

You (The Novel and the Television Series)

Kepnes, Caroline, New York: Simon & Schuster, New York, 2014. 464 pp. \$17.00

Screenplay by Greg Berlanti, Sera Gamble, April Blair, Michael Foley, Neil Reynolds, Adria Lang, Amanda Zetterstrom, Caroline Kepnes, and Kelli Breslin. Directed by Lee Toland Krieger, Marcos Siega, Vic Mahoney, Marta Cunningham, Kellie Cyrus, Erin Feeley, and Martha Mitchell.

Lifetime television series, first aired September 9, 2018 (Season 1, 10 episodes)

You wonder who the narrator is and why he is speaking in the second person. You try to like him and then feel guilty when you do. You want to analyze him or be his forensic psychiatrist, but then you realize that he is not mentally ill but rather has a character pathology that makes him feel justified in killing his enemies. He reminds you of Dexter (from the eponymous Showtime series), only Joe Goldberg (Penn Badgley, whom you recognize from his character who lurked in the shadows in *Gossip Girl*) is a hipster from Brooklyn who mainly kills people in the social circle of Beck (portrayed in the series by Elizabeth Lail), the current object of his desire.

In the novel *You*, Caroline Kepnes portrays various themes encountered by forensic psychiatrists, including stalking, psychopathy, trauma, relationship struggles, and homicide. Joe Goldberg is a highly intelligent and well-read New York City bookshop manager who feels insecure and inferior due to a lack of higher education. He does not trust his own ability to court women and instead stalks them, using technology as well as old-fashioned following.

Joe Goldberg first meets Guinevere Beck when she wanders into his bookstore. He notices her hair, her outfit, the way she holds herself. He immediately creates in his mind a version of who he thinks she is, saying to that version (and to the readers), "What will you buy?" while studying her as she walks through the bookstore aisles. They talk about the book she finally decides on. There is witty banter and right before she leaves, he learns her name from her credit card (he attributes her paying by credit card instead of with cash to her wanting him to know her name),

and then he is off to the races. Using the Internet, he finds her on social media, figures out where she lives, and that same night is outside her West Village bedroom window, where she complements his voyeuristic efforts by leaving the window shades open even though she lives on the first floor of a Manhattan apartment building.

Joe Goldberg is an object lesson in stalking. Joe stalks a stranger who then becomes an acquaintance who then becomes an intimate who then becomes an ex-intimate. He also engages in stalking of his victim's other intimate partners. Joe's various repeated and persistent stalking behaviors include, but are not limited to, stealing phones, breaking into emails, perusing Facebook, looking through computer pictures and actual pictures, breaking into his targets' homes, posing as the idol of one of his targets, and speaking to the friends and loved ones of his targets to get more information about them.

Joe Goldberg fits into various parts of the Mullen stalker typology.¹ Mullen characterized stalkers into five types: rejected stalkers, intimacy-seeking stalkers, incompetent stalkers, resentful stalkers, and predatory stalkers.

While the romantics among us may consider Joe to primarily be an intimacy-seeking stalker, strong arguments can also be made for the predatory, rejected, and resentful categories, depending on which victim is considered. What we can assert is that Joe is never an incompetent stalker. Joe has learned from Hollywood and his books about how women are to be pursued and what they really like; he, of course, knows better than they do. Joe pursues his love (intimacy seeking), and gains her; after he loses her, he becomes the rejected stalker, consummately demonstrating the elevated risk of violence among ex-intimates. Meanwhile, Joe is a resentful stalker toward those who have wronged him or society. He views himself as an underdog who can save the world from phonies, similar to Holden Caulfield, justifying any means to this end. For example, he killed Beck's on-again, off-again boyfriend, not only to ensure Beck's availability but also because he represented a class of people who have things handed to them without any effort on their part.

Joe Goldberg is also a predatory stalker: he is preparing for a violent attack, and as a successful young man, he wants no one to know that this violent attack is coming. Though Joe acts violently, he knows not to threaten so as to catch the victim off guard. Joe

even stalks a mental health professional, someone with whom he poses as a patient to get more information about Beck, after he suspects that Beck is cheating with him. This “doctor” (Beck calls him a doctor although he is a social worker) eventually gets accused of murder, which is more severe than most of the sanctions for boundary violations.

Joe’s risk factors for stalking include his attachment issues and cluster B traits. While approximately half of stalkers reoffend,² for Joe, we know it will be one hundred percent. He is looking for love and looking for the world to be right, but his default is toward obsessional love and the irony is that the very thing he strives for is always just out of his grasp.

Joe Goldberg eventually discloses to the reader that he had a highly unusual trauma during the attacks of September 11, 2001, perpetrated by the owner of the bookstore, who has been a father figure. Your heart goes out to him, although as a forensic psychiatrist you quickly realize he uses this trauma to justify his current aberrant behaviors. He has an exaggerated sense of self, he is cunning and manipulative, he lacks guilt or empathy, demonstrates criminal versatility, and when his relationships end, they really end. You find yourself reflecting on the relationship between trauma and the development of psychopathic traits. Of course, those studies you’ve read are about criminals who got caught, a group Joe would not find himself in.

In summary, although the book is more compelling than the television series, we agree with the legendary Stephen King when he wrote of *You*, “Never read anything quite like it . . . hypnotic and scary.” The television series does not capture the inner life of Joe quite as well as the book does. The second season of *You* has moved from Lifetime to Netflix and will likely be even more thrilling as Netflix series rarely miss. Forensic psychiatrists will find the book an informative and interesting read about stalking and obsessional love.

References

1. Mullen PE, Pathe M, Purcell R, *et al.* Study of stalkers. *Am J Psychiatry* 56:1244–9, 1999
2. Ostermeyer B, Friedman SH, Sorrentino R, Booth B: Stalking and violence. *Psychiatr Clin North Am* 39:663–73, 2016

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Legal Issues in Clinical Practice with Victims of Violence

By John E. B. Myers. New York: The Guilford Press, 2017. 300 pp. \$40.00

John E. B. Myers has a national reputation as an expert in interpersonal violence. As a practicing attorney and law professor, he has focused much of his career on advocacy for abused and neglected children and persons involved in domestic violence.¹ In addition to the book reviewed here, he has authored or edited numerous books and chapters on these topics. He was the 2000 recipient of the American Psychological Association’s Distinguished Contribution to Child Advocacy Award.²

With his considerable expertise and experience in the legal aspects of interpersonal violence, Myers wrote this book to offer mental health and social work professionals needed information “about the legal system and their role in it, particularly when working with victims of child maltreatment or domestic violence” (jacket cover). The book’s target audience is clinical practitioners.

The book delivers both general legal content as well as practical information for clinicians. The book is divided into five parts, with parts I–III covering legal basics, an overview of the criminal justice system, and a synopsis of the civil justice system as relevant to mental health clinicians. Part IV addresses clinicians and courts and includes chapters on testifying, serving as an expert witness, and issues related to confidentiality and privilege. Part V focuses on proving interpersonal violence in court. The book is constructed such that each part or chapter could be read independently of other sections.

The book succeeds in providing core information about the legal system in a way that is approachable to the reader. For mental health clinicians with little previous experience with the legal system, parts I–III provide a digestible and practical overview of basic legal principles, as well as hallmarks of criminal law, family