



Roundtable review

Cold case: The elusive story of Julie Ward's murder

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A Death Retold in Truth and Rumour: Kenya, Britain and the Julie Ward Murder by Grace Ahingula Musila is an extraordinary, captivating, thought-provoking and chilling account of the unsolved murder of Julie Ward. Musila points out that this book does not set out to reveal who murdered Julie Ward. Instead, as an academic, she is interested in examining the intertextual process between the rumours around this cold case and the evidence available in various published accounts, such as books, newspapers and court judgments. As a literary scholar interested in genre fiction, such as romance fiction and its 'happily ever afters' or crime fiction where most of the time 'the bad guys' get caught, these narratives with 'neat' endings do not leave me asking what, who, why, how, where? If *A Death Retold in Truth and Rumour: Kenya, Britain and the Julie Ward Murder* (hereafter, *A Death Retold in Truth and Rumour*) were submitted as a script to a film producer, I am convinced it would be rejected outright. Musila has successfully demonstrated that fact is indeed stranger than fiction.

From the beginning, we are given four possible causes of Julie Ward's death: murder, suicide, killed by wild animals or struck dead by lightning. In other words, blame is shifted, but, as Musila says, there is no human culpability. Trying to figure out who murdered Julie Ward and why is like trying to catch an eel covered in cooking oil; this is a book full of smoke, mirrors and ghosts. It is thus not surprising that Musila does not profess to provide the answers, while she clearly lays out different aspects that allow the reader to make sense of what is first and foremost a tragedy, namely the death of Julie Ward, and the bizarre circumstances that surrounded her death and the unbelievable investigations by different entities which were shrouded in conspiracies, truths, half-truths, lies and cover-ups. All the various parties seemed to have their own agenda,