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INTRODUCTION TO THE ANALYSIS OF CRIME FICTION

A USER-FRIENDLY GUIDE

VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY
KAUNAS 2011

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Svarstyta VDU Humanitarinių mokslų fakulteto Anglų filologijos katedros posėdyje 2010-06-05 (protokolo Nr. 5) ir VDU Humanitarinių mokslų fakulteto Tarybos posėdyje 2010-06-05 (protokolo Nr. 3).

PREFACE FOR THOSE USING THIS LEARNING AID

Welcome to a very pleasant experience in reading and thinking about one of the most popular literary genres – crime fiction – whose roots go back far in human culture, but which has acquired a particular kind of form since the late 19th century. Crime fiction, whether it is an intellectual puzzle or a thrilling action-packed narrative in book or cinematic form, is great fun to read. Still, although popular genres like this were long dismissed as ‘light reading’, ‘escapist reading’ and even ‘trash’, crime fiction, along with other popular cultural phenomena, is more complex than it may appear.

The purpose of this learning aid is to provide the kind of basic information that helps you analyse a particular work of crime fiction. Often students become confused by the variety of definitions they find in critical sources. In this short text, the most generally accepted features of crime fiction in general are given in the first section, while later different sub-genres are presented: their general characteristics and history, along with examples of major writers, followed by a list of specific features. For each genre, the list follows the same order with the same key ideas so that it is easy to compare one variety of crime fiction to another.

Furthermore, exercises that encourage creative thinking are provided throughout the learning aid. You can do these on your own or with others. Since crime fiction is such a popular form, almost every one of us has read books or seen films that belong to the genre. All this familiarity with the genre is useful in deciding what kind of sub-genre your text or film belongs to. You will find it interesting to see that many of the lists of characteristics I offer are already familiar to you, though you may never have thought about the texts and films in this way.

At the end of the learning aid, there are some examples of crime fiction: you can see whether or not you can assign them to a particular genre. The annotated list of references is not intended to be complete. Aside from pointing out very useful books in our university library, it is intended to help you find critical material on the internet.

Good luck with your work! I enjoyed preparing this learning aid, and take the opportunity to thank many students in the past who have made me think more seriously about crime fiction by choosing to write their course papers or theses on this subject.

Dr. Milda Danyté

June 29, 2010

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1. WHAT IS CRIME FICTION?

“**Crime fiction**” is one of several names given to one of the most popular of narrative genres today. This term is very broad, as it includes any story that has a crime and its solution as a central feature of its plot. Theoretically, William Shakespeare’s play *Macbeth*, which depicts the murder of a king and the eventual revelation that this was done by Macbeth and his wife, could be called crime fiction. However, literary specialists reserve the term crime fiction for a more recent genre that developed in the late 19th century, in which there is more mystery about the crime that has taken place. In these narratives, a good deal of the text is concerned with the effort to solve the mystery of the crime. In *Macbeth*, although Macbeth tries to throw the guilt on other men, those around him almost immediately realize that he is the real murderer and start to collect an army against him.

Therefore, the necessary elements of crime fiction in the past one hundred years have included the following.

- A crime, most often murder, is committed early in the narrative.
- There are a variety of suspects with different motives.
- A central character formally or informally acts as the detective.
- The detective collects evidence about the crime and its victim.
- Usually the detective interviews the suspects, as well as witnesses.
- The detective solves the mystery and indicates the real criminal.
- Usually this criminal is now arrested or otherwise punished.

Since the element of mystery is so important, and the crime or crimes are most often murder, these narratives are also known as “**murder mysteries.**” The role of detective is also considered essential; therefore, another term, “**detective fiction**”, is also common.

2. ARE SUSPENSE THRILLERS ALSO PART OF CRIME FICTION?

Suspense thrillers are closely related to crime fiction. One can find literary specialists who argue that they form a separate genre with its own characteristics. Certainly, crimes do take place in a suspense thriller, and the central character or characters often function as detectives trying to solve these crimes. Still, the primary interest in thrillers, as the name suggests, is very rapid action in which the main characters are often in danger of being killed themselves. Traditional crime fiction, beginning with Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories, includes some exciting events, but is more concerned with the intellectual game of trying to puzzle out the crime. A suspense thriller like Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code* or the novels of writers like John Le Carre and John Grisham moves rapidly from place to place, often over different cities and countries. The crimes, too, are more likely to be ones committed by some international organization of criminals like the Mafia, people within government organizations, directors of big business and the like, while the main characters are often pursued or attacked by the criminals. The hero of a suspense thriller

needs a good deal of luck as well as physical strength and courage, while the detective in a crime novel needs mostly intelligence and keen observation.

Nevertheless, most specialists on crime fiction are now inclined to include the thriller into the general genre. This can be seen in a reputable overview of the genre like *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction* (2003), edited by Martin Priestman, which has an article on the thriller along with more traditional forms like Golden Age crime fiction. Furthermore, as time passes, there are more and more examples of novels and films that can be called **crossovers**, combining features of both crime fiction and suspense thrillers. Still, most writers work in one sub-genre or the other, as readers often prefer, as with most **popular or mass literature**, to be sure that they will get the kind of narrative they want.

YOUR INPUT: 1

THINK ABOUT NOVELS YOU HAVE READ OR FILMS OR TV SERIALS YOU HAVE WATCHED. ARE ANY OF THEM “CRIME FICTION” OR “SUSPENSE THRILLERS”? WHY DO YOU DECIDE TO PLACE THE BOOK OR FILM IN ONE GENRE OR ANOTHER?

3. THE PRE-HISTORY IN ENGLISH OF MODERN CRIME FICTION

The first texts in English that focus on crime and criminals appear in the 16th century. Writers like John Awdeley and Thomas Harman collected information about the criminal underworld in England, its structure, professions and language, and published this in a form that was between what could be called sociological information and narrative. Awdeley's *Fraternity of Vagabonds* (1565), Harman's *A Caveat or Warning* (1567) and some others of less importance were later used by Renaissance writers like Thomas Dekker (1570-1632) and Robert Greene (1556-1592), working in the time of Shakespeare, who expanded the narrative elements, creating dialogues between different kinds of professional criminals or narratives about how they worked. From a literary point of view, the finest of these works were two plays by the major Renaissance writer, Ben Jonson (1572-1637), *The Alchemist* (1610) and *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), in which some of the central characters are professional criminals and the plot circles around their criminal acts.

However, these literary works are very different from crime fiction as readers think of it today. There are no detectives, and the crime is never murder. The interest for the readers in these Renaissance texts is how prostitutes, pickpockets, thieves and con-men of different kinds manage to make money from foolish and gullible English citizens. The writers create a picture of an underworld with its own class system – for some kinds of crime are considered to have higher status than others – and its own language, what may be called a sociolect, words and expressions used by these people to refer to different kinds of crimes, criminals and victims, as well as some ordinary items from everyday life. Besides, although English Renaissance writers formally condemned criminals as sinful, immoral and wicked people, in truth these narratives are very sympathetic to thieves, prostitutes and con-men. One sign of this is that the victims are often fooled because they are greedy as well as stupid, and so are rightfully punished by being tricked out of their money. Another, even more important, is that the criminals almost never repent or

change and are not punished for their crimes. Nor are there any detectives, though occasionally men representing the law, like magistrates, may appear. The criminals, then, are treated as heroes of a kind, which is easier to do for the writers as the narratives are often humorous and the crimes are not major ones (Dany, *Renaissance Crime Fiction*).

This kind of literature was popular up to the mid-seventeenth century. Meanwhile, at the same time as it flourished, a simpler kind of literary genre about criminals also existed and continued for over two centuries. This was the **broadside** sheet, (sometimes called "**broadside ballads**" if they were written in rhymed verse), which were part of popular writing for the working class. A broadside sheet is a large piece of paper: with the invention of printing, stories, songs and other texts, often accompanied by a crude woodcut picture, were sold cheaply in the street. The ones about criminals claimed to be factual biographies of men and women who had been arrested and hung, or this criminal's confession before he or she was hung. The punishment of criminals in the Renaissance and up to the middle of the 19th century was most often public, with hangings drawing enormous crowds of men, women and children. Clever printers saw that there was a market here and had men move through the crowds selling their broadside sheets about the person who was being hung. Broadside sheets were also sold in shops near markets, hung up to attract buyers. Although these texts have no literary value (often the same story or confession, as well as illustration, was attached to a new name), they demonstrate that English readers were interested in criminal life.

The next major phase in crime literature in English took place in the early 18th century, when major writers used the new novel form to write stories about highwaymen, thieves, prostitutes and criminal rings. The first important figure was Daniel Defoe (1660-1731), a journalist whose *Moll Flanders* (1722) takes as its hero a working-class woman who survives by prostitution and stealing. Again, as with the earlier Renaissance texts, readers are made to feel sympathetic to Moll and hope for her escape from punishment. Defoe wrote other novels whose central figures are criminals, and was followed by major writers like Henry Fielding (1707-1754) – *The Life of Jonathan Wild the Great* (1743) and John Gay (1685-1732) – *The Beggars' Opera* (1728). All of these works make criminals the central figures of their stories. Indeed, *Moll Flanders* and *Jonathan Wild* are the first-person narrators of their novels, which makes it easy for readers to identify with them.

Nonetheless, these works, though much more complex than those written earlier, are still not crime fiction in the current sense. There are no mysteries about the crimes that are being committed and no detectives who solve them. In effect, they are sophisticated literary versions of a popular series called the *Newgate Calendar*, which claimed to give facts about the more sensational crimes that really took place in England in the 18th and early 19th centuries. These led in turn to fictional texts about criminals that were published in the 1830s: some of these continued the tradition of depicting the criminal as a sympathetic figure, while others, like Charles Dickens' novel *Oliver Twist* (1837-1838), were more realistic in their versions of the English underworld. Here too these texts are far from current crime fiction, as readers see the crimes being committed and know who did them: there is no mystery and no detective.

All of these works from the early English Renaissance onwards demonstrate that writers and readers were interested in crime. Still, the particular elements that form crime fiction as it is now known, came together only later in the 19th century.

4. ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE'S SHERLOCK HOLMES STORIES AND THE BEGINNINGS OF DETECTIVE CRIME FICTION IN ENGLISH

The first stories in English that are truly detective crime fiction are three published by the American writer Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), of which the first, "Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841), is the most famous. It includes a number of the elements that have been mentioned as characteristic of modern crime fiction: a crime is committed, a detective collects information and eventually reveals who the real criminal is. However, for a time Poe was more influential for French than English writers, and crime fiction stories and novels appeared in French before they began to appear in English. It was only with the publication of the Sherlock Holmes stories by Arthur Conan Doyle from 1887 to 1927 that crime fiction as the genre that is now recognized really appeared.

Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930), the son of a poorly-off Scottish architect, became a doctor, but was not very successful at this profession. While waiting for patients, he began to write stories. The first Sherlock Holmes works were novels, but it was the series of short stories that appeared in the *Strand Magazine* from 1891 and were then re-published as collections of stories that made his detective Sherlock Holmes not only famous but a cult figure whose popularity has continued through reprints and versions in cinema and television films up to the present day.

Because most of Conan Doyle's crime fiction takes the form of the short story, features that are now considered typical of this genre are not so significant. Since a short story has a limited number of pages in which to develop its plot, it is not possible within its confines to present a larger number of suspects who can be investigated by the detective. In fact, most detective crime fiction appears as novels, not short stories. However, Conan Doyle managed to establish what, in effect, was a new genre and to give his detective hero a distinctive stamp of individuality that has been imitated by countless writers in the century afterwards.

It was the idea of having a series of mystery stories united by the same detective, Sherlock Holmes, that proved to be the foundation of the new genre. This also helped Conan Doyle overcome the physical limits of the short story genre in developing his hero, for readers gradually learned more about Sherlock Holmes from one story to the next. Although there are many crime fiction novels that do not have a detective who appears again in another book, the ones that do continue from one novel to another have proved to be the best-selling of the genre. This is because crime fiction, like a popular literature, attracts readers who want more of the same – a different story, but with the assurance that the detective whom they find appealing or interesting will be there again. Agatha Christie, for example, uses a variety of detectives in her works, but the most popular of her novels have been those that feature the arrogant professional Belgian detective Hercule Poirot and the apparently innocent but very shrewd elderly spinster Miss Jane Marple.

In addition, Conan Doyle offers a solution to the technical problem that confronts all writers of detective crime fiction. These stories involve a crime, and part of what keeps the readers turning the pages is the desire to find out who committed the crime. Sherlock Holmes, like Agatha Christie's detectives, is exceptionally brilliant and very quickly notices clues and makes interpretations that readers, if they knew them, would lead them too fast to the correct solution. Therefore, it is important that the story not be told by these

detectives as first-person narrators, because then readers would know what they are thinking. However, the narrator has to remain very close to the detective, or guessing at a solution to the mystery becomes too difficult. Therefore, Conan Doyle gave Sherlock Holmes a friend and assistant, Dr. Watson. The two young men share a comfortable apartment in Baker Street in London. Often the stories begin with a client coming here to seek Holmes' help. For example, after some introductory remarks, two stories start in this way:

'Holmes,' said I, as I stood one morning in our bow-window looking down the street, 'here is a madman coming along.' [...] 'What on earth can be the matter with him?' I asked. 'He is looking up at the numbers of the houses.'

