

Incandescent

A Murder Mystery Set in New York City in the 1920s

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INCANDESCENT

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Do you promise that your detectives shall well and truly detect the crimes presented to them, using those wits which it may please you to bestow upon them and not placing reliance on Divine Revelation, Feminine Intuition, Mumbo Jumbo, Jiggery-Pokery, Coincidence or the Act of God?¹

¹ Membership oath of The Detection Club, founded in 1928; past presidents include Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers. H. Ephron (2016). p. 14.

1. Introduction and Statement of Motivation

“I love Hercule Poirot, Sherlock Holmes and other mystery books. I'm going to write one for my Maturitätsarbeit,” I said to myself (naively), after binge-watching television and reading novels throughout the spring of 2020. It was the first spring of the coronavirus pandemic: a season of quarantining, social isolation, home-schooling and a feeling that nothing was normal. Escaping into the fictional world of “whodunits” and period dramas, was a way to bring excitement and new experiences into my life.

I have a great interest in historical fiction, clever dialogue, peculiar characters and plot twists. I enjoy stories which provoke the reader to examine their² own moral code. Conflicted characters are fascinating, especially if neither the protagonist nor the villain is entirely good or evil. If everything was a choice between black and white, life would be simple. But dramatic stories frequently take place in a grey zone.

I often feel that I have grown up, culturally, in the wrong era. I prefer the Lindy Hop to Hip Hop and music from the '20s to '70s rather than the hits of today. This does not mean that I would rather live during another time. The advantages of living where and when I do, definitely outweigh its disadvantages. However, the ‘romanticized’ Roaring '20s is a period in American history that intrigues me. I have read *The Great Gatsby*, by F. Scott Fitzgerald,³ watched a number of films set during that period and listened to the music of that era at home for years. This background motivated me to choose 1920s New York as my setting and my interest in detective stories led me to select the cozy mystery sub-genre for my novel.

This senior thesis is the most challenging project I have completed in my academic lifetime. I was and am fortunate to have an advisor who is also a fan of crime novels and mysteries. She has been supportive of me as well as my ideas for the plot, setting and language (American English, early 20th century), and guided me through the year-and-a-half-long journey. Her encouragement is a major reason why I was able to see this project through.

² This report utilizes the terms “she,” “their” and “one” interchangeably to refer to neutral, third-person, singular pronouns except as the context otherwise indicates.

³ See Fitzgerald, Bibliography

2. Historical Background: 1920s New York/New Jersey

This report presents brief descriptions of places, people and events relevant to the novel. It is not meant to cover all of New York's history and culture of the early 20th century.

2.1. Tenafly, New Jersey

The Borough of Tenafly, New Jersey is located outside of Manhattan and is the hometown of my mother's family. I have spent part of every summer of my life there and became familiar with its history over the past years. During the last decades of the 19th century, Tenafly was home to Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a leading suffragette, who attempted to vote there in 1870 and was turned away. She owned a mansion known as Grindelwald, which still stands today and is a designated historical site.⁴

Towards the end of the 19th century, Tenafly hosted children from poor neighborhoods of New York City every summer in order to give them the opportunity to breathe clean air and enjoy nature outside of the slums in which they lived. They stayed at the Rethmore House, established by the Browning family.⁵ I constructed the childhood and background of Geneviève and certain other characters using these historical references.

2.2. New York City

2.2.1. New York Buildings

This report includes only major buildings featured in the novel.

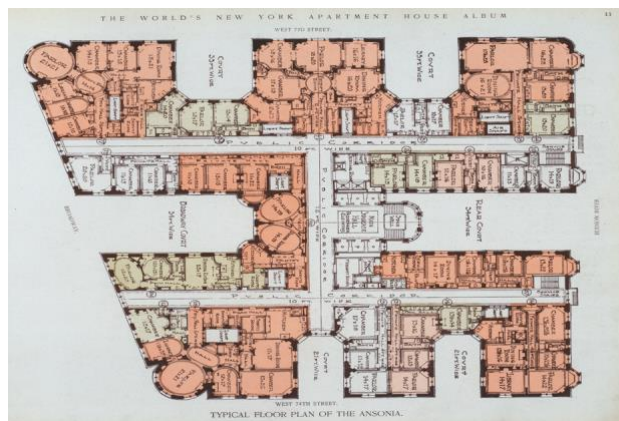


Image 1: <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/the-worlds-loose-leaf-album-of-apartment-houses-containing-views-and-ground#/?tab=about> (accessed & uploaded in November, 2021)

⁴ Unknown Authors (2021). *Tenafly, New Jersey*. Wikipedia. (12.10.20).

⁵ Tenafly Public Library (2020). *History of Tenafly*. (12.10.20).

The Ansonia is an 18-story-high building located at 73rd to 74th Streets and Broadway. It opened in 1903 as a luxurious residential hotel. It was built in the Beaux-Arts style, has round corner-towers, and a grand stairwell under a domed skylight. The Ansonia had 3,000 rooms, room service dining, tearooms, live orchestras playing in the dining room/restaurant, grand ballrooms, Turkish baths, a lobby fountain and, initially, a rooftop farm with hundreds of chickens, ducks, and goats which provided daily milk and eggs for residents. The animals were removed by order of the New York Health Department in 1907, but the gardens remained. Suites rented for \$14,000 per year when it first opened (more than \$400,000 today). Among the famous residents of the Ansonia were: Babe Ruth (the Yankees baseball star), Arturo Toscanini (the conductor), Igor Stravinsky (the Russian composer, pianist and conductor), Enrico Caruso (the Italian opera tenor) and Florenz Ziegfeld (the Broadway businessman). In 1919, Chicago White Sox first baseman, Chick Gandil, who had an apartment at the Ansonia, allegedly had a meeting there with his White Sox teammates (and, it is rumored, with Arnold Rothstein) to recruit them to intentionally lose the 1919 World Series. This was known as the Black Sox Scandal. Today, the Ansonia apartments are privately owned or rented.⁶

Brownstones are row houses that were first built in lower Manhattan at the end of the 18th century. The older brownstones are small, have colonial designs, and brick exteriors. The name “brownstone,” came from the rock that was quarried in both New Jersey and Connecticut beginning in the 1850's. This stone replaced brick as the building material of choice. Brownstone living became very fashionable for the middle to upper classes from the late 1800s.⁷

By the late 1870s, the Upper West Side was still largely undeveloped. But when the elevated train (the EL) was built in 1879, and brought public transportation to the Upper West Side, a building boom of brownstones began. After the turn of the 20th century, newly built large apartment buildings/residential hotels, like the Ansonia attracted the upper classes as well as celebrities.⁸

Grand Central Terminal was completed in 1913 by Cornelius Vanderbilt (owner of a railroad empire which included the New York Central Railroad). All trains that came to the Terminal were electric, which allowed the tracks to be built underground so that buildings could be built over the station. The Main Concourse of the Terminal is 13 stories high with a vaulted ceiling painted with the night sky, complete with the major constellations and hundreds of incandescent bulbs forming stars.⁹

2.2.2. New York Infrastructure

This report includes only major infrastructure featured in the novel.

⁶ M. Nevius and J. Nevius (2009). p. 189.

⁷ K. Cancila (2012). p. 142.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ M. Nevius and J.Nevius (2009). pp. 211- 212.

The Brooklyn Bridge, an iconic symbol of New York City, was completed in 1883. It crosses the East River between Brooklyn and lower Manhattan. The two ends, called anchorages, contain vaulted chambers and passages previously rented to alcohol distributors to store wine, champagne and liquors. The chambers had a reported storage capacity of one million gallons of alcohol.¹⁰ As the chambers were supposedly emptied of alcohol during Prohibition, I have taken some literary license in the story to create a speakeasy in the chambers. However, it is not a great stretch of the imagination to think that illicit parties were held in the cool caverns.

