

Missing Persons: *Cherokee's* Parrot
and *Chatterton's* Poet

Leonard R. Koos
Mary Washington College

Lönnrot thought of himself as a pure
thinker, an Auguste Dupin, but there
was something of an adventurer in
him, and even a gamester.

—Jorge Luis Borges
“Death and the Compass”

I will now play the Oedipus to the
Rattleborough enigma.

—Edgar Allan Poe
“Thou Art The Man”

In the never-ending parade of tormented Romantic outcasts, ambitious social climbers, consumptive bohemians, bourgeois liberals, arch criminals (like the real-life Vidocq and the fictive Vautrin), anarchists, decadents, and geniuses in every field, nineteenth-century European culture exhibited its developing cult of the individual. In this burgeoning landscape of real or imagined individualism, a new literary genre took root whose paired protagonists, the criminal and the detective, exemplified the increasing privatized and individualized network of subjective presuppositions.¹ The inventor of this new genre, Edgar Allan Poe—whom Walter Benjamin called “the first physiognomist of the interior” (169)—presented in the character of C. Auguste Dupin a detective whose particular version of subjectivity dominated detective fiction for the next century.

Dupin's self-imposed isolation, a conduit for the expansion of the cogitating subject, transforms him into a veritable "man of the crowd," effectively stripping away, for criminal and detective alike, the signifying overdetermination of an array of societal structures, notably those that potentially circumvent logic and truth: convention, appearance, habit, law, and so on.² The narrator of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" recognizes Dupin's particular sense of selfhood when he muses on "the philosophy of the Bi-Part Soul" in imagining, as an explanation of his remarkable and quasi-fantastic powers, "a double Dupin—the creative and the resolvent" (338-39). Many critics cite this rather peculiar description, along with Dupin's other idiosyncrasies—his impulsive nature, his dwelling in a "time-eaten and grotesque mansion" (337), his possibly "diseased intelligence" (339)—to emphasize how successfully Poe melded Enlightenment and Romantic values (Tani 3-15). But the possibility of a "double Dupin—the creative and the resolvent" also unequivocally foregrounds questions of subjectivity in the traditional detective story, and provides a fecund point of comparison with the meta-physical detective novel of the late twentieth century.

The description of Dupin's deductive process offers several clues to the nature of his particular subjectivity. While Dupin normally indulges in eccentricities and "wild whims," he becomes in this state "frigid and abstract, his eyes . . . vacant in expression" (338); as Stefano Tani suggestively remarks, "Dupin in other words temporarily sets aside his own psyche" (5). The resulting selfless void that Dupin willfully produces allows him to imagine a number of possibilities, intersecting or corresponding to those traces of the crime that have hitherto confounded reasonable explanation and narration: in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," for example, the locked room, the absence of theft, the assailant's superhuman strength, the witnesses's divergent identifications of the "criminal's" language, and so forth. These possibilities, invented by the "creative" self, are then sorted out by the "resolvent" Dupin as a prelude to constructing the crime as a narrative solution.

The detective's "Bi-Part Soul" in traditional detective fiction thus mirrors the genre's necessary condition of duplicity and the more philosophically significant implication of the radical arbitrariness of value in the world. The criminal takes advantage of equivocal signifying structures, and the detective reads and interprets these misleading appearances in order to reestablish truth and meaning. In a century that extolled the value of the bourgeois individual over

all others, the detective hero, from Dupin onwards, nevertheless seems to acknowledge the inevitability of indeterminacy in the human realm—subjectivity included. Dupin is able to strip himself of himself and reach back to an ur-subjectivity that Daniel Hoffman finds “is closer to the origins of being” (108). This primordial center, which Dupin can access at will, permits him to escape not only his own phenomenological existence, but also any unconsciously internalized societal values. Only in this void of an evacuated self can the detective simulate the motivating design that left its unreliable traces at the scene of the crime. Perhaps it is only his extraordinarily varied knowledge that allows Dupin to retrieve his usual self, despite the obvious allure (the narrator admits as much) of losing himself for a time.³

From the very beginning, then, detective fiction seems to limit, if not problematize, the transcendent value of differentiated subjectivity. Dupin, like his celebrated descendants in the nineteenth century Lecoq and Holmes, always remains capable of vacating the created, alternate self. But the presence of that second, simulated subject—reflecting in turn the criminal’s own “Bi-Part Soul” which is equally creative but ultimately confounding—anticipates the undoing of traditional notions of subjectivity in the postmodern detective novel of the late twentieth century. Whereas the nineteenth-century detective contributes to the developing bourgeois metanarrative of the self, metaphysical detective novels like Jean Echenoz’s *Cherokee* (1983) and Peter Ackroyd’s *Chatterton* (1987) challenge such models, as they revisit and attempt to reformulate the notion of subjectivity in the postmodern era.

