

Centre Number: 352
Student Number: 11521525

English Extension II

Print Medium

Critical Response

- A critique of an author's work

Title (Thesis question):

**Barry Maitland: From Dean to Crime Fiction
Writer: Why is Barry Maitland's 'Brock and Kolla'
series so successful in the crime fiction genre?**

Preface:

This essay is an exploration of the Barry Maitland's 'Brock and Kolla' series.

There are two main aims, they are:

a) To scrutinise Maitland as a writer in the genre

and

b) to explore his unique use of architecture as a device.

Barry Maitland is a relatively new author to the genre of crime fiction who has an architectural background. He recently retired from his 17-year post as Dean of Architecture at Newcastle University (Australia) to pursue a full time career in writing crime fiction.

Architectural background, you say? Yes! In fact, Maitland's books are successful due to their unique insight into the impact of environment on the individual. This approach differs from the traditional approach of 'characters before setting'. Nevertheless, Maitland demonstrates how it is possible to apply his expert knowledge to his award winning 'Brock and Kolla' series.

Readers today are antagonistic toward crime fiction novels that contain caricature detectives and hackneyed subjects.

Maitland's established architectural ideas and studies have instigated a unique social commentary that deals with the impact setting has on individuals in the context of London, England. However, by dealing with familiar settings, like a shopping centre, new suburb, or a naturopathic clinic, readers can sense an element of universality that can be read by an international audience.

This essay takes a critical approach to the techniques used by Maitland as to how and why they are effective in the context of today's competitive market.

Thesis: Barry Maitland: From Dean to Crime Fiction Writer: Why is Barry Maitland's 'Brock and Kolla' series so successful in the crime fiction genre?

It is hard to believe that Australia's most hailed crime fiction stylist¹ is an architect nevertheless; Australia's Barry Maitland is just that.

Writer of the 'Brock and Kolla' series, Barry Maitland retired from his post as the Dean of Architecture at Newcastle University to take up the challenge of writing crime fiction.

His quirky police procedurals are set in London and written in Australia from his experience of living in and designing buildings in England where he spent the best part of his life. He was born in Scotland and raised in London, and later studied architecture at the University of Cambridge. After graduating, he worked on the post-second world war New Towns project, being involved in the government experiment to clear slums and construct new towns for one hundred thousand people. He achieved a Ph.D. in Urban Design before successfully applying for the position of the Dean of Architecture at Newcastle University, Australia.

As an academic, he wrote numerous books on his studies of architecture where he developed his ideas of how to write lengthy compositions that sustain reader interest. These works include: 'Concepts of Urban Design' (1984), 'The New Architecture of the Retail Mall' (1990), 'Architecture Newcastle: A Guide' (1997) with David Stafford.

As a condition to printing these books, the editor of the architectural press insisted that he write for a diverse audience other than those who were familiar with the study of architecture. This gave Maitland the experience of having to appeal to the public and create a book that would capture the interest of anyone, no matter their level of understanding of architecture.

Although writing crime fiction may seem very different to writing about architecture, in reality, authors have to continually stretch the boundaries of the genre and redefine it to keep up with current reader expectations. These reader expectations can either make or break an author's work in contemporary society. Sara Ann Freed, executive editor of Mysterious press says that it is a common dilemma for every contemporary author to come up with a plot and characters that satisfy the demands of the modern reader.

"A lot of writers have bottomed out on the more traditional crime novel. They're bored with the time-worn subjects and settings and aren't having much fun writing about the traditional P.I, male or female, so they are turning to new places and different types of people. Readers are also demanding more than ever that they are bored with the cozies where not a lot happens. They want substance, themes explored in depth, and they are more concerned with issues."²

Even Maitland himself has stated this concern:

"There are an increasing number of mysteries being published, putting greater pressure on the writers to be original." ³

Barry Maitland's unique techniques in writing crime fiction have been the reason for his successful debut as a crime fiction writer.

His extensive expertise in architecture and interest in crime fiction have combined to produce a winning combination. Maitland has won the shortlisted John Creasey award for best first crime novel with his 'The Marx Sisters' and his second, 'The Malcontenta', was the joint winner of the Inaugural Ned Kelly Award for best crime novel.