'I believe that he is coming here,' said Holmes, rubbing his hands."(Doyle, "The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet" 282).

It was a wild, tempestuous night towards the close of November. Holmes and I sat together in silence all the evening, he engaged with a powerful lens deciphering the remains of the original inscription upon a palimpsest, I deep in a recent treatise upon surgery. Outside the wind howled down Baker Street, while the rain beat fiercely against the windows. [...] A single cab was splashing its way from the Oxford Street end. [...] The cab which I had seen had pulled up at our door.

"What can he want?" I ejaculated, as a man stepped out of it.

"Want! He wants us." (Doyle, "The Adventure of the Golden Pince-nez" 351)

Then, when Holmes heads out to investigate the crime or mystery, Dr Watson almost always goes with him. Watson is the first-person narrator of the story so that he can provide the reader with an account of the client's and other characters' conversations with Sherlock Holmes, descriptions of the crime scene and clues found at it, as well as whatever Holmes tells him as he reflects on the mystery.

Dr Watson is not a stupid man, but he seems only average in intelligence. Often he jumps to hasty conclusions or misinterprets the evidence. Sometimes Holmes corrects him, but other times he simply makes mysterious remarks that neither Watson nor the readers can interpret. In effect, Dr Watson stands in for the readers, who enter the story but are still puzzled to find a solution – and so keep turning the pages until the great detective explains it all.

Having an assistant close to him is also useful for presenting the personality of the detective himself. The detective is the hero of most crime fiction and, like heroes in literature in general, has to be an interesting, not a dull character. In addition to his extraordinary intelligence, Conan Doyle made his Sherlock Holmes an eccentric person with many vivid features. Stephen Knight, in *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction*, describes Holmes as a "romantic artistic persona [...] the model of a superior being, a superman [...]" (1980: 79). Holmes is not married and only once shows a passing interest in a woman. His interests are narrow but very deep: he is an expert in the new science of identifying fingerprints, and can also distinguish different kinds of tobacco as well. He often publishes an article on some very specialized topic. He has a laboratory in Baker Street and acts as a kind of scientist, though the science in the Holmes stories is not very profound. At the

same time, Holmes is subject to deep fits of depression and dreaminess, in which he plays the violin for hours, smokes one pipe after another and sometimes uses narcotic drugs. Not rich, he has just enough money from investments (four hundred pounds a year) to be able to live without working so that he can afford to take up only those cases that interest him.

In a class sense, Holmes belongs to the upper middle-class; he is perfectly comfortable dealing with the highest ranks of English society, but also seems at ease with shopkeepers, servants and working-class people. Indeed, he employs a network of street boys and other agents who collect information for him. His clients come from all classes, though they are mostly from upper-class ones.

Morally, it is important that Sherlock Holmes is always on the side of the good. In this way the new genre of crime fiction has moved far from the earlier centuries of fiction that was fascinated by and often sympathetic to criminals. As a detective, Holmes functions as the guardian of middle-class order, the values that dominated the England of his time. For example, in "The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton" (1899), Holmes calls the criminal Milverton "the worst man in London", explaining to Watson that the man is "the king of all the blackmailers" and "as cunning as the Evil One" (Doyle 558-559). Crimes of any kind – and they are by no means always murder in the Sherlock Holmes stories – disrupt and threaten social order. By solving the crime, Holmes restores order to society. Very occasionally, when the victim of the murder turns out to be far more evil than the murderer, Holmes lets the murderer escape punishment. This is the case in "The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton", where Holmes and Watson enter the villain's house as burglars, and wind up witnessing the man's murder by a beautiful upper-class woman. Approached by the police to try to solve Milverton's murder, Holmes for once refuses: "I think there are certain crimes which the law cannot touch, and which therefore, to some extent, justify private revenge." (Doyle 570). Normally, however, he is relentless in making sure that crime is punished.

In this way, the murder or crime puzzle allows the readers the pleasure of witnessing criminal acts, while the detective's skill at solving the mystery and indicating the guilty person satisfies the readers' need for order, for rational solutions and for the victory of good over evil and innocence over guilt. Generally speaking, the criminal in the Sherlock Holmes stories is never very attractive as a human being. Later writers change this formula to some extent, but for a long time, and even today, crime fiction follows Conan Doyle in being on the side of good.

Although brilliant intelligence, acute perceptiveness and an excellent memory are the dominant features that make Holmes a successful detective, he is also an active man who visits the scenes of crimes and carefully searches them for clues. In "The Adventure of the Devil's Foot" (1897), for instance, after he and Watson enter the room where the dead man is, Holmes bursts into action:

He was out on the lawn, in through the window, round the room, and up into the bedroom, for all the world like a dashing foxhound drawing a cover [...] He carefully scrutinized with his lens the talc shield which covered the top of the chimney and scraped off some ashes which adhered to its upper surface, putting some of them into an envelope, which he placed in his pocket-book. (Doyle 518)

Sometimes he even disguises himself in order to approach suspects. In his attempts to stop the blackmailer in “The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton”, he disguises himself as a workman and courts Milverton’s housemaid to get the necessary details about the layout of the house. Later he usually spends days smoking pipes and thinking over what he has seen and learned. Still, he is described as a young man who can be strong and athletic when he wants to, though he is rarely engaged in physical violence or carries a weapon.

Conan Doyle’s models of the narrative and characters in crime fiction have had a major impact on writers in the genre. Indeed, it may be asserted that the intellectual side of his creation led to Golden Age crime fiction, while the image of Holmes as a young, vigorous man physically collecting evidence affected the American hard-boiled detective genre.

YOUR INPUT: 2

ASK YOUR FRIENDS OR FAMILY

1. **HAVE THEY EVER HEARD OF SHERLOCK HOLMES? IF SO, WHAT IS HE LIKE?**
2. **HAVE THEY EVER READ ANY SHERLOCK HOLMES’ STORIES IN ENGLISH OR ANY OTHER LANGUAGE?**
3. **HAVE THEY EVER SEEN A SHERLOCK HOLMES STORY ON TV OR IN THE CINEMA?**

5. GOLDEN AGE CRIME FICTION: ITS HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS

The term “**Golden Age crime fiction**” was first used to suggest that the detective crime novels written between the two world wars and shortly afterwards marked a high point in the history of 20th century crime fiction writing. Critics no longer agree with this evaluation, as a great deal of excellent crime fiction has been written since then. However, the term is still used by literary historians and critics to conveniently refer to a particular sub-genre of crime fiction. An alternative term is the ‘**clue-puzzle**’ novel, which indicates one of the central characteristics of this kind of writing.

Golden Age crime fiction takes a number of its features from the Sherlock Holmes stories, but it favours the novel form so that the plots are more complex, often involving more than one crime (now almost always murder), a large number of characters, many of whom are suspects, and a more detailed description of the social structure and geography of the place where the crimes occur. Still, there are many similarities to the formula that Conan Doyle developed. From a narrative point of view, the most important is that these are usually stories told not from the point of view of the detective, but of the detective’s friend or assistant.

For example, the most famous of the Golden Age writers, Agatha Christie (1890-1976) gave her detective Hercule Poirot in her first novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920), a faithful friend, Captain Hastings, who, like Dr Watson, is not very intelligent but who accompanies Poirot during the investigation: he is the first-person narrator in the novels in which he appears. Like Sherlock Holmes, Poirot is also an eccentric character, scornful of the police. However, he does not think much of detectives like Holmes who run about investigating a crime scene or disguise themselves to get information. Instead, he insists

on the importance of quietly letting his 'little grey cells' work. He is also pedantically tidy, and strikes the English as comic because of the size of his moustaches and his accented language. Still, he is brilliantly intelligent and always solves all the mysteries. In terms of plot, the same basic structure used by Conan Doyle is followed by Christie: a mysterious crime is committed, the detective investigates it, certain people appear as suspects, and finally the detective explains everything and indicates the criminal, who is then arrested. However, since Christie primarily wrote a much longer form, the novel, her works usually include a second crime or even several murders, introducing a mood of suspense, as the detective struggles to solve the case before the murderer strikes again.

Crime fiction became extremely popular during the interwar period and has never lost its popularity since. There is an enormous variety of eccentric detectives produced in this period, from the aristocratic Lord Peter Wimsey created by Dorothy Sayers (1893-1957), who sings beautifully, is always quoting literature and collects old books, yet is also an extremely fine cricket player, to Nero Wolfe, the very fat detective who almost never leaves his expensive New York apartment where he grows rare flowers, but sends out his handsome and athletic assistant Archie to collect information and bring suspects to his office. Nero Wolfe was created by Rex Stout (1886-1975), but most Golden Age crime fiction in the interwar period was produced by British writers. In the interwar period, the detective is almost never a member of the police force and, indeed, the police are often treated as unimaginative men who come to simple and hasty conclusions about who the murderer is. The Golden Age detectives show themselves to be superior to the official forces that are supposed to deal with crime.

The major name in this period is that of Agatha Christie, who, like many of these writers, continued to produce her detective novels after World War II with great success. Indeed, although other Golden Age writers are still read today, Christie is the only one who has become a household name like Conan Doyle, with her works translated into most world languages and still selling very well. Although some critics of crime fiction do not treat Christie with great respect, the fact remains that she was not only a very clever producer of clue-puzzle novels, but also a writer who had a broad interest in English society and the changes that took place in it from the 1920s to the 1960s. Moreover, though Christie was definitely a product of her social class and times, she was more tolerant of social change than many of her fellow Golden Age writers. Almost all of them were well-educated middle class people who tended, like Dorothy Sayers or Margery Allingham, to create detectives belonging to the aristocracy who have distinct class prejudices and rather irritatingly spend a good deal of time showing off their knowledge of fine wines and art, making references to works of literature not likely to be known by the masses, and classifying people by their accents and class origins. This material has dated badly, limiting their appeal to later generations.

Agatha Christie's more tolerant views may seem surprising considering that her background is in many ways typical of women who became successful writers in the popular and literary genres in the first half of the 20th century. By this time women had long distinguished themselves both as writers in popular genres (Gothic, romance, sensational novels, literature for children and the like) and as authors of poems and novels that were taken seriously as high literature. However, the majority of women writers still tended to work in the popular genres, in part because these were freer of the male-controlled values associated with canonical literature, but more because these genres

required less formal education than other kinds of literature. For several centuries in Britain, it was mainly only upper and middle-class boys who were given the traditional education in Latin and Greek which allowed them to produce the kind of literature that was built on these language traditions. Women, on the other hand, were either educated at home or might even be largely self-educated, reading books in English that were available. If they did have lessons in languages, these were modern languages like Italian, French and German. If they did attend schools for girls, these were very much concerned with producing young ladies with proper manners who could dance, sing and play a musical instrument a little, and know a few basic geographical and historical facts.

Still, the limitations put on women gave them freedom from the stereotyped classical genres that men of their class were educated in. Among 19th century women writers, ones like Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797-1851) and Charlotte and Emily Bronte produced new genre traditions with their novels *Frankenstein* (1818) and *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Wuthering Heights* (1847)., while the best-selling **sensational novel** genre was, a predecessor to detective fiction, was almost entirely in the hands of women writers like Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1835-1915).

Agatha Christie (1890-1976) was born and grew up in an upper middle class family that saw no reason to send a girl to school, but expected her to pick up some cultural knowledge by reading. Her future life was expected to be that of any young lady – to be married to a man of her own class, to be supported by him in comfort financially, to have children and run a household with several servants, to attend and hold parties for friends and relatives. It should have been a pleasant life in large country houses with frequent visits to London and Paris and holidays in the Riviera or the Near East (biographical details from Wagoner, 1-11).

As a child Christie took naturally to story-telling, living often without any other children around and so amusing herself by inventing characters and stories. Her father's death while she was only eleven left the family in a much tighter economic condition, but still when she went to Paris to what was known as a finishing school, one where girls improved their manners, dancing, French and other subjects to make them attractive marriage partners. In those days a young lady formally indicated that she was available for marriage by being a debutante and attending many fancy balls and parties in London. This was too expensive for her family, so instead Christie was sent to Cairo, then a British colony, for a season of excursions and parties there. Back in England, she went for month-long stays at the country houses of wealthy relatives and friends of the family, all this designed to introduce her to as many suitable young men as possible.

From this socializing Christie picked up a good deal of information about certain classes in England: the landed gentry, country house people, many of them rich and socially prominent, and the more humble lower middle class in country villages. In all her crime fiction class and money are extremely important, and Christie's characters are sharply defined by their use of language, choice of clothes and social mannerisms. Moreover, she began to understand how status worked and how power was obtained and maintained by certain people within a small community like an English village.