Parroting the Subject: The Name of the Ruse

Since these mysteries are beyond me,
let’s pretend to be their organizer.

—Jean Cocteau

The Newlyweds of the Eiffel Tower

The Crypt is a detective novel, a detective novel in two parts of which the second meticulously destroys all that the first strived to establish, a classic procedure of numerous nov-

els concerned with enigmas, here pushed to a nearly caricatural paroxysm.

—Georges Perec
53 Days

The reader of Jean Echenoz's novel *Cherokee* quickly grasps the impossibility of predicting the next element in this decidedly unconventional narrative. Absurd plot twists, surprising coincidences, and odd characters in unexpected places and in even odder situations, all underscored by a deliriously burlesque tone, pervade the novel and challenge those very readerly conventions that *Cherokee's* appropriation of the detective genre suggests and slyly encourages from the outset. Among the novel's generic allusions, none are more prominent than those to the hard-boiled tradition and the Hollywood *film noir*—appropriated, it would seem, for their consistent figuring of the detective as anti-hero and their general portrayal of the modern (primarily urban and sometimes suburban) world as a dangerous, dehumanizing void.⁴ Echenoz's fictional world is a neo-surrealist realm wherein the "private eye" is understood so literally that the detective solves cases by virtue of an inner subconscious eye, which discovers solutions through intuition or luck (recalling André Breton's notion of "objective chance"). This new version of the detective updates a number of traditionally held conceptions of selfhood as reevaluated and refigured with renewed fervor by the postmodern idiom.

The postmodern perspective is exemplified in the critically provocative death, disappearance, or decentering of the subject—glimpses of which *Cherokee* references in its treatment of the onomastic status, both in the narration and in the story, of its principal characters. From the first chapter on, the proper name discloses itself to be as unreliable a referent as any other word. In the novel's opening passage, Georges Chave, *Cherokee's* reluctant detective and main character, meets a man who, when asked if he needs any assistance, merely replies again and again with the ambiguous utterance "Croconyan"—supposedly his name, despite the third-person narrator's commentary that "Croconyan is nothing, not even a name, it means nothing" (6-7). Whether it is a first name or a surname, French or foreign, none of the other characters can or even care to determine, despite the frequent reappearance of "Croconyan" in the course of this unlikely story. When Georges

Chave is asked the origin of his own apparently alien surname, he answers that he does not know but adds, significantly, that a street in Marseilles “where they used to cut people’s heads off” (59) bears the same name. Echenoz’s recycling of the French Revolution in this allusion to the hero’s family name suggests a headless detective, who epitomizes the two-dimensional survivor of a desubjectifying linguistic existence.

Cherokee is marked throughout by a disruption of the privileged status of the proper name in the onomastic hierarchy. The narration obsessively repeats the full names of its certain characters (most notably Georges Chave and his kidnapped object of desire, Jenny Weltman). The narrative resistance to the pronominal replacement of names—comparable to a similar narrative strategy in Marguerite Duras’s *The Ravishing of Lol V. Stein*—does not maintain the preeminent status of the proper noun. Instead, such narration has the effect of degrading the name’s former distinction through flat, nearly autistic repetition, recalling Frederic Jameson’s description of the schizophrenic nature of postmodernism as a “rubble of distinct and unrelated signifiers” (26). Coupled with the novel’s frequent use of contextually present-tense articulations which imply a demonstratively inclusive address of the reader—“shifters,” as Emile Benveniste terms them, like “now,” “here is,” and so on—these temporally stagnant proper names reverberate in a linguistically destabilized eternal present that renders the constitution of the subject doubtful if not impossible.

