His sensitivity to other people's psychological make-up and feelings

enables him to recognize an unspoken situation that Wilson either doesn't yet know or cannot acknowledge. House has an uncanny comprehension of other people's insecurities and what they are hiding or avoiding. He functions, in effect, as a human lie detector.

Indeed, week after week, the answer to the medical mystery posed resides not in the rational course of the disease but in something emotionally or psychologically troubling that the patient is hiding about his or her life. It is invariably this human factor that proves to be the key to solving the mystery. In an episode from Season Three, titled 'Resignation,' House informs a nineteen-year-old patient that there is nothing the medical team can do for her condition and, thus, she is about to die. However, he is perplexed when the patient shows no interest in knowing the cause of her impending death. When House describes this circumstance to Wilson, his colleague attributes her lack of curiosity to her misery concerning her imminent fate.

House: She wasn't miserable.
Wilson: Of course she was miserable. You just told her….
House: She was no different than she's ever been. She was no different than she's ever been… Oh god! I've got to go.

House suddenly realizes that his patient isn't curious about her cause of death because she already knows what it is. Further, she does not grow more miserable when told she's dying because she has actually tried to kill herself. Finally, he recognizes that her suicide attempt is due to her current state of depression which means she is already in a state of misery.

House's sudden and insightful awareness of his patient's complex emotional circumstances leads him to recognize that her dire physical condition results from a suicide attempt with household poison, rather than what he had previously believed. No diagnostic or scientific issue discovered about her physiological state enables House to save his patient. Rather, the solution rests with a significant emotional factor the patient has been unable to admit but which House holds the remarkable perspicacity to recognize. Indeed, his perceptiveness concerning others' feelings, behaviours, and motivations far exceeds the 'people skills' of the ostensibly much more emotionally functional and sensitive members of his medical team.

Yet, in the same episode, 'Resignation,' the narrative trajectory simultaneously and explicitly mitigates against House's emotional savvy by stressing his extreme callousness. When, prior to his epiphany, House moves to

tell the patient she is dying, Foreman (Omar Epps), one of the members of his medical team, stops him to ask if he even knows her name.

House: Who? The co-ed?
Foreman: Sure.
House: Dead sophomore girl?
Foreman: You know her father's name?
House: Dad. Her mother's name is Mummy.
Foreman: Ben and Jodie are about to lose their only daughter, Addie.

With cruel flippancy, House refers to his dying patient as 'Dead sophomore girl.' In a curious reversal of an episode (and series) that also works to establish House's brilliance at reading 'the human factor,' he coldly refuses to personify her or her family, negating them as feeling, caring people. House's coldness and cruelty seem intended to serve as an antidote to his emotional acuity. In a conceptual system structured on the basis of emotionality as the antithesis of pure rationality, exceptional proficiency with emotions risks obfuscating claims of the very possibility of an idealized reason. Therefore, emotions must be held in check as that which defines, because they threaten, the existence of pure reason.

In a similar manner, Monk could not identify culprits without understanding their emotions. Yet the series also strives to undercut and deny his exceptional skills in this arena. However, understanding the non-rational (in Enlightenment terms) logics of various emotional states and, therefore, that which motivates people, forms an important component in Monk's professional brilliance. While it may be possible to argue that greed as a motive for robbery and murder operates by the rational rules of logic, vengeance, for example, does not. Vengeance, anger, humiliation, or jealousy operates upon a wholly different 'logic' based on how people feel and, therefore, how they act. In one episode ('Mr. Monk Goes to Vegas'), Monk hears a wealthy Las Vegas casino owner say a few words at a ceremonial groundbreaking for a new building. Immediately, the detective 'knows' the man did not love his wife, who recently has been murdered. The casino owner's absence of love supplies an emotional motive for wishing her demise, thereby confirming for Monk what he already suspects: the husband is the guilty party. When Monk's assistant, Natalie (Traylor Howard), asks him how he knows the suspect did not love his wife, Monk answers simply with, 'I know.' His enigmatic response indicates that neither the character nor the text's narrative feel the need to expound further.