At first it seemed that Agatha Christie's life would go according to the program set for her by gender and class. She had started writing and publishing as a teenager, but this was simply poems and stories. When World War I broke out, like many young women, she took

a volunteer job as a nurse. She also married very quickly, as was typical during the war, a young pilot. She wrote her first novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, using her experience as a nurse, in part because of a bet she made with her sister that she could write a clue-puzzle novel. The novel introduced the detective Hercule Poirot. It was successful, but the publishers paid Christie only 25 pounds, a ridiculously small sum even at the time. However, she went on writing detective stories and soon had a major reputation and was making a good deal of money. This was soon necessary since her husband did not turn out to be very practical. In 1926, when the reading public was buying her bestseller, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, an especially tricky example of the clue-puzzle novel in which the narrator, the detective's helper, turns out to be the murderer, Christie's own life took a very bad turn. Her husband suddenly announced that he wanted a divorce to marry another woman. She was left to raise her daughter and manage her own life, which she did very successfully. If anything, the emotional pain she felt made the crime fiction of her middle and later years psychologically deeper. Her personal story had a happy ending, as some years after her divorce, she married a young archaeologist, Max Mallown, with whom she enjoyed an excellent relationship and who was very supportive of her career.

Christie, despite her enormous success and public fame, remained a modest person all her life. She took very calmly all the awards she received, including titles from the queen so that she became Dame Agatha Christie. In the public media, she was the "Queen of Crime" against whom many later writers would be measured. Yet, as Earl F. Bargainnier notes in one of the better book-length studies of her work she always insisted that she was "lowbrow" (a synonym for what is now called popular culture) and even made disparaging remarks about her writing, such as calling herself a "tradesman" and a "sausage machine". When she was asked what she hoped future literary cultural historians would say about her, her answer was typically modest: "Well, I would like it to be said that I was a good writer of detective and thriller stories" (all cited from Bargainnier 200). The way she puts this reminds us that not all her novels were Golden Age clue-puzzles: she wrote throughout her career some detective fiction that is more suspense thriller, some with strong romance elements, and even some with supernatural features. However, it is as the creator of classical Golden Age detective fiction that she remains best known.

Aside from her general brilliance as a writer, Agatha Christie did take a major step in making a gender change in the formula of the classical Golden Age detective novel. There had been women detectives before her novels, but none had been especially popular. When women do appear in the Sherlock Holmes stories, they play very minor roles, most often as victims or clients seeking aid; very occasionally they may be criminals. On the whole, the genre was widely considered to be a man's genre, especially in the form that stressed careful reasoning on the part of readers to solve the mystery. In 1893, when Bernard Shaw wanted to give a young woman in his play *Mrs. Warren's Profession* characteristics that were generally associated with stereotypical masculinity, he had Vivie tell a shocked gentleman: "I like working and being paid for it. When I'm tired of working, I like a comfortable chair, a cigar, a little whisky, and a novel with a good detective story in it" (Shaw 1765). Even though so many Golden Age writers were women, they still chose to create male detectives and a man-centred world.

It was in 1930 that Christie introduced what was to be her most famous female detective, Miss Jane Marple, in *The Murder at the Vicarage*. Miss Marple appears as one of the elderly spinsters in the charming English village of St Mary Mead where ,very

unexpectedly, murder takes place. Although most people find Miss Marple an irritatingly observant gossip, and some make fun of her as a woman who has never had much experience of the wider world outside of St. Mary Mead, she herself has quite a different opinion, believing, rightly, as it turns out, that her life-long experience of studying people's behavior and solving the mysteries of a small community provides the basis for being an excellent detective. With Miss Marple, Agatha Christie does much to redeem the image of the elderly unmarried lady as silly, weak and lacking any talents that the world needs. She has explained that she finds Miss Marple very enjoyable to write about and that the character herself is based on features of her grandmother and other elderly women relatives, who were very astute observers of human behavior; though personally well-behaved and decorous, they tended to expect the worst of those around them – and so were not shocked by any misbehavior, even murder.

It is interesting to note that, unlike her fellow Golden Age crime writers, who made their detectives men of status and wealth with solid positions within their societies, Christie's two most important detectives, Hercule Poirot and Miss Jane Marple, are both marginal to British society, both middle class, to be sure, but often treated with disrespect by those who first meet them. Poirot seems a comic figure with his polished moustaches and imperfect English, and is also a short man who could certainly not protect himself against violence. Miss Marple is neither rich nor beautiful nor wealthy nor married to a man of high position, so that in the England of her day, she is treated by many as a figure of fun, or at least someone who can safely be disregarded. Both seem intended to play the role of victims, not of detective heroes. In this way, without being a radical feminist, Agatha Christie creates figures who embody many of the stereotypical qualities associated with femininity, and then shows that they are superior in intellect to those who make fun of them.

In more recent years, as popular culture in general is being taken more seriously by academic critics, work on Agatha Christie's novels and others of their kind are being analysed beyond surface qualities of characterization, plot and setting. One such critic is Heta Pyrhonen, who in *Mayhem and Murder: Narrative and Moral Problems in the Detective Story* (1999), examines both the ideology of crime fiction and the complex relationship of detective and reader. She writes that "much of the complexity in moral evaluation in detective stories arises from the difference between two sets of criteria: the judicial and the moral codes [...] because criminal investigation shows guilt to be a more universal phenomenon than crime" (Pyrhonen 18). Good crime fiction reveals that many people have secret lives and bear guilt for earlier actions, although only a very small number of them actually commit crimes. Therefore, though religious notions of sin rarely are mentioned in crime fiction, they exist between the lines, as it were.

In addition, moral evaluation becomes more important in Golden Age than in earlier kinds of crime fiction in part because of a greater interest in human psychology that became common in the early 20th century with the influence of psychologists like Sigmund Freud. Although Agatha Christie and most later detective novelists rely on a very popularized form of psychology, in this way being similar to crime cinema of the same period in the hands of masters like Alfred Hitchcock, still motivation becomes one of the major clues in solving a crime. In a Christie narrative, each character is presented not only by appearance and mannerisms, but often with psychological analysis. Hercule Poirot short stories often begin with the detective thinking in this way about his new client. For example, in "The

Cretan Bull”, a young lady comes to Poirot when her fiancé breaks off their engagement because he believes he suffers from a form of his family’s insanity. The story opens in this way:

Hercule Poirot looked thoughtfully at his visitor.
He saw a pale face with a determined-looking chin, eyes that were more grey than blue, and hair that was of the real blue-black shade so seldom seen [...] He noted the well-cut but also well-worn country tweeds, the shabby handbag, and the unconscious arrogance of manner that lay behind the girl’s obvious nervousness. (Christie 520)

“The Apples of the Hesperides” begins in a very similar fashion:

Hercule Poirot looked thoughtfully into the face of the man behind the big mahogany desk. He noted the generous brow, the mean mouth, the rapacious line of the jaw and the piercing visionary eyes. He understood from looking at the man why Emery Power had become the great financial force that he was.
And his eyes falling to the long delicate hands, exquisitely shaped, that lay on the desk, he understood, too, why Emery Power had attained renown as a great collector. He was known on both sides of the Atlantic as a connoisseur of works of art. (Christie 587)

All of Agatha Christie’s detectives trust their ability to analyse people in this way. However, Miss Jane Marple also uses another method particular to herself. Because she has spent so many years of her life studying people in a small village and solving very minor puzzles about their actions, when she has to deal with a murder, she often relies on finding parallels to village life and village people. In the novel *They Do It with Mirrors* (1952), for example, Miss Marple struggles to understand the personality of one young man:

If only she could find in her memory the right parallel.
Painstakingly she rejected the curious behavior of Mr. Selkirk’s delivery van – the absent-minded postman – the gardener who worked on Whitmonday – and that very curious affair of the summer weight combinations. (Christie 54)

In another novel, *4:50 from Paddington* (1957), Miss Marple comes up with village parallels for suspects in the current murder she is investigating and mentions these to a policeman she knows well:

“All one can do is to observe the people concerned, or who might have been concerned, and see of whom they remind you.” [...]
Craddock smiled and said:
“And Alfred?”
“Jenkins at the garage,” Miss Marple replied promptly. “He didn’t exactly appropriate tools, but he used to exchange a broken or inferior jack for a good one.” (Christie 137)

In this way, analysis of the personalities and behaviour of suspects becomes just as important in clue-puzzle crime fiction as careful investigation of physical clues left by a murderer at the crime scene and meticulous calculations of schedules and distances. Indeed, in a Golden Age detective narrative, the physical clues and alibis provided by time and distance from the murder scene often turn out to have been cleverly faked to implicate another person, while psychological analysis indicates the true murderer.

YOUR INPUT 3: CREATIVE ACTIVITY

THE CRIME SITUATION IS THE FOLLOWING: BEFORE THE FINAL EXAMINATION IN A COURSE OF YOUR CHOICE, THE TEACHER IS FOUND DEAD IN THE WASHROOM. SHE HAS BEEN HIT OVER THE HEAD WITH A HEAVY HAMMER LEFT IN THE LOBBY BY WORKERS DOING RENOVATIONS. THIS TEACHER IS VERY STRICT ABOUT MARKS AND IS ALSO NOT VERY POPULAR WITH HER FELLOW TEACHERS.

BY YOURSELF OR IN GROUPS, CREATE A LIST OF SUSPECTS. GIVE EACH A NAME; DESCRIBE HIS OR HER APPEARANCE AND PERSONALITY AND OFFER MOTIVES FOR THE CRIME. INCLUDE TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF AND STUDENTS IN YOUR LIST. THEN ARGUE WHICH ONE IS THE TRUE MURDERER.

6. WHAT ARE THE MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF GOLDEN AGE CRIME FICTION?

1. Social realism.

These narratives are set in a specific time and place, which may be fictional but which are based on real societies and periods. The novels are dense with details about villages and houses, furniture, clothing, meals, social structures and the like. Although the cliché that Golden Age stories all take place in a country house or small village is not true, there is a distinct preference for what is called a **closed setting**, a place containing a limited number of people, most of whom know each other to some extent. In addition to villages and country houses, these may be university colleges, places of business, tourist resorts and so on. In any case the writer usually goes to a fair amount of trouble to construct a realistic setting (in the older Golden Age novels a map was often included of the village or a plan of the house where the murder took place). In contemporary crime fiction that continues the Golden Age formula, writers often produce a series set in a specific location, such as the Canadian L.R. Wright's novels set on what is known as the Sunshine Coast of British Columbia in Canada, or Ruth Rendell's Inspector Wexford series set in Suffolk, or the Yorkshire novels of Reginald Hill. Readers often find the detailed portrayal of these realistic worlds as interesting as the crime mystery that is being solved.

2. Moral and ideological values of the dominant class

Typically, in the first examples, even when the detective is from the upper class, Golden Age fiction focuses on the upper middle class of British or American society. Lower-class characters appear, including servants, but are not primary and almost never turn out to be the murderers. The moral and ideological views of the upper middle class are taken for granted as right, and murder is seen as a violation of the social order. Social structures are

rarely questioned: it is assumed that the government, police and other forms of authority, though they may include people who are weak or criminal, are not corrupt or indifferent to crime.

3. The detective represents and re-establishes order.

Although the detective may not be a leader in a community, he or she shares middle class values and its ideology. Crime of any kind, but especially murder is seen as a dangerous kind of disorder which disrupts ordinary human relations and the functioning of society. The detective solves the mystery of the crime and by making the solution public and having the criminal arrested, restores order to the system. In very rare cases, the solution is found but the murderer is not directly punished by the state. However, this happens only when the murderer killed a person much more evil than themselves. Even then, the murderer often commits suicide or is said to be suffering from a fatal illness.

4. The detective solves the mystery without the use of much physical action, but through close observation of places and people, and especially the use of logic and reason.

While Sherlock Holmes did run about and often search the sites of crime for physical clues, Golden Age detectives rely much more on talking to witnesses and suspects. Detectives like Miss Marple are physically incapable of strenuous physical action, though they are quick to pick up small details that help indicate a person's psychological state. Much of the interest for the reader is in speculating on the list of suspects to guess which one did the crime.

5. Violence is not described in detail, even when a murder is involved. Nor does the detective usually use or feel threatened by violence.

Unpleasant details about pools of blood are avoided in this kind of crime fiction, as are forms of murder that include torture. Although other characters are often killed during the course of an investigation, the detective rarely feels at risk, almost never carries a weapon and is not injured in the work of solving the crime.

6. Romance and love may appear in these novels, and sexual desire is often a motive for crime, but there are few direct depictions of sexuality.

In the more classical kind of Golden Age fiction there is no romance of any real importance. In Christie's novels her major detectives are not sexual beings, though other writers, like Dorothy Sayers, make her detective fall in love. Nevertheless, more explicit sexual references are definitely censored.

7. The detective is confident and feels part of his or her society.

As a series progresses, the detectives tend to be treated as people who are respected investigators of crime by those who know them. In any case, even when others do not show them much respect, the detectives themselves are very sure of their value.

8. The general tone of these novels is analytical, sometimes ironic, with fear and suspense playing a role, but not always a major one.

Sometimes there is humour in these novels, and often a distinct element of social satire in the presentation of characters. These are definitely not plots based on strong suspense;

there are always pauses in which the suspects and the crime are discussed and argued about in an intellectual way.

9. The narratives begin with a crime (often after a short introduction of the place and major characters) and end with a happy ending.

The ending can be said to be **closed**, as all the mysteries have been solved and readers are given an idea of what will happen to all major characters. They are **happy endings** because good triumphs over evil, the criminal is caught and there will be no more crimes. If there is a romantic narrative, it is now concluded happily as well.

