Out of Exile: The Recusal of the Chicago Police from American Film and Television, 1961–2011

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Abstract: The prime-time debut and subsequent cancellation of the Fox police procedural *The Chicago Code*, in 2011, briefly returned the once iconic Chicago Police Department to a place of prominence in the American crime drama. The series marked an end to the once official and later unofficial fifty-year moratorium on the fictionalized use of the department's name, image, and uniform in film and television, as well as a controversial ordinance prohibiting police dramas from being filmed on location in Chicago itself. The present article examines what impact this protracted self-exile from the mythography of the police—the depiction of the police myth in the arts and media—has meant for the Chicago Police Department in terms of its place in both American society and the national police subculture during a time when other police departments were undertaking significant modernization and commercialization efforts. The article additionally examines what the legacy of *The Chicago Code* may mean for the Chicago Police Department's imagistic reinvention and eventual reintegration into American popular culture.

Keywords: Chicago Police Department, *The Chicago Code*, Mayor Richard J. Daley, police procedural, mythography, *M-Squad*, institutional memory, vernacular memory

Résumé : Le début aux heures de grande écoute et l'annulation subséquente en 2011 par Fox de l'émission *The Chicago Code* sur les procédures policières a brièvement ramené le service de police de Chicago autrefois iconique à l'avant-plan de la dramatique policière américaine. La série a marqué la fin d'un moratoire de cinquante ans, d'abord officiel et plus tard non officiel, sur l'utilisation romancée du nom, de l'image, et de l'uniformité du service dans les films et la télévision, ainsi qu'une ordonnance controversée interdisant de filmer les dramatiques policières sur place dans Chicago même. Le présent article examine l'effet de cet exil volontaire prolongé de la mythographie policière – la représentation du mythe policier dans les arts et les médias – qui

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permettait de présenter la place du service de police de Chicago à la fois dans la société américaine et la subculture policière nationale à un moment où d'autres services de police amorçaient des efforts importants de modernisation et de commercialisation. L'article examine aussi ce que la tradition laissée par *The Chicago Code* peut signifier pour la réinvention du service de police dans l'imaginaire et sa réintégration éventuelle dans la culture populaire américaine.

Mots clés : service de police de Chicago, *The Chicago Code*, le maire Richard J. Daley, procédures policières, mythographie, *M-Squad*, mémoire institutionnelle, mémoire populaire

Introduction: The American Police-Media System

The present article forms part of a larger work that critically examines the interplay between popular representations of American police departments and their host cities in American film and television. Moreover, the article provides an interdisciplinary overview of the role that this media exposure, or lack thereof, has on the recruiting, retention, and public relations practices of those same police departments as well as on their larger institutional memories. Focusing on the period since what I call, elsewhere, the genre's "Golden Age" (1967 to 1975) (Arntfield 76), the article details how the production of American crime drama, specifically the television crime drama known as the police procedural, has enabled select police departments *qua* media corporations to enjoy preferred narrative positions within the larger American police-media system. While there certainly appears to be a direct correlation, or even a causal relation, between a department's complement of officers and commensurate funding, on the one hand, and its media profile, on the other, the Chicago Police Department (CPD), the second largest municipal law enforcement agency in the United States (Hickman and Reaves), has, until recently, despite its considerable size and the venerable crime history of the city it polices, remained largely a non-player in this system, for a number of reasons addressed here.

The consequences of this media self-exile, both internal and external to the department, include the creation of an institutional and cultural brand that differs significantly from that of other comparably sized police departments that have emerged as departments of record within the American police-media system. Departments of record, in this context, include the New York Police Department (NYPD), Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), San Francisco

Police Department (SFPD), and to a lesser extent, the Detroit Police Department (DPD), which remains, particularly in film, something of a preferred locale for dystopias depicting the inevitable perils and horrors associated with American municipal police work.[1] While it is frequently obvious that the identified perils of specific cities, as well as the mortality rates associated with working in certain police departments, predispose those cities and departments to dramatic rendering—a predisposition I will explore in detail toward the end of this article—specific departments of record have, for the last half-century, largely monopolized police procedural content and format, not only on American television, but in commercial film as well.

Just as those newspapers of record that, by virtue of their accreditation by the state and ability to disseminate public notices on issues of concern, tend to have significant cultural clout and are seen as authorities on topical issues, so, too, have police departments of record in the American police-media system become state-sanctioned conduits—whether by a consent decree or through Nielsen ratings—for official statements that represent the top-down transference of propaganda. Also, like their newspaper counterparts, police departments of record tend to be headquartered in existing major media centres, have celebrated and romanticized histories, and tend to be the model of excellence—or, at least, influence—upon which departments that are both competitors and imitators base themselves, in whole or in part.