Such meaningless repetition in the story of *Cherokee* is exemplified by the figure of the loquacious parrot, Morgan, that Georges is hired to locate after its theft. Of all of the novel’s “characters,” Morgan—named after its species, which carries the name of the ornithologist credited with its discovery, but also echoing Alain Robbe-Grillet’s Dr. Morgan in *Souvenirs du triangle d’or* and elsewhere—receives the fullest characterization in *Cherokee*. After Georges unexpectedly and unbelievably finds the bird by merely going to the winter circus and calling out its name, the parrot Morgan proves to have the power to move the narrative forward when it pronounces Jenny Weltman’s name in one of its torrents of mimicked fragments; but the clue which sends Georges across France to question the bird’s former owners about Jenny Weltman’s whereabouts proves in the end to be a red herring. The bird’s current owner, Dr. Spielvogel, whose name ludically emphasizes the parrot’s function in the novel, recounts for Georges its complete life story

from the egg to the present. The bird's age, the reader learns, is about sixty, "which corresponds roughly, in human terms, to about sixty years old, the generation of George's father" (125). Spielvogel's story of Morgan's life, punctuated with personifying, omniscient contentions, figures the parrot in a way that corresponds to its treatment of the other characters: as a perfect simulation of the human subject. For the novel's characters, Morgan represents something more than the "repeating machine" that he in principle is. As a machine, however, Morgan does not operate properly. The defective or incomplete machine, recalling works of Jean Cocteau like the proto-surrealist play *The Newlyweds of the Eiffel Tower* and his later "monologue" drama *The Human Voice*, is a favorite figure of Echenoz.⁵ Dominique Jullien compares such machines to Echenoz's own novels, calling the latter "self-destroying devices" (341). Still, it remains to be seen whether "although the links are present, the story falls to pieces" (341). Echenoz's novels—like the parrot's convincing yet incomplete simulation of human subjectivity—ape the detective genre and provide an ironic commentary without going so far as to destroy the appropriated model. The parrot, then, as a *mise en abyme* for the self in *Cherokee*, decenters and contaminates any possibility for the survival of a recognizable unique human subject.

A contrary representational strategy appears in the novel's other subplot, the search for the descendents of the Ferro family (another of Georges's cases, but one remaining unsolved and perhaps unsolvable). As the story goes, the son-in-law of a rich, formerly expatriated Frenchman (who had made his fortune in Mexico in the mid nineteenth century) poisoned him in the hopes of inheriting his substantial estate, only to find that the father-in-law's last will and testament did not allow his fortune to pass on to any relative until six generations after his death. In the meantime, the estate's lawyers saw to it that it grew to monumentally incomprehensible proportions (like that of Eugène Sue's *The Wandering Jew*). By the time Georges and the other operatives of his detective agency receive the case, all known descendants of the family have died. Beyond its generalized critique of the directionlessness of modern capital and those who manipulate it, this subplot once again proclaims the notion of the human subject constituted in a temporal continuum—emblemized by the Ferro family's empty genealogy—as an old-fashioned, bankrupt, and ultimately obsolete perspective. The Ferro legacy is further complicated by the fact that the family's archives and documents, ostensibly the tools that detectives, law-

yers, and judges would use to authenticate the validity of any claims on the estate, were completely destroyed in a fire. The detective agency's file on the case, "composed of incomplete yet repetitive documents, poor in information, that one could at times suspect of having been placed there for no other purpose than to add bulk" (49), offers little hope. Georges Chave, momentarily playing devil's advocate, tells a colleague who plans to present a false claim to the inheritance that his ruse will not work because "there are no archives. If there were, it would be a different story" (101). This explanation, so unexpected—that is, it should be easier to present a false claim in the absence of authenticating documents—displays Jean Baudrillard's distinction between the counterfeit (the predominant scheme from the Renaissance to the industrial revolution, which posits its value in opposition to the original) and the simulation (which asserts "no relation to reality whatsoever: it is its own simulacrum" [11]). The Ferro fortune, which continues to grow although no inheritor can or ever will be located, resembles the parrot Morgan in its simulation of an otherwise nonexistent human subject. In a nod to the hard-boiled bird of Dashell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*, one of the unsuccessful detectives remarks: "That bird's just like Ferro, we'll never find anything. It's just something to keep the money coming in till the client gets fed up" (5).

Echenoz's novel relentlessly and playfully questions received notions of human identity and subjectivity. Unlike the traditional detective novel, wherein the criminal's identity is sought and found, *Cherokee* confounds the subjective presuppositions of the genre. Proper names, no longer reliable as markers of human identity, slip from their privileged linguistic rung and are doomed to ceaseless, senseless repetition; parrots are convincing subjects; human genealogies peter out, while family fortunes continue to grow. Perhaps the most striking of these successive dismantlings of the traditionally conceived subject comes at the novel's conclusion. *Cherokee's* non-ending (which resolves few of its mysteries) takes place in the Père-Lachaise cemetery, as the corpse of one of Georges's fellow detectives is buried. In this parody of Honoré de Balzac's *Old Goriot*, Georges is finally reunited with both the elusive Jenny Weltman and his occasionally criminal cousin Fred Shapiro, who had borrowed the cassette containing the jazz song "Cherokee" from which the novel tellingly yet somewhat arbitrarily takes its title. Whereas Balzac's ending unequivocally champions the constitution of Eugène de Rastignac's Parisian bourgeois self, Echenoz's merely