Maitland has published five books up to 2000 and they are: 'The Marx Sisters', 'The Malcontenta', 'All my enemies', 'The Chalon Heads' and 'Silvermeadow'.

Maitland's writing style is different from other crime fiction writers because he composes from the assumption that architecture conditions behaviour. According to Barry Maitland, architecture, like crime fiction, has its own conventions in the way that it influences society. A crime fiction story has its conventions in the way it is to be solved; similarly, a building affects people because of its design.

This combination creates a unique methodology for writing crime fiction that gives the reader an appreciation of universally accepted environments that people take for granted even though they manipulate the minds of the masses.

Maitland explained in his book 'Architecture Newcastle: A guide':

"It is said a city without a building is like a person without a memory"⁴

Whether we like it or not, buildings play a large part in our lives, we eat, sleep, and work in them, without them cities would be obsolete.

Maitland has simply taken the logical step of introducing into his books the idea that buildings impact on society.

It is the accretion of architectural detail that establishes the setting for the 'Brock and Kolla' series and gives Maitland's novels a strong sense of place and an intriguing insight into the historical background of each setting. He writes from the aspect that buildings affect people's behaviour and consequently this creates complex life dramas that perpetrate the crime. Whereas, other more traditional crime fiction authors, write about people and their psychological dramas that affect society and therefore impact on the environment.

Sian Prior from Melbourne's 774 ABC radio "(in relation to Silvermeadow) said,

"I enjoyed this book a lot, but it's very different to Dunant's. There's a lot more technical detail and less psychological exploration. It has a more complex plot, but less obviously complex characters"⁵

Sian Prior is clearly contrasting Maitland's unique writing style to that of British author Sarah Dunant, an author who uses the established psychological stance in her crime fiction books.

In contrast, Maitland has said that he prefers to establish the setting before the characters are introduced to the story. Once the setting is established, he then chooses characters that pertain to his chosen environment. This environment begins to develop as readers come to learn of the influence that it has over its occupants and its function in society. This is an interesting approach to take, as often people are subtly isolated within an architectural environment without realising the influence that the place has on their lives. Hence, the type of characters found in the novel varies according to the place in which they are set.

Gabrielle Lord is a successful Australian crime fiction writer and when asked if she started with the setting before the characters, she simply answered.

" Always start with the character first...If you start with the character then you can decide where they can be. "⁶

The suggestion of choosing a place before the characters was out of the question to Gabrielle Lord. Nevertheless, Maitland has proven his method is a sound approach to the writing of his series.

Traditionally, there are two distinct forms of crime fiction, that of the American tradition and the British tradition.

Although all of Maitland's books are set in England the plot lines tend to follow the American tradition of the fast paced suspenseful narratives. P.D. James's work 'The Skull Beneath the Skin' is an example of the traditional English paced novel that is carefully structured, but much slower in progression. In the 'Brock and Kolla' series, the murder occurs in the first or second chapters whereas, in the 'Skull Beneath the Skin' there is a more protracted development towards the murder, establishing the identities of people and places with the event occurring in chapter twenty-one.

By combining these two styles, Maitland has tailored his work to produce a hybrid series, which is predominantly, English in plot, language and accretion of detail, but with an adoption of an American pace.

The leading detectives, David Brock and Kathy Kolla are a modern duo that work for New Scotland Yard. The relationship between these two detectives was designed to reflect a more contemporary partnership that one commonly finds in a modern London Metropolitan Police station. It is a situation where more women

are becoming detectives and are striving to match the expertise of the more experienced male members of the force.

Kathy Kolla is the young female recruit who, despite her age and inexperience, has a natural flair for solving mysteries involving murder. David Brock is experienced, highly regarded for his expertise within the force, and is head of the SOI the serious crime branch of New Scotland Yard.

In spite of his experience, David tends to be the less active of the two detectives. Kathy Kolla solves the complex mysteries and despite her habitual injuries that require hospital treatment she is always able to solve the murder mystery whilst risking her life. This results in promotion within the force in succeeding books of the series.

The equality that exists in this relationship is not accidental, as Maitland has eliminated any trace of the Holmesian style duo in which there is no equality. Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, by Arthur Conan Doyle, are classic examples of English detectives who have one-dimensional personalities and no weakness in their ability to solve the crime.