Until the debut of the Fox Network series *The Chicago Code*, in 2011, the CPD effectively sequestered itself from the paradigm of the American police-media system, routinely falling back on its tradition of what was a once official, and later voluntary, recusal from representation in popular crime dramas. This was especially the case for television police drama, or the police procedural, with the CPD having little or no public legacy and having essentially forfeited the opportunity to become a culturally and commercially significant police department of record, in spite of its otherwise notable institutional history. The debut, to critical acclaim, of *The Chicago Code*, therefore, which brought to an end the fifty-year moratorium on participating in police procedurals or allowing the use of the CPD name or image, brings to the fore questions about the CPD's imagistic reinvention as a latecomer in the police-media system as well as its place in the American popular imagination, even though the series was abruptly cancelled in May 2011.

The police-media system might be more broadly defined as a nationalist partnership that, using closely regulated and thus formulaic media like network television, fuses public and private interests that are mutually benefitted by the myths generated through police stories. As, perhaps, the apotheosis of what Jacques Ellul identifies as a specific form of state-regulated propaganda that he calls the "propaganda of integration," or the use of media to stabilize a large social body dispersed across space and time, the police-media system ensures social cohesion among identifiable groups with shared ideologies, despite a surrounding physical environment of instability (71–4). Products of the police-media system such as police procedurals thus promote collective unification and deference to a hegemonic system through a common source of information that tends to be covert rather than overt in design (Ellul 53, 76). The propaganda of integration might, therefore, also be described as the horizontal, *interactive* transference of messages and meanings that, while largely defined by the intentions of its designers, is still shaped by the medium used to deliver it. The more tightly regulated and appended to the state that medium is—as is the case for network television, for instance—the more narratives can be used to restore baseline values that serve that state's larger interests.

The earliest example of the integrative ideation of the police-media system in action is likely to be found not on television, however, but with the inception of the content-specific police death notice printed in early broadsheet newspapers. My earlier research actually suggests that, by the mid-nineteenth century, American police departments—largely apathetic corporations, with dubious and even illiterate leadership—had abdicated control over the veneration of fallen officers and the creation of hero folklore to newspapers and, later, the commercial media generally. Following the police memorial in the rise of the police-media system were the police dime novel and pulp magazine together with the detective novel, then police radio serials, and then the televised police procedural and police film, soon after.[2] The most recent example of the police-media system is likely the proliferation of the designation known as the Public Information Officer, a frequently civilianized position within police departments for the purposes of controlling a department's public image and vetting the content used to contribute to the creation of American myth. The proliferation of these appointments within American police departments has largely been spurred by the rise of social media and its epochal "viral" videos

where, unlike television, police mythography is easily marred through its exposure to unregulated and frequently vexatious content beyond the direct control of the state, the police departments of record, and the police profession as a whole.

The Police Mythography

Describing police procedurals as myths, in this context, is not to discredit or devalue them. In fact, on the contrary, I define "myth" as real history presented as a collective narrative, or more specifically, as a story or series of snowballing stories that are, in some sense, all interconnected and that accumulate over generations of variable retellings to create an archive upon which people rely to make sense of the world. These stories always consist of partial truths, which have both a written and oral tradition and whose evolution over time serves the interest of preserving narrative longevity rather than objective facts. Myth, therefore, serves as a vehicle for larger cultural constructs across history and deploys the exaggeration and emotive elements required to appeal to visceral instincts rather than intellect, having a fantasy quality that ultimately overrides a story's verifiable elements. Myths are, in this sense, "made" by audiences who elect certain stories over others for retelling and carrying forward, ensuring their sustainability, relevance, and renewability. Simply put, myth is something very real, which empowers audiences to justify preferred readings of events and other phenomena, using a bottom-up approach, delineating stories selected from a larger archive that have some universal applicability or cogency. The convergence of narrative themes and images among the ancient Greek, Roman, Egyptian, and Norse traditions, for instance, underscores that, despite changes in name and locale, there exist certain fundamental truths that cut across cultures that are otherwise isolated from one another and unaware that the same stories exist elsewhere. While the social sciences have traditionally, almost without exception, deferred to Roland Barthes' *Mythologies* for boilerplate definitions of myth, in the present context, I prefer the more recent postulates of American cultural historian Richard Slotkin, who sees myth as the narrative form that helps contemporary society "make sense of the history we have lived and the place we are living in" (655). While the state's officially sanctioning and documenting certain myths perhaps marks the tipping point where myths evolve to become popular history, myths remain fundamentally grassroots constructions and are, in some sense, always the mediated reality and intellectual property of the people.

In looking specifically at television, by virtue of its populist design as a state-sanctioned and myth-making medium, it is necessary to relegate the American crime drama to what I call the police mythography, as a particular collection of myths. I define mythography, in this sense, as the treatment of a specific myth or amalgam of myths as portrayed in the arts and media. For the better part of the last fifty years, the police departments that generally come to mind, in terms of imagistic and rhetorical dominance in this police mythography, include those same departments that dominate the police-media system as departments of record. These include the NYPD, LAPD, SFPD, and DPD, as well as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), although, in the present article, I limit my analysis strictly to municipal police departments. In larger terms, the prominence of these agencies across all spectra of the police-media system has actually elevated their narratives to the status of myth, by virtue of their cultural and historical significance in America at large. As Slotkin points out, myth has become the means by which an identifiable group (American viewers and readers) expresses collective ideologies as historical reality (6–7). Slotkin goes on to describe what he calls "public myths," which are narratives controlled, in whole or in part, by the commercial media and which, necessarily, have a nationalist function (9), not unlike that of certain police departments elected for inclusion in the larger police mythography.

