Night And Day Essay, Research Paper

Night and dayLike a spouse and a lover, medicine and writing occupy separate parts of my life, and I do everything in my power to prevent them meeting. My novels have never dealt directly with the stuff of my day job. Fiction sustains a side of me that would suffocate in medicine. I thrive on research, inhabiting areas of life I would never otherwise experience. In 1995, I chanced on an article about a solar eclipse in India, which was seen as a major proselytising opportunity on either side. I was an aspiring writer in search of a subject. As a GP I spend much of my time arbitrating between rational medicine and obdurate human nature. No matter that I knew next to nothing of India, the research would be a challenge. My first novel, Eclipse of the Sun (1997), was born. Writing has always been a nocturnal activity. I do my best work in the early hours, ear phones filling my head with music to create the right mood. I hate the first draft: months spent discarding and revising, despairing of ever getting the right tone and voice. Once I’ve carved out 100 decent pages the book begins to take on a life of its own, and the exhilaration mounts in the closing stages. While working on Eclipse, I heard a radio interview with one of the last forensic artists working in Britain. There was something about conjuring faces from the memories of victims that lodged in my imagination. I tried to use it, but the novel I tentatively titled The Face never materialised. A few years later I started in forensic medicine, and shortly afterwards my first child was born. Frequently my work involved crimes against children: examining victims and offenders, confronted by the base corruption of innocence. Cases over, I would return home to my family, where images from victims’ stories would repeatedly intrude. Such intense emotions for my child: dreams for her future, fears for her safety, my own hopes and anxieties as to what, one day, I would mean to her as her father. Somewhere in all of that a spark ignited. The Face came to life. For many years – with my wife’s support – I have managed to continue the love affair with fiction while remaining married to medicine. Now there are children involved, too. While I dream constantly of eloping with my mistress, I don’t know if I ever shall. Nor do I know what it might do to our affair if ever I could.