

Michael Connelly Interview: 9/11, *City of Bones*, and *Lost Light*

Christopher J. Davies

An Alum of the *University of Florida*, Michael Connelly's writing career began as a 'Crime Beat' reporter, writing for the *Daytona Beach News Journal*, before moving on to the *Fort Lauderdale News and Sun Sentinel* and *Los Angeles Times* respectively. Connelly's first crime novel, *The Black Echo*, was published in 1992, and to date Connelly has written 27 further novels, including the forthcoming *The Crossing*. Many of Connelly's novels feature *The Black Echo's* main protagonist, LAPD Detective, Hieronymus (Harry) Bosch.

In early 2014 I interviewed Connelly about the extent to which 9/11, and the ensuing political upheaval that cohered under the rubric of the war on terror, had affected his work as an author of popular crime novels. In a frank and considered discussion Connelly shared his thoughts on the impact that 9/11 politics had on the crime narratives he wanted to write; how the personal worldview of his central detective character, Harry Bosch, absolutely had to change in response to an event that touched everyone in the country to some degree; the challenges of writing politically engaged genre fiction without sacrificing the core appeal of a compelling crime mystery; and the relative strengths of crime genre, as opposed to the more high-art literary establishment, in responding critically to large scale national events. Furthermore, Connelly offered specific insights into the development of the Harry Bosch novels *City of Bones* (2002) and *Lost Light* (2003), and the motivating factors behind their respective threads of post 9/11 commentary.

The following interview content is published with the knowledge and consent of Michael Connelly.

Writing After 9/11 and Writing Crime

CJD: To kick things off, I wondered if you recall where you were on 9/11 and what you were doing, and what your initial thoughts were on what 9/11 could mean for the future direction of the US politically?

MC: On September 10 I flew with my wife, daughter, mother and stepfather to Cincinnati where we were supposed to connect with an overnight flight to London. I was taking my mother to London and Paris for her 70th birthday because she had never been to either place. Our flight from Cincinnati to Heathrow was cancelled because of a mechanical problem so we had to spend the night in a hotel in downtown Cincinnati with the plan to fly the next day. I was awakened that morning by a call from my mother in another hotel room. She said to turn on the television. We then spent the day watching the news with an awful dread for what it meant. So many unanswered questions, so many people killed. The only good thing was that none of us had anybody in that vicinity that we needed to check on. So that wasn't part of the dread. I think the dread came from knowing that everything would change now. How we looked at ourselves as Americans, how we felt about being secure in the world, this sort of foolish they-won't-dare-come-at-us-here mentality. All that changed in less than an hour that morning while we sat in a hotel in Cincinnati.

Our daughter was only three at the time and didn't understand what was going on. My wife and I had to take turns occupying her while the other watched the TV. The next day I managed to rent a mini-van and we drove back to Florida over the next two days. Oddly, we passed through Paris, Kentucky and I took a picture of my mother in front of the Welcome to Paris sign. She passed away a few years later and never got to London or the real Paris.

CJD: British novelist Martin Amis was quoted as saying that:

I think every writer on earth was considering a change of occupation on September 12 because what you had to say seemed so dwarfed by events.

Is this something that rings true for you? Did 9/11 exert any particular effect on your approach to writing or what you wanted to write about? Could you identify a shift in tone between your pre and post 9/11 works that was directly relational to that event?

MC: I think that was a good way of describing it. Even when you are writing crime novels you are always reaching for some sort of relevancy in your work. It's not just about a who-did-it puzzle. It is an entertainment, sure, but you try to hold the mirror up from time to time in the pages and show a little reflection of the human condition and the human situation. I think writers in my genre who pull that off are at the top of the game. I have always tried to do that with varying degrees of success. With 9/11 you had this catastrophic event that touched every person in the country at least psychologically. It changed me and therefore it had to change the characters I was writing about. And it came down to relevancy. People, no matter what they do in life, want to feel that what they do matters. But when 3,000 innocent people are wiped out in a matter of minutes and on live television it really leaves you with the sense of what

does it matter. I felt that and the way I worked through it was to put it into my characters, especially Harry Bosch.