The Holmes and Watson duo are only viewed by readers as caricatures of traditional detectives and their characters do not change or develop at any stage of any mystery in which they appear. Conventionally, the inexperienced, Watson is always second to Holmes's first person narrative and superior level of

knowledge. In comparison, Watson is lesser in intellect than the average reader and is never recognised for his contribution to solving the case.

As Maitland said:

"I felt really sort of cross with a number of television detectives like say, Morse, and Daisel and Pascoe and some of the others where there is a main detective and there is his lieutenant.

(Interviewer) Rather like a Holmes and Watson situation?

Yes, that's right and they treat their second person with contempt."⁷

Neither detective is underdog to the other as both Brock and Kolla are allowed to develop in succeeding books, rather than follow the restrictive traditional partnership. They aid each other in detection and both are recognised by others as being exemplary detectives within the force.

Brock and Kolla typify a contemporary detective partnership, a feature HRF Keating, crime fiction author and critic has observed in an appreciation of 'The Chalon Heads':

" What have we here, Watson? Great Scott, Holmes, it's an old-fashioned detective story. Acute as ever, Watson, but one piece of data has escaped you. I hardly think so Holmes why, yes, Watson, you have seen, though you do not appear to have observed, that the facts as laid

out in Maitland's narrative, as well as the attitudes of the characters he portrays are altogether of the late 1990's "⁸

This statement is a reflection of Maitland's contemporary stance on characters. Keating did not have to interview Maitland to understand the reasoning behind his usage of the Brock and Kolla duo, nor would he have known directly about his frustration over the restricting conventions of the traditional genre as experienced by all contemporary crime fiction writers.

Kathy Kolla is an ambitious young detective sergeant who creates interest for the modern reader, not only is she talented she is also blonde and attractive. Her relationships have been a main point of interest because as well as creating a side issue, it also develops her personality and identity throughout the book. Hence, she becomes a real person with individual problems and emotions, not just a caricature of a detective like the one dimensional Sherlock Holmes or Dr. Watson.

It is interesting to note that on the cover of Maitland's third book *All My Enemies*, it states 'The new Kathy Kolla mystery'.

According to Maitland this was an error made by the editors. However, the character Kathy Kolla does have a central role in this mystery, more so than that of David Brock. In '*All my Enemies*', Kathy's thoughts are introduced as third person narrative.

"By lunchtime Kathy was reduced to the word-puzzle in the Sunday paper... She had begun the day with good intentions. There were plenty of things that could be done before she started her new job: letters that could be written, bills that could be paid, housework that could be done."⁹

Maitland continues to follow both detectives throughout the case with this narrative style, allowing him to strategically choose which character to emphasise. This is an important technique when dealing with a duo as it allows Maitland to cross-examine the thoughts of each character. In the narrative of 'All my Enemies' Maitland has chosen to follow the ideas of Kathy.

The third person narrative tends to follow Kathy as she investigates the case.

This has been a precedent set at introduction of the characters, Brock and Kolla.

" ' Detective Sergeant Kolla,' she said brightly, extending her hand, expecting some put-down for being late, knowing his reputation among the junior officers at Division. But he just beamed at her, a big bear of a man, twice her weight, and took her hand, introducing himself disarmingly without rank. 'David Brock,' he said in a low growl."¹⁰

The third person narrative does have an overall effect on pace as Maitland can select the scene that he would like to focus upon, rather than the first person narrative which is controlled solely by one character as in the Holmesean duo. Readers often become irritated with the central first person perspective as only

one viewpoint can be expressed. To be successful in the genre writers must take a varied approach to their characters and Maitland's use of the third person narrative allows him to take a 'bird's eye view' of his characters and settings which is much more appealing to a varied audience. This has more potential to sustain reader interest and gives the 'Brock and Kolla' series a faster pace that is pertinent for today's audience.

In the first book, *The Marx Sisters* first published in 1994 and written many years earlier when Maitland was a student of architecture in England. This book was the first of the 'Brock and Kolla' series in which Maitland introduces the key ideas of an architecturally focused social commentary.