7. HARD-BOILED (NOIR) CRIME FICTION: ITS HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS

Hard-boiled crime fiction, often called **the noir thriller** (“noir” is French for “black”), developed at much the same time as Golden Age fiction and, like it, is descended from the Sherlock Holmes stories. One of the characteristics of Conan Doyle’s stories which Golden Age writers discarded, the physical activity of the detective, becomes extremely important in Noir writing. Here the detective, at first always a man, is a professional private detective (or private investigator, from which the American term, **the private eye**, a pun on the letters “p.i.” comes from). Moreover, he is always a young man, physically very strong and able to fight, familiar with guns and ready to risk his own life to solve crimes. The detective must also be intelligent, quick-witted and perceptive about people and places, but there is much less of the slow-paced reflection on suspects that is characteristic of Golden Age detective fiction.

Instead, hard-boiled detective stories tend to move very quickly and include a large number of physical confrontations as the detective tries to gather information. This is why this kind of narrative is sometimes called thrillers, although technically there is a separate genre, the **suspense thriller**, in which exciting fights, chases and the like completely dominate over rational investigation. French critics, long before American or British ones, became fascinated by American hard-boiled crime fiction and the films that were made in a similar style, imitated it and gave it the name of the noir thriller.

Hard-boiled detective fiction is even more an American genre than Golden Age is a British one, as it is associated closely with the marketing situation in the United States in the interwar period as well as the power of the criminal underworld during this time. With its large population of immigrants and working-class people in general, the American publishing market soon saw the potential in very cheap, easy-to-read publications in a variety of genres. In this way, **pulp fiction**, inexpensive books of a little over a hundred pages, small in format and printed on the cheapest kind of newsprint, wood pulp paper, appeared and quickly attracted readers. Pulp fiction could be about any topic from sentimental romances and pornographic stories to cowboy, science fiction and detective fiction, crime fiction soon became the most prominent and best-selling of these genres. The most famous of the crime fiction published in this way was the magazine *The Black Mask*, which began in 1920. It provided a place for young writers to start their career before moving on to the greater challenge of a hard-boiled novel.

Dashiell Hammett (1894-1961) was the first great writer in the noir genre, beginning in *The Black Mask* with short stories in the 1920s and publishing his first full-length novel *Red Harvest* in 1929. Some of his other novels, like *The Maltese Falcon* (1930), were later turned into films whose success further advertised the new genre. Hammett was one of the very rare writers of detective fiction who had worked as a private investigator himself; his experience in the prestigious Pinkerton Agency in San Francisco gave a gritty reality to his narratives, whose cynical protagonists are very different from the socially refined detectives of Golden Age fiction. He also produced a formula that has been used successfully ever since. The private detective is approached by a client to take up a case that may or may not appear difficult. However, the more he probes and questions people, the clearer it becomes that he is dealing with serious crimes and dangerous and powerful people both in the criminal underworld and in the upper reaches of American society. These narratives take place in large urban centres, which may be New York or Chicago, although California is probably the single most popular setting in the interwar period and shortly after it. In comparison to Golden Age texts, these novels appear more modern, as fast cars, large apartment buildings and the intricacies of municipal politics often figure in them.

Another major difference from the Golden Age novels is that, because the detective is a young and usually attractive man, he is often approached by attractive women. Sexuality is now much less censored, though, like earlier detectives in the British mold, romance never lasts long. Indeed, aside from being victims of crime, women in noir thrillers are often fatal women (from the French **femme fatale**), beautiful, sophisticated, and extremely dangerous; they are just as likely to be the killers as any male character.

Furthermore, Hammett established the tradition of making his detectives the first-person narrators of their stories, while the language they use, as well as that used in snappy, aggressive dialogues, is full of colloquialisms and slang. In general, it is closer to the language of real speech than what is found in Golden Age fiction. In addition, too, the hero of a hard-boiled detective story must be just as quick with his tongue as with his fists and his gun, and uses both as weapons in a tough and cruel world. In some ways, the detectives in noir thrillers seem more stereotypical than those of Golden Age crime fiction, because there is very little difference among the ones portrayed by different writers. Still, they escape being completely flat characters because of hints of sensitivity beneath the very tough exterior. Externally, they seem more confident than a Miss Marple, but this is not really true. Miss Marple, like other Golden Age detectives, feels supported by a moral system of values accepted by the majority of the members of her society, while noir detectives are rather closer to the criminal world than they want to be: at times they accept bribes, commit crimes to get information and beat up those who stand in their way. At heart, they are lonely men who never have a steady girl-friend or wife or even a close male friend, and who find release in smoking and drinking far too much.

One of the finest writers of hard-boiled detective fiction, Raymond Chandler (1888-1959), has produced a number of essays praising this kind of crime fiction at the expense of the Golden Age variety. He is not fair in his assessments of the latter, but his comments on the American genre are interesting. For example, he turns one of Hammett's memorable detectives, Sam Spade, into a heroic warrior for good against evil in the complex and corrupt world of American power and materialism: "Down these mean streets a man must

go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid. [...] He must be a complete man and a common man and yet an unusual man. He must be, to use a rather weathered phrase, a man of honor" (Chandler, "The Simple Art of Murder" 533). This sounds very much like the tough cowboy who brings law and order to a Wild West town by shooting all the villains. Indeed, paradoxically, there is more discussion of morality in these stories than in Golden Age detective fiction, where moral values, based on Christian morality and social norms, are generally taken for granted. In the noir world the moral code is always defeated in one way or another by the sheer corruption, materialism and violence of American society.

Aside from the strikingly different type of detective used in hard-boiled crime fiction, readers notice in particular the much faster pace of events in this kind of narrative. Golden Age detective stories often pause in the action while the detective and others consider the crime and the probable suspects. Since the detective often has a friend who serves as a limited confidante, clues and opinions are discussed at length. These give readers the time to also reflect on the crime and who may have committed it, making such fiction more of an intellectual game. In hard-boiled narratives, however, one event follows another very fast, often with multiple scenes of pursuit, fights and new crimes. As in a Golden Age narrative, the noir detective collects clues and questions witnesses and suspects, but this happens fast, and most often in an atmosphere of psychological conflict and physical violence. For example, in a very short story, "Guilt-Edged Blonde", by Ross Macdonald (1915-1983), one of the masters of the American noir, two men are murdered and the detective is threatened by a woman with a gun and later shoots her in the arm, all of this within a handful of pages. Moreover, while Golden Age writers prefer not to dwell on the unpleasant details of a murder, in hard-boiled detective fiction, blood and suffering are almost always depicted at length. In this way readers are caught up in the rapid action and have little time to reflect on who the most likely suspect is. Still, clues are given to readers, though the detective-narrator may misinterpret them at first. In the end, noir detectives always succeed in doing this, as they are bright and observant, just like the detectives of the Golden Age crime narrative.

Yet the combination of rapid action, aggressive speech and violent acts creates a particular atmosphere in hard-boiled fiction that is one of its trademarks. It was this atmosphere, strengthened by a modern American big-city setting very often seen at night that was reproduced in film versions of the genre which caught the attention of French critics of literature and film: they gave this genre, which they saw as extremely American and unique the name of **noir**, referring not only to the dark night-time scenes but to the general mood of cynicism and the detective's feeling that even in solving a particular crime he has failed to defeat evil forces in society.

In terms of social setting, hard-boiled detective fiction ranges across all the classes in American society, but shows a particular fondness for the very rich, whether families of old wealth and power, or the newly rich, some of whom are criminals, along with the poorer working class and the underworld of professional crime. The detective himself is neither very rich nor very poor, but the general tendency is that he lives from one case to another, has only a small apartment and does not drive an expensive car. He can deal with the members of any class, but is not really at home with any of them.

Superficially, at least, the settings of hard-boiled fiction are more **open** than those of Golden Age narratives. The readers are unlikely to find themselves in a small village or

town, as the action usually takes place in a very large city. Nor will the detective have to solve a murder in a **closed** setting in which only a small number of people could have committed the crime. Nevertheless, this initial sense of openness, emphasized by frequent drives in a car from one place to another, is in large part an illusion. As the narrative progresses, the detective finds that all the characters are closely related in a network of earlier crimes and relationships that explain the major crime that he is trying to solve.

YOUR INPUT: 4

EITHER BY YOURSELF OR IN A GROUP, CHOOSE A LITHUANIAN VILLAGE FOR A GOLDEN AGE MURDER MYSTERY OR A CITY FOR A HARD-BOILED MYSTERY. DECIDE WHO WILL BE MURDERED, AND WHAT THE DETECTIVE WILL DO TO SOLVE THE MYSTERY IN EITHER CASE. FINALLY, BRIEFLY DESCRIBE YOUR DETECTIVE.

8. RAYMOND CHANDLER'S *THE BIG SLEEP* AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE HARD-BOILED DETECTIVE NOVEL

Raymond Chandler's private detective Philip Marlowe is featured in a number of novels that are considered among the finest hard-boiled detective fiction ever written. In *The Big Sleep* (1939) Marlowe is hired by an extremely wealthy man, General Sternwood, to deal with a man who is blackmailing him by threatening to publish nude photographs of Sternwood's younger daughter, Carmen, a very wild and unbalanced girl. Marlowe does not consider this a very difficult assignment, but it quickly leads him into a world of violence and other crimes. As the dead bodies begin to pile up and Marlowe is forced to deal with powerful underworld bosses, he suspects that more crimes lie in the past. Eventually General Sternwood admits that he really wants him to track down his missing son-in-law, Rusty Regan, whom he liked very much but who simply disappeared one day. Vivian Regan, the very beautiful woman who is Rusty's wife, does not seem concerned that he is gone and makes several attempts to seduce Marlowe. In the end it turns out that Rusty was killed by Carmen because he refused to make love to her, and that Vivian protected her younger sister by getting a gangster to help her hide the body. Marlowe refuses the money that Vivian offers him to keep quiet once he gets her promise that Carmen will be placed under guard so that she does not kill other people. Nor will he tell the truth to General Sternwood. Marlowe has solved all the mysteries, but feels empty, confirmed in his view that his world is a poisonous one and that nothing like truth or justice really exists.

As almost always in this genre, the story has a first-person narrator, Philip Marlowe himself. Like other hard-boiled detectives he presents a front that is very confident and even arrogant. On the first page of the novel he introduces himself to the reader in the typical clipped sentences of this genre: "I was neat, clean, shaved and sober, and I didn't care who knew it. I was everything the well-dressed private detective ought to be. I was calling on four million dollars" (Chandler, *Big Sleep* 3). The same arrogance appears in his dialogue with General Sternwood's older daughter, Vivian Regan, who attempts to find out what her father has hired him to do, but cannot get him to tell her much:

"I don't see what there is to be cagey about," she snapped. "And I don't like your manners."

*"I'm not crazy about yours," I said. "I didn't ask to see you. You sent for me. [...] I don't mind your showing me your legs. They're very swell legs, and it's a pleasure to make their acquaintance. I don't mind if you don't like my manners. They're pretty bad. I grieve over them during the long winter evenings. But don't waste your time trying to cross-examine me." (Chandler, *Big Sleep* 19)*

This dialogue is typical of those in hard-boiled fiction. In effect, Vivian is either a useful informant or a suspect, but instead of the calmer manner of interviewing such characters in Golden Age fiction, this whole conversation is a battle for power, with Vivian using her sexual appeal and wealth to try to get information from Marlowe, and him contemptuously rejecting both. Moreover, his speech is amusing in a characteristically ironic way. From a technical point of view, this witty repartee is not necessary to the plot, but it amuses the readers and establishes the detective as cool-headed and in control.

During the course of the narrative, Philip Marlowe takes one risk after another to carry out his assignment. He begins to realize that in some ways he is being manipulated to cover other crimes; more than once he is attacked and almost killed, and once he shoots another man dead. He cooperates with the police only to a certain extent, refusing to share knowledge about the Sternwood family that will harm them. When a policeman points out that he is not being paid very much for all these risks, including getting a bad reputation with the authorities, Marlowe answers with one of the statements that expresses the moral code of the hard-boiled detective: "I'm selling what I have to sell to make a living. What little guts and intelligence the Lord gave me and a willingness to get pushed around in order to protect a client" (Chandler, *Big Sleep* 114). Even here he is ironic about his real efforts, which go far beyond what he says. Still, in a corrupt and dangerous world he has set limits on what he is willing and not willing to do.

The ending of *The Big Sleep* is often quoted. Marlowe has discovered that Rusty Regan, killed by Carmen, had his body dumped into the filthy water of an old oil well sump. However, he does not have any feeling that this man needs a more honourable burial: "What did it matter where you lay once you were dead? In a dirty sump or in a marble tower on top of a high hill. You were dead, you were sleeping the big sleep, you were not bothered by things like that. [...] You just slept the big sleep, not caring about the nastiness of how you died or where you fell. Me, I was part of the nastiness now" (Chandler, *Big Sleep* 230). Still, this is not the actual end of the novel. Chandler deliberately undercuts this philosophical melancholy by having Marlowe turn, as he often does, to drinking to numb his conscience: "On the way downtown I stopped at a bar and had a couple of double Scotches. They didn't do me any good. All they did was make me think of Silver-Wig, and I never saw her again" (Chandler, *Big Sleep* 231). Marlowe never says directly that he feels remorse or sadness about anyone's fate, and the suggestion that he does have these weaker emotions is quickly covered by the stereotypically masculine act of heavy drinking. In this way readers do not have that comfortable sense that comes at the close of a Golden Age detective novel, where all the mysteries are solved, and some people are now much happier. Instead, lying remains the common coin of human relationships in Chandler's fictional world, and though the mysteries are solved, the final mood is one of sour irony.