Immediately after the repeal of Prohibition, Anthony Oechs & Co., an alcohol distributor, rented and began to throw parties inside the vaults. According to the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, (an article published on July 12, 1934), “musicians played Viennese waltzes, champagne corks popped and nobody remembered that above the trolleys and the elevators, the automobiles and the rushing pedestrians still hurried back and forth.”¹¹

Subways: Transportation was modernizing at a rapid pace in the early decades of the 20th century. Horse-drawn trolleys were being replaced by cars, buses, elevated trains and subways. The IRT (Interborough Rapid Transit) subway line opened in 1904. It ran from City Hall on the Lower East Side (just north of the entrance to the Brooklyn Bridge) uptown under Lafayette St., turned west under 42nd Street and then up the Westside of Manhattan.¹²

2.3. The Roaring ‘20s

2.3.1. Cultural Shifts in the 1920s

The Roaring ‘20s was a period between the First World War and the Great Depression. It was a time of change in society and in politics.¹³

“The New Woman” also known as the Flapper is the most recognized icon of the ‘20s. Many women rejected the restrictions of old-fashioned society and began going out to night clubs and bars, wearing short dresses, showing their skin, cutting their hair, drinking and smoking.¹⁴

2.3.2. Prohibition and Speakeasy Culture

“For as long as the U.S. has been a nation, it’s had a substance-abuse problem. In its early years, Americans consumed staggering amounts of alcohol: from 5.8 gallons of pure alcohol per person in 1790 up to 7.1 gallons per year by 1830. The misery and waste caused by

¹⁰ S. Xu (2021). *Secret Vaults Under the Brooklyn Bridge Once Home to Private Wine Cellars*. (15.09.21).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² M. Nevius and J. Nevius (2009). p. 193.

¹³ Unknown Authors (2021). *Boundless US History: The Roaring Twenties: 1920-1929*. (22.12.21).

¹⁴ History.com Editors (2010). *The Roaring Twenties*. (22.12.21).

drunkenness prompted many Americans to beg for laws that would outlaw liquor.”¹⁵

The temperance (anti-alcohol) movement gained popularity during the second half of the 19th century in reaction to widespread abuse of alcohol. In New York, saloons were the center of community life for the common man, private clubs for the rich, and many immigrants considered alcohol to be safer to drink than the polluted water of the City. Parents in the slum areas even gave their children beer instead of water to drink because local water sources were contaminated. The 18th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution, which banned the production, sale or distribution of alcohol (but not its consumption), passed Congress in December 1917, and was approved by the majority of the states thereafter. Prohibition, under the Volstead Act, took effect in January of 1920. It was only repealed by the 21st Amendment in 1933.¹⁶

Instead of cutting down the use of alcohol and closing down saloons, Prohibition simply caused the drinking scene to move to secret locations. Many people who previously did not drink, began to visit speakeasies for the social scene, which included women (who had previously not been permitted in men's clubs or bars, and music in the larger venues) and, in some venues, allowed the races to mix (these establishments were called “black and tan” clubs).^{17 18}

The name “speakeasy” came from stories of illegal liquor sellers telling patrons to “speak easy” (or quietly) so the police or nosy neighbors do not hear the customers in the bars or buying the alcohol. Speakeasies often were hidden behind doors. The illegal bars ranged from dirty cellars, to rooms in apartments up to large nightclubs with live jazz bands and dance floors. Alcohol was also served at house parties and in restaurants. There were more than 32,000 speakeasies in New York City at the height of Prohibition.¹⁹

Some speakeasies were built to avoid being found by Prohibition Agents (“Prohis”). The entrance to the 21 Club (at 21 West 52nd street), was a camouflaged door. Inside, a false wall hid a secret wine cellar. The bar had a rigged surface that could open at the push of a button, dropping liquor bottles down to the cellar where they would break open and drain away the alcohol. Many speakeasies had multiple exits for a quick escape, and codes (such as a red light flashing or a special song played by a band) to signal if the police or agents were starting a raid.²⁰

2.3.3. Absinthe

Absinthe is a liquor with a high percentage of alcohol, which is made from a mixture of botanicals. The ingredients include the flowers and leaves of the grand wormwood

¹⁵ J. Nilsson, A. Hollandbeck and W. McAdoo (2016). The Saturday Evening Post. (10.05.21).

¹⁶ M. Nevius and J. Nevius (2009). p. 225.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 226.

¹⁸ Unknown Authors (2021). *Prohibition, An Interactive History*. The Mob Museum. (05.11.21).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

(*Artemisia absinthium*), as well as green anise and other herbs. It has a naturally green color but also comes as a clear liquid (La Bleu), depending upon its ingredients. Absinthe originated in Switzerland, in the Canton of Neuchatel, in the late 18th century. It became very popular in France as well as in the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Besides drinking absinthe for pleasure, people used it as a medicine as well as for the prevention of malaria. It has several nicknames, including: the Green Muse, the Green Fairy ("la fée verte") and La Bleu. 5 o'clock p.m. was popularly call "l'heure verte" in the 1860's.²¹

Absinthe production and sale was banned in the U.S., France and Switzerland in 1915. There had been wide-spread rumors of addiction and psychotic behavior connected to absinthe. There is a psychoactive ingredient, thujone, in some absinthe but it is only found in trace amounts in the liquor. In hindsight, it may have just been general alcohol abuse that was to blame for bad behavior. After it was banned, absinthe was made in secret.²²

2.3.4. Music, Dance and Entertainment

Speakeasies, house parties, private clubs, jazz clubs, and roadhouses were places where men and women (and sometimes mixed races) could socialize, hear live music, and learn the new dance crazes. Jazz music came north from the southern states during the 20's, and took over the club scene: the 20's became known as the Jazz Age. Dancing was a large part of popular culture, as was dating (then a new way for men and women to get together without chaperones). Some of the popular dances of the decade were: The "Charleston," the "Black Bottom," the "Shimmy," the "Foxtrot," and the "Lindy Hop."²³

Broadway theaters, became places where talented performers, composers, writers, and musicians came together and put on extravagant shows. Composers like George and Ira Gershwin, Cole Porter, and Irving Berlin created musicals that are still heard today.²⁴

2.4. Feminism and Worker's Rights

2.4.1. Women's Suffrage, Education and Careers

American women advocated for the right to vote for more than a half-century before their success in 1920. The suffrage movement started in the first half of the 19th century and became official in 1848 with the Seneca Falls Convention, the first convention for women's rights. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony formed one of two national suffrage organizations in 1869. The two groups finally merged into The National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) in 1890 with Anthony as its leader. The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), established in 1873, also campaigned for with NAWSA the right of women to vote.²⁵

²¹ Unknown Authors (2021). *Absinthe*. *Wikipedia*. (27.10.21).

²² Ibid.

²³ The People History (2021). *Music Played in the 1920's*. (05.11.21).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Unknown Authors (2021). *Women's Suffrage in the United States*. *Wikipedia*. (10.05.21).

Anthony and Stanton both attempted to vote in the 1870s. Stanton was turned away from a polling station in Tenafly, New Jersey in 1870 and Anthony was arrested after voting in 1872. They brought a lawsuit up to the United States Supreme Court but lost their case. An amendment to the U.S. Constitution was the only legal solution to their complaint. Women across the country held demonstrations and were arrested by the hundreds. Some went on hunger strikes. After nationwide campaigning for over a half-century, the U.S. Congress passed the 19th Amendment to the Constitution on August 18, 1920, providing women with the right to vote.²⁶

2.4.2. Workers' Rights after the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire

The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire of March 25, 1911, was the tragedy that started a movement to improve worker safety and rights. The garment industry was infamous for worker abuse. The employees in the industry were mainly poor women and girls with immigrant backgrounds. They had little power individually and the company blocked their unionizing efforts. The factory fire started on the 8th floor of the building and swept upwards. Workers on the 9th floor had been locked in by the owners, who escaped with the factory manager and the only key. The women (148) jumped to their deaths or were burned to death before the eyes of hundreds of spectators on the ground. The fire department could do nothing to save them as their ladders could not reach high enough. Max Blanck and Isaac Harris, the owners, were acquitted of any criminal charges. But the catastrophe motivated the public to demand that workers be better protected on the job, and started a revolution in the unionizing of factory workers.²⁷

2.5. Poisons and Toxins

The novel refers to a number of natural and man-made substances that can be poisonous to humans. This list includes chloroform²⁸, belladonna²⁹, poison ivy³⁰, hemlock^{31 32}, arsenic and radium.