The book is set in an old residential community in Jerusalem Lane, in Central London, which is being threatened by developers who want to build up the old suburban area to sell profitable office blocks. The Marx sisters are the only ones who will not move from their home and are subsequently made victims by others who would benefit from the changes. However, many members of the small community are suspect and all have possible motives, for killing the Marx sisters. This mystery keeps the reader in suspense and has an unexpected twist in the final chapter of the novel.

" The site is in central London, Bob," he said at last. " You know central London. The present buildings on the site are all rubbish, with the possible exception of a small synagogue which I'm currently getting

heritage advice on. The surrounding buildings are a mixed, undistinguished lot. You design your ideal solution to the brief I've just outlined for you - God knows it's loose enough, I should have thought. I always thought you architects were begging for a chance like this, with so few constraints. However, if you feel you can't do it....." ¹¹

This excerpt demonstrates Maitland's knowledge of the attitude of developers towards prime real estate that is not being used to its profitable potential. He has cleverly interwoven architectural issues as a forum for a murder mystery. This type of social commentary is unusual in the context of a crime fiction novel. So much so that 'The Marx Sisters' won an award for best first crime novel.

'The Malcontenta', Maitland's second book, is based upon the author's true experience in redesigning a stately home that was being used as a naturopathic clinic in London, England. The building portrayed in the book is based upon the Italian Renaissance building formally called the Villa Foscari or colloquially 'La Malcontenta' in the town of Malcontenta, Italy. Maitland draws upon his knowledge of the architectural features of 'La Malcontenta' and the eccentricity of the clients he had been acquainted with in his time at a real naturopathic clinic.

The settings in Maitland's books are derived from his professional life experience, the issues and locations often have a haunting sense of realism. Therefore, his books have a strong sense of place, and often involve the intense study of one

particular location in London as a place of investigation. They can be compared to the traditional style of 'English country house mystery' without the limited passage of characters.

"Buildings aren't like ships and planes, they're rooted to the spot they impact on one specific place, they sit alongside, overlook, cast shadows on, generate traffic around, a specific set of neighbours"¹²

Although Maitland's settings are isolated to one location, his characters do not require the restrictions of the isolated island or the mansion cut off by a fog and swamp as in the early traditional English crime novels. Instead, Maitland uses accretion of detail of a reasonably populated setting to give his readers a concept that his characters are just as isolated by their architectural environment.

Traditionally a crime fiction story is set in an isolated house:

"The typical detective story presents a group of people assembled at an isolated place, usually an English country house, who discover that one of their number has been murdered. They summon the local constabulary, who are completely baffled: they find either no clues or entirely too many, everyone or no one has had the means, motive and opportunity to commit the crime, and nobody seems to be telling the truth."¹³

In this way, Maitland has created his own subgenre by stretching the boundaries of the conventional crime fiction setting.

'All my Enemies' is set in Petts Wood, a middle class suburb in South London, Kent. In this suburb resides an established neighbourhood that has only ever experienced the odd burglary and never a crime such as murder.

"The density of the buildings cramming the sides of the road began to ease, and she came to dark woods, heavy with summer foliage swaying and billowing suddenly like green-black sails in the light afternoon breeze...

She stopped to check the A-Z, then turned off the main road into a maze of quiet crescents and winding streets lined with identical houses submerged in gardens of endless variety." ¹⁴

Petts Wood is an example of a community cut off from the rabble of the city. Although the setting of 'All my Enemies' has a feeling of restriction of character movement in the introduction of the book, the reader later learns of the suburb's connection to London by the southbound rail link and main road. This setting is quite reminiscent of the suburbs one would find on the outskirts of London to facilitate the city's overgrown population, a sight Maitland would be familiar with after working on the New Towns project.

Maitland received a grant to inspect shopping centres across America to write a book. From this project Maitland wrote 'The New Architecture of the Retail Mall' (1990) and this greatly influenced the content of Maitland's fifth book, 'Silvermeadow'.

Silvermeadow is a large shopping centre in the outer districts of London that has emptied the community shops and mesmerised customers into spending their savings under the influence of the strategically placed shop fronts. Maitland peels back the glamour behind the pearly façade to reveal the reality of the influence that these architectural monstrosities have on peoples' lives. It is revealed that shopping centres do control our behaviour in the way in which we move from A to B. Maitland developed an understanding of the stark reality of the shopping centres, which he expressed in his fifth book, 'Silvermeadow'.