I had just turned my book *City of Bones* into my editor a few days before 9/11. The publishing house shut down for a few days after the attack. When they opened back up I called my editor and said I needed to take the book back and infiltrate it with 9/11. The book was set to be published in early 2002 and my books are always chronologically set in the year they are published. So I didn't want to publish a book set in 2002 that had no mention and no feeling of the changes from 2001. My editor readily agreed and so I spent the rest of September 2001 and October going through the book and putting small changes in. I think the biggest change was in Harry Bosch's outlook and how the events of 9/11 left him questioning whether what he did mattered. He solves murders and when 3,000 people can be murdered in a few minutes, what's it matter that he is plugging away trying to solve one murder of a long forgotten child whose bones are found buried in the woods.

CJD: You've said previously that first and foremost your novels are crime novels, and that it isn't a case of the crime element being happenstance because the novel is really about something else. While *City of Bones* for me has a number of subtle (or implicit) threads of post 9/11 commentary, *Lost Light*, for me, offers a much more overt level of commentary. How much of the plots, narrative threads and formal flourishes were driven by a desire to react and respond to the evolving socio-political conditions in the US, both at street level for the ordinary citizen and at the macro level of political gamesmanship?

MC: I think it's interesting when I look back at these two books. The 9/11 threads in *City of Bones* were put in within days and weeks of the attack so they, to me at least, offer a more emotional response as exhibited by Harry Bosch's feelings of what-the-use? This is carried all the way to the end when he actually quits his job and turns in his badge. In the manuscript completed before 9/11 he also quit his job but with the emotional underpinnings of 9/11 I think his decision to quit is better supported and understood.

Lost Light was written during the year that followed 9/11 and I think it has a view from at least a few steps back and therefore it includes more of a political view. I would say that it is easily my most political novel because it is a story that by design takes Harry Bosch – no longer a cop but a private citizen – across the newly empowered government in the form of the FBI with all its new authority to circumvent rights and freedoms of those they suspect of just about anything.

As a U.S. citizen I objected to how quickly the government moved to expand the reach, intrusion and authority of federal law enforcement agencies to dip into citizens lives. I wanted to write a story that would have a citizen - Harry Bosch - get run over by this new machinery.

CJD: Bearing in mind that crime genre works have historically been sites for navigating the predominant anxieties of a society at specific historic moments, as a crime/thriller writer, do you feel any sense of responsibility to acknowledge and work through large scale traumatic events like 9/11? How important is a social commentary strand to you?

MC: To me social commentary is a very important part of the process. To me the crime novel is simply a framework for that social commentary. I think it is what gives every work undertaken the chance of jumping from something that is simply entertainment to something that can also be seen as art. And let's face it; we all want to be considered artists. We want our stories to be read and told and heard and seen for generations to come. A good thriller is a good thriller. But if it is a thriller that very subtly holds up a mirror to what is actually going on in the world and maybe throws in a question or two - This is where we are, is this what we want? - Then you are traveling on a different level, a level of relevancy and relevancy leads to art. If you achieve that then your books are going to stay on shelves for a long time and you have a shot at immortality.

CJD: Part of my research is arguing for the crime narrative as having been the overlooked site of concerted political engagement and critique with 9/11 and terror war politics that literary critics have found lacking in significant high art novels of 9/11. Several critics have talked about 9/11 novels like Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* as interiorised, narcissistic narratives, pre-occupied with the *personal* sphere of trauma, where 9/11 and everything that followed was just a backdrop to romantic and emotional entanglements and could be interchanged with any other national tragedy; the politics of 9/11 virtually unrepresented.

What are your feelings on what genre fiction, specifically the crime narrative, can bring to the table, or indeed has brought to the table, in terms of rectifying that disengagement?