rejects such a possibility as irrelevant, as indicated by Fred's ironic summation, "What do we do now?" (212). With an indeterminacy typical of postmodernist prose, the human subject of *Cherokee* is treated like one of the cases confronting Georges's detective agency: "Okay, so we don't find anything, but at least we'll look like we're looking" (27).

Forging the Subject: The Murder of Peter Ackroyd

Yes, they very much like to make the
dead live and kill off the living.

—Alfred de Vigny
Chatterton

Toward the end of Peter Ackroyd's early work *Notes for a New Culture* (1976), he discusses a range of contemporary thinkers and writers—Lacan, Derrida, Barthes, O'Hara, Roche, Ashbury, and others—who seem to "proclaim the death of Man" (147). Ackroyd locates the first instances of this withering away of humanism in transitional modernists (Joyce and Eliot, among others) who marked the end of what Jameson has recently called "the modernism of isolated 'genius'" (305). Ackroyd, like many other critics, takes Surrealism as his primary example of the assertive, self-reflexive subjectivity of high modernism. In this view, modernism rejects previous paradigms of selfhood, engaging in a lengthy self-questioning that leads to postmodernism's more radical notion of the impossibility of a fixed or fixable subjectivity. In his subsequent novels, Ackroyd further explores the dimensions of postmodern subjectivity in his extensive use of pastiche.

Despite Jameson's rather spurious description of postmodernist pastiche as "that strange new thing" (17), it was certainly not born with the postmodernist era, nor have contemporary authors been its sole virtuoso practitioners (consider its use in Joyce, Eliot, Proust, and Mann). Nonetheless, pastiche has become a frequent means of postmodernist production. Ackroyd, in novels like *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde* (1983) and *Hawksmoor* (1985), has become the contemporary European writer most closely associated with pastiche. In his recent novel, *English Music* (1992)—which begins with the telling assertion "Yes, you have returned to the past" (1), and continues in alternating chapters that imitate the styles and contents of a score of writers—Ackroyd produces his most extreme and

elaborate pastiche. In *Chatterton* (1987), he thematizes and employs pastiche while appropriating and parodying the detective fiction form, taking as his subject the preromantic poet Thomas Chatterton, the infamous eighteenth-century “forger” of a series of poems by an imaginary late-medieval monk.

Chatterton, which evokes both detective story and research novel (from Henry James’s *The Aspern Papers* to A. S. Byatt’s *Possession*), follows this premise: what if the actual existence of the poet Thomas Chatterton had not ended in suicide in 1770? When Charles Lynchwood, the novel’s main character, happens upon a painting dated 1802 that seemingly depicts an older Chatterton, he begins to question the official account. In the subsequent detective-like inquiry, the reader encounters a successful novelist who plagiarizes from obscure nineteenth-century authors, an art dealer who sells forgeries to unwitting clients, and a host of other eccentric characters—one of whom is descended from a long line of playful pastichers, and who further confounds the situation by providing a manuscript allegedly documenting Chatterton’s staged death and ultimate survival. *Chatterton*’s chosen structure, the research novel as detective story (made more suspect by the preliminary disclosure of Chatterton’s actual history), becomes progressively more metaphysical. The initial authority of the biographical fact is obscured by the successive pastiched fantasies of Chatterton’s end (one in which he dies from an improperly administered venereal disease treatment, and another in which he stages his own death and goes on to ghost-write well-known works by Gray and Blake), not to mention an imagined conversation on poetry, representation, and imitation between painter Henry Wallis and his model as the former composes the famous painting of Chatterton’s suicide (actually finished in 1856). Ackroyd’s metaphysical detective novel parallels the guiding principle of Chatterton’s poetry, as summarized in a fictive citation: “the truest Plagiarism is the truest Poetry” (87). Framed by these shifting perspectives on origin, influence, imitation, forgery, and plagiarism, pastiche in *Chatterton* foregrounds postmodernism’s problematization of the reliance on language as the barometer for the traditional conception of a fixed, centered, and unique self.