2.5.1. Arsenic

Arsenic (As) - Acute arsenic poisoning rapidly causes vomiting, convulsions, gasping and severe pain. It is nicknamed the “inheritance powder” as it was popularly used to eliminate relatives. White arsenic is easily slipped into food or drink and is extremely difficult to taste once mixed into an alcohol drink. If arsenic is given in small doses over time, it is easy to

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ M. Nevius and J. Nevius (2009). pp. 204-205.

²⁸ D. Blum (2010). pp. 6-25.

²⁹ Unknown Authors (2021). *Atropa Belladonna*. Wikipedia. (15.10.21).

³⁰ C. DerSarkissian (2020). *Poison Ivy and Other Plants: What You Should Know*. WebMD. (17.10.21).

³¹ Unknown Authors (2021). *Conium Maculatum*. Wikipedia (17.10.21)

³² Unknown Authors WebMD (2021). *Hemlock – Uses, Side Effects and More*. WebMD. (17.10.21).

confuse the symptoms with other diseases (including influenza, cholera and heart disease). Autopsies reveal the metallic element and it can be detected in the hair and fingernails of victims decades after death.³³

2.5.2. Radium

Radium was first discovered in 1898 by Pierre and Marie Curie. It shines with a pale green/blue glow and is a highly radioactive element. Radioluminescent paint contains radium, with added zinc and other substances that increase its brilliance. Phosphorescent paints were widely used in the United States and Europe in the early 20th century in cosmetics, toothpaste and even certain foods. Radithor and Revigators also known as “liquid sunshine” or referred to as “nature’s way to health” contained water mixed with radium. There were many bogus medicinal products, like the Radiendocrinator, which was worn like a jockstrap by men to increase virility. However, radium had legitimate medical uses. Dr. Howard Kelly for instance, founder of the John Hopkins Hospital, treated cervical and uterine cancer with radium.³⁴

Wilhelm Röntgen, who discovered X-rays, found that radiation could expose photographic film like visible light. Antoine Henri Becquerel, engineer and physicist, became aware of Röntgen’s findings and experimented on his own. He placed rock crystals (containing uranium) on photographic plates and later found that they had been exposed. Continuing his experiments, he discovered radioactivity. I used this information in the novel to connect the radioactivity left on the victim to the killers.^{35 36}

2.6. The Radium Girls

The United States Radium Corporation (U.S. Radium) in Orange, New Jersey, produced various products using radium-based luminescent paint. Towards the end of World War I, the U.S. military recognized the value of glow-in-the-dark instruments. Radiant watches allowed soldiers to check the time in the dark without giving away their position to enemies. U.S. Radium received profitable contracts to produce radiant dials for the army. Undark, one of their related paints, was also advertised for use in households and businesses.³⁷



Image 2: Radium Girl painting dials

³³ D. Blum (2010). pp. 76, 79-81.

³⁴ R. Gunderman and A. Gonda (2015). *Radium Girls*. (06.03.21).

³⁵ Unknown Authors (2020). *The Discovery of Radioactivity*. Chemistry LibreTexts. (06.12.21).

³⁶ The British Broadcasting Corporation (2021). *Properties of Radiation*. (06.12.21).

³⁷ This section 2.6. of the report relies on multiple pages of two sources: K. Moore. 2017. *The Radium*

U.S. Radium hired young women to paint the dials of their watches and clocks. Women were considered suitable for this work because it did not require physical strength, and company executives believed that women had a fine touch for painting the delicate lines on the dial faces. They were taught to place the tips of brushes in their mouths to make a fine point. This would moisten the brush, prevent them from wasting paint and allowed them to work faster. The women were paid pennies per dial painted. Every day each woman painted about 250 watches and received an average of 20-25 dollars a week.

They were never told that radium was dangerous, although the company executives knew to stay away from it. Instead it was advertised as healthy and beneficial. The women decorated their teeth, nails and lips with the paint. The radium dust in their workroom covered their hair, skin and clothing. These girls started becoming very ill with bleeding gums, rotting jaws, anemia, fatigue and tumors. Doctors found out that what they had in common was their work at U.S. Radium.

The company sent Frederick Flinn, a “doctor”, to examine the employees. Flinn insisted that that the women were healthy and that the work environment at U.S. Radium was safe. Dr. Flinn was not a medical doctor at all. He was a physiologist from Columbia University who had been hired by U.S. Radium and the Waterbury Clock Co. to lie to the employees.

Five women sued U.S. Radium. The company hid a report completed by Dr. Cecil Drinker of Harvard, which found that workers were being contaminated by radium and suffering from illnesses due to radium poisoning. The company lawyers delayed court proceedings, likely hoping that the plaintiffs would die before their case was ever heard. Later, it was also revealed that U.S. Radium attempted to ruin the reputation of the sick girls by claiming that they were suffering from syphilis in order to avoid having to admit responsibility for or pay for their employees’ injuries. The dial painters from U.S. Radium and the many other radium painters became known as the Radium Girls.³⁸

2.7. Historical Figures included in the Novel

Incandescent is a work of fiction. Most of the characters in the novel never existed in real life, although some have names or characteristics loosely related to or adapted from people who lived during the 1920s or were written about in other stories.

Geneviève Poirot, the protagonist of the story, is an example of a fictionalized character based on another literary figure. Her family name was borrowed from Agatha Christie's Belgian detective, Hercule Poirot, and her back-story as his niece was created for the book. This is my way of honoring a character that motivated me to choose this thesis project.

Other characters were drawn from references about New Yorkers in the 1920s or from other works of fiction written about the time (as with Hercule Poirot). An example of the former

Girls. and R. Gunderman and A. Gonda (2015). *Radium Girls*. (20.12.21).

³⁸ R. Gunderman and A. Gonda (2015). *Radium Girls*. (20.12.21).

were Ziegfeld Follies girls, who were a real part of New York's entertainment scene, although "Ruby" was not based on any particular dancer. Her looks and character are based on general stories about New York show girls during the '20s. An example of the latter is the "newspaper" story about Jay Gatsby. Gatsby, George Wilson and the Buchanans (from Fitzgerald's novel) are described as if they were "real" people although they are imaginary characters from *The Great Gatsby*. I hoped that this reference would bring memories of that story to any reader who had also read Fitzgerald's work or seen the Gatsby film(s).

"Real" people included Samuel Weiss and David Golde, who actually lived in New York during the '20s. Their professions and elements of their personal lives were as described in the story. Sam Weiss was my great, great uncle and Dave was his life partner. In truth, they did not live in the Ansonia, but at Sutton Place. And, although they were famed in our family for speaking with upper-class British accents (which they described as a fashion among New York gay men during the early to mid 20th century), they were really from Brooklyn and Queens.

There are a number of famous (or infamous) characters who appear in the story (some who are merely mentioned by name, such as Babe Ruth, Florenz Ziegfeld, Zelda Fitzgerald and Cole Porter), who actually lived and were active during the 1920s in New York but with whom I have no personal connection. The following is a biographical listing of those people who have more than a cameo role in the book:

Dr. Frederick Flinn, described in Section 2.6, was an assistant professor of physiology at Columbia University's Institute of Public Health. He made himself known as a specialist in industrial hygiene, but in reality, was a hired by corporations to defend themselves in cases of industrial pollution. Flinn was employed by the U.S. Radium Corporation of Orange New Jersey to defend them against allegations that they were poisoning residents of New Jersey with fumes from their factory and to counter charges that the dial painters were becoming sick and dying from radiation poisoning.³⁹

From all accounts, Dr. Flinn and Arthur Roeder, president of the company, knowingly deceived the dial painters and lied about their conditions in order to benefit themselves financially. In my novel, I have painted Flinn and Roeder as villains. I have also fictionalized their vices (adultery and alcohol consumption), public behavior and dialogue in order to fit my plot. Frankly, I believe they deserved to be skewered, even if only in a novel.