In examining the CPD's self-exile from police mythography, prior to 2011, I therefore begin by looking at the conditions through which other police departments obtained their current standing and "institutional memory," or the way in which a given organization produces and curates its collective memories of people and events so as to serve its own interests. For instance, the emergence of the LAPD as a department of record, it should be noted, occurred comparatively late, as the agency was first commissioned in 1869;[3] at the outset of the modern era, the police mythography was dominated by the NYPD, through the use of strategic and often lurid propagandist media. These included dime novels, such as the unapologetically lurid *National Police Gazette*—perhaps America's oldest periodical, ultimately acquired by the maverick and media-savvy NYPD commissioner George W. Matsell, in 1866, and retooled as a marketing, recruiting, and propagandist device (Mott 328, 418).[4] The subsequent rebranding of New York City as Gotham City in the DC Comics universe following the appropriation of the *National Police Gazette*—in particular, through the launch of the contemporaneous Detective Comics series, in 1937—would additionally cement

the NYPD as a department of record within the police mythography. This was a blurring of fact and fiction that later allowed the mythography to bleed into real-world and real-time policies during the NYPD's public-image renaissance in the 1990s, when then Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's sweeping hiring and retention reforms frequently replaced the job description "policing" with "crime fighting" for officers on the beat in Manhattan (Manning 319, 321). By deferring to the department's mythic origins and the vernacular of the DC Comics' rendering of the NYPD, American policing, generally, under Giuliani, therefore, came to epitomize the extraordinary cultural, procedural, and legislative scale of the police-media system.

By contrast, during much of the twentieth century, the LAPD's status as a department of record seems to have been, in large part, a product of its host city's geography. On one hand, the city is located at the precipice of the original frontier, resting at the urban boundary of the Old West that Slotkin argues is so integral to the American imagination and foundational to the construction of all American myths.[5] On the other hand, the LAPD seems to have also been the beneficiary of Los Angeles's summarily coming to eclipse New York City as the leading film and television production centre in the United States by the mid-twentieth century, where filming police narratives for both the big and small screens "on location" in Los Angeles seemed to create a televisual brand of what Arjun Appadurai calls "production fetishism" (41), or the way in which the location of production rather than the commodity being produced is what ultimately becomes fetishized. In this sense, the LAPD has emerged as a police department of record over a comparatively compressed time period, in large part, through its simply being the police department with jurisdiction in those areas where most police mythography is created.[6]

While the early NYPD sought to control misuse of its image and reputation by appropriating the *National Police Gazette*, in 1866, and later took on a more active role in consulting on official representations of the department that would persist (a designated film and television production consulting unit was created in 1966, a full century later ["Rules"]), the LAPD has taken the additional step of not only preventing non-sanctioned portrayals of the department within the city and elsewhere but also aggressively weeding out fictional versions that might compromise their standing in the police mythography. These proscriptive tactics in brand retention

arguably began with *TJ Hooker* (1982–6) and its transparent parody of the LAPD (the so-called "LCPD" is an otherwise identical police department in every respect) and crested in the 1990s, following a string of public relations disasters for the LAPD that effectively forced producers to co-opt the department's image and either rename or anonymize it.[7] The final and most flagrant example was likely the Steven Spielberg police procedural, *High Incident* that followed in the footsteps of *TJ Hooker* by presenting an obvious, but shrewdly genericized, duplication of the LAPD in all but name. The response to these imposters was the *real* department's registering its uniform, badge, motto, and even the initials "LAPD" as trademarked products with the United States Patent and Trademark Office in 1998 (Morrison; Fowler), an aggressively litigious move that secured the LAPD as a department of record in the police mythography, with clearly delineated user terms and costs. Keenly aware of how police departments function as brand names that are subject not only to myth-making narratives from within the police-media system but also to disinformation and libel tactics from outside, by detractors and critics, the LAPD's self-recognition as not only a brand name—but the department's credo, vernacular, and ethos as all amounting to bona fide intellectual property—provides an excellent case study in how dramatic police media always reflects and ultimately effects the institutional culture and public image of a given police department.

