

‘J’: Life, murder

“.....J regards prison as a “waste of time”. The offence and the factors leading up to it are seen as a “closed chapter”. He also described attempting to avoid becoming a “cabbage” by not being rushed or influenced by others and by keeping his mind “active”. Part of keeping his mind active is watching people on the wing and “psychoanalysing” them (his words, as are the other terms in quotation marks).

The idea failed to penetrate that he could be wrong about other people (as he claims others have been wrong about him) and that briefly weighing up a person from a distance might contain at least as much assumption as insight. He has very definite views about life (“I like to keep my own counsel”) and seems in his element with the sort of home-spun philosophy often characteristic of the country and western music which he admires. He vows never to get involved with a woman again, seeing himself as the injured party; yet he also dismisses his wife’s apparent dissatisfactions the relationship as having been concerned with things that were “irrelevant”. His inflexibility of beliefs, linked to a tendency to self-justification, is likely to have been a major cause of difficulties in the relationship.

Much blame for the offence is attached to his in-laws. “They were murdering me.....He (his father in law) died in my place”. He still maintains, however, that his original intention was to kill himself in front of them after an appropriate speech. When he arrived at their house, however, things were different from how he had imagined them and everything became “a haze”. He contended that he was very depressed at the time over the marital situation and over an injury at work, coupled with resentment at his in-law’s interference, and that he had made serious suicide attempts in the past, of which this was to be the final one.

Due to J’s capacity for rigid self-justification it is difficult to evaluate confidently aspects of his account such as “the haze”. However people with an excessively rigid style of thinking may be faced with a sense of chaos and unreality when events are not as anticipated and suicidal intentions can be part of an attempt to pre-empt the collapse of understanding (metaphorically speaking to go down with the ship, rather than have rethink one’s fundamental approach to life). In his present state it is important for him to shore up his sense of himself as competent by casting his in-laws as villains, informing people how active and reasonable he was on the outside and keeping a heightened sense of his individuality.....”