

JFK, but not as grittily realistic and controlled as *In Cold Blood*, the product of Truman Capote's six-year investigation into the unexplained murder of a family of four in rural Kansas.

"There's a long tradition of writers much greater than me – Malaparte, Sartre, Foucault, Hemingway – turning their hands to journalism without abandoning their identity as writers," Lévy says. "But the word *romanquète* is mine. The genre enables one to go further, to make the bridge between the facts, to discover more things." The boundaries can sometimes be unclear. Lévy says he has only allowed himself artistic licence under strict conditions, the most important of which is that he must feel confident that he fully understands his characters. "I think I am among those people on this planet who know Omar Sheikh well," he says. "Having studied Daniel Pearl so

It seems clear that Lévy also saw himself reflected in Pearl, whom he calls his 'posthumous friend'

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closely, I think that I know him as well as it is possible for a foreigner who never met him... when you really know someone from the inside, when you extrapolate from the facts available, then you have a good source."

Lévy believes the reporter's kidnapping and murder was essentially a "crime of state" that implicates parts of the Pakistani government and, in particular, its Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI). That conclusion is not particularly original. Tariq Ali said much the same thing in his analysis of the Pearl murder in *The Guardian*. The author of *The Clash of Fundamentalisms* argued that hardline Islamic groups such as Jaish-e-Mohammed and Harkatul Ansar, who claim responsibility for acts of terrorism in Pakistan, are probably just shell organisations controlled by the ISI. Sections of the ISI who patronised, funded and manipulated these organisations were livid at Musharraf's "betrayal of the Taliban" and at being forced to unravel the only victory they had ever scored – the Taliban takeover in Kabul.

What is new in *Qui a Tué Daniel Pearl?* is the idea that the journalist was murdered because he "knew too much". Lévy claims that Pearl was on to al Qaeda plans to gain access to

Pakistan's nuclear technology. In other words, that Pearl was not killed because he was American and Jewish, as his last videotaped messages would seem to suggest. It is an interesting thesis, but one which Lévy does not succeed in nailing down entirely satisfactorily. It is particularly frustrating that Lévy has failed to persuade *The Wall Street Journal* to talk to him. If anyone knew what leads Pearl was pursuing during his days in Pakistan, it would have been the American newspaper. However, for reasons unknown to Lévy, Pearl's employer refused to co-operate with his investigation.

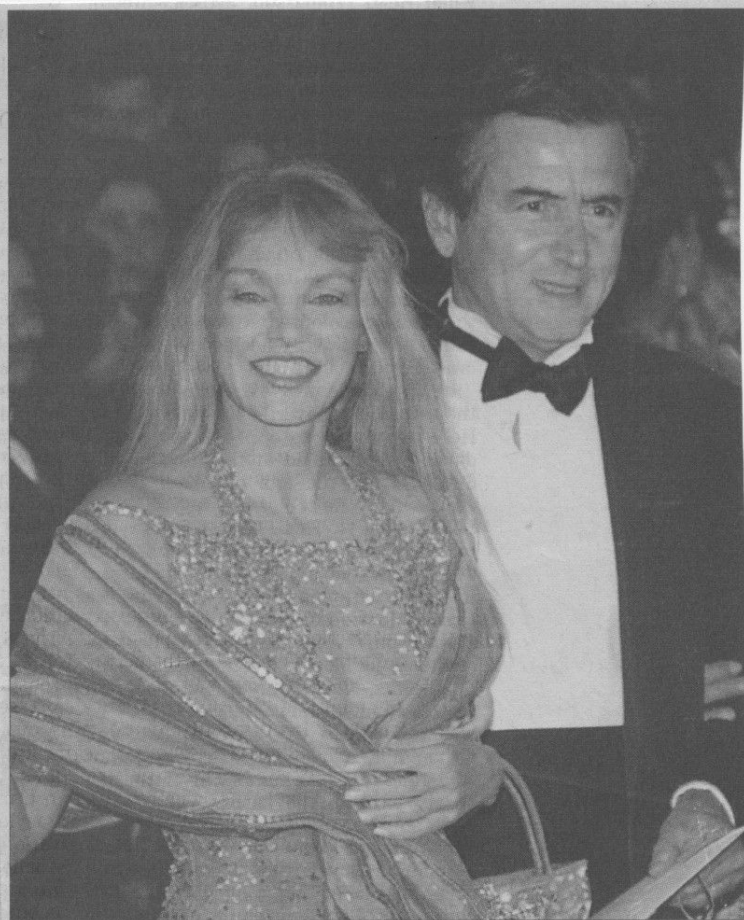
In fact, *The Wall Street Journal* has since gone one step further by undermining the entire thrust of Lévy's thesis. In an e-mailed response to the FT's questions on the subject, the newspaper said: "We have published everything we know on this topic. We have no reason to believe Danny Pearl was pursuing any article focused on a conspiracy among Pakistan, North Korea and al Qaeda such as that suggested in Bernard-Henri Lévy's book. *The Wall Street Journal* was not involved in any way in the preparation of this book. However, we urge all the authorities involved in the investigation to review the book to see whether it provides any useful information which could help in the effort to bring Danny's killers to justice."

Lévy is a compulsive worker: his self-discipline as a writer is legendary. In addition to turning out his widely read weekly column for *Le Point*, over the past three years he has published the seventh in his series of *Questions de Principe*, a 400-page book entitled *Reflexions sur la Guerre et le Mal et la Fin de l'Histoire*, the 100-page report for President Jacques Chirac on Afghanistan and now the book on Pearl. At 55, BHL is probably in his prime. "How can we tell?" he asks. "We will only know retrospectively. I am working very hard but then I have worked enormously hard for 25 years because that's what I feel I must do."

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"Who Killed Daniel Pearl?" is published on September 1 by Melville House Publishing at \$25.95

BHL's acclaimed biography of Jean-Paul Sartre, "Sartre: The Philosopher of the Twentieth Century", is published in English this month (Polity Press £25/\$29.95)



BHL with his wife Arielle Dombasle – a modern-day Arthur Miller and Marilyn Monroe