9. WHAT ARE THE MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF HARD-BOILED (NOIR) CRIME FICTION?

1. Social realism.

Very often the setting of the narratives is a large American urban community or even a very big city, and the details of its geographical layout, the names of neighbourhoods and major streets are usually the real ones of the place. The setting seems to be an **open** one, though often the detective returns frequently to particular neighbourhoods or houses. However, if the characters know each other, it is not because they are neighbours: in the big modern city, people tend to ignore most of those around them and form networks of social and work relationships. Since so much of the action takes place in marginalized settings like the criminal world, and the detective has no family, few or no friends and only a small apartment in which little time is spent, readers find the underworld settings intriguing because they are not familiar ones.

2. The collapse of moral and ideological values.

Although 20th-century American society had very strong values and religion plays an important role in the lives of many people, in the noir world no one can be completely trusted: politicians, the police and even the detective may be bribed or use illegal means to get what they want. Here American society is depicted as a very tough and materialistic world in which those who do not succeed in making money are simple cast aside, and those who do, no matter how (like gangsters) have power and prestige. If a character shows real love for someone else, then readers can expect that this person will be betrayed or killed. Hard-boiled detective fiction began in the interwar decades when the underworld ruled many politicians and people suffered the poverty of the Great Depression, but the novels written after World War II, a period of great prosperity, show no change in the moral system: more money simply means stronger desires for money, and even greater corruption and violence. The large part of American society that leads a quiet orderly life is not depicted in these novels.

3. The detective solves mysteries but does not re-establish social or moral order.

Since all social structures are corrupt and even evil, the fact that the detective solves the mysteries and often kills a villain or two or hands them over to the police makes little real difference. Characters on the whole are less than sympathetic, and the detective may be seen by others not as a hero but as a fool for insisting on keeping to certain moral principles.

4. The detective uses physical force along with observation and reason.

In this kind of crime fiction, the detective has to be physically strong and good with weapons as violence explodes all around him as soon as he begins to investigate a case. Typically there are scenes of pursuit, some in fast cars, as well as of physical fights, at which the hard-boiled detective excels. Guns play an important role in these stories, in part helped by the much more liberal gun laws in large parts of the United States than in other Western countries.

5. Violence is described in detail, including the suffering that the detective endures.

Characters who are murdered are described closely, with emphasis on blood and other unpleasant details. Often the murder takes place in front of the readers' eyes, or the detective reaches the victim as he or she is dying. There are also scenes of torture, in which the victim is most likely to be the detective: tied up by villains, he is beaten badly, though later he always manages to carry on his investigation.

6. Sexuality is at the forefront of many descriptions of characters and relationships, though love in the true sense rarely appears.

With the detective as a handsome young man, it is not surprising that there are usually many scenes in which a woman tries to seduce him or bribe him by offering him sex. Usually this stops with embraces and kisses, in conformity to the censorship of the sexual act common until fairly recent times in English-language literature. The hard-boiled detective often evaluates the sexual attractiveness of women whom he meets or shows his response to them in what he is thinking, but he keeps control of his emotions. Women who seem to really be in love with the detective almost always turn out to be criminals or even killers.

7. The detective is arrogant, but feels marginalized in his society.

Although the detective speaks and behaves in a very self-confident way, since readers know what he is thinking and feeling, they understand that he often feels marginalized in his society. After all, he has no family, little money, few or no friends, and bad habits like an addiction to alcohol. He does not really trust anyone and so has no confidants. In a society that is so materialistic, his lack of economic success means he is not treated as worthy a great deal of respect. The rich see him as a tool, the police as someone who breaks laws, and criminals either treat him as an opponent or offer him a position in the underworld. Basically, he is depicted as a very lonely man, though he expresses this only indirectly, most often through drinking.

8. The general tone of these novels is one of suspense and anxiety, though the witty humour of the detective's thoughts and speeches lightens the mood.

These are definitely dark novels, with characters suddenly being killed off and the mood one of suspense as readers wait for the next attack of violence. Characters speak in cynical ways of each other, even family members. They have dreams and desires, but these seem doomed in advance.

9. The narratives begin with a crime (often after a short introduction) and end with the solution of all the mysteries.

The endings can be said to be **closed** as all the mysteries are solved, but they feel more open than in the Golden Age fiction because the main character, the detective, is not happy with the results. Good does not really triumph over evil, and even if some criminals have been caught or killed, more will probably appear soon. If there is anything like a romantic narrative, then it ends badly.

10. WOMEN IN HARD-BOILED CRIME FICTION: FATAL WOMEN AND WOMEN HARD-BOILED DETECTIVES

Up until the 1980s American hard-boiled crime fiction featured stereotypically masculine male detectives in a world in which women had little place except as victims or wives and lovers of male characters. Although Marcia Muller (b.1944), a major writer in the genre, did create Sharon McCone, a female private eye, her protagonist is not very similar to the hard-boiled male detective. McCone does have to deal with violent situations, but she is more a very clever and hard-working women detective without the physical force or wise-cracking witty language associated with male hard-boiled detectives.

Nevertheless, there is one female figure that is very typical of the traditional hard-boiled detection novel, and this is the **femme fatale** or **fatal woman**, who appears very frequently in novels and film. As the use of the French term “femme fatale” suggests, this is a stereotype of femininity that appeared first in France, not in literature but in the art movement known as Symbolism: this began in the 1870s and then spread all over Europe; it was still influential in the early decades of the 20th century.

The fatal woman (the term “femme fatale” has now been accepted into English critical usage and appears more often than its English translation) is first and foremost a very attractive woman who expresses a strong and aggressive sexuality that goes against the traditional norms for femininity. Both in visual and verbal arts, she is most often tall, striking in appearance, with a shapely figure, full red lips and eyes that have a hypnotic power over men. Fatal women do not follow any moral codes or norms for feminine behavior: their sexual appetites are voracious and their seduction expressed very directly. At the same time, they make it clear that they will not submit in any sense to male power, and are experts in manipulating male sexual appetites for their own benefits. The word “fatal” means “deadly”, and relationships with fatal women end in the destruction and even death of their male victims. In addition to their aggressiveness, they have other qualities that are associated more with stereotypical masculinity: they are not sentimental and their intelligence controls their emotions easily; they do not hesitate to use violence as a means to their goals; they move freely from one man to another and show no interest in being a wife or mother.

In hard-boiled detective fiction the male detective is often both attracted and put off by the fatal woman. They may become lovers, but she always betrays him. Indeed, she often turns out to be the major villain of the story, either acting directly or inciting men whom she has seduced to carry out crimes, including murder. In Dashiell Hammett’s *The Maltese Falcon* (1930), for example, the fatal woman, Brigid O’Shaughnessy, appears on the opening pages of the novel as the detective Sam Spade’s client. Her tempting appearance, tall and curvaceous, with red hair and “full lips more brightly red” (Hammett 2) signal her true nature to the readers, though Sam Spade himself is tricked into seeing her as a weak woman seeking protection from him. The novel ends with his full recognition of how evil she is; he hands her over to the police to be punished for her crimes.

More often, the fatal women are recognized as such by male detectives at first sight (as has been stated, the detectives almost always function as first-person narrators in this genre). In Raymond Chandler’s *The Big Sleep*, Vivian Regan is introduced in this way by the detective: “I sat down on the edge of a deep soft chair and looked at Mrs. Regan. She was

worth a stare. She was trouble" (Chandler, *Big Sleep* 17), and indeed she does disturb both his peace of mind and his investigation of crimes. In another text by Chandler, the novella "Trouble Is My Business" (1933), the fatal woman is given the suggestive name of Miss Harriet Huntress. In similar fashion, Carroll John Daly (1889-1958), an early writer of hard-boiled detective fiction, calls his fatal woman "The Flame" in the novella "Just Another Stiff" (1936) and his detective sees her in this way: "There were times when she was young and lovely, the sparkle of youth in her eyes – and times, too, when she was hard, cold, cruel, a woman of the night. Beautiful – sure, but in a sinister way" (Daly 18). Another of the early noir writers, Leigh Brackett, introduces his fatal woman in "I Feel Bad Killing You" (1944) as "a red-haired, green-eyed girl with a smouldering, angry glow deep inside her" (Brackett 75): she turns out to have killed or instigated the murders of many people and also winds up handed over to the police by the detective at the end of the story.

These fatal women are interesting creatures both on the page and on the screen (Marlene Dietrich was the epitome of the type in the first half of the 20th century), but they are stereotypes of the flattest kind. To find positive examples of women in noir fiction who are not simply passive victims, readers have had to wait until the feminist movement prepared the ground for hard-boiled women detectives. Then, in 1982, Sara Paretsky introduced V.I. Warshawski in *Indemnity Only* and Sue Grafton started her alphabetical series about Kinsey Millhone in *A Is for Alibi*. Earlier, some short stories of this kind were published in the late 1970s, but it was the novels that made bestseller lists and signaled a major change in hard-boiled detective fiction.

Critics like Sabine Vanacker tend to refer to these new examples of noir fiction as "feminist" (Vanacker 69-71), but the word is applicable only if one refers to the ideological changes in American society that made the idea of an independent and professional woman more acceptable, or perhaps to the fact that feminist readers find these characters enjoyable to read about. In some ways they are as much fantasies and stereotypes as the traditionally super-masculine hard-boiled detectives. Like them, they are loners who seem happy without the everyday support of family or friends, able to work without sleep for days and to show incredible physical endurance even when sick or injured. Still, they are not purely masculinized women, for they possess the basic features of the hard-boiled detective but include some characteristics that seem more traditionally feminine. Moreover, Kinsey and V.I. Warshawski are not similar in their combination of masculine and feminine traits and, indeed, later women hard-boiled detectives show more individuality than their male equivalents.

At first reading the similarities are more striking than the differences because noir crime fiction, like most popular genres, is centred on plot, setting and mood rather than character. Grafton's novels are set in California while Paretsky's are in Chicago, but both, in true noir tradition, emphasize the moral degradation and political corruption of American society. All the usual classes of society appear, with the emphasis being on the rich and powerful along with the poor and criminal. Rapid action, frequent acts of violence described in detail and a mood of bitterness even when the crimes are solved are just as common in the women writers' novels as they are in those by men. Furthermore, both women detectives show the same fanatical dedication to their work, and are ready to employ illegal means if legal ones will take too long or are not available.

Finally, both women employ the sarcastic, quick-witted tough language in dialogues that is so characteristic of male noir heroes. For example, in Paretsky's *Killing Orders* (1985),

V. I. Warshawski gets a telephone call from her cousin Albert, whom she dislikes; he complains he has been trying to reach her for a long time and demands to know where she has been. Warshawski snaps back ironically, "At an all-night sex and dope orgy. The sex was terrible but the coke was great. Want to come next time?" (Paretsky, *Killing Orders* 37) Grafton's Kinsey is even more prone to wise-cracking on all occasions. When she is trapped by a killer who has planted a time bomb in her home, she is frightened, but says coolly, "Sorry to interrupt you. [...] Don't stick around on my account" (Grafton, *E Is For Evidence* 193). In the same novel, catching up with an old school friend who admits "Someone asked me once which I'd rather have – sex or a warm chocolate cookie," Kinsey immediately responds, "Go for the cookies. You can bake 'em yourself" (Grafton, *E Is For Evidence* 39). This repeated irony makes the women detectives sound tough, especially in dangerous situations.

Yet differences do appear, and they are not insignificant ones. It should be remembered that hard-boiled detectives are the first-person narrators of their stories, so that readers are inside their minds all through the narrative. While male noir detectives may feel uneasy, they never feel the fear or even panic that often affects Grafton's or Paretsky's heroes as they face very dangerous situations or are attacked by villains. In fact, the typical climactic scenes of these novels depict the women detectives just barely escaping death at the hands of the villains. Moreover, throughout the novels, while male hard-boiled detectives signal depression, stress or loneliness by hard drinking, female ones do reflect on their situations and wonder whether they have made the right decisions in life.

Sue Grafton's Kinsey is closer to the classical model of the male hard-boiled detective. She has no close female friends: she does have a few male ones, though unless they are policemen, she does not confide the details of her cases at all to them. She is a private investigator by profession and was once a member of the police force. Occasionally Kinsey has doubts about her appearance and clothes, but as she persists in not wearing jewellery or makeup, cuts her own hair and wears by preference jeans all the time, she does not show the stereotypically feminine strong concern with one's appearance. Kinsey has no family and does not want one, does not like children and, though she was married twice (and divorced twice), does not seem to be looking for a long-term relationship. She has no domestic qualities at all and eats by preference fast food; her idea of cooking is making a peanut butter and pickle sandwich.