This sort of LAPD-esque branding scheme was, in fact, first conceived by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) earlier that same year (McLaughlin 12), when the massive agency that serves as arguably Canada's lone department of record in the police mythography undertook its own efforts to retain control over its brand image.[8] Going so far as to transfer title and control of its image to the Walt Disney Company, for its own marketing purposes and as part of a larger cross-branding strategy, the RCMP apparently resigned itself to the reality—doing so ahead of the venerable LAPD or NYPD—that the newly, unapologetic "merchandising of the police officer" (12) was an inevitability of the modern police-media system, where the police procedural was to dominate prime-time television.[9] As a composite public figure, simultaneously romanticized and vilified, celebrated yet scrutinized to the level of minutiae, the police—as evidenced by the departments of record—are like all industries reliant on public-image strategies and are frequently defined, for better or worse, by their struggle to control commercial images and popular representations. Few other examples are as

emblematic of this quandary as the police procedural that serves as the linchpin of the police mythography. Also, few other departments better underscore this truism than the LAPD, other than, perhaps, by their omission from this cultural paradigm, the CPD.

The Curious Case of the Chicago Police Department

In terms of the emergent police mythography of the twentieth century, the CPD's opt-out policy, like the LAPD's and the RCMP's trademarking schemes, was apparently prompted by a case of brand misrepresentation on television. In fact, well before the emergence of the network police procedural, the CPD was a prolific player in the nascent police-media system as represented in film. As Chicago proved to be a popular and somewhat natural setting for crime films, in light of its infamous reputation as a strategic hub for bootleggers, robber barons, gangsters, and mafia operations generally, the CPD achieved significant notoriety as, if nothing else, one of the most dangerous departments for which to work in America. Most of the films produced during the interwar period that accurately depict the CPD as an especially dangerous department to join not only relied on the cresting celebrity of American criminal folklore as depicted in the media of the day but were informed, in more empirical terms, by some grim statistics. These include numbers confirming that, between 1918 and the American declaration of war in 1941, the CPD had a deplorable total of 215 officers killed in the line of duty, including an astounding 14 officers slain in 1931 alone (*Officer Down*). Not surprisingly, these shocking figures made the CPD popular fodder for the so-called "public enemy" films produced both before and after the enactment of the Motion Picture Production Code of 1934, known colloquially as the Hays Code, that tightly regulated and censored cinematic violence and the glorification of crime. Examples include Howard Hawks's boundary-pushing *Scarface* (1932) as likely the pre-eminent pre-Code[10] film using the deaths of CPD officers for rhetorical and dramatic value. It was a tactic used to lesser extents even earlier in films such as *Underworld* (1927), *Little Caesar* (1930), and more prominently, in subsequent films such as the docudrama *Call Northside 777* (1948), which depicts the wrongful conviction of a man accused of murdering a CPD officer in 1932, a year when it was purportedly deemed "open season on cops" in the city of Chicago.

As films of the public enemy era defied state interests by glorifying the gangster lifestyle that pervaded Depression-era Chicago, media

representations of the police arguably showed them as disposable heroes. As on-screen deaths of CPD officers mimicked the real line-of-duty deaths occurring outside air-chilled movie houses, the CPD quickly gained credit among both the public and the police fraternity as an especially dangerous department, reserved for the most daring of officers. While this was not the most flattering of portrayals for the city of Chicago itself, American newspapers of the day—including local dailies *The Chicago Tribune* and what was then the *Chicago Daily Illustrated Times* (now the *Chicago Sun-Times*)—came to laud police officers killed in the line of duty as national heroes and proffered memorials normally reserved for nobility and local celebrities as well as obituaries replete with solicitous maxims. In short, the CPD of the fledgling police-media system prior the advent of television was the domain of the American hero and a department that achieved significant coverage and notoriety through, if nothing else, the iconography of its fallen officers.

Following the meteoric rise of the police procedural as a staple of American television, however, and in particular, after *Dragnet*'s original run on NBC from 1951 to 1959—when departments such as the LAPD, NYPD, and later the SFPD came to enjoy preferred standing in the police-media system—the CPD soon found itself less tolerant of unfaithful, or at the very least unflattering, depictions that these other departments accepted as a cost of doing business. As a department afflicted by a significant number of historical tragedies, in effect, carrying the burden of the battle against bootlegging and organized crime as measured in lives lost, the CPD took steps to inoculate itself against the critical depictions of policing that came to pervade film and television during the social turbulence of the 1960s and 1970s and that might tarnish its venerable history and institutional memory.

Chicago's longest-reigning mayor, Richard J. Daley, spearheaded a full-on media opt-out policy, personally ensuring that the department was omitted from fictionalized, mythographic representations of police work that might bring the city, or earlier heroic depictions of the department, into disrepute *post hoc* (Ebert 173). In office from 1955 to 1976, Daley enacted an ordinance in 1959, with the support of, and assurances of strict enforcement by, then CPD Commissioner Timothy O'Connor, that prohibited the filming of police procedurals—both the film and television varieties—on location, within the city limits, and also banned outright any commercial or theatrical use of the CPD uniform crest or vehicular

insignia in any media productions (Liebenson).[11] These proscriptive measures were purportedly undertaken to protect the department's reputation after Daley viewed a second season episode, titled "The Jumper" in the Lee Marvin police procedural *M Squad* (1957–60), in which a CPD officer is depicted as accepting a bribe. The balance of the *M Squad* series that triggered Daley's by-laws and the CPD's ensuing self-imposed exile from the police mythography was filmed in England, as the production was banished from Chicago. Panoramic shots of the iconic Chicago cityscape and skyline appearing in the third season of the series had to be obtained covertly, without a film permit and without any cooperation from the local government or police, a trend that would define Chicago-based police narratives for decades to come (Liebenson).