" 'It's called the Gruen Transfer. The name comes from Victor Gruen, the architect who designed the first enclosed shopping mall, at Edina in Minneapolis in 1956. He has a vision, you see, that the modern shopping centre could be more than just a collection of shops, it could be a complete integrated environment, separate from the world outside, a perfect machine for consumption.' ¹⁵

The reader comes to learn that the Gruen Transfer is the cunning systematic scheme that architects have devised to attract customers to the shopping centre. The reader can then learn something about their own familiar shopping centre and therefore empathise with the observations that the main detectives express throughout their investigation.

Both Brock and Kolla tend to be vehicles to express architectural ideas. Neither character is an expert in the field of architecture, however, the architectural social commentary is apparent through the observations made by each detective as they investigate within each setting.

The Gruen Transfer is expressed through the thoughts and reactions of Kathy Kolla to the shopping centre environment in 'Silvermeadow'. Her investigation becomes hindered in the fantasy like atmosphere of the shopping centre.

"From time to time their eyes would be drawn to a sparkling shop display, and Kathy would pause with them and find herself drawn into conversation, checking out some lovely thing that none of them had a use for. Then she would have to turn away, and remember what they were supposed to be doing, and get them moving again. Lulled by the scented air, the music not too loud or too soft but just right, it was hard to imagine that anything unpleasant could ever have happened here..."¹⁶

As a relatively new writer to the genre of crime fiction, Maitland has naturally experimented with different writing techniques in the 'Brock and Kolla' series. He was aware that organised crime exists in the British Isles and decided to make it a central theme in his fourth book 'The Chalon Heads'.

This novel describes in detail, the complex relationships in organised crime. Instead of the conventional one party involvement in the murder, there may be several characters with differing motives. Once one becomes familiar with the usual style of writing presented by Maitland, one notices that this book is quite different from the others in the series. There is a twist on the ordinary "whodunit?" To a, "who did what and why"? Instead of guessing who committed the crime, it is a matter of piecing together the possible motives of the multiple suspects and guessing the degree to which they are involved.

'The Chalon Heads' is a mystery about a 'retired' gangster (Sammy Starling) who decided to collect stamps. Each suspect party has a motive for the murder of the gangster's wife (Eva Starling). The catch at the end is that there are so many groups involved that it become a little too difficult to follow.

The following summary from the back of 'The Chalon Heads' prepares the reader for the complexity of the denouement.

"Kolla, unsuccessfully trying to come to terms with Brock's disgrace, needs to find out why nothing in this case seems to be making sense.

What is the connection between Starling's absorption in philately and McLaren's obsession with the legendary forgers, Raphael and the Beast? How much do Toby and Helen Fitzpatrick, Starling's country neighbours, know about Eva's disappearance?"¹⁷

Although, organised crime is an issue in contemporary society, this idea can become confusing in the final ratiocination when several subplots converge, and the suspects' complex motives are revealed. Maitland believes in the ideology that there is no innocent party. This means that all suspects are guilty and are involved in the murder at some level. Therefore, there are no real suspects as there are no red herrings, everyone in 'The Chalon Heads' is guilty of something. Some readers may find that they have to keep rereading certain sections of the subplots, as it is easy to forget the connections between parties.

Throughout the 'Brock and Kolla' series it is evident that Maitland has used his life experience and interests to develop every aspect of his books.

His extensive knowledge of architecture combined with a passion for crime fiction has created a new breed of writing that analyses how one's environment influences one's behaviour.

Each setting is derived from projects and research that Maitland completed whilst studying and working as an architect. Projects such as the New Towns project and the writing of 'The New Retail Mall' have provided him with the unique ability

to probe into how the architectural environment manipulates an individual in context to today's society. The issues that he focuses on are universal issues that all contemporary readers are affected by in some way.

Because Maitland's writing style has been influenced by two distinct traditions- the American and the British, his books appeal to a broad range of ages and nationalities. The modern duo, Kathy Kolla and David Brock are characters that have aided in providing universality and a contemporary element within each plot. Their relationship is reflective of a society where women are accepted into high profile positions which is in direct opposition to the idea of inequality within traditional detective partnerships- like that of Holmes and Watson. Instead, Brock and Kolla are allowed to develop and both have an equally important role to play in the solving of each mystery.