MC: I think the word is *immediacy*. Most practitioners of the crime novel write contemporaneously with history. Crime novels examining aspects of 9/11 and the changes it wrought in terms of self-examination, politics, spywork, law, national pride and isolation were coming out within months of the event. It was mostly unnoticed by the critical establishment but not by readers. My view is that the literary take on 9/11

came much later. It came after the dust had settled and of course it was much more reviewed and examined but ultimately less gripping because it examined things we had already worked through. There is no doubt in my mind that crime novels were more timely and therefore more significant in the process of self-examination and healing. *City of Bones* was published in April 2002, seven months after 9/11. It is a crime novel and therefore an entertainment and a puzzle. It is also about a guy trying to find the meaning in what he does in a time when many core truths about his country and his time have been changed dramatically. It may be highly egotistical for me to put this forth, but I think that that was what many people were working through seven months after 9/11 and it is the reason I am most proud of this book. It was in the moment and it was relevant. If I had published it 2005 or 2008 then I am not so sure the relevancy would have been there.

CJD: As a novelist, writing and publishing crime narratives predominantly set in the US, did you feel any sense of restriction about how critical of the political status quo you could be, particularly during Bush's first term when nationalism and patriotism were getting conflated and the "with us or against us" vibe of Bush's rhetoric was at its most rampant?

MC: I am not sure I would call it restriction but I think any writer would know that if you take a political stand on anything then you certainly run the risk of offending readers. But this is not a 9/11 specific issue. It comes up whenever you give a character a point of view. For example, in crime novels you deal with crime and consequences. You write about characters - detectives, lawyers, judges - who have an opinion on the death penalty. That is a political and religious question almost every reader has an opinion about. So the 9/11 inspired political themes and issues were not new but perhaps more prevalent or ramped up than others. I think Harry Bosch is used as a vehicle in *Lost Light* to ask are we going to far with this? Is this what we want, this erosion of long held and even fought for checks and balances on government? Another book I wrote called *The Overlook* has these same questions at the core of its story. I knew that as I wrote these books there would be objections from some readers but that's the way it goes with every book. The truth is I don't write for my readers. I write for an audience of one - me. I have to please myself and I have to be true to myself so I write it the way I see it and I hope I am never in a position where I hold something back out of fear of offending or even losing readers.

I used to have a commentary section on my website where readers could ask me questions and make comments, etc. I remember after *Lost Light* came out I got a comment from a reader that accused me of infusing the book with anti-Bush politics and that it would be the last book of mine this person would ever read. The person who

manages my website asked me if I wanted her to remove the post and I said no, leave it there and see if others join in support. I also added my own post in response and that was to say I was glad this reader was abandoning my work because I write these stories for people who are open-minded and interested in all sides of an issue or debate. Nobody ever added another post to the string.

CJD: Crime genre has always been self-referential, pulling formal and literary motifs out of its own back catalogue and redeploying them in new settings or within new contexts to advance the genre into a new iteration - a kind of progression through regression. Have you noticed any specific trends in the post 9/11 US crime/thriller works your familiar with, in terms of recycling or adapting old motifs?

MC: I'm not qualified to answer this one. I can't say I am well enough read in the genre at this point. In the last few years I have read less and less crime fiction as it becomes more and more distracting and intrusive to my own work.

CJD: Do you think there was a noticeable shift in the way that 9/11, and latterly the war on terror, changed the way readers responded to trauma / violence in entertainment forms, and indeed responded to crime genre in terms of how they might identify with the protagonists and what they might be searching for from a crime novel?

MC: 9/11 made the world a more complicated and scary place. I think that only serves to increase the relevancy of crime novels and though I have no data supporting this, I think it brought more readers into the fold. While crime novels can seek to understand and explain things, they also entertain and they almost always take a disordered world and bring a sense of order to it. This is the reassuring side of the genre and I think that reassurance - that things get solved, that justice prevails - drew people to the genre during this period, especially when it took nearly ten years to locate and kill the man responsible for 9/11.