Dr. Charles Norris was New York City's first Chief Medical Examiner. He brought professional reform and scientific rigor to the previously corrupt and unprofessional coroner's department.⁴⁰

Dr. Alexander Gettler was the chief toxicologist hired by Dr. Charles Norris. He developed techniques in his laboratory for detecting poisons and other chemical compounds in the tissues and bones of cadavers. His work with Dr. Norris and other scientists brought the

³⁹ K. Moore (2017). pp. 119-120.

⁴⁰ D. Blum (2010). pp. 29-33.

science of toxicology into the modern era.⁴¹

Isabella Goodwin was the first female detective of New York City. She gained her detective status by working undercover, disguising herself as a cleaning woman at a boarding house to capture a band of bank robbers in 1912. Detective Goodwin helped run the newly established Women's Bureau in Midtown which dealt with female offenders, runaways and victims of domestic violence.⁴²

Florence Foster Jenkins (born as Narcissa Florence Foster) was a wealthy philanthropist, socialite and amateur opera singer who lived in New York City most of her adult life. She was known for her uniquely tone-deaf performances. Despite her incompetence, she performed regularly and had many fans among musical celebrities during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s.⁴³

Frances Perkins moved to New York and was hired by the New York Consumer's League. When Perkins witnessed the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in 1911, she was hired by the Committee on Safety of New York where the first workplace and safety laws were established.⁴⁴ Al Smith, Governor of New York, selected her as a member of the Industrial Commission and she was later appointed Industrial Commissioner by Governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt.⁴⁵

Arnold Rothstein, a.k.a., A. Redstone, a.k.a., The Brain, was one of the Prohibition Era's most infamous gangsters. He operated out of midtown, New York City, in gambling and illegal alcohol sales.⁴⁶ He was described as petite and baby-faced, egotistical, sober (he never drank alcohol) and very smart, especially with numbers. He wore perfectly tailored suits and was never personally violent, but was very much feared. Rothstein could have a man easily killed, but since he "owned" the police and many politicians, he never faced punishment. His only known addiction was to large amounts of cake and milk.⁴⁷

Rothstein often spent the later part of each night until morning at Lindy's restaurant in Times Square, surrounded by his gang. Lindy's was also popular with actors, composers, athletes, police officers, journalists, other criminals and anyone who wanted to see them or be seen there. Rothstein's wife, Carolyn, once said Lindy's was a "water hole in the jungle where beasts of prey and their natural enemies gather under a very real, but invisible, flag of truce for refreshment."⁴⁸

⁴¹ Ibid. pp. 35-37.

⁴² C. Kilgannon (2019). *Overlooked No More: Isabella Goodwin, New York City's First Female Police Detective*. New York Times. (10.03.21).

⁴³ Unknown Authors (2021). *Florence Foster Jenkins*. Wikipedia. (11.05.21).

⁴⁴ Frances Perkins Center (2021). *Frances Perkins: Chronology of a Long and Productive Life*. (11.11.21).

⁴⁵ D. Brooks (2015). *How the First Woman in the U.S. Cabinet found her Vocation*. The Atlantic Magazine. (11.11.21).

⁴⁶ Unknown Authors (2021). *List of Jewish American Mobsters*. Wikipedia. (14.04.21).

⁴⁷ J. Hari (2015). *Meet America's First Drug Dealer: Arnold Rothstein's Wild Real-Life 1920's "Sopranos" story*. Salon. (14.04.21).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Arnold Rothstein is also infamous for having rigged the World Series of baseball in 1919. The game, between the Cincinnati Reds and the heavily-favored White Sox, was an upset win for the Reds. Eight White Sox players were charged with fraud and Rothstein was questioned, but all were acquitted.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and **Harriot Eaton Stanton-Batch** were mother and daughter suffragettes and reformers. Mrs. Stanton is referenced under “2.1. Tenafly, New Jersey”.⁴⁹

3. Process

3.1. Project Scope and Parameters

3.1.1. Inspiration for the Project

A love of period dramas, mystery and adventure stories inspired this senior project. Television, movies and music have been major influences in my life. Family film nights often feature Sherlock Holmes, Poirot and other film adaptations of novels with sleuths as main characters. We watch favorite classic films, including *Some Like It Hot* (a 1920s gangster and Jazz Age comedy released in 1959), and every version of Jane Austen's novels adapted for the screen, several times a year. I have also read a number of stories, including *The Great Gatsby*, which were set in the Roaring '20s. Early in the Spring of 2020, these influences came together in my search for a senior thesis topic.

I decided to write a novel, rather than produce a play or a film. I have no experience in film-making. And, although I enjoy seeing and hearing stories as much or more than reading them, I was not interested in writing a play, organizing rehearsals, video sessions, or a live performance in the midst of a pandemic.

3.1.2. Choosing a Genre

I chose to work within the cozy mystery subgenre of mysteries. The typical features of cozies match my tastes. I enjoy a story that has: (i) an amateur sleuth as protagonist (someone with whom one can identify); (ii) interesting supporting characters; (iii) an emphasis on relationships between characters; (iv) a well-developed and memorable setting; (v) a plot which, although it has twists, does not “cheat” the reader by finishing with an unbelievable, irrational ending; (vi) “fair play” clues provided so that a reader could solve the case if she is alert; (vii) humor; and, (viii) a resolution that gives the reader a feeling of satisfaction or contentment, and/or a sense that justice has been served.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica (2021). *Nora Stanton Blatch Barney*. Britannica (09.04.21).

⁵⁰ N. Cohen (2018). pp. 3-4.

I do not particularly enjoy horror and gore in stories. I read (and watched) *The Alienist* (1994) by Caleb Carr as part of my exploration for this project. The novel has a richly-developed setting and fascinating main characters, but the ritualistic murders of children are too graphic for me. There is no humor in such a tale, and no peaceful resolution.

Although I avoided horror in my story-writing, I did not want my novel to be boring. Pure cozy mysteries often feature cooking, crafts and pets.⁵¹ That is too “sweet” for me. I needed a little adrenaline to keep my plot interesting. This fits the thriller subgenre more than the cozy.⁵² For example: I deliberately described the murder and autopsies, rather than have them take place “off stage” as in a typical cozy. I also increased the pace of the narrative at certain points, and chose to feature mobsters as part of my story. True to the cozy genre, the bootleggers are dangerous, but not overtly violent. Their accents and dialogue are exaggerated to the point of kitsch (much like many of the Hollywood films produced about that era), in order to keep their part of the story somewhat light.

Incandescent is not a pure cozy mystery or pure thriller, but rather a blended “cozy-thriller.”

3.1.3. Reading and Preparation

My older sister wrote a biographical story about our grandparents for her senior project four years ago. I learned, from observing her, that gathering background information and doing research could take hundreds of hours. Before I would ever type the first word of my book, I needed to study writing techniques, as well as become familiar with my setting. My advance preparation took more than a year before I actually wrote my first draft.

Beginning in June, 2020, I collected books, magazines, newspaper articles, and internet sources (including online news articles, magazine articles and videos) that provided the biographical, historical, cultural information I needed to become educated about the subject, setting and characters of my story. A full list of the materials I collected is included in the Bibliography at the end of this support document.

I organized a binder of my downloaded materials and read and reviewed on a part-time basis for months before beginning to write the outline. The two most important non-fiction books I relied upon for background were:

Blum, Deborah (2010). *The Poisoner's Handbook, Murder and the Birth of Forensic Medicine in Jazz Age New York*. U.S.A.: Penguin Books; and

Moore, Kate (2017). *The Radium Girls: The Dark Story of America's Shining Women*. U.S.A. Source Books.

I started brainstorming about my characters and the plot in July, 2020. I bought a notebook

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 3.