In Sara Paretsky's novels V.I. Warshawski (like Kinsey, she has a first name that could be male or female) has a few more traditionally feminine interests and characteristics than Grafton's detective. She does cook dinners for friends and often dresses up according to recent fashions. The men who meet her consider her very attractive, something that is never said about Kinsey. In addition, in each novel readers learn more about her parents, now both dead, and friends, mostly women, who mean a good deal to her. Although she lives alone, she goes out frequently. While Kinsey is true to the noir detective tradition of not being well-educated or widely-read, V.I. Warshawski has a degree as a lawyer, though she now works as a private investigator. Moreover, she sings classical music well and plays the piano, and is generally a cultivated person. Paradoxically, then, she is far more personally violent than Kinsey and far better at hand-to-hand combat, though she too feels fear during such struggles. She also has more political interests and refers frequently to municipal issues in the Chicago area.

Still, it has to be kept in mind that these are aspects of her personality that readers pick up only by reading several of the novels, and that in the course of these fast-moving action stories, Warshawski seems more masculine than might appear from this analysis. Some of the differences that have been listed, after all, owe more to class than gender differences, for Warshawski clearly belongs to the middle class, while Grafton's Kinsey is working-class in origin and attitudes.

11. THE POLICE PROCEDURAL AS ANOTHER KIND OF CRIME FICTION: ITS HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS

Although the police appear as characters in both Golden Age and hard-boiled crime fiction, they are generally given a minor role and are often contrasted to the private detective as lacking imagination and being too quick to come to a conclusion. However, after the second world war, both in Britain and the United States, a new kind of crime fiction appears in which the police and their methods of investigation are at the heart of these narratives. What is interesting is that this kind of crime story can be found both as novels and as radio and later television shows, and is immediately extremely popular. Still, this new genre does not in any sense replace the Golden Age and noir narratives, which continue to attract large numbers of readers: the police procedural is a parallel development.

George N. Dove, whose book-length study entitled *The Police Procedural*, though published in 1982, is still a major source on the subject, agrees with other historians of detective fiction that the first true police procedural was Lawrence Treat's *Vas in Victim*, published in 1945. However, he also indicates that the great success of the genre began with the American police crime series *Dragnet*, which began as a radio program in 1949 and was transferred to the television screen in 1952, where it ran for seven years. Then a number of writers started police procedural series that consolidated the genre in the public eye: of the early writers, the best-known is John Creasey (writing as J.J. Marric), whose series about George Gideon of Scotland Yard in London established many of the narrative traditions of the new genre (Dove 2-14).

A major novelty in the police procedural is, as its name suggests, that it pays a good deal of attention to the way that police investigations really work and so seems more realistic than Golden Age or Noir crime fiction. Both of the latter genres feature a detective who is in many ways a super-hero, whether male or female, able to solve the most complicated of crimes and, although this is not emphasized, depending a good deal on luck to meet the right people who can help him or her. Whether he or she is super-intelligent or super-strong, this detective is clearly not an ordinary man or woman. The readers' identification with the detective has a strong element of wish fulfillment, of taking part in a fantasy of greater success than most people are likely to achieve.

The police in police procedurals are, for the most part, much more ordinary individuals: they may be clever or stupid, hard-working or lazy, have a strong variety of private interests that interfere with their work and are presented as individualized characters. What is most important, however, is that they belong to a strict hierarchy, are assigned specific tasks in an investigation, some of which are dull and lead nowhere, and work in pairs and teams, reporting back regularly to police headquarters. In addition, the requirements of the law for evidence against criminals means that they have to write a

vast number of shorter or longer reports, a task most of them dislike but do carry out. Most of the writers of police procedurals, especially the earlier generation, worked in the police themselves, while others carry out careful research on police practice: many of their novels begin with words of thanks to specific police departments or individuals who have helped them get the procedure right.

Nowadays, many crime novels featuring police officers have moved from the original plot and character formulas by incorporating elements from Golden Age and, especially, from hard-boiled crime fiction. It is a necessity of narrative art that one or two fictional police officers dominate an investigation in a way that real police detectives do not necessarily do, but lately the trend has been to focus much more closely on one member of the police, making him or her closer to the super-hero and, in an unrealistic fashion, freeing this protagonist from the team work and hierarchical structure in which the real police actually work. However, even these novels embody the core features of the original police procedurals.

The essential nature of a police procedural is clearer when one considers an example from the early novels. *Gideon's Day*, published in 1955, was the first of the long-running Gideon series written by John Creasey. As was standard in that period, the novel is not long, less than 200 pages, yet it describes six different cases that Senior Superintendent George Gideon works on in a single day – and most are actually solved within a period of about eighteen hours. They are not all the kinds of crimes that would interest Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot or Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe: in one, for example, a young man with a criminal record beats an elderly woman running a small shop to death for the sake of a fairly small amount of money. The other crimes are a mixed bag of those committed by professional criminals and those carried out by people with no record of previous crime. For instance, Arthur Sayer gives in to his sexual desire for very young girls and rapes and kills some before he is caught. Another man with a clean record, Alec Fitzroy, organizes the robbery of a bank's safety deposit boxes but is trapped by the police and shoots his way out, killing at least one man. In another case, a series of robberies of the Royal Mail is finally solved, though only after some more killings. One crime may turn out to be entangled in another one, especially where the professional crime world is concerned.

In most of these crimes there is no real mystery as such to be solved. The novels are told in the third person, so that sometimes readers enter the minds of criminals planning their crimes or carrying them out. In other cases there may be some doubts about one person or another, but these do not last long. Although Gideon takes part to some extent in all the investigations, he is still dependent on his team of officers who carry out inquiries and report to him, as well as to police informers from the criminal underworld. Yet the novel is exciting to read, moving quickly back and forth between the different cases, and often rising to acute suspense: will the little girl taken by the pedophile murderer escape or be killed? Will the police informer, now hunted by mob members, get away? When the bank robbery manages to go wrong, will its organizer manage to get through the police chain or be caught?

Still another thread in the narrative is Gideon's personal life. Right through the novel he thinks about his relations with his wife of many years, how close he and Kate were and how far they have now moved apart. The police are notoriously a profession troubled by failed marriages, as the demands of overtime work and the intensity of some of the experiences

during work make it hard for a police officer to keep up a successful family life. Gideon is aware that Kate is unhappy with his long absences and, in one very interesting scene, he recalls how angry she was when she found out she was pregnant for the fifth time. In *Gideon's Day* he begins to make an effort to drop back at home during the day and to talk to her about his work at least a little. The novel concludes with a warmer relationship between the two. Since police procedurals are almost always written as a chronological series, the writers have the opportunity to develop the police officers' personal lives over the course of a number of years, showing marital changes, problems with children, and even romantic developments. Characters also age and mature in these series, which almost never happens in Golden Age or hard-boiled series: here the detective is fixed permanently, with very few exceptions, at a certain age. Christie's Miss Marple, for example, is an elderly woman in the first novel in which she appears in the 1920s and remains an elderly woman, only a little more troubled by arthritis, in the novels of the 1960s.

Furthermore, in *Gideon's Day*, George Gideon is frequently seen discussing his cases with officers senior to him, a rule in police work. He also spends a good deal of time with his assistant Chief Inspector Lemaitre, a man who irritates him, but with whom he still shares his ideas about how he should proceed. Then there are a whole range of experts of different kinds who are mentioned and who provide scientific analysis of clues found at a crime scene. Gideon gets on extremely well with his seniors and juniors, which is not completely realistic; still, their presence in the narrative reminds the readers of the official teamwork which is essential in police investigations.

Finally, although the Gideon series, especially in the opening novels, is not very critical of British society or the government, there are still allusions in *Gideon's Day* to the fact that the police are overworked and that they do not have enough staff to cover all the crimes they have to deal with. This novel also includes as one of its storylines that of a corrupt police officer who has been taking substantial bribes from a major criminal, a kind of problem that is later developed in other police procedurals. Indeed, the fact of corruption higher up in government administration and how it makes it hard for the police to function becomes a major theme in crime fiction centred on a police station. Yet Creasey's series is realistic in most ways, including the fact that some of the characters threatened by criminals do suffer or even die before the police can help.

YOUR INPUT: 5

WHAT KIND OF WORK DOES THE POLICE IN YOUR COMMUNITY DO, ASIDE FROM SOLVING MAJOR CRIMES? HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN A POLICE STATION OF ANY KIND? DESCRIBE WHAT YOU SAW.

12. WHAT ARE THE MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF POLICE PROCEDURALS?

1. Social realism.

Although the police hierarchy and police stations are fictionalized to some extent, they still closely reflect the real police in a specific place. This is named if it is a large city, but may be fictional if it is a small town. At first police procedurals were almost all set in cities, but later many were placed in towns or even rural regions. This helps create a **closed**

setting of a kind, as the police in charge of a town or part of a city tend to know their territory intimately, especially the minor ranks of criminals who work in it. Furthermore, there are often many references to the characteristics of the place itself.

2. Moral and ideological values of a conservative kind.

The police tend to be conservative in their attitudes and values, and reflect the conservative middle-class value system of their day. Though they may feel sympathetic to some small-time criminals, they tend to see the world in black and white terms, good or evil. Often, especially in early police procedurals, they are quick to stereotype different classes and races, and to apply conservative gender codes. However, there are differences between the British and the American schools in this respect, as the American police procedurals were earlier to emphasize that many police officers are in part corrupt.

1. The detective represents and re-establishes order.

The police have great authority and power in society, and so the detectives in police procedurals have a strong sense of their right and duty to enforce the laws. Unless they are corrupt themselves, they see their role as good fighting against evil and have a strong need to catch criminals. Often they feel dissatisfied with laws that seem too weak in punishing crime, or laws that make it hard for them to work and collect evidence. They feel great satisfaction in arresting most criminals, but are not optimistic about social problems in general, as they see far too much of the dark side of their communities. Early police procedurals tend to end more optimistically, with the stopping of a crime, while more recent ones show the police as exhausted and depressed by their work.

4. The police detective often uses force as a necessary weapon against crime, along with rational study of evidence and psychological deduction.

Police detectives are trained and allowed to use physical violence and weapons in the course of their work, though they generally are subject to inquiry if they shoot or kill someone. However, they spend a great deal of time in going through old records and questioning everyone living in the neighbourhood of a crime. Most of this is only summarized in police procedural fiction, as it is dull work and takes hours, days or even weeks. They also wait to get laboratory results from specialists (fingerprints, analysis of blood, fabric, etc.). Instead of the more informal interview carried out by detectives in Golden Age and Noir fiction, police interviews are often very official, both with suspects or people who have been arrested.

5. Violence is described in detail, more or less depending on the writer. The police officer is often in danger.

Police officers often are injured or killed in the line of duty, so this is not at all uncommon in police procedurals. The fear of this happening affects a police detective's family relationships or romances as well. Moreover, the police often are called in to help in crises like attempts at suicide or fires when they must also risk their lives. Such episodes tend to make the protagonists in police procedurals heroic, as they show courage in terrible circumstances.

5. As these are continuing series, romance and love in the lives of police characters are often part of the plot.

Here again a greater realism often appears than in earlier crime fiction genres, as major characters in a police procedural fall in love, get married, have children and are either happy or have problems within their families, including divorce and serious issues with their children. In the first police procedurals, especially the British ones, there are only very muted references to sexuality, in line with the moral restrictions on popular fiction in the immediate postwar period, but later a certain number of references do appear.

6. Police detectives in early police procedurals and some later ones feel very much part of their community and know a great deal about how it works.

The police may be respected or hated, but they are perceived as important and powerful by their community. They tend to know major politicians and wealthy people of influence, as well as many ordinary people. In later police procedurals, characters are often deeply cynical about their societies, and especially about those in power.

8. The general tone of these narratives is exciting, fast-moving, and action-oriented.

Humour may or may not be used, but it is the very busy schedule of the police, and the sudden emergency calls that come in which create fast-paced narrative. Strong suspense is created, as readers of these third-person narratives often know both what the criminals and the police are thinking and doing.

9. The narratives begin with one or more crimes that need to be investigated, some new and others continuing from earlier days. They conclude with some crimes solved, though the criminals may not be brought to justice.

Unlike the noir thrillers, which focus on a single major criminal act, police procedurals always include a number of crimes. Moreover, the next day will bring further crimes, some minor and others very serious. In this way, though there is closure of a kind, the police procedural has a fairly **open ending**. Tomorrow new problems will arise for the police to deal with, while the police officers' personal lives will also show new developments.

13. SUSPENSE THRILLERS: HOW DO THEY DIFFER FROM DETECTIVE FICTION?

Suspense thrillers belong to the large family of narrative that is called crime fiction, but they differ in many critical ways and often appeal to readers who do not like detective stories. The very words used for this extremely popular genre in print and cinematic versions define what readers expect to get from it. A 'thrilling' experience is a very exciting one that usually includes an element of fear, a pleasurable fear in those cases where one feels safe, as in carnival rides, and a less pleasant one if the situation is a dark street and a man with a knife. The other term, 'suspense', means that readers or viewers want very strongly to know what will happen next, and fear that it might be something horrifying. For readers and cinema or television viewers of suspense thrillers, the ideal is to be gripped by the narrative, to be unable to stop reading or watching it, and to feel a maximum of strong sensations – while knowing perfectly well that this is not reality but only an imaginary situation.

