

Queen Elizabeth I's favorite, Lord Robert Dudley (the future Earl of Leicester). Amy's body was found at the foot of a staircase in Cumnor Hall, the property of Dudley's retainer Anthony Forster, and the politically correct view was that she had accidentally fallen to her death. However, darker rumors implicated Dudley and Queen Elizabeth, who were suspected of carrying on a love affair and of planning to marry after the death of inconvenient Amy.

Scott's novel is replete with distortions of historical fact. Amy Robsart did not marry Dudley in secret, as Scott relates; nor did Dudley become Earl of Leicester or live at Kenilworth until after her death. Scott absolves Queen Elizabeth and Dudley of complicity in Amy's death, which he attributes to the disloyal plot of Lord Robert's henchman, Sir Richard Varney, who rigged a trapdoor through which Amy fell.

Nonfictional studies have offered varying explanations of Amy's death. George Adlard, in *Amy Robsart and the Earl of Leicester* (London: John Russell Smith, 1870), surmises that Amy fell either accidentally or as a suicide despairing of her husband's neglect. More recently, Hugh Ross Williamson, revealing his strong anti-Tudor bias, asserts that "no one who has seriously studied the matter is likely to doubt that the queen had guilty foreknowledge of the murder of her lover's wife, though the Tudor-Protestant propaganda line, obscuring this, is still potent in 'popular' history" (*Historical Whodunits* [New York: Macmillan, 1956], 63).

s.15 ——— *Rob Roy*. 1817. In *The Works of Sir Walter Scott*. Vols. 7 and 8. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1912–13.

■ It is difficult to disentangle the historical Robert MacGregor Campbell (Rob Roy), who was born around 1671 and died in 1735, from his legend. Once a cattle-drover on a large scale, he was ruined financially and turned to raiding the herds of others. Still, Highland traditions portrayed him as a champion of his dispossessed MacGregor clan and "the friend of the poor and oppressed, as Robin Hood was, not given to wanton cruelty, not a monster thirsting for blood, but drawing the sword only when generous motives inspired him" (W. S. Crockett, *The Scott Originals* [New York: Scribner, 1912], 197–98).

Sir Walter Scott was an admirer of the Highland hero, acquiring a long-barreled Scottish gun bearing his initials for his collections at Abbotsford. In the novel *Rob Roy*, the outlaw plays a beneficent role as the defender of Frank Osbaldistone against the villainies of his cousin Rashleigh, who caps his transgressions by supporting the English cause in the Jacobite rising of 1715.

s.16 Sen, Mala *India's Bandit Queen: The True Story of Phoolan Devi*. London: Harvill (HarperCollins), 1991.

■ For centuries the deeply ravined Chambal Valley south of Agra, India, has been infested by bands of criminals worshipping Kali, the Hindu goddess of revenge. The Thugs, ritual stranglers who preyed on Indian travelers (see s.33), were suppressed by the British in the nineteenth century, but the armed robbers called *dacoits* persist to the present day. The dacoits prefer the designation *baghis* (rebels) and often fancy themselves as "social

bandits,” robbing the rich to benefit the oppressed. Oddly, India’s religious antagonisms are forgotten among the dacoits, but caste differences fuel gang warfare.

Against this historical backdrop, Sen has written one of the best accounts of India’s modern “bandit queen,” Phoolan Devi. Born into the Mallah (fishermen) subcaste of the lowly Sudras, Phoolan was kidnapped by dacoits and took one of the robbers, Vikram Mallah, as her lover and protector. When he was killed, she was chloroformed and gang-raped by a group of upper-caste Thakurs in the village of Behmai. In 1981, she had her revenge when twenty-two Thakur men were shot in cold blood (twenty fatally) in the so-called Behmai Massacre. She denied any involvement in the slaughter, but her companion and joint gang leader, Man Singh, admitted the responsibility of their gunmen. In 1983, Phoolan Devi and Man Singh surrendered to the police of Madhya Pradesh in a well-publicized ceremony after obtaining Indira Gandhi’s promise that they would be spared from capital punishment.

Mala Sen based her fine work on interviews with Phoolan and her relatives and utilized “prison diaries” dictated by the illiterate bandit queen. Despite the bloodiness of Phoolan’s revenge, the book is a powerful indictment of abuse of Indian women, police brutality and incompetence, and sinister ties between upper-caste string-pullers and government officials.

After her release from prison in 1994, Phoolan Devi’s life remained eventful. She was elected a member of India’s parliament in 1996 as a candidate of the low-caste Samajwadi Party for the constituency of Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh. Survivors of the Behmai massacre, unimpressed by her new political credentials, sought to put her on trial for murder. In 1998, her name was floated as a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize. The name “Phoolan Devi” was also proposed as a baby name that “gives you an intense desire to be of service to others.” On July 25, 2001, Phoolan was killed by masked gunmen outside her home.

See also Richard Shears and Isobelle Giddy, *Devi: The Bandit Queen* (Hemel, Hempstead: George Allen & Unwin, 1984); Phoolan Devi, with Marie-Thérèse Cuny and Paul Rambali, *I, Phoolan Devi: The Autobiography of India’s Bandit Queen* (London: Little, Brown, 1996).

s.17 Sereny, Gitta *The Case of Mary Bell*. London: Eyre Methuen, 1972.

■ Gitta Sereny, a Hungarian writer who has worked with disturbed French and German children, explores in *The Case of Mary Bell* the background of the two horrifying murders committed within six weeks in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the spring of 1968. The victims, Martin Brown, aged four, and Brian Howe, three, were found strangled in the working-class Scotswood district, the neighborhood of the eleven-year-old Mary Bell and her thirteen-year-old girlfriend, who were accused of the murders. Sereny attended the trial, held in assize court, where little interest was exhibited during the proceedings in the causes of the crime. The older girl was acquitted, probably partly due to her slow-wittedness and her obvious submission to the younger, brighter, and more dominant Mary Bell. Mary was found guilty of manslaughter rather than murder due to “diminished responsibility” resulting from her diagnosed psychopathic personality. The judge sentenced her to be detained for life and recommended that she receive psychiatric treatment, but no mental hospital would admit her.