⁵² Ibid.

in the U.S. and began my journal at the end of July. Throughout the second half of 2020 and the first half of 2021, I also watched many videos (uploaded on YouTube) about 1920s culture, society, and historical figures. I also binge-watched parts of the Prohibition series, *Boardwalk Empire*, which featured several of the crime figures I included in my story. During the summers, I visited New York City to tour the various sites of my story. I also went with my grandparents to the Absinthe museum in Val-de-Travers to learn about its history and sample the goods (which I did not quite enjoy).

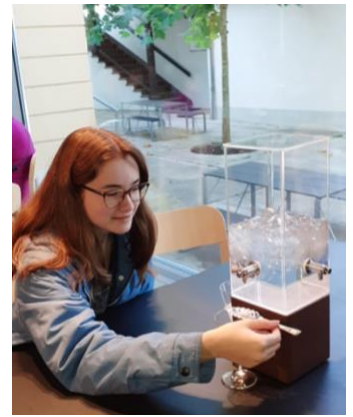


Image 3: Absinthe Museum in Val-de-Travers

I began meeting with Ms. Tobler, my advisor, towards the end of 2020. We met several times prior to the summer of 2021 to discuss my characters, plot and outline. We agreed that Dr. Flinn would make the perfect victim for a revenge killing.

3.2. Writing Process

3.2.1. Drafting the Novel

J.K. Rowling apparently came up with the Harry Potter stories on a train, and Stephen King and Agatha Christie produced books every year or two. I am not like any of these professional authors. I have written essays and a few short stories in public school and in private English lessons, but I did not have experience writing longer pieces. I knew that it would take me more time to write a novel than the normal 7-8 months for a standard Maturitätsarbeit. That is why I tried to complete most of my background reading and research by the end of June, 2021, to develop character ideas (by following the blueprint in *Writing and Selling Your Mystery Novel*, by Hallie Ephron), and to have a general outline approved by my mentor prior to summer vacation.

At the start of July, 2021, I gave up on following the Ephron book. It was too detailed and I felt tied down by the charts the author had set up to help new writers develop their ideas. I thought that I could use my outline to simply begin.

First Writer's Block:

My first writer's block, actually a pre-writing block, happened at the start of August, 2021. I sat for days in front of a blank computer screen in my uncle's house, writing and erasing the same paragraphs. I filled in note cards with plot ideas and arranged them on the floor, rearranged them and then tossed them out. I made mind maps with the victim at the middle and the other characters and motives around him. I crumpled and threw away pages of notes from brainstorming sessions. I was still revising my outline to help me get going on my draft (The revised outline, from the end of August, 2021, actually ended up being more like a first draft of the novel rather than an outline).

My writing was not what I had hoped. I could not start my book if the words did not flow like a great novel. I definitely cried. That did not help.

My family told me to just start, no matter how bad it was. Ephron quotes David Owen: “In order to become even sort of good at it, you have to be willing to be bad at it for a long time.”⁵³ She continues by stating: “Almost everyone's first efforts stink... So here's my first piece of sage advice to anyone about to embark on writing a mystery novel: Just hold your nose and write.”⁵⁴

I tried to follow this advice and began writing based on my outline. It was awful – plain, flat, dry - like an instruction sheet for IKEA furniture. I needed to find a lively voice for my narration.

I decided to imagine that I was watching a film. “World building”⁵⁵ is how the cozy novel creates a setting that the reader can see in her mind. I aimed to describe each scene as if it were in front of my eyes. And, I tried to “hear” conversations among the characters and to write down what I would expect them to say, if I watched them on screen. Of course, I learned that this is easier said than done.

Finding a voice:

I found it difficult to come up with a “voice” in my writing. Since Jane Austen is my favorite author, I naturally adopted her style. My initial chapters sounded like they were written by someone who lived in an early 1800s English country manor. Two readers of my first chapter mentioned the “flowery” language and their concerns that it did not match with the 1920s. I tried to be conscious about my writing style after that.

The First Draft and its many revisions:

I initially hoped to write an entire rough first draft (by the end of September), then edit it and produce a second draft (by mid-November) and later a final version. But, I learned that my schedule would never work as I had planned.

My writing was “intolerable,” as Miss Austen would say. I could not move on from my first chapter until I had rewritten it many times. It had to be ready for other eyes to see before I could continue.

My first three chapters were designed to set the scene of the story both in time and place. They were ready for review and revision by mid-September, 2021. The next three chapters took several weeks more to complete. These earlier chapters were all a buildup to the murder scene and they took a long time to complete. I changed my first draft deadline to the end of the Fall holidays.

The October vacation quickly approached and my victim still hadn't been murdered (“Did you kill him yet?” became a running joke among my mother's friends every time they spoke with me.). I had a plot crisis between October 20th and October 22nd about how exactly to kill my victim and had to go back over all of my suspects, their motives and opportunities. I

⁵³ H. Ephron (2016). Quoting David Owen in *The New Yorker* (March 7, 2016). p. 3.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 3- 4.

⁵⁵ N. Cohen. (2018). p. 7.

then started looking ahead to the ending to try and work out the resolution of the story. My deadline of the end of October for the completed first draft was pushed back, indefinitely.

Practicing Avoidance:

Between the end of October and the start of November, I skipped to the last few chapters of my story, drafting them before going back and writing the third quarter. I was avoiding having to deal with the many threads of the plot that had to be tied together. I already knew my ending, and it was frankly discouraging to keep trying to find solutions to the many loose ends surrounding my suspects. The last three chapters of my book basically were written before chapters 14-19. But, I eventually had to go back and work out the logic.

I sent the first nine chapters to a reader on November 14th and received positive feedback and some helpful comments. Ms. Tobler also gave me comments and tips for the sample chapters I sent to her.

Addressing Logic Issues:

From November 18th to the 26th, I spent many hours trying to find common sense explanations for open issues relating to: (i) the toxins used (where they came from, how they were given to the victim, which characters would be connected with them); (ii) the appearance and disappearance of evidence; (iii) the dropping of hints and clues for readers; (iv) the communication by secret messages (how to send them, use of Bible text, what clues to give to the reader and protagonist); and (v) deciding whether and how to use false leads (also known as “red herrings”).⁵⁶

Once most of these problems were more or less solved, the next chapters were relatively easy to write in terms of overall plot, as they followed a straight-forward script: (i) the victim dies in public; (ii) the body and the characters at the scene are dealt with; (iii) the autopsy; and (iv) interviews of witnesses and suspects. My writing style was more direct and dialogue took the place of outside narration in many scenes. I still had serious issues with finding a balance between revealing too little to the reader, or giving too many obvious clues and ruining the ending. I had to go back to revise these middle chapters when I noticed inconsistencies or holes in my logic later on.

3.2.2. Completing the Draft and Editing

Towards the end of November and the beginning of December, I began to feel the pressure of my deadlines approaching. I wrote and erased Chapter 14 three times in three days, which was frustrating and pushed me to increase my time commitment to writing in the days that followed. After finishing Chapter 14, writing became much more comfortable. The first few weeks of December were intense, with many hours devoted each day (and late into the nights) to working on the third quarter and revising the final chapters to match the plot from the earlier chapters. I reread and revised the entire story on December 10th, and again on the 11th and the 12th.

⁵⁶ N. Cohen (2018). p. 52.

The final items to add to my book were a Glossary (which I made at the suggestion of my mentor), Endnotes/Bibliography, and a Preface. The Preface had to address the fact that language and attitudes have changed since the early 20th century. Also, I destroyed Dr. Flinn's reputation in this story, and needed to note that this novel is a work of pure fiction. I asked my mother to help me word this language. She is an attorney and, therefore, the disclaimers in the Preface are made in extremely lawyerly fashion.

My novel was ready to be fully read on December 12th. Since the first half had already been reviewed and commented upon in November, I hoped that my three readers would be able to get through the second half within a couple of evenings. As explained below in the section called *Challenges and Resolution of Problems*, this quick reading and review did not go exactly as planned. However, I received a full set of comments from one of my readers by December 15th and was able to recruit another family member to make a full review of my story by the 16th. I spent the night of the 16th to the 17th making my "final" edits and brought a USB stick with my book and my cover art to the printers in the afternoon of December 17th.