With this in mind, it is easy to see that the kind of crime fiction that is closest to suspense thrillers is the hard-boiled detective or noir fiction, where violent encounters and chases are common and often follow each other in quick succession. The Golden Age clue-puzzle narrative moves much more slowly, giving time for reflection: it does contain suspense, but this is an intellectual kind of suspense, a strong desire to solve the mystery and find out who committed the crime and why. The traditional police procedural also does not provide the unremitting kind of action demanded in a suspense thriller, since by definition it has to show how the police really work, with at least some references to the boredom of filling out reports, the long hours spent questioning people near a crime scene, and the rigid administrative structure that dictates the choices a police detective can take.

Still, although hard-boiled detective stories and suspense thrillers overlap thematically in depicting a corrupt modern society in which danger and violence are commonplace, especially if one tries to disturb the power of those at the top, the two genres have distinct differences. The hard-boiled detective novel has a fairly rigid, formula-bound narrative structure. Here the central character is the hard-boiled detective, who is usually the first-person narrator, and traditionally a strong young man. In a suspense thriller, a third-person narrator is often used, or the story moves from one first-narrator to another – although there is no rule here. A major difference is that in suspense thrillers, although they include mysteries, these puzzles are often multiple and keep appearing as the narrative progresses. For example, in Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, a man and a young woman are the protagonists trying to make sense of a mysterious death in Paris. However, very quickly these amateur detectives become potential victims and have to flee before they are murdered themselves. They are never in possession of all the clues but progress from one mystery to another. The novel is also typical of suspense thrillers in its international settings and rapid movements from one country to another and one place in a country to another. Because the readers know something about the villains and their plans, two issues are put in suspense: why are these crimes taking place? And will the protagonists survive?

One of the most popular narrative elements in a suspense thriller is the chase scene: usually thrillers contain one or more, ranging from characters simply running away to pursuits in cars, airplanes or whatever. If the suspense thriller is a film, then these scenes involve many very complex special effects and the destruction of any number of vehicles, bridges, buildings, boats and the like. There may be a good deal of shooting going on as well, though the protagonists manage not to be hit by any bullets.

In general, all narratives are artificial and are likely to include an unrealistic dependence on coincidence, illogical jumps in plot, bizarre changes in character and psychologically unlikely behavior. However, suspense thrillers certainly outdo other genres of crime fiction in their use of improbability. Readers and viewers do not mind at all: the suspense thriller is escapist culture aimed at arousing strong emotion, not rational reflection and, in any case, the plot moves so quickly that there is little time for logical criticism.

Thrillers themselves fall into a variety of kinds depending on plot elements. Probably the best-known of the older kinds is the **spy thriller**, in which the main character is employed by a government agency to spy on foreign countries or on important bureaucrats and government figures who are suspected of being double agents. In the Cold War period after the second world war, when the Soviet Union on one side and the United States and Britain on the other employed a network of spies and agents all over the world against

each other, this genre fit in very well with the political atmosphere of conflict, threat of war and real wars conducted in variety of countries. These thrillers were often written in series with the same spy as the protagonist or the spy service itself as a kind of collective protagonist.

Of these, the most famous and successful have been the James Bond series written by Ian Fleming (1908-1964). Fleming, a product of the British upper classes who worked as a journalist in Moscow for a time, created in James Bond the kind of hero that has become a stereotype: intelligent, with sophisticated tastes in food, alcohol, expensive cars and other upper-class pleasures, yet physically very strong and often equipped with the latest in technical weaponry. Bond is a handsome man who attracts women and regularly falls in love with one during each novel, but this love relationship always ends, leaving him free to engage in another one in the next text. Like many thriller heroes and detectives in general, Bond has his own ideas on how to run his work, and so often gets into trouble with his superiors in the British Secret Service. However, usually at the cost of many lives, he succeeds in defeating the enemy. Fleming also developed a very popular form of the villain in his novels, which has also been imitated by later thriller writers: the all-powerful yet eccentric villain, fond of arranging sadistic tortures and horrible forms of death, and yet intellectually interesting and capable of intelligent conversation (for example, as in *Dr Goldfinger*).

Fleming's series reflects the concerns of the immediate postwar period, when the British people lived among ruins, still dealt with rationing and had to accept that Britain was no longer a great player in global politics. In one sense James Bond's elegant and wealthy way of life can be interpreted as a form of wish-fulfillment fantasy. In Fleming's novels, American spies are usually treated as inferior and Bond's victories allow the illusion that British power is still significant. Furthermore, although Fleming died in 1964, the continuing production of James Bond films and the re-makes has kept the James Bond formula alive in global popular culture.

Another writer of British spy thrillers who has gained world renown is John Le Carre (b.1931, the pseudonym of David John Moore Cornwall). Like Fleming, he enjoyed an upper-class education; then he actually worked for a number of years in the British spy system. His novels are longer and intellectually more complex than Fleming's, though the basic formula is similar: the heads of the British Foreign Service, the spies, one of whom is the protagonist of the novel, the struggle against an enemy that is extremely wealthy, powerful and unscrupulous, a love affair with a beautiful woman which generally ends or she is killed, and all the usual suspense thriller chases, betrayals, and physical violence.

However, unlike Fleming's James Bond, who always emerges safe at the end of the novel, Le Carre's heroes often die in carrying out their work. The major villain is usually defeated but at a cost. In other cases, the spy hero himself (for these are all male protagonists in the vast majority of thrillers before the end of the 20th century) is betrayed by an agreement between the government and the villains. Indeed, the picture that Le Carre depicts is far from James Bond enjoying the pleasures of fine hotels, resorts, excellent restaurants and the like. The typical Le Carre hero, whether lower or upper class in origin, spends a good deal of time in a grey world of rain, cold, dirty third-class hotels and loneliness. Indeed, Le Carre is often classified as a 'literary writer' whose novels devote many pages to the feelings of alienation, loneliness, fear and failure of the spy hero. For example, in *The Night Manager* (1993), Jonathan Case works is a British spy who often plays the part of a

manager in a luxurious hotel. All through the novel he is haunted by the fact that he was trusted by a beautiful Egyptian woman with important documents about international arms smuggling and handed these over to his superiors in the service. The result is that his source is betrayed: the woman whom he had fallen in love with is tortured to death. At first he leaves the service but is lured back to help bring down the British criminal who was part of this killing. The novel has all the usual thriller elements, while Case himself is a trained spy with amazing physical strength, but his superhero traits are less interesting than his doubts and feelings of guilt. In the end the usual betrayals occur among higher British government officials, but Case himself resists and remains true to another woman he has come to love. Le Carre's novels in this sense are close to ones that can also be read as thrillers but which are generally accepted as 'high literature', the novels of Graham Greene (1904-1991).

Another variety of thriller is the **legal thriller**, of whom the current leader is held to be John Grisham (b.1955), a lawyer and state politician by profession. His second novel, *The Firm* (1991), established his world-wide career, as well as the basic formula of characters and plot that are typical of his novels and many legal thrillers in general. In such novels the protagonist is not a spy or detective but a lawyer, usually a perfectly honourable one, often young and still not very experienced. Grisham does not write series with the same lawyer; this would increase the improbability of novels that are already full of it. *The Firm* opens in a way that is common in many thrillers, with the villain, not the hero: in this case an unnamed man is considering which of a number of young lawyers to hire for "the firm", a large financial company rather surprisingly located not in a major American city but in the small one of Memphis in the United States. It is clear that there is something shady and illegal going on, as the man recalls a mistake made earlier in hiring an overly honest and zealous woman lawyer: she had to be fired and shortly afterwards died in a car accident. The experienced readers of thrillers need no other clues to see that the 'accident' was undoubtedly arranged and that the firm is run by some form of mafia. In this way, the readers already know more about the true situation, while the lawyer hero only learns it when he is informed by the FBI. In the end, he understands that he is being betrayed by the FBI as well, manages to steal millions of dollars from the firm and escapes with his wife to a Caribbean island. Although the firm itself is closed by the FBI, the novel ends with the hero and his wife well aware that both government organizations and the mafia will be after them, and that their chances of living a peaceful life are almost zero.

Unlike many crime novels, thrillers tend to be connected to the political beliefs and concerns of the period in which they are written. For example, the ones created in the Cold War period by Ian Fleming and John Le Carre often refer to Soviet-American conflicts and heighten anxiety by creating many double agents and casting doubt on the fidelity of the agencies supposed to protect Western states. As time passes, the Middle East, which at first is depicted as an area colonized by different Western countries, becomes more of an independent player with Arab political goals taking on new importance. In recent thrillers wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are likely to play a part, along with much more emphasis on terrorist forces carrying out crimes in countries like Britain and the United States. New kinds of international crime also appear, from killing people to sell their organs, trade in children for prostitution and different sorts of manipulation of information technology. To be sure, these issues are greatly simplified, but they are more prominent in the motivation of wrongdoers in thrillers than in other kinds of crime fiction, where violence is more likely to have been carried out for personal reasons.

14. WHAT ARE THE MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF THRILLERS?

1. Social realism.

More than any other genre of crime fiction, the action in thrillers moves rapidly from one place to another and may take place in a number of different countries of the world. Spy thrillers in particular depict a very wide variety of settings, though they favour major cities from London to Tokyo where important institutions and government offices are located. Protagonists in thrillers may find themselves in jungles and deserts, but are even more likely to be in settings associated with the very rich and powerful. In this sense, they depict setting in a romantic rather than a realistic way. However, many thrillers give details about an institution, whether legal or not, and these details are often researched and fairly reliable. In this way readers enjoy learning about the structure of the British or American secret service, a legal firm, advanced technology and illegal financial transactions including drugs and arms from an insider's point of view. Exotic settings are also popular among thriller writers, and these give the readers the pleasure of imaginary tourism.

2. The collapse of moral and ideological values.

While the hard-boiled detective story or police procedural often depicts Western society as corrupt, this is usually at the level of certain people or organizations within a single city. In the thriller the stakes are much higher, as powerful governments and their legal institutions agree to falsify evidence, have troublesome people killed and collaborate with criminals to a much greater degree than the general public realizes. This moral decay is opposed by a small number of characters, including the protagonist, who still have a sense of honour (though a rather battered one, as they too are corrupt in some ways). Therefore, the old battle of good against evil is fought out at an international level, for the victory of evil here means wars and suffering for hundreds of thousands of people. Nor do these narratives end with good winning; any victories are limited and often cost the lives of major characters with whom the readers identify, sometimes including the protagonist.

3. The protagonist solves mysteries but does not re-establish social or moral order.

In effect, even when the protagonist tries to solve mysteries, he or she does not function as a true detective. Most of the revelations come from someone telling the protagonist the truth. Moreover, the protagonist almost always betrays someone or some principles in the course of the action.

4. The protagonist uses physical force along with observation and reason.

The degree to which a thriller protagonist uses physical force depends on the kind of thriller and the choice of protagonist. Spies in spy thrillers are very prone to using their fists and a variety of weapons to handle dangerous situations, while a lawyer in a legal thriller by John Grisham is not trained or accustomed to physical combat and uses force only as a desperate measure of self-defence. Protagonists in techno-thrillers may excel in intelligence in certain fields and use computers as a kind of weapon.

5. Violence is described in detail, including the suffering the detective endures.

In suspense thrillers, one of the things that readers fear will happen soon – and it does happen – is scenes of violence, given in detail, including scenes of the main characters

being beaten up or tortured. In addition, violence also appears in scenes of car or plane crashes, explosions and the like.

6. There are many scenes of pursuit in thrillers.

Chase scenes and pursuit of other characters are the hallmark of thrillers of all kinds. In general, at a certain point in the action, the protagonist falls into danger and often is pursued by dangerous figures. Pursuits may last a few minutes or hours or go on for days, as the character drives or flies from one country to another. In film versions of thrillers, these pursuit scenes become even more important and result in the mass destruction of cars, planes, bridges, buildings and many people who happen to be around.

7. The action in thrillers moves very fast, with many unexpected turns and twists in the plot.

All popular genres of narrative move quickly, but the successful thriller usually progresses at breakneck speed after the introductory part, and the pace quickens in the last third of the text. The story also depends on a good number of betrayals and transformations of characters: those whom the protagonist confided in often turn out to be villains (and the readers get clues about this before the protagonists, thus increasing suspense). Very ordinary people can suddenly turn into pathological monsters, while those in high positions reveal that they have no moral principles at all. Critics who object to the genre often point out the high degree of coincidence in these plots, and the psychological and physical improbabilities in which they abound, but readers who are caught up in the story do not care about these at all.

8. Both sexuality and love often play a part in thrillers.

Rather surprisingly, given the emphasis on exciting action, sexuality and even real love appear frequently in thrillers. The male protagonist (most are male in thrillers) may engage in sexual relations with more than one woman, but often also falls genuinely in love. Some protagonists (usually not those in spy thrillers) have a wife or a long-term partner, and this makes their escape more dangerous. The death of a lover is a major traumatic event in a thriller.

9. The ending of a thriller may be seen as both open and closed.

The narratives have a **closed ending** in that the current story is finished: the major criminal activity has usually ended or been stopped. However, in a fair number of cases, although the criminals may even be killed or arrested by the police, the larger criminal organizations and the corruption within governments, including secret service organizations, continue. Whether alive or dead, the protagonist's efforts have not been much use. Then one can refer to the ending as more **open**. Still, the current sequence of violence which constituted the problem of the novel has come to an end, at least for the time.