CJD: In an interview you did for 'Indiebound', you mentioned that when you got to writing *A Darkness More Than Night*, you'd hit upon the physics principle of every action having an equal and opposite reaction as a guiding totem that allowed you to explore what regular exposure to death, and I guess violent, criminal led death, does to a person, particularly one charged with bringing both closure to the victims' families and justice to the perpetrator.

Essentially you said that an individual required to go into the darkness inevitably has that darkness pass, in some form, back into them. Bearing in mind where you took

Bosch over the next three novels, and the dramatically upturned socio-political context of post 9/11 where we were suddenly confronted head on with a very particular kind of darkness, I wondered if you could perhaps give me an idea of how 9/11 and the unfolding politics of the war on terror might have influenced your exploration of this process?

MC: A key thing in a crime novel is this sense that anything can happen. These are stories that function best on a level where the protagonist and by proxy the reader has to look over his shoulder. This happens best in darkness. The title of my book *A Darkness More Than Night* is taken from the Raymond Chandler essay about crime novels and what instigated the rise in their popularity. Paraphrasing, he said they came from a time when the streets were alive with a darkness that was more than night. He was talking about disorder and mistrust of our police departments and government agencies. I think the events of 9/11 shrouded the world in a darkness that was certainly more than night. It became an anything can happen world. No one was safe. We became people looking over our shoulders at what might be coming up behind us. They didn't find Osama bin Laden for ten years. Where was he? What was he planning? Terrorist cells were forming all over the world. We were filling a prison in Guantanamo with people we thought might be terrorists. We were water-boarding people to get information. All of this made the aura of darkness found in the crime novel something palpable in the real world. We as a country went into this dark world and did dark things in the name of justice and protection and vengeance. We now have to deal with it - from soldiers coming home with PTSD to the next generation of terrorists we manufactured with our own acts. So all of this cannot be excluded from the creative process. It's in me so it comes out in what I write. Is it a carefully crafted and conscious process? No, not at all. I never sit at my computer and think about how do I do this or reflect this or create allegorical references and metaphors reflecting this. I just write. I use no outlines. It is all improvisational. I just write but I can't help but think that what goes into me as a person comes out of me as a writer and is in these stories.

City of Bones

CJD: You mentioned to me previously, and had said words to this effect in another interview, that when your publisher wanted to hold back the release of *City of Bones* after 9/11, you asked to have time to revise parts of the manuscript so as to be able to reference 9/11 - to take account of it as a real world event in a narrative universe that you consider roughly follows our own real world chronology. How much of the novel did you alter in order to do this? What effect, if any, did it have on the direction of

specific plot elements or choices you had made about where characters were going and how the different narrative threads would resolve?

MC: I did not alter it plot wise at all. At least I don't recall do that. What I wanted to do and what I felt was my duty to do was alter the interior landscape of Harry Bosch. This is a man who has been through war and had many other experiences that would give him a certain take on what had happened in New York City. He was three-thousand miles away but the attack was not only on New Yorkers. It was against us all and we all had after affects and a changed view of the world. My Bosch books are about one man's view of the world and how he thinks things should be ordered. These views would have changed after 9/11 so it was my duty to take the book back and revisit every viewpoint he espoused and every thought he had. I additionally wanted to include in the story the struggle everyone had to find meaning after such a catastrophic event, literally witnessed first hand through television.

CJD: In *City of Bones*, there is an ongoing tension between reality as perceived by individuals, and reality as agents of the state and the media wish it to be portrayed (e.g. Trent's suicide, Trent's identity, the circumstances of Brasher's death, and the death itself). I couldn't help but extrapolate an allegory from this to the role of mainstream media working complicity with the Bush administration after 9/11 to ratify a "favoured" narrative of the attacks and the government's response.