Formatting and Layout:

Ms. Tobler kindly gave me many helpful suggestions about how to organize my novel visually to make it easy for the reader to distinguish one speaker from another and to set special information apart from the narrative. For example, when more than one person "speaks" in the story, or characters are interrupting each other, she suggested setting the words of each speaker physically apart. I have done this in several places in the story. In addition, when a character reads a newspaper story, that story is formatted in a different typesetting and size than the standard typeset for the novel.

I chose to format the story in Times New Roman 12 with justified pages. I also requested the printer to use a softer white or ivory paper for the printing to match the setting of the early 20th century.

This support document is formatted in Arial 12 with justified pages.

3.2.3. Challenges and Resolution of Problems

Balance: I believe that the greatest challenge I have faced while working on this senior thesis is in finding a balance among my regular school, extra-curricular commitments and finishing this project. Vacations have been spent in front of my computer and I gave up dancing school and babysitting for months to devote almost all of my afternoons, evenings and weekends to writing. I also noticed that my other coursework suffered this semester in comparison to past years. This book took over my life and in retrospect, was much more work than I ever anticipated. This balancing act is something I will need to keep in mind my future studies.

Writer's Block: I experienced periods of writer's block from the very beginning of the creative phase of my project. Having a story to tell and actually being able to tell it well are not one in the same, and I learned that tough lesson through many false starts and rewrites.

My writing was also extremely inconsistent. Dialogue, if I could “hear” it in my head, was not difficult to draft, but narration was much harder for me. However, I also learned that writing improves with practice and I had encouragement and constructive critique from my mentor and readers, which helped me move past obstacles.

Rewritten Chapters:

Every chapter of my novel required extensive editing and rewriting. Here is an example of a portion of Chapter 5, in its original form and as rewritten:

They entered a dimly lit room. Jazzy music filled their ears. Geneviève turned to see a familiar face up on stage. Imogene stood amongst the band. She was a singer at La Fée Verte and performed almost every night. Below, the dance floor was swarming with young men in fashionable suits with their hair slicked back and women with bobbed hair, wrapped in dazzling modern dresses. Lucien and Geneviève slithered their way through the throng and sat themselves amidst the many small tables, each with a small green glass lamp.

Lucien motioned to a refined looking man, wearing a white suit and a bowtie at the bar to come over and take their order.

“A French 75 for me sir. Geni, what would you like?” asked Lucien.

“I’ll have a Sazerac Jim.”, she looked up to the server, who gave her a nod. He came back moments later with a tall cloudy drink and a cherry-colored liquid. He placed it in front of Geneviève.

“You know, this must be the only place that I trust enough to drink in. Besides Sam and Dave’s of course, they know their onions. There seems to be increasing news on illnesses and death caused by impurity of booze nowadays.”, said Lucien while they clinked their glasses.

They entered a cavernous, dimly lit room. Jazz filled their ears. Geneviève turned to see a familiar face up on stage. Imogene stood in front of the band. She was a singer at La Fée Verte and performed almost every night. Below, the dance floor was swarming with young men in fashionable suits with their hair slicked back and women with bobbed hair, wrapped in dazzling modern dresses. Lucien and Geneviève made their way through the throng and sat at one of the many small, round tables, each lit by a delicate green glass lamp held up by a seductive bronze fairy. Larger, half-moon shaped banquettes were located along two walls of the room.

Lucien motioned to a refined looking man standing behind the bar, who was wearing a white jacket and a black bowtie. He came over to take their order.

“A French 75* for me sir. Geni, what would you like?” asked Lucien.

“I’ll have a Sazerac,* Jimmy.” She looked up to the server, who gave her a nod. He returned moments later with a tall, lemony, translucent drink in a champagne flute for Lucien, and a cherry-colored liquid in a whiskey glass which he placed in front of Geneviève.

“You know, this must be the only place that I trust enough to drink in, besides Sam and Dave’s of course. They know their onions and get their supplies through the British ambassador or directly off the boat. It’s too risky to go downtown to those cheap gin joints* and I’m not completely sure about the Cotton Club anymore. There seems to be an epidemic of alcohol poisoning nowadays,” said Lucien, while they clinked their glasses.

Image 4: Original Version of Chapter 5

Image 5: Edited Version of Chapter 5

Avoidance: Although I did not intentionally procrastinate, when faced with logic issues, I often ended up thinking in circles. I avoided facing difficult passages by skipping over chapters to write the ending before the middle of my story. This probably cost me significant time and energy. While it felt good to smoothly write my final chapters, I had to revise those same chapters to conform with the earlier sections, once I had written them. I also spent hours in the last few days of drafting, checking for inconsistencies.

Stylistic Changes and language issues: As previously mentioned, I began writing in an early 19th century style and then transitioned to a more modern style after receiving feedback from readers. I had to revise the language in the first chapters slightly, and removed sentences that made the writing heavy and outdated. I hope that the first chapters end up placing the reader in the past era of the 1920s and that the later chapters “move” the story forward at a good pace.

I found it an additional challenge to remember to consistently apply early 20th century American vocabulary, idioms, slang and American grammar rules and spelling. I relied heavily upon the *Oxford American Writer’s Thesaurus* to enrich my vocabulary.

Murphy’s Law: A last moment challenge came with the review of my story in mid-December. If I had completed my draft and my own revisions of the story by the end of November, this problem would not have occurred. However, I was not ready to show my book to my three

reviewers until the night of December 12th. One, a family friend, was my specialist in accent and dialect, as well as a good judge of whether the story made sense. She had read the first nine chapters of the book in November and gave valuable comments. Unfortunately, a bad reaction to a Covid booster plus her work commitments, prevented her from being able to review the last two-thirds of my story during the week of the 12th.

A second reader, who planned to look at grammar and not creative content, became unavailable for a week, due to the death of a colleague's dog (She is a big dog lover and she was too upset to review my work.). She subsequently finished her review two days after I gave my document to the printer, but I was still able to make several corrections she suggested and resubmit the draft for printing.

In the end, I had my uncle as my main reader, with my mother stepping in to challenge me on inconsistencies in my story. That was my first personal experience with **Murphy's Law**.⁵⁷

I was able to complete my book with last-minute edits by December 20th. I began working on my support documentation the next day. "Murphy" visited me again in a minor way on December 23rd. I picked up a box full of my books from the printer, but I was told that they would not be able to print my support document. The firm had decided to close the business for the period between holidays. I was able to find another printer in town that same day, so this was only a temporary issue.

On December 24, 2021, Murphy's Law made its third appearance in the saga of this senior project. I tested positive for coronavirus and have been in isolation ever since. I am finishing this support documentation from quarantine and will email it to the printers. Hopefully, at least one member of my family will remain Covid-free so that he or she will be able to pick up my report. I will be released from quarantine by the BAG on the night of January 1st, so, without any other problems, I should be able to deliver the entire project to KZU on the submission date.

3.2.4. Language, Symbolism, Names, Biblical References

Language and Accents:

As it is an American story set in 1920s New York, this tale is written in American English, except with respect to certain words and idioms deliberately chosen to be written in French or British English. French terms have been printed in italics (e.g. *n'est-ce pas?*).

Brooklyn⁵⁸, New Jersey⁵⁹, Boston and faux British accents are also used in this book, as well as slang terms popular in the 1920s. The book contains a Glossary (with source information) which defines slang terms as well as certain vocabulary not popularly known to non-native New Yorkers.

⁵⁷ Unknown Authors (2021). Murphy's Law "Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong.". Wikipedia. (22.12.21).

⁵⁸ Howcast (2013). *How to Do a Brooklyn Accent, Accent Training*. YouTube. (25.09.21).

⁵⁹ Howcast (2013). *How to Do a New Jersey Accent, Accent Training*. YouTube. (25.09.21).