Even after Mayor Daley's death in office in December 1976, the CPD opt-out policy remained in place until the production of director John Landis's cult film *The Blues Brothers* in 1980, when Daley's successor, Mayor Jane Byrne, allowed the department to be referenced in name and image and some scenes to be shot on location within the city limits. While Byrne generally made Chicago much more hospitable to commercial media productions, allowing it to graduate, eventually, to become a preferred city for filming on location (Ebert 172–3), Daley's injunction has curiously remained on the books, at least unofficially, with the CPD itself continuing to screen and typically reject representations of the department in the popular media as per the original agreement between the Mayor's office and the Police Commission (Feder). This trend to self-governed quality control over the department's imagistic representation and reputation persisted until well after 2000, when some incremental progress toward restoring the use of the name and image in American popular culture was made. While this multigenerational avoidance of the commercial media by the CPD is now little more than a matter of local interest and the bailiwick of trivia buffs and has managed, hitherto, to avoid critical or scholarly analysis, the emergence of *The Chicago Code* as a conspicuous departure from the CPD's peculiar and poorly understood media history demands a more substantive critical analysis, within the context of both film and television scholarship and organizational sociology.

The eventual and incremental media reintegration of the CPD that led up to the debut of *The Chicago Code* began, not as part of the police-media system, however, but strictly through oblique

references made in the long-running television medical drama *ER* (1994–2006), and the contemporaneous 2001 Warner Brothers film *Angel Eyes*. Both of these productions—neither of which constitutes a police text *per se*—managed to use crude but discernible on-screen approximations of the existing CPD insignia, although predecessors had been required to defer to derivatives such as "City Police," "Metro Police," or some other disguised moniker. In fact, televisual representations of the CPD in terms of police procedurals post-2000 actually remained rather sparse, as was the department's institutional memory with respect to the police procedural.

Institutional memory is defined here as the collective memory that is at the heart of organizations that emphasize their historical relativism and exceptionalism. This includes the CPD where, as in most police departments, collective memory reflects the sanctioned history that is underwritten or otherwise endorsed by the police as a municipal corporation and, like Ellul's propaganda of integration, serves the material interests of the state. Nicole Maurantonio, when examining the institutional memory and mediated identity of the Philadelphia Police Department, similarly refers to it as the "official" and comparatively rigid version of an organization's historical culture that can be used to reassert and legitimize institutional identity (49). In other words, it is a function of the occupational and social present, not the past (56), and is a means of establishing a collective identity and group-think culture by constructing myths from the top down, not the bottom up, as they are traditionally created. As a form of myth that is, to some extent, imposed and has the backing of the police-media system, the institutional memory of the CPD is one that effectively ends with the public-enemy era. The lack of representative media content since that time, in particular television content, is especially telling, given the sizeable population base of Chicago and its being the setting for a disparate group of successful, non-police, prime-time series; its cultural and economic importance as a media production centre in the United States generally; and the equally impressive complement of its police force. In fact, relevant, canonical police titles created since Mayor Daley's media embargo are limited to Michael Mann's *Crime Story* (1986–8) and *Due South* (1994–9), though the former was filmed largely in Mexico and Las Vegas, and the latter in Canada, in both its network incarnations ("*Crime Story*"; "*Due South*").

The Chicago Code, Vernacular Memory, and Media Renewal

Debuting on the Fox Network in February 2011 and created by Shawn Ryan, producer of the iconoclastic and critically acclaimed Fox series *The Shield* (2002–9), *The Chicago Code* was filmed entirely on location in Chicago: a novelty in its own right, given that it is the only police procedural in half a century to successfully use the city name in its title. As with *M Squad*, which first drew with ire of Mayor Daley and city bureaucrats and lawmakers, *The Chicago Code* offers a less-than-flattering depiction of the city itself, with the narrative following plainclothes detectives as they investigate entrenched municipal corruption and connections between Chicago politicians, city institutions, and the Irish mob. While Ryan insisted that the series was intended to pay homage to a great city and serve as a point-of-view showcase for its police department (Salem), he chose never to speak directly to the fact that the series also marked a number of media milestones for the CPD, including what was the most liberal use of the city name and filming location, as well as CPD equipment and regalia, in television history.