In another episode, titled 'Mr. Monk Goes to the Circus,' Monk immediately and adamantly accuses a trapeze artist of the highly acrobatic murder of her ex-husband, even though she is confined to a wheelchair with a severely

broken foot, verified by x-ray. While all those around Monk, including the police detectives he works with, believe the trapeze artist's involvement in the crime to be impossible and so turn to other suspects, Monk stands firm in his conviction of her guilt. Once again, his certainty is based on a feeling he has about the suspect's emotional temperament: 'She's as cold as ice.' Further, in the absence of any 'rational' explanation, such as financial or other personal gain, her motivation can only be emotional: jealousy over her ex-husband's new relationship or a general resentment and animosity towards him.

Of course, ultimately Monk is proven correct. At the same time, in an attempt to undermine his emotional acumen, the personal storyline in the same circus episode focuses on Monk's complete insensitivity towards his assistant, Sharona. Despite his own myriad of phobias, oddities, and quirks, Monk evinces lack of sympathy for Sharona's fear of elephants, laughing at her and telling her to 'just suck it up.' Initially, when Monk remains oblivious to the fact that something is distressing Sharona, she asks him: 'Are you blind? What kind of detective are you? Can't you see that I'm upset?' When an event occurs on a 'personal' level, Monk's otherwise exquisite powers of observation fail him completely.

Once Sharona has explained her problem, and in response to Monk's brusque dismissal of her fears, she accuses him of a total absence of compassion, adding, 'You're the most selfish, inconsiderate man I've ever met,' a description that resonates with the viewer as accurate. For the remainder of the episode, Monk attempts to respond to Sharona's anger, but simply doesn't 'get' it. For instance, he sends her flowers as a gesture of reconciliation but leaves the card blank because he cannot think of anything to say. His efforts at reconciliation do not occur because Monk has come to understand and empathize with Sharona's feelings; he is motivated by the fact that as long as she is upset, she won't assist him on his case or with his needs. By the end of the episode, Monk knows intellectually he has done something wrong and that he is missing a certain quality of compassion or empathy – he knows largely because everyone has told him so – but he is incapable of making the emotional adjustment to actually *feel* it. Rather, he plays at or pretends to appreciate the situation in order to return the two to their habitual working relationship which, through his ineffectual efforts, the narrative utilizes chiefly for comic effect. Thus, this series, too, both relies on and discounts Monk's exceptional comprehension of emotions because they function in opposition to dominant understandings of pure reason.

6. Conclusion

In all three series, we find a similar narrative reliance on emotions, in which they prove pivotal to consummate skills of detection. At the same time, the efficacy of emotions to the detection enterprise is overtly denied; instead, they continue to be represented as 'the problem.' Further, in all three programs, reason is depicted as a stable commodity: a reliable, recognizable, and highly productive

set of principles or ideal. Indeed, rational coherence and purity have long been considered among the founding elements of the genre.

However, the nature of the threatening disorder depicted by each series differs, embodied in the emotional deficiencies or mental illness of its lead character. Fitz's intellectual brilliance must struggle against, and ultimately surmount or at least keep at bay, physical and emotional desires – indulgences of the flesh and heart – symbolized by his obesity, alcoholism, chain-smoking, gambling, and adultery. And this must be repeated, in each new episode. In House's case, the threatening disorder lays not with his own desires but in the character of other people, in particular, the oppressiveness, demands, needs, and deceits that accompany all human personalities. In his loathing of the overbearing qualities of human psychology, House lives out Sartre's contention that Hell is other people. For Monk, the threatening, potentially devastating disorder also takes the shape of other people, but not in terms of their personal attributes. Instead, he must guard against the effects generated by human artifacts and practices, specifically, the noise, confusion, messiness, and disruptions that social institutions and human activities leave in their wake.

