

A man in a dark top hat and a dark coat with a light blue shirt and dark tie, looking to the right. He is holding a walking stick with a silver handle. The background is a dark, textured blue.

The Best Murders Are British

Essays on the
International
Appeal of English
Crime Dramas

Edited by
JIM DAEMS

This book has undergone peer review

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The “Bloody ’ell” of Broadchurch

Heterotopia in British Television Crime Series

DEBNITA CHAKRAVARTI

Broadchurch was one of the highest-rated programs on British television in 2013. Series one met with almost unanimous acclaim. The *Radio Times* named it the best television series of the year. Matthew Bell, of the industry journal *Television*, called it “a cultural phenomenon,” and the *Entertainment Weekly* wasn’t exaggerating when it termed it a “national obsession” in the U.K. (Collins). Tirdad Derekhshani’s critical assessment in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* represents the majority of contemporary reviews: “British TV writer Chris Chibnall achieved something special with the ITV show *Broadchurch*: It’s a tense, gripping murder mystery [...] a brilliantly plotted, multilayered, intimate character study [...] [f]eaturing a brilliant ensemble cast.” The resounding popularity of the series is a considerable achievement, given that “[i]n contemporary Britain, it is a rare thing indeed for a week’s television schedule not to include several crime dramas in primetime” (McElroy, *Cops on the Box* 1).

The first series was aired in the UK from March 4, 2013, to April 22, 2013. The eight-episode series begins with the murder of an eleven-year-old boy in the fictional coastal town of Broadchurch in Dorset, United Kingdom. The incident sparks a complex murder investigation that puts an entire town, its residents, and its secrets under the national spotlight, setting off a veritable media frenzy. Amidst this turmoil emerge frictions and fissures hitherto absent from this near-perfect community. The two primary families involved, the Latimers and the Millers, along with an entire gamut of townspeople and the media retinue, get caught in a web of lies, half-truths, and fantasies that obfuscate facts and elucidate characters. Grief, shame, malice, secrets, and mutual suspicions surface. Local police officer Ellie Miller (Olivia Colman) is compelled to team up reluctantly with Detective Inspector Alec Hardy