As mentioned earlier in this report, certain characters “speak” with exaggerated mobster dialect or New York accents. These caricatures were meant to recall some early films set in the bootlegger era, and to add levity to the more serious moments in the plot.

*The Oxford American Writer's Thesaurus*⁶⁰ was my crutch and best friend when it came to choosing synonyms in place of my limited vocabulary. Not only does it list more substitute terms than online resources do, it also provides advice and context to help avoid the misuse of words.

Symbolism:

I included some symbolic references within the book, which I hoped might be noticed (consciously or subconsciously) by readers. This worked with varying degrees of success with the people I asked to review my story before printing.

Throughout the story, there are references to smoke (cigarette, fire), steam, fog and mist (on the Brooklyn Bridge) or clouds that swirl and move as if alive, or as if they were spirits. The descriptions were intended to help the reader visualize the scenes and sometimes to reflect the emotions of the characters at that time.

I also incorporate the color, red: the lipstick stain on Geneviève's coffee cup and Ruby's handkerchief, the blood on Poppy's finger, the roses at the Verdi Club, the exit lights in the speakeasy, and even the names: Poppy and Ruby, for example. The repetition of various shade of the color foreshadows danger or death, signals a warning, anger or regret.

Eye color, intensity and looks are important in the novel. Family connections (Margaret and Colin, and Lucien and Geneviève) are hinted at or revealed by the description of eye color. Character is also hinted at in the description of Arnold Rothstein's eyes (and smile).

Light references – As radium, the glowing, radioactive element, is central to this story, I wove references to light throughout the novel. Incandescent, the title itself, is a reference to light, Lucien Claire (clear light), the use of Undark, radiant, luminous and glowing are all intentionally included. In addition, Arnold Rothstein makes a reference to radiation in the form of a pun in the “newspaper interview” at the end of the book.

Names:

The reader may notice that certain characters' names have something to do with their personalities or jobs. Poppy, for example, is a botanist. Charlotte Blatheron, talks (blathers) all of the time. Dotty is also a slang reference to someone who is a bit eccentric, crazy or infatuated⁶¹. “Mo” Mauro Salvatore Fortunato is a reference to Charles “Lucky” Luciano, Arnold Rothstein's real-life associate.

⁶⁰ C. Lindberg (2004, 2008, 2012). *Oxford American Writer's Thesaurus*. U.S.A.: Oxford University Press.

⁶¹ Unknown Authors (2021). Oxford Languages. (23.12.21).

Biblical References:

Two of my main characters are Irish Catholics. It made sense that they are familiar with both the Old and New Testaments. I chose to utilize biblical references for their secret messages, which I cited in the back of my novel.

3.3. Artwork, Photographs and Other Materials

3.3.1. Cover Painting for the Novel

Cover art for the book is a painting provided by my sister, Lydia and my mom, who both enjoy working with acrylics.

3.3.2. Photographs and Other Artwork Included in this Support Documentation

I have included photographs of some of the more important reference and fiction books that I used in preparing and writing my novel at the back of this report. In addition, I have added photos of the Ansonia in Section 2.2.1. of the support document, a radium dial painter in Section 2.5, and an appendix including the photographs of actors or actual people who inspired certain characters in the story. The reader may, of course, have an entirely different image of each character.

Postcards of 1920s-era Flappers, party-goers and vintage absinthe advertisements are part of my presentation boxes, as is a list of 1920s music to create atmosphere. If my sister and I have time to finish painting and preparing two boxes prior to the submission date, I hope to create a mini-speakeasy to go along with my book for each reader.

Printing and Binding Methods, Comparative Costs, Production, Packaging:

I always hoped to present my story as a professionally printed soft cover book. A limited budget and time constraints factored importantly in my decision. Quality control and customer service were also essential.

Reviewing options on the internet, I noticed that ordering printed books online (from foreign sources) was inexpensive (with estimates of 9 Chf for each printed version). I could also self-publish using Amazon.com or several other firms. Swiss printing companies are significantly more expensive (average offers of 25-30 Chf per copy for a 120-page A5 book). Foreign printers also work over the holidays, whereas most local book printers close between December 24th and the first business day after New Year's Day. If I chose a Swiss printer, I would have to complete my manuscript by December 20th to receive it back by Christmas.

I chose a local Swiss company: I believe that it is important to support local businesses whenever possible. Giving my order to a foreign company would be easier on my bank account, but would do nothing to help the Swiss economy. I also wished to have an interactive relationship with the printing company, to have their assistance and advice on

format and layout, and to be able to have a higher level of quality control and assurance than a web-based, unknown entity would give me. I just had to make sure that my work was done early enough to submit to the printer.

I made contact by email with several printing companies in Switzerland in the last week of September, 2021. One company, Druckzentrum Bülach, AG, at Schützenmattstrasse 18, 8180 Bülach, responded immediately. I had direct contact with the owner/manager of the firm. His prompt attention, even for my small private job, gave me confidence that I would receive the service I needed.

I brought my story and a scanned copy of my cover art to the printer on Friday, December 17th. The printer had previously estimated that it would take 3-4 business days to complete the job. Of course, as Murphy's Law predicts, I received comments from one of my readers only on December 19th. I emailed the printer to warn them of revisions and sent my revised work on Monday morning, December 20th. My printed books were ready for pick up on December 23rd, and I was very happily surprised to receive two free copies as well as a lower price of 23 Chf per book for a longer book than anticipated. This support document, once completed, will also be printed in Bülach at Copy44.

4. Reflections, Conclusions

From the beginning of the Corona pandemic in 2020, I knew what I wanted to do as my senior thesis. To write my own book just like my idols: Agatha Christie, Jane Austen, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, J.K. Rowling and many more. I was well aware that this project required more time than the 7-8 months suggested by the school, which is why I started gathering information a year early. Since then, I have learned a great many things about the culture of and life in New York in the 1920s.

I have also come to understand that things do not always go the way you expect them to. Even though I spent a long time planning this project and making the preparations for it, it didn't go as swiftly as I had hoped it would. During the process, I was confronted by many obstacles even before writing the first words of my book. There were times when I did not think it would be possible to finish it; times when it was hard to find the motivation to continue. By working through my own shortcomings, I have learned that the process is as important as the outcome. Even though *Incandescent* will never be as great as Agatha Christie's work or fully meet my expectations (I will always find something to perfect), I am proud of my results.

Thanks to my dear friends and family, who supported me mentally and emotionally, I pushed through. This Maturitätsarbeit never would have been concluded without their help.

5. Acknowledgements

I would like to express my profound gratitude to Ms. Franziska Tobler. Ms. Tobler has not only been an incredible mentor and advisor throughout this project, but an encouraging and motivating role model. From the very beginning of our work together, she has been an ally, a coach, and a great support. I valued every critique she made to help me in our collaboration and could not have completed this thesis without her suggestions and guidance. She gave me time and attention when she had so many other commitments to juggle. Thank you, Ms. Tobler, from the bottom of my heart.

To Mr. Adelsberger, I greatly appreciate the time and consideration you have put into reading my story and this background documentation.

Many people who have aided me over the years in getting where I am today and with this senior project:

My readers who overcame busy schedules and other challenges to give me feedback and emotional support;

Ms. MeriBeth Byrnes, my private English teacher for nearly a decade, is a compassionate person who has not only prepared me for Cambridge exams, but has, more importantly, brought literature and story-telling into our classes;

My family; My uncle Jon, aunt Claire Walsh, my grandparents, all of my other uncles, aunts, and family friends who have supported me emotionally, psychologically and in every other way during my lifetime and especially now;

Lydia, my big sister and my inspiration. She cheered me up and brought more joy and fun into my life during these one-and-a-half years; and

Lastly, my parents and biggest supporters. They gave me a push whenever I needed it and always helped me through the tough times when working on this project.

Thank you and I love you all.