That each series offers up a different portrayal of emotional disorder, yet all depicted prove equally threatening to rational coherence, indicates the extensiveness of that which must be consigned to the shadows. Further, the range of emotional illnesses displayed in these programs, there to protect a kernel of undiluted, uncorrupted rational truth, emphasizes the fragility of the concept of reason in the face of the multitude of dangers 'out there,' threatening to obstruct the functioning of pure mind. Finally, perhaps the greatest fantasy in these portraits of intellectual brilliance and emotional incompetence rests in the belief that one can choose emotionality – to exist as a feeling human being -- when it proves productive, but, out of a longing for certainty over chaos, otherwise simply set emotions aside.

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[1] Tony Bennett, Introduction to 'Knowledge, Power, Ideology: Detective Fiction,' in *Popular Fiction: Technology, Ideology, Production, Reading*, ed. T. Bennett (London: Routledge, 1990), 212; Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), 248; Jon Thompson, *Fiction, Crime, and Empire: Clues to Modernity and Postmodernism* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993).
[2] Bennett, Introduction, 213.
[3] Bloch, *Utopian Function*, 246-7, 251.

[4] John Sumser, *Morality and Social Order in Television Crime Drama* (Jefferson: NC: McFarland, 1996), 65.
[5] Thompson, *Fiction, Crime, and Empire*, 3. It is worth noting that none of these writers attempt to account for the century or more delay between Enlightenment developments and the actual rise of the detective story.
[6] Wendell Wittler, 'Living in a *House* Built for One,' *MSNBC.com* (18 April, 2005).
[7] For more on this, see E. Deidre Pribram, *Emotions, Genre, Justice in Film and Television: Detecting Feeling* (New York: Routledge, 2011), chapter 3.
[8] E. Deidre Pribram, 'Mr. Monk and the Emotion-Reason Dilemma,' in *Mr. Monk and Philosophy: The Curious Case of the Defective Detective*, ed. D.E. Wittkower (Chicago: Open Court, 2010).
[9] There are four predominant categories of symptoms for OCD. Monk does not exhibit the fourth, hoarding, although his brother Ambrose (John Turturro) does.
[10] 'House M.D. Guide,' Viewed 25 October, 2011. <http://www.housemd-guide.com/>
[11] Glen Creeber, 'Old Sleuth or New Man? Investigations into Rape, Murder, and Masculinity in *Cracker* (1993-1996),' *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 16.2 (2002): 171, 173.
[12] Quoted in Creeber, 'Old Sleuth or New Man?,' 176.
[13] Creeber, 'Old Sleuth or New Man?,' 176, italics in original.
[14] Ibid., 169.
[15] Alison Jaggar, 'Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology,' in *Emotions: A Cultural Studies Reader,* eds. J. Harding and E.D. Pribram (London: Routledge, 2009), 50-51; Alison Jaggar, Introduction to *Just Methods: An Interdisciplinary Feminist Reader*, ed. A. Jaggar (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2008), 3, 42; Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in Western Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 39, 46-47; Susan Bordo, *The Flight to Objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and Culture* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1987), 8, 10.
[16] Jaggar, 'Love and Knowledge,' 51.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Susan Bordo, Introduction to *Feminist Interpretations of René Descartes*, ed. S. Bordo (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 2; Lloyd, *Man of Reason*, 45, 49.
[19] Bordo, Introduction, 2.
[20] Ibid., 3, 10.
[21] Lloyd, *Man of Reason*, 47, 49.

[22] Eric Hobsbawm quoted in Roy Porter, Introduction to *The Cambridge History of Science, Volume 4, Eighteenth-Century Science*, ed. R. Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1.
[23] Linda Nicholson, *The Play of Reason: From the Modern to the Postmodern* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 117.
[24] Bordo, *Flight to Objectivity*, 1-2.
[25] Ibid., 17.
[26] Ibid., 75-76, italics in original.
[27] Alexander Pope quoted in Robert Huxley, 'Challenging the Dogma: Classifying and Describing the Natural World,' in *Enlightenment: Discovering the World in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. K. Sloan (London: British Museum Press, 2003), 70.
[28] Thompson, *Fiction, Crime, and Empire*, 50-53, 66.
[29] Arthur Conan Doyle quoted in Thompson, *Fiction, Crime, and Empire*, 66.