The unexpected cancellation of *The Chicago Code* in May 2011, following what had been favourable reviews of the series pilot and subsequent episodes, now brings to the fore questions regarding the cultural legacy of these milestones, if any. Such questions include: did the concessions made by the CPD and the city in granting licence to the Fox Network for prime-time representations of the city normally reserved for other departments of record mark a new branding strategy? or are they little more than a reflection of the fact that competing interests in new media have necessitated that the CPD bring itself out of exile in deference to its officers, both past and present, living and dead? And the ongoing recruiting and retention crisis, afflicting not only the CPD but all American police departments—both large and small—at the time of this writing (Wilson and Castaneda; Bratton), together with the impact this crisis has on the public image and marketing strategies employed by police departments as they compete for a very limited pool of qualified and motivated applicants still interested in police work, is an equally timely question, and one likely warranting its own study. On a broader scale, the emergence and summary disappearance of *The Chicago Code* from American network television also comes at a time when the conventional police mythography, under pressure from new media, is undergoing something of a shake-up, as are

those departments of record that had largely controlled popular discourses on policing for the better part of fifty years.

Just as the advent of new media has deregulated the police-hero myth by allowing uncensored and unscripted attacks in public forums—through, for instance, videos that go viral or non-moderated discourses—so, too, are police subcultures able to circumvent conventional, state-sanctioned modes of myth making to establish their own branding schemes through the modularity and democracy of the Internet. The Internet is a liminal space where what were historically non-players in the police mythography, including the CPD, have managed to establish their own social history, governed, not by institutional memory, but by its antithesis: the vernacular memory.

Just as the television police procedural and the police film allow crime narratives, as public myths, to expose and express the social mores and ideological norms of a society, stimulating and moderating debates on matters of race, class, gender, and justice, so, too, does the Internet, in the case of the CPD, show evidence of an internal culture and collective reality emancipated from "official" discourses. The vernacular memory is an ideological frame of reference for the past and present that is controlled by the rank and file of an institution; one that Aaron Hess, in his study of online obituaries, calls the "personally situated interpretations" of history and tragedy that reflect the language communities of those actually telling the story. In contrast to the legalese scripted by bureaucrats or the melodrama composed by network writers, vernacular memory, in both its written and oral traditions, creates and protects myth at the ground level, expressing everyday realities of social drama as interpreted by its participants, not its spectators or marketers. Mimicking the way in which the Internet fosters alternative currents for the dissemination of news among counter-cultures, departments such as the CPD have used new media as a release valve to create independent axes of cultural discourse all their own.

By engendering a collective memory and written legacy scripted by everyday officers' responses to the localized experience and culture of policing— or what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, in their examination of ghettoized language systems, would call the "rhizomes" (21) of the media profile CPD inherited from Mayor Daley's scorched-earth media policy—the CPD has developed a system of meaning not dictated by official directives and procedures but by

the vernacular memory that operates subcutaneously, organically, and along multiple pathways beyond the public eye.

Aligning itself with the CPD's once iconic status, through its deplorable casualties, as a department of record during the films of the public enemy era,[12] the vernacular memory is once again employing the iconography of the department's fallen officers and the city's history as an organized crime capital as textual vehicles to reinvent the CPD as a relevant cultural institution and reanimate its now anodyne media profile. In fact, just as the Internet has never been subject to the same sort of dogmatic creative and legislative restrictions as other more conventional media have, measures such as cultural self-exile—whether imposed or voluntary—have not prevented the CPD from creating its own mythography online. Nowhere is this more the case than the in the open-source commemorative and epitaphic content of police memorial web sites. Of note, the *Officer Down Memorial Page*—which, since its inception in 1996, has remained the most visited online law enforcement memorial in terms of overall web traffic, boasting over 100,000 unique visitors per month—is, perhaps, the most telling example of the CPD's creating a grassroots mythography, outside the traditional institutional parameters upon which most American municipal police departments rely for cultural currency and credibility.

A review of the hypertext epitaphs and condolences, submitted not only by existing CPD officers educating themselves on the department's tragic history through the site but also by outsiders proffering their knowledge about and respect for the CPD's venerable heritage, suggests that those titles in the CPD mythography prior to Mayor Daley remain canonical even today: "Officer Lundy's murder was the basis for the 1948 film noir classic 'Call Northside 777' starring Jimmy Stewart. God bless Officer Lundy. Retired. Chicago Police Department. April 24, 2006" (*Officer Down*). In this brief inscription at the virtual memorial for Patrolman William D. Lundy, shot and killed on 9 December 1932, an anonymous contributor, identifying him or herself only as a retired CPD officer, offers earnest condolences, while referring, for the benefit of the public, to the context of the officer's murder in the "classic" film *Call Northside 777*, one of the representative films in the CPD mythography. The memorial for Patrolman Edward M. O'Donnell, another public-enemy-era fatality, who was shot and killed while interrupting a hold-up on 9 June 1931, has an online memorial containing reflections, submitted by both current and former CPD

officers, that range from the sombre to the poetic: "It has been 80 years but the CPD will not allow your ultimate sacrifice to be forgotten. Thank you for your service. Detective Thomas Downes. Chicago. June 14, 2011."