6. Appendix: Character Visuals

Main Characters: Actual Photos and/or Inspirational Photos



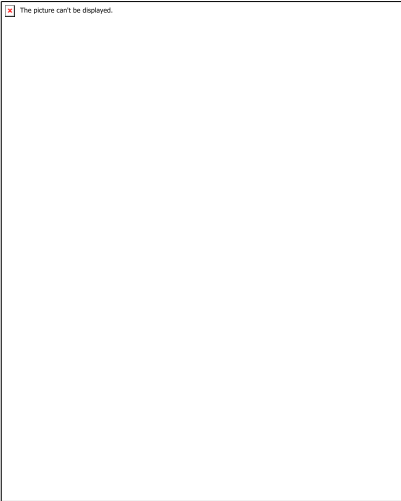
Geneviève Poiret – a fictional character, inspired by Rachel McAdams' portrayal of Irene Adler in *Sherlock Holmes* (2009, 2011)
([https://bakerstreet.fandom.com/wiki/Irene_Adler_\(McAdams\)](https://bakerstreet.fandom.com/wiki/Irene_Adler_(McAdams)))



Lucien Claire – a fictional character, inspired by Henry Cavill in *Enola Holmes* (2020)
(https://www.nme.com/en_asia/news/film/henry-cavill-enola-holmes-copyright-lawsuit-netflix-2766334) or



Matthew Goode
(https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQ3dQTH7kyr4USrdssk4_nAkkk-kHsSk8ogww&usqp=CAU)



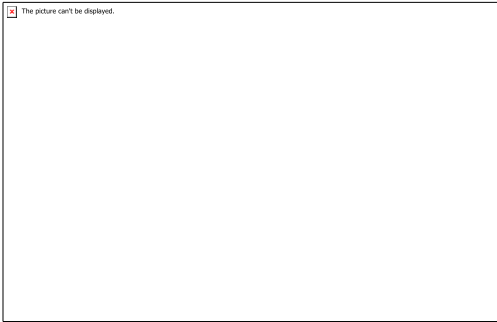
Poppy – a fictional character resembling actress Mayim Bialek
(<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/408701734915109846/>)



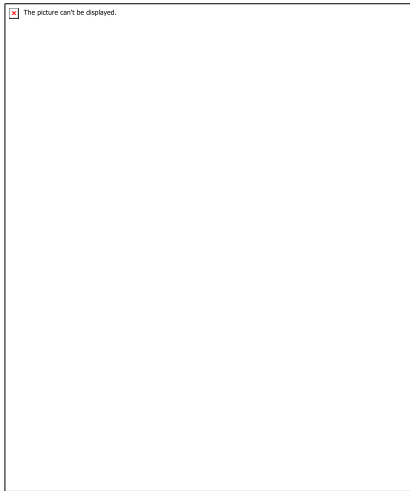
Imogene – a fictional character inspired by a model for 1920's hairstyles
(<https://www.lorealparisusa.com/beauty-magazine/hair-style/hairstyle-trends/1920s-flapper-hairstyles>)



Dotty – a fictional character imagined as resembling Melissa McCarthy:
(<https://www.worldcelebritydress.com/melissa-mccarthy-chiffon-short-sleeve-plus-size-prom-celebrity-dress-oscar-red-carpet.html>)



Charlotte – a fictional character inspired by Nellie Bly (a real journalist of the late 19th and early 20th centuries): (<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/how-nellie-bly-went-undercover-to-expose-abuse-of-the-mentally-ill>)



Ruby – a fictional character imagined as Christina Ricci portraying Zelda Fitzgerald in *Z: The Beginning of Everything* (2015): (<https://www.vulture.com/2017/01/z-the-beginning-of-everything-almost-gives-zelda-her-due.html>)

Samuel (Sam) Weiss:

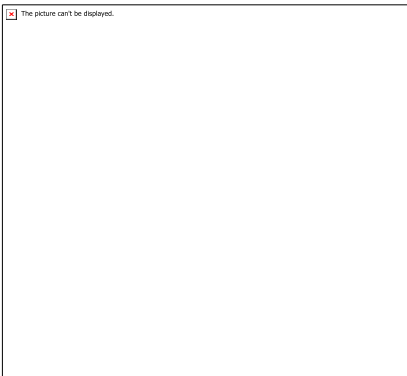


David (Dave) Golde (in later years):

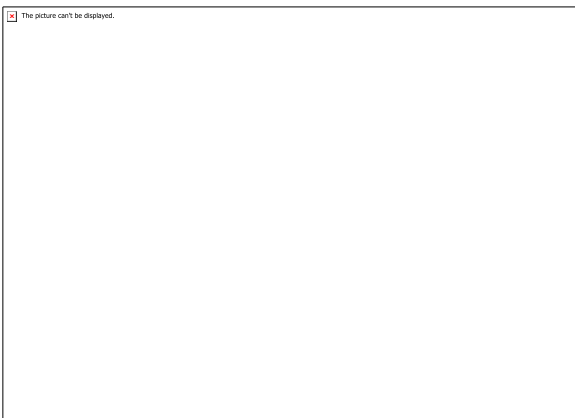


Arnold Rothstein – his actual photo: (https://godfather.fandom.com/wiki/Arnold_Rothstein)

and an inspiration from Michael Stuhlbarg in the series *Boardwalk Empire* (2010-2013): (https://pressofatlanticcity.com/life/actor-finds-boardwalk-empire-gangster-role-to-be-captivating/article_40a9377b-0914-57a0-845c-86c4a58068ae.html)



Mo (Mauro Salvatore Fortunato, Fortunato meaning lucky in Italian) inspired by Rothstein's real-life associate Charles "Lucky" Luciano (<https://www.redbubble.com/shop/lucky+luciano+posters>)



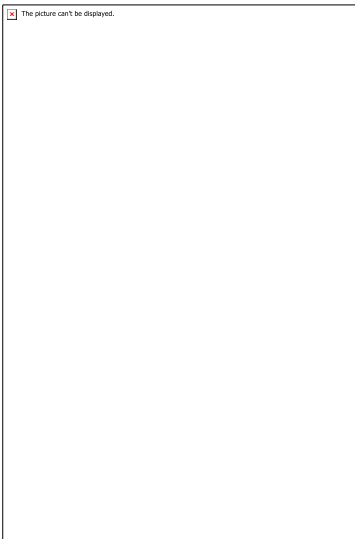
Tiny inspired by Rothstein's real-life associate Thomas "Fatty" Walsh (https://onewaystreet.typepad.com/one_way_street/2009/08/the-ghosts-of-will-hays.html)



Dr. Frederick Flinn (photo from K. Moore, *Radium Girls*)



Arthur Roeder (photo from K. Moore, *Radium Girls*)



Margaret Lynch – a fictional character inspired by actress Gemma Jones
<https://7wallpapers.net/gemma-jones/>)



Colin Lynch – a fictional character inspired Simon Woods in *Pride and Prejudice* (2005)
(<https://www.listal.com/list/ginger-men>)



Ciara Lynch – a fictional character imagined as resembling Saoirse Ronan
(<https://i.pinimg.com/originals/e5/7b/5e/e57b5e28835df205ea03a0d966b3c385.png>)

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7.6. Photograph/Image Sources

Image 1: The New York Public Library, Digital Collections

<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/the-worlds-loose-leaf-album-of-apartment-houses-containing-views-and-ground#/?tab=about> (accessed & uploaded in November, 2021)

Image 2: CNN Style

<https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/radium-girls-radioactive-paint/index.html> (accessed 19.12.2021)

Photographs used in Appendix (see sources cited in Appendix)

7.7. Postcards used in Presentation Box

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The full Bibliography can be found under this link:

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or by scanning this QR Code



8. Bestätigung/Eigenständigkeitserklärung

Ich, Anaïs Yumi Weiss, erkläre hiermit, dass ich die vorliegende Maturitätsarbeit eigenständig und ohne unerlaubte fremde Hilfe erstellt habe und dass alle Quellen, Hilfsmittel und Internetseiten wahrheitsgetreu verwendet wurden und belegt sind.

Ich bin damit einverstanden, dass eine Kopie meiner Maturitätsarbeit bei einer Anfrage nach aussen abgegeben wird.

03.01.2022, _____