Although you had written this pre-9/11, I wondered if this was one of those occasions where a strand of commentary takes on a whole new meaning when read in the contemporary context it is released into. What are your thoughts on how this narrative thread would be received and translated by a post 9/11 audience? Have you found yourself revisiting *City of Bones* in light of the context into which it was published, and having to compare your initial intentions against how different aspects of the novel might be interpreted in light of 9/11?

MC: You give me too much credit! Most, if not all, of the media exploration and commentary in the novel was written pre-9/11 and was purely my viewpoint on the media, having been a member of the circus, so to speak, for 14 years of my life. Most journalists go into the business with a lot of idealism and that gets eroded by the reality of the work. I have often used the media as a component in my storytelling and it's almost never and good and righteous portrayal. It's usually about deal-making and ulterior motives, competition trumping thoughtfulness and fairness. It's a cynical view of the media (In one book I made a reporter a serial killer!) and it was in *City of Bones* before 9/11. I do find it interesting to see how quite by accident the book could now be read as something larger than that and full of post 9/11 commentary on the media but I have to admit that was not the intention.

CJD: Reading *City of Bones*, one of the lasting and evocative images is the initial burial site of Arthur Delacroix, where the bones have been born up through the earth, leaving a jagged wound with the protruding bones. You get this real sense of crimes of the past invading the present to revisit trauma in new ways indelibly anchored to the past. Was this an image you intended to use as establishing an underlying tone for the novel of the inescapability of the traumas of the past?

MC: Absolutely. I love the idea and imagery of the past informing the present, that it reaches up out of the ground and grabs you by the ankle. I think *City of Bones* is the best title I've ever put on a book because it gets at that idea that the present is built on the bones of the past.

CJD: You said previously:

"I grew up loving private eye novels, but the reality was that in fourteen years as a reporter, I never wrote an article about a private eye solving a murder. So I decided to write about a detective, somebody who would legitimately encounter murders and solve murders."

By the end of *City of Bones* you've got Bosch leaving the LAPD for what will become a spell as a PI. When did you make the decision to have Bosch work as PI? What motivated you to make the choice to take Bosch out of police world and into civilian life? (And moreover, for you to further explore the non PD settings via *Chasing the Dime* and *Lincoln Lawyer*)

MC: It simply seemed like the right thing to do at that time in terms of the evolution of the character. My number one priority as a writer is to keep Harry Bosch alive. To do that, you have to keep him changing. He cannot have him static from one book to the next. At the time I wrote *City of Bones* was leaving Los Angeles after 14 years and things going on in my own life were coming out in the writing. I was making a big change and so I thought I would make a big change with Harry. I liked the idea of him being an outsider looking in. Until that point I viewed him as an outsider with an insider's job. Now I wanted to take a look at him without a badge and as an outsider looking in.

I have to say, though, that this ended up being a mistake. I had Harry leave his badge behind and I wrote *Lost Light* about him being a private operator. What I quickly learned as I wrote this book was that I was missing a key ingredient in what I think made the earlier books work. And that was Harry's rebellion against bureaucracy and government management. This was a key thing that created empathic connections between Harry and readers, all of whom have had their bouts with bureaucracy. So

Harry as a free agent was not going to work in the long haul. And I wanted the long haul. So after *Lost Light* I looked for and found a legitimate path for him back into the police department.

CJD: As you have recently been revisiting *City of Bones* to transition the novel to television, has that post 9/11 reading context affected how you and the development team have translated the narrative to the small screen?

MC: We decided to go with a contemporary show. So this entails taking the *City of Bones* story and placing it in 2014 Los Angeles. Subsequently the dimensions of the book related to 9/11 are largely excised. It's now 13 years later and the wounds are not as fresh. We do not depict Bosch with any ambivalence about his mission in life.

CJD: Do you think it is fair to say that *City of Bones* is one of those pieces of popular culture, like Bob Dylan's '*Love and Theft*', that becomes ever more greatly severed from your authorial intent? Has it become, to a more significant extent than your other novels, "owned" by the readers and beholden to the context within which it is a) read, and b) the context that the novel deliberately anchors itself to with its 9/11 references and setting of January 2002?