The third person narrative allows Maitland to alternate between each character and maintains the pace of the plot and eliminates readers' boredom. These writing techniques make his books accessible to a universal audience who demand a thrilling pace and a reflection on social issues that affect their lives' with characters that they can relate to.

'Silvermeadow' was by far the most interesting book because it brought together all the successful techniques from his previous four novels and then applied them

to a setting in which Maitland had completed an extensive inquiry on the universal concept of the Retail Mall.

In contrast, Maitland's fourth book, 'The Chalon Heads' did not focus on the idea of architectural social commentary; instead, Maitland decided to analyse the idea of organised crime in society. This idea is too complex to be ratiocinated in a 'whodunit?' fashion, as everyone is involved, hence there are no innocent parties. This book lacks reader satisfaction of being able to solve the mystery and pinpoint the murderer's identity in the final chapters of the book. Without the architectural social commentary, this book is dull in comparison to his other books because it lacks the breadth and depth of his experience as an architect that gives the book substance.

Maitland has revealed his current project has been inspired by the movie 'East meets West' and will be set in London's East End which is a hot bed of racial tension and gang violence. Readers will find it interesting to see if Maitland combines the technique of organised crime with architectural social commentary as he did in his highly successful 'Silvermeadow'.

Architectural social commentary is a successful device as it is different from the techniques adopted by other crime fiction writers. Barry Maitland's transition from Dean of Architecture has been successful because the 'Brock and Kolla' series

leads the way in creating an innovative new subgenre that is taking crime fiction to a new level.

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Centre Number: 352 ...
Student Number: 11521525

English Extension II

HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION	
ENGLISH EXTENSION COURSE 2 MAJOR WORK	
IDENTIFICATION TAG	
Student No.:	11521525 C352
School No.:	8509 8509
Number of Pieces:	2 of 3
Category and Description:	Reflection Statement
ATTACH THIS CARD SECURELY TO EACH PART	

Reflection Statement

Title (Thesis question):

**Barry Maitland: From Dean to Crime Fiction
Writer: What has made Barry Maitland's 'Brock
and Kolla' series a successful in the crime fiction
genre?**

The intent of the work was to complete a critical essay on Barry Maitland's 'Brock and Kolla' series. His works are of special interest to me because I had read one of his books when I was in year 10 on the recommendation of an English teacher at school. I had become disinterested with the usual teenage style of books for girls of my age so I decided to follow his recommendation and read something entirely different. The book was entitled 'The Malcontenta' which is Barry Maitland's second book in the 'Brock and Kolla' series. I was so impressed with the unique approach of this book, that when I was given the opportunity to engage in a critical essay of my choice, it was clear to me that Barry Maitland's this series would be an excellent topic for consideration.

Maitland's series contains five books written in prose form and are classified under the genre of 'Crime Fiction'. The books are: 'The Marx Sisters', 'The Malcontenta', 'All my Enemies', 'The Chalon Heads', and 'Silvermeadow'.

My intention for the major work was to be investigative, interpretive, analytical and to determine how an architect could succeed in the genre of crime fiction writing. I wanted a challenge that would prepare me for the next level of education at university which will require me to be able to learn independently, be self-motivated and be able to successfully research a topic in detail as well as developing and producing a major work of a high standard.

Researching the works of Barry Maitland and finally formulating my personal concepts of his works was the most timely, but necessary process throughout the development of the essay. The most valuable experience that I had was actually meeting and interviewing

the author personally to gauge his opinion of his work and his intentions in writing the series.

The process journal was the most important research and reflection tool that I had. It was a "sounding board" and a book where I could collect and discuss research. This proved the most supportive tool for writing the essay as I had written, planned and experimented with formats and topics that I could focus on in my major work.

Of course, in the process of my major work, minor problems were encountered. The first hurdle that I had to overcome was making a decision about the direction of my thesis.

From the beginning it was clear to me that architecture in Barry Maitland's work would be of prominent focus as it is so unique, especially when writing in crime fiction.

And the most important was how to write an essay.

I found it interesting that Barry Maitland said that he does not preplan in detail before he writes, instead he allows the story to evolve as he writes.