Pastiche, in the form of the supposed Chatterton manuscript, generates the novel’s detective structure. When successfully rendered, as *Chatterton*’s plot suggests, pastiche challenges an array

of presuppositions that constitute the edifice of bourgeois self-fashioning—such as the originally Romantic values of the uniqueness, originality, and authenticity of the individual self and its issue (in this case, the text). The frequent use of pastiche in postmodernism reverses the claim that language and literary style are reliable depositories of the idiosyncrasies of the differentiated subject. Like Echenoz's talkative parrot, or *Chatterton's* own cast of forgers and plagiarists, Ackroyd the pasticher denies representation's aspirations to subjective authenticity, novelty, and originality. Ackroyd initially encourages this process through his choice of title character: Chatterton, the eighteenth-century poet who convincingly produced a fifteenth-century self in the textual person of Thomas Rowley. The comments of artist and model, during the painting of the suicide of Chatterton, further obscure the possibility of a monumental self expressed through literary style; Chatterton was the model poet, the model contends, because he is "pretending to be someone else" (2). In the contemporary characters' search for the truth behind the found and purloined documents, the individualistic production of the isolated subject in a historical continuum is shown to be a hopelessly arbitrary and obsolete construction. In *Chatterton*, then, language in general, and writing in particular, are the quintessential means by which to chart the disappearance of the subject. Akin to the provocative "death of the author" conceived by Roland Barthes, Ackroyd's version of subjectivity, simultaneously represented and enacted, denies the subject's ability to affirm itself in language.

The issue of pastiche also raises questions regarding the notion of a temporally (or historically) constituted subject. The pasticher clearly disallows the historicity of the constituted, centered subject by simulating it in an historically disjunctive moment. *Chatterton*, like Ackroyd's other pastiche novels, participates in this travesty of the authority of chronological history. As Charles Lynchwood inquires into the supposed mystery of Chatterton's life, he discovers, in a moment reminiscent of Roquentin's research into the life of the Marquis de Rolleston in Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea*, that the available studies of Chatterton vary significantly: "each biography described a quite different poet: even the simplest observation by one was contradicted by another, so that nothing seemed certain" (127). On this dilemma in *Chatterton*, Linda Hutcheon has written that "the postmodern condition with respect to history might well be

described as one of radical uncertainty" (97). Such radical uncertainty provides Charles Lynchwood with a feeling of exhilaration, "for it meant that anything became possible" (127). Limitless possibilities can have nevertheless a predatory influence. In the end, Lynchwood is yet another "doomed detective," in Tani's phrase, who dies before discovering that the Chatterton "documents" were forged. Moreover, the decline of his health and untimely death (echoing that of the young poet) would seem to be directly related to his contact and engagement with these documents. Like the myth of Oedipus, Jorge Luis Borges's "Death and the Compass," Paul Auster's first book in the "New York Trilogy" *City of Glass*, and a number of other metaphysical detective stories, *Chatterton* underlines the existential risk that the detective must take in attempting to solve a mystery. Writing, as exemplified by the purloined styles of pastiche, becomes the primary accomplice of this radical uncertainty because it provides the purest realm for the non-representation of the subject. Individualistic literary styles and historically identifiable selves, alive and well prior to the postmodern condition, fall into Ackroyd's vortex of hyperreality which obstructs, if not eliminates, the possibility of any decisive constitution of the subject in language and time.

And Then There Were None?

Within the larger story are inset the stories of how I came to be marooned (told by myself to Cruso) and that of Cruso's shipwreck and early years (told by Cruso to myself), as well as the story of Friday, which is properly not a story but a puzzle or hole in the narrative (I picture it as a buttonhole, carefully cross-stitched around, but waiting for the button).

—J. M. Coetzee
Foe

This is not a true story, but certain things follow from other things.