MC: I would definitely go with B. As you noted above I have spent a lot of time with the book in the last year or so as we have adapted it for television. I have really come to view it in the context of being a reflection of that time. I rarely go back and re-read my books, especially after so many years. I go into writing each one of them with the idea that they are very contemporary and reflecting of life in the year they are published. Re-reading *City of Bones* after ten years left me feeling that I accomplished that. It's filled with a post 9/11 angst that is very much of that moment but not this moment. This is not to say that I believe it is dated or irrelevant. I think quite the opposite and I am proud of it. I have the advantage of being able to write at least a book a year and I have done that for more than twenty years. So *City of Bones* is just one story in a mosaic that if taken as a whole reflects a quarter century of life in Los Angeles. *City of Bones* is just one tile in the mosaic but the mosaic would be incomplete without that tile in its place.

Lost Light:

CJD: Where *City of Bones* is subtle in its critique of post 9/11 politics, *Lost Light* is overt in the commentary it makes on the encroachment of the war on terror into everyday policing. Could you give me some background as to what was motivating you to pursue that line of critique and commentary?

MC: I just found myself personally disagreeing with what I considered an overreaching response to the attack. I started writing as a journalist and I think I will always feel that I am a journalist at heart. So I viewed the Patriot Act as something that gave the government too much leeway and too much power. In my books I touch on the adage the absolute power corrupts absolutely and I thought we were heading in that direction. So I set out to write a story in which Harry Bosch as a private citizen would be thrown into a situation where this idea could be examined. I hope it wasn't too overt. I think that whatever theme you are working with, it is always better to be subtle.

CJD: *Lost Light* is narrated in the first person. Could give me some insight into why you choose to shift to this narrative mode at this time and to tell this story? How much of that decision is relatable to Bosch's new position as an outsider from Law Enforcement, shorn of its protections and privileges, and losing the sense of "speaking" with a whole (the LAPD, and by association the Government) that the badge represents?

MC: This was a choice that I made to go with the idea of Harry Bosch being an outsider with no badge and no standing. I became a writer because I loved the private detective novels of writers like Raymond Chandler and Ross MacDonald. Their protagonists were classic outsiders looking in on an establishment that they were suspicious of and certainly cynical about. By having Harry turn in his badge at the end of *City of Bones* I now had the opportunity to write my own private eye novel. This to me dictated that I shift to first person and tell the story in the manner of the classic PI novels that drew me to the table in the first place. I found the transition very difficult. I feel in first person you can not hold anything back or you are cheating the reader. In third person you do not have to present all that is known by the protagonist to the reader. And that mystery was part of the reason readers connected to Bosch. They were trying to figure out what he was up to and what he was thinking. In first person I had to tell the reader what Bosch was thinking and what he was up to. It was difficult and I think that explains why it's the only Bosch book in first person.

CJD: In terms of the first person narration; on the one hand we are guided by the first person style to align ourselves with Bosch, because we are restricted from "hearing" any viewpoint other than his, and yet the events of the novel conspire to leave us with an uncertainty about the absolute validity or ethicality of Bosch's philosophy. The ending is a violent and bloody one, and in terms of the means by which Bosch arrives in this scenario routes us back to his activities in *A Darkness More Than Night*. There seems to be a tension between what Harry's narrative voice tells the reader about Harry and

his actions, and what the actions themselves tell the reader. Can the novel as a discrete entity be separated from the politics of its chief protagonist?

MC: I think it can be – as long as you stay in third person. This is what I was trying to get at before. There is a buffer in a third person narrative that is useful in building mystery around the protagonist. What is he up to? What is he thinking? He believes in a code of fairness, that everybody counts or nobody counts. But does he practice what he preaches? There are contradictions here.