I think this is how I worked too. Most of my ideas were very separate and at times, I even got out some scissors and sticky tape to physically bond my ideas together. This process initiated the formation of my ideas that I would continue throughout my essay.

I wrote about four drafts before I was satisfied with my major product, and of course along the way evaluating my grammar and punctuation and so forth. In each draft, I simply cut and pasted the relevant ideas from each draft and applied it to my new one.

Starting the essay was rather daunting and I first started with simply 'telling it how it was', the only problem with this was that it did not emphasise any major point. This was mainly due to the large quantity of information that I had. I don't think I realised this at the time as I sorted through the essay, but after having written it I think I used about half of what I had actually found about Maitland's work!

Research skills are essential for preparing an essay. The process of researching was the longest and most enjoyable task of this essay.

The internet proved to be a valuable source of information about Maitland in such areas as his background and book reviews from crime fiction fan sites from America, UK and Australia. However, I found that there were not any established essays on his works, so I decided that I was going to be the first.

The school library (particularly the reference section) was a helpful resource to obtain established ideas on the genre of crime fiction to develop my own understanding of the genre and to become acquainted with contemporary ideas on the genre to understand contemporary reader expectations and commonly used conventions.

The audience at which I am aiming my essay is fans of crime fiction regardless of whether they had read any of the books in the 'Brock and Kolla' series or not. I wondered if the people who had read his books had recognised, as I did, the uniqueness of his style due to the inclusion of his life long experience as an architect.

By reading Maitland's books, I concluded that he had an interesting approach to social commentary in the way that he referred to architectural settings throughout the books. After researching the conventions of the crime fiction genre on the internet and in the classroom, I came to the realisation that social commentary is necessary in crime fiction in order for it to appeal to the contemporary readership and it must contain issues that relate directly to the reader's lives. It seemed that by writing the social commentary from Maitland's experience that architecture influences society, he had in effect created his own subgenre. Other writers within the genre focus particularly on the individual in society without placing too much importance on the environment, other than being somewhere for the plot to take place.

Maitland's works contain established setting and social commentary. After having interviewed the author in person I discovered that Maitland's past projects influenced the setting and social commentary within each book, such as the New Towns project and the investigation of the Retail Mall.

Maitland referred to his past as "My past life as an architect...", but as I researched further I started to notice that architecture played a larger role in his books than Maitland recognised. I then saw that the essay had to be based upon this aspect of his work because it was the most prominent feature of his work and I needed to discover if his approach to writing crime fiction was unique.

Maitland's characters are different in age and experience and appeal to a varied audience. The Brock and Kolla duo are meant to reflect a modern detective duo where there is more equality than that of the one dimensional Holmesian duo. I noticed in this partnership each character praised the other for their work and each had their own personal lives in addition to the mystery at hand. Today, readers are antagonistic towards caricature detectives and want detectives that they can empathise with, as well as incorporating a satisfying mystery.

The final concepts in the essay did not develop instantly. In fact, I found that it took me several months to piece together ideas and re-evaluate different approaches I could make. At first, I had started with the idea of beginning a '1000 word a week policy' only to come to the realisation that I needed to develop a thesis before I had actually decided to formally write the essay. The most challenging part of the task was organising my research and making my own decision on what the thesis should be. The thesis had to be kept simple so that I could write a thorough essay of the required length. Every time I had tried to make a thesis, it became quite a task to write a lengthy composition.

Here is my final thesis question:

"Barry Maitland from Dean to Crime Fiction Writer: Why is Barry Maitland's 'Brock and Kolla' series so successful in the crime fiction genre?"

In this essay, I tried to keep the level of language to a moderate level that people of all backgrounds and ages could understand without becoming lost in complex detail.

The concepts within the essay are based upon my observations of the genre of crime fiction and the techniques Barry Maitland used to become a successful writer in the genre.

The final concepts in the essay developed slowly as I soon found out that I had to sort through both relevant and irrelevant details. I had to learn how to recognise the difference between the two and make sure that when I was researching that I had made a decision on what I actually wanted to find. Otherwise, I would be stuck in the 'Gruen Transfer' of information.

I am proud of my major work and I thoroughly enjoyed each stage of the challenge to write this essay. I have learnt a lot about how to write an essay independently, which I feel is imperative for university studies. The essay that was produced from this process of investigations exceeded my expectations.