—Peter Ackroyd
The Great Fire of London

Writers in the postmodern era have been strikingly drawn to detective fiction, and have elaborated some of their most fundamental concepts in that genre. Their predilection for detective fiction has facilitated the expression of characteristic postmodern concerns, not least the examination of selfhood through representational permutations of the genre's subjective presuppositions. In classic detective fiction, the detective, however divided his identity, could always return to the realm of authentic selfhood after the crime was solved. With the postmodern decentering of the subject, however, a number of the traditional detective story's underpinnings become anachronistic and irrelevant. Both chatty parrots and limitless pastiches emphasize the postmodern allure of hyperreality as applied to the self. These novels' ironic appropriation of genre significantly challenges the metanarrative in which the conventional detective story participates: the story of the self, replete with notions of an unequivocal moral, legal, social, and referential reality. The metaphysical detective story, however, attempts to enact the predicament of the decentered subject of postmodernism in all its indeterminate glory. It rewrites the detective structure according to the demands of postmodern parody: while explicitly alluding to its model, the metaphysical detective story immobilizes it through the ironic space created by its slightly defective citation of the original. With every new twist, the literary corpus of the postmodern detective novel—of which Jean Echenoz's *Cherokee* and Peter Ackroyd's *Chatterton* are only two recent examples—seeks to unhinge the process of reading from the generic assumptions of its monolithic institutional format, in which the narrative's closure is meant somehow to project the shadow of closure beyond its own textual limits. By appropriating the detective genre, postmodernism enacts in minute detail the erosion of the great metanarratives of European culture—primary among them, perhaps, the conception of a totalizing subjectivity. The reader might ask, as the narrator of Patrick Modiano's recent novel *Fleurs de ruine* does, "what good is it to try and resolve unsolvable mysteries and pursue ghosts, when life is there, completely simple, under the sun?" (87; my translation). The metaphysical detective story's only reply is to ceaselessly plot the spectral traces of a fugitive being.

Notes

1. Hegel traces this new system of relationships to revolutionary and post-revolutionary France and christens it "free subjectivity" (84; 280), the limitless possibility of the self as a self-justifying goal. On the real-life detective's role in the nineteenth century's polarization of public and private spheres, see Lock and Morn; on the role of the body and the late nineteenth-century insistence on physiology as the incontrovertible origin of identity, criminal or otherwise, see Thorwald and Darmon.

2. Dupin first applies his deductive powers in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" to an anonymous encounter between the narrator and another man in the early-evening Parisian crowd. Dupin himself, due to his self-imposed exile from society, has "ceased to be known in Paris" (337). His existential anonymity—not unlike Marie Rogêt's on the day of her murder in another of the author's ground-breaking stories—also corresponds to Poe's characterization of "The Man of the Crowd." In that story, the eponymous character whom the narrator follows represents "the type and genius of deep crime. He refuses to be alone. He is the man of the crowd!" (118). Both Dupin and the criminal live in a world in which anonymity and the equivocal meaning of the traces left at the scene of the crime are directly related, the only difference being the teleologically opposed applications of their production and decipherment.

3. The classic detective's ability to lose and regain himself accounts, perhaps, for his propensity for and successful mastery of disguise and impersonation. The theatricality of the gesture of disguise and the context within which it is employed (that is, to gain information that otherwise would not be divulged to the detective), however, suggests a resilient, resolute, and ever-present consciousness on the part of the true, hidden self behind the proposed, simulated self.

4. *Film noir* would also seem to be the source of the many detailed descriptions of light and lighting in various scenes in *Cherokee*. But the effect of the inclusion of these details in the novel goes far beyond mere stylistic flourish or faithful imitation. Coined by the critic Nino Frank in the French movie magazine *L'Ecran français* in 1946 to describe the pessimistic tone of certain post-war American films, *film noir* of the 1940s and early 1950s (like German Expressionist film of the early 1920s which many critics point to as an important aesthetic influence on the later style), in addition to fatalistic themes and narrative structures, often exhibited a striking visual style that included compositional tensions, disturbingly acute shot angles, disjunctive editing styles, and lighting that produced an extreme *chiaroscuro* in which shadows on all levels were rarely subordinated to lit spaces. Such lighting served, as Paul Sharader has noted, to further constrain and immobilize the characters of these stories: "No character can

speak authoritatively from a space that is being continually cut into ribbons of light. . . . When the environment is given equal or greater weight than the actor, it, of course, creates a fatalistic, hopeless mood. There is nothing the protagonists can do; the city will outlast and even negate their best efforts" (103-04). For an overview on the relationships between these visual styles and the other constitutive elements frequently found in *film noir* narratives, see Krutnik (17-23). Certainly one effect of the importing of the visual aesthetics of *film noir* in *Cherokee* is the motivated reduction of the dimensionality of the novel's characters.

5. The most elaborate example of these machines can be found in Echenoz's novel *Le Méridien de Greenwich* in which a scientist is held captive in order to construct a mysterious machine for an international gang. This machine is described as "a sort of collage, a conglomeration of accumulated materials which he assembled according to the arbitrary principle of random selection. It was nothing more than a technological *trompe l'oeil* with just the right number of motors and mysteries . . ." (222; my translation).

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