I think these contradictions and grey areas build a fuller character for the reader to be intrigued by. First person does not allow that to a great extent. To me, first person narratives are whispered confessions. The protagonist is taking the reader on a ride and while he doesn't have to reveal the destination he can't lie about things along the way. My personal take is that when you get into the territory of the unreliable narrator then you risk losing the reader.

CJD: Sticking with Formal techniques – you made the decision not just to have Bosch comment on having access to documents only in highly redacted form, but to actually place that redaction, and that sense of having information kept from you, right there on the page. Could you give me some insight into that decision? Because it made for me, a very personal connection between reader and Bosch – almost breaking down the fourth wall, as if Bosch is turning to the audience and saying “see, even you don't get to know what is in it, or what the truth is”.

MC: I think you give me too much credit for this. I just thought it would be interesting to present these redacted documents to the readers and let them try to fill in the missing words and meanings. I am always aware while writing these stories that on some basic level these books are entertainments and puzzles. I was just offering a puzzle within the puzzle.

CJD: At the end of *Lost Light*, Harry seems to believe that he has he's has been pulled back (or has pulled himself back) from the edge of the abyss, avoiding becoming like the BAM squad and Linus Simonson. But in many ways we have already witnessed Harry fall into the abyss, both metaphorically and physically, allowing one to associate Harry with that dark space and viewing him as already in it or part of it. Is Harry deluding himself?

MC: Harry probably deludes himself about many things but I think he has an innate understanding about redemption. Sure, he has splashed through the waters of the abyss but if you are lucky you get to live a long time and in that span there will be moral highs and lows. It's a very basic idea about climbing out of the abyss. In a book like A

Darkness More Than Night you have Harry way down in the abyss. He makes decisions that are very dark and costly. So in the books that follow he finds dimensions of redemption that allow him to climb up and keep going.

I reached a point somewhere around my fifth or sixth book where I knew I could do this the rest of my life. Not just that I would be able to come up with stories and continue the Harry Bosch series, but also that I would be paid well and have a comfortable life. The freedom this understanding gave me was amazing and it infiltrated the work. I knew that I could have Harry drop into the abyss for a while because I knew there would come a time where I could write about him climbing out. I went from thinking book to book to thinking about the overall story - the 25 year mosaic. This is why *Lost Light* ends with Harry realizing he was a father. I was turning the series in a slightly new direction and setting up the next 10 years. The first 10 years were about Harry being bulletproof. He was a man on a mission and to carry that mission out he had to be heavily armored so that no one could get to him and compromise him. When he sees the child at the end and realizes that it is his daughter, he also realizes that he is no longer bulletproof. That he has a responsibility to someone else in the world and by virtue of that he can be gotten to.

CJD: Do you think it's fair to say that Harry Bosch has always been something of an insider/outsider, but that *Lost Light's* channelling of the post 9/11 terrorism paranoia and infatuation exaggerates this aspect of Bosch's character?

MC: Yes. When he was a cop I always felt that he was an outsider with an insider's job. I never wanted him to feel comfortable with the weight of the badge. I wanted him to be a feral cat, the kid who sits alone at the lunch table. I made him left-handed. I made him a smoker so he would physically have to stand outside. In many small and big ways I made him an outsider but he always had that badge. Until *Lost Light*. And now in this book he is the complete outsider.

CJD: After 9/11, a substantial tract of the Bush administration's 9/11 narrative was the characterisation of victimhood as a near-exclusively American preserve, one chronologically rooted to the incident of 9/11, and one which would be used to obscure the victimisations that the political and military response to 9/11 would herald. To what extent do you think *Lost Light* can be read as a novel that tries to account for the complexity of victim status after 9/11 that the Bush narrative occluded?

MC: To be honest, I never thought about that while writing the book. I agree with that take on post 9/11 politics and the Bush theme, but that is a viewpoint with some distance on it. I didn't have that as I wrote this book in 2002 so I did what I think was the smart thing. I kept it simple. I made it a story about one man and his encounter with

this new government and bureaucracy. That's the trick, to try to make one individual's story transcend the national experience. I don't know if I did that but I tried.