> An angel in the sky must leave his place of rest. Gently tucking his wings beneath his armored vest. For duty has called, there is much work to do. Little did he know, this one's dressed in blue. Arriving on the scene, He knows just what to say. "Follow me my fallen Brother, I'll show you the way. Your duty here has ended, now your work is through. Come rest your hat beside mine, for I'm a cop too." Rest in peace Ed. You deserve more than we can do for you!
>
> James 'Jimbo' O'Donnell Det. Ret. Chgo. P.D. area 6 robbery October 25, 2006.

These are but samples from a list of hundreds of memorials containing what appears to be a disproportionate number of entries from CPD officers, as compared to memorials for fallen officers representing the four departments of record, where an international constituency of both police officers and civilians from outside the immediate vernacular circle submit emotive and often vengeful reflections en masse. It seems as though the CPD, by contrast, who are accustomed to extolling their own brand of the police-hero myth independently of the commercial- and government-regulated media, rely, to sustain the myth of their fallen predecessors, on their own vernacular memory. By endorsing a movement away from civilianized and commercialized representations, they have changed how the collective identity of police departments are put on the written record, inspiring alternative, self-sustaining currents in departmental branding and storytelling that are independent of the department's official media policies and mythographic profile.

Standing in stark contrast to the CPD's otherwise non-existent media presence prior to *The Chicago Code*, which rebooted the CPD as a public rather than private or vernacular media franchise, is the department's profile on the *Officer Down Memorial Page*, where fallen officers are solemnized with local semantics. The profile is a tribal, closed language system that points to an internally regulated mythography, emancipated from ratings systems, gag orders, and institutional spin doctoring. It is a language system and written record that not only predates *The Chicago Code* but likely helped to inspire it. As such, it remains distinct from the department's official public image, so the sanctions and cancellations that reflect the

institutional memory minimally disrupt the more sovereign vernacular memory. The disconnect between the official language and version of history deployed by the CPD, on the one hand, and its refusal to partake in the police-media system for half a century, on the other, has, in effect, forced the creation of this underground mythography, where the vernacular memory—myth that operates from the bottom up and remains distinct from the official story—flourishes among the rank-and-file CPD officers. In this sense, *The Chicago Code*, and the new and comparatively liberal media policy adopted by the CPD and city of Chicago with respect to its production, seem to reflect the fact that vernacular myths, as products of vernacular memory, operate in spite of, and not in deference to, the institutional memory—as is seen, for example, in the case of the *Officer Down Memorial Page*. Despite Mayor Daley's deliberately rejecting the possibility that the department might have a place in the official police mythography, preferring, instead, to keep it insulated from the burgeoning popularity of the police procedural, Chicago's recusal from the master narrative has proved to be of little detriment to its standing as a department of record in the eyes of its own officers—as seen through the lens of new media.

Conclusion: TV or Not TV?

The development of the CPD's own private mythography has effectively ensured that its vernacular memory begins, where its institutional memory ended, over fifty years ago, with the enormity of the CPD's blood sacrifices. The CPD profile on the *Officer Down Memorial Page*, for instance—not only a forum of public mourning and memorialization among police officers but also a community where the CPD are emancipated from proscriptive ordinances and competing commercial and political interests—illustrates that the institutional memory of the CPD is not dependent on ephemeral and unpredictable media like prime-time television, but rather on its own linguistic system and historical record. As police departments headquartered in locales such as Los Angeles and New York City seem to have been the beneficiaries of their host cities' salutary relationship with the commercial media, the CPD has remained, in spite of politically motivated obstacles, a department of record in the police mythography by virtue of its own vernacular memory: the stories of "ordinary people" and their need for social texts that speak to their daily reality, even if such realities are distilled through myth. Ethnographic research suggests that, from the outset of their careers, new police recruits, who inevitably have been

inundated for years by the images promulgated by police films and television series (Perlmutter 8), have a systemic and socialized need to parody what they perceive as content worthy of inclusion in the mythography.

The debut of the Fox television series *The Chicago Code*, while reprising the same conventions that have made the police procedural the most consistently profitable television genre of the last fifty years (Tulloch 46), has, despite all of its ground-breaking progress toward restoring the CPD as a department of record and despite its critical success, ultimately proven to be a red herring. All the fanfare as the release of the series approached and all the interest it generated ultimately distracted television producers—and audiences for that matter—from the fact that the CPD's place in the police mythography remained alive and well, in spite of its apparent invisibility on film and television. While American police departments, even lesser known departments outside the inner circle of the departments of record, would seem to be increasingly reliant on television-centred branding strategies, in light of the reality television zeitgeist,[13] the CPD remains as anomalous now as it was during Mayor Daley's tenure.

Slotkin points to the role of public myths, endorsed by the media and, therefore, the state, in creating shared ideological interpretations of the past—constructions that, real or not, help form the basis for nostalgia industries in America—but the CPD has, by opting out of that system, opted into a system of private myths. Whether by choice or out of necessity, the CPD—in the absence of a sustainable media conduit for the better part of fifty years, roughly the equivalent of two consecutive, complete police careers—established a new kind of organizational culture. By adopting what might be compared to a sort of collective existentialism, and by seeking a frame of reference and source of myth outside the prevailing hegemonic system, the CPD has entirely disaffiliated itself from official institutional representations and customs.