CJD: Bosch has a distinct moral code that he adheres to throughout the series, and the violence that Bosch is called upon to administer is generally justified for the situations Bosch is in. However, with Bosch taking an active role in engineering scenarios that terminate in violence, or as described in *The Concrete Blond* when he kills the Dollmaker, stemming from a gung-ho individualism predicated on acting in the interests of victims, is there is something of a "war on terror" sensibility about Bosch in his willingness to descend into those dark spaces in pursuit of what he believes is justice?

MC: I think you could make that argument but it's not something I consciously consider. I think that would entail starting with the bigger picture and chipping it down to the individual. I create in an opposite direction. I start with the individual and build out. Not sure if that makes sense.

CJD: If we were to flip that on its head, with Bosch, one could argue that by the end of *Lost Light* we have a guy who represents aspects of Neocon terror war ideology as he strives to use any means necessary to get justice for Angela Benton, but within the world of the novels has become just as much a representative of the targets of that policy - he is renditioned to the 9th floor of the FBI building after all.

Was developing this duality part of a deliberate tactic to allow Bosch to occupy a space after 9/11 that was neither pro nor anti-government - a third state of being that ultimately opposes the application of brute force, manipulation and terror by any agency, US government or otherwise and therefore a much more subversive proposition than it might appear on the surface?

MC: Man, you keep giving me too much credit and brainpower! These kinds of ideas were not even present when I was thinking about and writing this book. I didn't even know the word rendition back then. I wish I did. Yes, I consciously wanted to tell a story that would draw in elements of the Patriot Act and this growing national fervor of victimhood leading to entitlement when it comes to invading lands outside and restricting long held freedoms inside. But I had no ideas about finding space for Bosch to occupy after 9/11. This genre has a long tradition of introducing protagonists willing to act when other men and governments will not. It's what draws people to crime novels. They are about men and women that step up when others step back. The stories are intoxicating because we all want to be the person who steps up but in our heart of hearts we don't know if we are. People want to ride with Harry because he does what they hope they would do in similar circumstances. So in this story, as with every Bosch story, I wanted him to step up and be undaunted by the corruption of power he faced. I

wanted him to stand for Angela Benton because nobody else would. So it was not any sort of subversive proposition on a conscious level.

CJD: To what extent did introducing 9/11 and terror war into Bosch's world provide a new angle for the development of the Bosch character? *Lost Light* certainly feels like a novel in which 9/11 as a public historic event is inextricable, and that the narrative wouldn't hold together so well without it. You couldn't simply swap it out for another public trauma – it isn't a window dressing like it is in some of the recognised 9/11 novels.

MC: I think it provided an opening to go into Bosch's history and character in this story. He has been to war and that experience is always something I like to filter the stories through. I don't know if an angle opened up for continuing development of the character in future books. It obviously was something I grabbed hold of in this book.

CJD: What was the driving force behind returning Bosch to the LAPD?

MC: To be honest I realized I had made a mistake in taking Bosch out of the police force and by doing so I had doomed the series. I didn't want that. I wanted to keep writing about Harry Bosch so I found a way to bring him back into the police department. By the way, it was a totally legitimate way to do it, not a novelistic device. What happened was that by the time I came to the end of writing *Lost Light* I realized that Bosch could not realistically survive on the page much longer as a private eye. I want to write about a real world and it simply would not be real for Harry to be solving murders every year as a private operator. So I knew I would not be able to keep doing that and would need to end the series. This was a very depressing realization. But then I got lucky. A real life LAPD detective I knew of was going through the same experience. He had retired, took a private security job, and suddenly realized he had made a mistake. He went through the process of re-applying for his LAPD job and was accepted back. He was placed on the cold case squad. This happened at the exact same time I was going through my own disenchantment with Harry in retirement. So I piggybacked on the real detective's story and brought Harry back into the department and put him on the cold case squad.

CJD: Thank you for your time Michael.