It has become evident that CPD officers have created an alterative discourse space, beyond the reach of the department itself, where the vernacular memory—myths told by and for CPD officers alone—determines their relationship to their organizational past. This past has apparently come to coalesce around the iconography of the fallen CPD officer, just as it did prior to 1959, when the CPD's line-of-duty death registry ranked among its most important

distinguishing features and markers of identity in media productions. The lingering question is whether *The Chicago Code* was simply too little, too late, in terms of reinventing the CPD as a mainstream media entity. Perhaps, the current occupational culture of the CPD is simply too far removed from the paradigms of network television and prefers instead to remain insulated, in an intimate narrative circle that is dismissive, even contemptuous, of mainstream views and viewership. The CPD as an institution, and CPD officers as a distinct cultural and vernacular phylum within that institution, have come to realize very different interpretations of the department's past and the direction of its current media brand. The apparent apathy with which *The Chicago Code* was met, therefore, may suggest that trying to change the department's recent past on a public level is less important than honouring the department's distant past at the private level, at least among the rank-and-file officers who apparently still carry the popular vote in terms of what myths get elected for retelling.

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Notes

1 E.g., the *Robocop* franchises produced for film, television, and graphic novels, as well as *Exit Wounds* (2001), *Narc* (2002), and the remake and relocation of *Assault on Precinct 13* (2005).

2 While *Dragnet*'s debut on NBC in 1951 is generally understood as a watershed in terms of police procedurals on television, the first canonical police film is generally accepted as being *Dirty Harry*, released a full twenty years later in the summer of 1971 (Rafter 111).

3 The LAPD had previously been an unpaid force, known as both the Los Angeles Guard and the Los Angeles Rangers and dating back to 1853 ("LAPD").

4 Matsell, having previously identified the media appeal of police stories, is perhaps best known, not only for modernizing the nascent NYPD both before and after the New York City Police Riot of 1857, but also for authoring the then definitive glossary of criminal ciphers and turns of phrase known as *Vocabulum; Or the Rogue's Lexicon*, in 1859.

5 This concept was, of course, first proposed by Frederick Jackson Turner.

6 The fact that "downtown" Los Angeles is a sprawling and amorphous cityscape with no discernible topographical or architectural landmarks as compared to older American cities of similar size and population makes it an easily exportable locale to suit nearly any narrative style or era, its effectively being everywhere and yet also nowhere in particular.

7 Examples include the beating of motorist Rodney King in 1991 and the ensuing riots of 1992, the investigative negligence and misconduct of investigators in the OJ Simpson investigation of 1994 and subsequent trial in 1995, and, most notably, the Rampart Division racketeering and robbery scandal of the late 1990s that saw over seventy LAPD police officers implicated in what became the largest corruption investigation of a police department in United States history, with control of the LAPD being turned over, by consent decree, to the United States Department of Justice on 19 September 2000 for a period of five years (Sullivan 308–9).

8 With rare exception, police procedurals produced in Canada and also based in Canada have summarily failed, both critically and commercially. Exceptions include *Night Heat* (1985–93) and *DaVinci's Inquest* (1998–2005) based in Toronto and Vancouver, respectively. The more recent *Flashpoint* (2008–present) and *Rookie Blue* (2010–present) have achieved success, not only in Canada but internationally, as a result of excluding any reference to Canada and using generic blue "Metro Police" uniforms—the same strategy used by the majority of media productions depicting the CPD following Mayor Daley's banishment of the police procedural from Chicago.

9 Police departments as brand names aside, the police procedural, as the mainstay of the prime-time network slot, has long been favoured for product placement schemes. Examples range from the use of cigarettes in *Dragnet* to the showcasing of designer clothing and a musical artist in each episode of *Miami Vice*.

10 The Hays Code was actually implemented in 1930 but not enforced until 1934, with films produced prior to that year being popularly, though unofficially, declared "pre-Code" films (Leitch 25–7).

11 In 1975, in the final year of Daley's life and political career, two films, *Cooley High* and *Brannigan*, were permitted to be filmed on site in Chicago and make use of Chicago police vehicles. The exact reasons for these special circumstances remain unclear.

12 The first confirmed use of the term "public enemy" was in a 1930 issue of the *Chicago Tribune*, citing Chicago Crime Commission founder Frank L. Loesch; it was later sensationalized by FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, and also Hollywood, through the rest of the 1930s (see Barnhart; "History").

13 Examples include the series *Dallas SWAT*, *Real Police Women of Broward County*, *Police Women of Cincinnati*, *Steven Segal: Lawman*, *Alaska State Troopers*, and a proliferating list of other titles based loosely on the

archetypical formula of *Cops* (1989–present), arguably the progenitor of the reality-television phenomenon.

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