15. NEWER TRENDS IN CRIME FICTION: AN EXPLOSION OF SUB-GENRES AND CROSSOVER GENRES

While Golden Age clue-puzzle novels, noir fiction, police procedurals and suspense thrillers proliferated after World War II and found eager audiences, more and more writers began to experiment with these genres, sometimes creating specialized sub-genres within the

dominant ones, and often writing crossovers between two genres. If they are well-written, all of these find readers easily, as the whole point of popular fiction is that readers discover the kind of narrative formula that they enjoy, very quickly read all the older classics in the field and then crave newer texts of the same basic kind. Agatha Christie, for example, in effect created a need; as a single writer she could not produce enough clue-puzzle stories to satisfy her audience so that they began to look for other writers working in a similar way. When this happened, it became clear that Christie's novels were popular for a number of reasons. Some readers liked the eccentricity of a detective like Hercule Poirot, and so writers created such detectives. Others were more interested in the English village setting for a mystery story, and fictional English villages troubled by mysterious murders have sprung up by the hundreds under the clever hands of not only British writers but also Canadian and American ones.

Furthermore, many mystery writers have found that readers enjoy a series of detective novels that have a specific kind of setting, character or theme. By now there are countless numbers of these specialized fields – Christie-type mysteries that feature recipes and cooking, or travel abroad, or the Jewish faith. Some detectives are individualized by having a pet cat that helps solve the mystery. Others are rather improbable detectives, like professional burglars or over-eighty-year-old residents in homes for the elderly, but a clever writer can do well with a series that stands out like this. One of the best series currently going is Alexander McCall Smith's set in Botswana and featuring Mma Ramotswe, who sets up the delightfully named "No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency", which she runs with considerable flare and success. This series has many Golden Age features, including a slower pace, the detailed social analysis and reliance on knowledge of people shown by the detective, as well as the inevitably happy ending with all crimes solved. Still, it has borrowed a degree of realism from the police procedural, for Mma Ramotswe deals with more than one case at a time, and works on ones that range from the trivial to the dangerous. Here much of the charm is the author's ability (he spent many years in Botswana) to present life in this African country from the inside without exoticizing it.

English-language writers have also started situating their crime fiction series in foreign countries with which they have had some contact. These are distinctly crossover novels which borrow features from more than one sub-genre of crime fiction. For example, Nicholas Freeling has written two different series, one with a Dutch police detective and the other with a French one, while H.R.F. Keating, a British writer, has chosen as his police detective, Inspector Ghote, a member of the C.I.D. in Bombay, India. English-language readers seem ready to accept foreign settings interpreted by British and American writers more than the native products in crime fiction produced by writers of different countries which have to be translated.

If there is a tendency that stands out, it is the increasing popularity of detectives in series to be members of the police department rather than private investigators. Private eyes are not common detectives in crime fiction anymore, though amateur detectives who, somewhat improbably, have to solve one murder after another, are very common. Jo Dereske, an American of Lithuanian origin, for example, sets her Miss Zukas series on the northwest coast of the United States and has a librarian as her detective. Ms. Helma Zukas, neat to the point of pedantry, like the stereotypical librarian, is a descendant in literary terms of Christie's Miss Marple, but she has the features of a woman of the second half of the 20th century: she has a profession and lives by herself, drives a car, gradually becomes romantically involved with the city's chief of police and has an eccentric artist friend Ruth

who connects her to worlds that would otherwise be foreign to her. One can find any number of fictional detectives today, who, like Miss Zukas, are basically curious about what happens around them and care about justice (major characteristics of Miss Marple), while also benefitting from police help and information.

The readers of crime fiction are not a homogeneous group so that their motives in picking up a novel of this kind or watching a television or cinema film in this genre are varied. Some readers like only a certain kind of crime fiction and refuse to consider any others, while some read Golden Age novels when they want to relax in a quiet way with the guarantee of a happy ending, but read a police procedural or thriller when they are in a different kind of mood.

16. THE POLICEMAN AS DETECTIVE IN CONTEMPORARY CRIME FICTION SERIES: SUPER-DETECTIVES, FATHERLY FIGURES AND MAVERICKS

Both in the English-speaking world and beyond it, some of the international best-selling crime fiction series in the last twenty years have been those featuring a policeman with particular characteristics as the detective. These can be divided into three basic prototypes: the super-detective, the fatherly figure, generally the chief of the police section in which he works (no women chief of police have yet appeared in series, as this would be too unrealistic, given prevailing gender codes), and the maverick policeman who clearly suffers from a variety of psychological problems, most often shown in alcoholism, heavy smoking and an inability to form stable personal relations. All three tend to act on their own more than would actually occur in a real police system, but the maverick in particular repeatedly breaks the rules and takes action on his or her own, despite specific prohibitions from those in authority. These series tend to run over a long number of years and analyse a particular society, both reflecting changes in social conditions and norms and commenting directly on these. The detective may also change to some extent, without altering his or her essential characteristics.

17. P. D. JAMES' CHIEF INSPECTOR DALGLIESH SERIES: THE SUPER-DETECTIVE

In the 1960s, when Agatha Christie's long career was drawing to an end, publishers and reviewers of crime fiction were constantly on the look-out for a new 'Queen of Crime'. The title has been given, without much basis except the desire to advertise a writer, to more than one woman writer of the genre. In particular, two very different British writers, Phyllis Dorothy James (b.1920; always known in criticism as P.D.James) and Ruth Rendell (b.1930) have long been seen as continuing the tradition of Christie as extremely popular women detective story writers. However, in both cases the series created by these writers feature a police detective, signaling the effect of the police procedural and bringing with it distinct differences from the Christie narrative formulas.

In 1962 P.D. James published her first detective novel featuring Adam Dalgliesh, *Cover Her Face*, and has continued publishing regularly, with her latest work, *The Private Patient*, appearing in 2008. The early novels do indeed show their connection with the Golden Age tradition, as there is a strong emphasis on a closed circle of characters who might have

committed the murder. *Cover Her Face* is set in an English village in the early 1960s: the victim is a servant, Sally Jupp, but not at all the kind of servant that appeared in countless interwar novels. The Maxie family, like most postwar English upper-class families, is suffering from increased property taxes and reduced incomes, and barely manages to keep alive their estate and role as a leading family among the local gentry. They accept Sally as a maid from an institution which helps women who have children out of wedlock. Sally, however, aside from being very attractive, enjoys making trouble and manipulating people, and suddenly announces that Stephen Maxie, the heir, has proposed marriage to her. Class feeling is still so powerful that this is considered a sufficient motive for one of the Maxie family members to have killed her that very night.

The novel soon establishes a short list of possible suspects, each of whom is interrogated by Dalgliesh. References to police procedure do appear, but are rather perfunctory, and it is Dalgliesh who has flashes of intuition that enable him to eventually solve the crime. In addition, James makes him a very handsome man and elements of romance in his relationship with one suspect appear near the end of the novel. Although this first novel in the Dalgliesh series is not completely typical of the later ones, as they are much longer and more complicated in plot, it does contain some of the characteristics that mark all of James' work. One is an acute sensitivity to British class distinctions, with people of the working class or lower middle class being seen as less intelligent, lacking in good taste and often morally irresponsible. James' own origins may be called aspiring middle-middle class, as her father was a civil servant, but not wealthy. As the series progresses, Dalgliesh becomes increasingly linked to the upper class with titled friends, intellectual interests (he is a published poet) and an easy familiarity with literature, architecture, classical music and other canonical cultural fields.

Further, James tends to make murder victims unsympathetic and in large part to blame for the anger that they arouse in someone more sympathetic who eventually kills them. This is quite unlike Agatha Christie, in whose novels the murderer can be anyone at all, and may even be a highly sympathetic character, while victims may be completely innocent. Although political issues of the day do not enter the novels, it is significant that P.D. James holds a very conservative view of life and literature, and eventually was rewarded for her long career with a life peerage granted to her through the Conservative Party. Many crime fiction readers can be classified as omnivores, but there are also those who hold to a rather snobbish notion that some crime fiction is purely popular literature, while a few select writers (and James is often cited as one) write 'serious literature.'

Class feeling is especially evident in James' presentation of a woman police detective, Kate Miskin, who plays an increasingly important role as one of Dalgliesh's younger colleagues in the later novels. Miskin has an almost melodramatically unfortunate social origin, not simply working class, but abandoned by her mother and raised by a very poor grandmother in a disreputable part of London. The comfortably off and rising working classes, which are so important in British society, do not seem to exist in James' fictional England. Miskin is made to be socially awkward, physically unattractive and hopelessly in love with Dalgliesh; she is also tormented by feelings of social inferiority which affect her to the point that she resents other police officers who, like Dalgliesh, know the right kind of wine to be served with every course and recognize little-known literary quotations.

However, to be fair to James, she does gradually smooth over her portrayal of Kate Miskin, letting her become more attractive and, in the last novels, giving her a promising if unlikely lover in the person of a colleague who is very attractive. In addition, she saves her superior officer more than once, and, as an active figure in the plot, becomes almost more interesting than the static Dalgliesh. Meanwhile, Dalgliesh's love relationships are generally unfortunate, even when he marries a woman he has been courting for years.

Gender issues are treated with ambiguity in James' work. Although some critics have attempted to see her two novels about a woman private detective, Cordelia Gray, as early feminist detective fiction, this does not work well when the novels themselves are analysed. In the first of these novels, *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman* (1972), Cordelia encounters a good deal of chauvinism, but it has to be admitted that she is far too sensitive emotionally to serve as a detective in a murder case. Even in the interwar period Agatha Christie created any number of much more strong-minded young women who fall into the role of the detective and manage very well. Women in James' fiction may occupy important professional posts, though it is very rare that they head anything but a school or similar institution. They usually appear as subordinates to a male character, though not necessarily inferior to them in intelligence.

James does not seem to believe in happy families, as almost none appear in her novels. The great majority of her police officers are unmarried, while those characters who are married often do not have children. Adam Dalgliesh himself begins his fictional life as a widower still feeling guilty that his wife died along with the baby after a difficult childbirth. Sometimes he meets women whom he finds attractive, but nothing much comes of these relationships, which are not well developed.. *The Private Patient* does end with his third marriage to a very beautiful and much younger woman who is a teacher at Cambridge University.

Many of James' major characters, including Dalgliesh, suffer from traumatic emotional problems. Those who fall in love most often are rejected, and resort to humiliating measures to win back their lovers. Feelings of degradation and shame appear equally in male and female characters and are typical from the very first novel. This use of neurotic characters seems to have contributed to James' popularity, as complex characterization is often mentioned as a strength in her novels. Nevertheless, on closer examination, like almost all characters in popular narrative genres, her characters are not very profound, but give an impression of depth because they hide tormented feelings under a mask of cool reserve. Still, they are definitely interesting characters, given to emotional outbursts, attempts at suicide or extreme behavior. P.D. James seems to suggest that the well-known upper-class British reserve results in men and women who are unable to communicate and whose passions are repressed until they explode in verbal or physical violence.

What James does carry on from the **clue-puzzle novel** of the Golden Age is a preference for the closed circle of suspects. Occasionally she sets her novels in isolated areas of England, but just as often she achieves the same effect by choosing an institution of some sort for her initial murder. For example, *Original Sin* (1994), is set in a small publishing house, and the intricacies of both the building on the Thames riverside and those of how publishing works are analysed both for reasons of plot and as interesting in themselves. Like Christie, motivation for crimes is still mostly personal, and the staff at this workplace turns out to be intricately bound up in long-held loves and hatreds. At the beginning of *The Murder Room* (2003) Adam Dalgliesh by chance visits a small private museum that includes

an exhibition of crimes of the interwar period; here he manages to meet with a number of people whose lives are intimately connected with the museum in different ways, preparing readers for the first murder that will soon take place. In a similar way, after the introduction of characters in conflict, the action of *The Private Patient* (2008) mostly takes place in an isolated private clinic for plastic surgery in a remote part of Dorset. Although James does not go into medical details of how such clinics really function, enough are given to create the impression of a specific professional workplace, and again are interesting in themselves. This ability to find particular settings for her novels has added to James' reputation, along with her ability to create dramatic characters.

18. RUTH RENDELL'S CHIEF INSPECTOR WEXFORD SERIES: THE FATHERLY POLICE DETECTIVE

Ruth Rendell (b.1930) published her first detective novel and began the Wexford series in 1964, just two years after P.D. James' first book and was also identified as taking up the work of Agatha Christie, even though her detective is a policeman and the novel has distinct features of the police procedural. Nevertheless, in the Wexford novels, the Golden Age traditions can be discerned, though to a lesser degree than in James' novels: Wexford works in a small town in an unnamed English county, apparently based on Suffolk, where Rendell herself has settled. A crime is committed and a range of witnesses and suspects are interrogated; often Wexford discusses the investigation and speculates on possible motives with another policeman, who gradually becomes mainly Mike Burden, another major figure in the series. However, like Gideon in John Creasey's police procedural's, Wexford is depicted as a family man with a wife, Dora, and two daughters, and his professional work is not limited to simply investigating one murder.

Rendell apparently found the formula of the series constricting after a while, as she began publishing crime fiction with more features of the suspense thriller under the name of Barbara Vine. These novels have also been successful, but any new Wexford novel is a guaranteed best-seller.

Since the Wexford series has continued for close to half a century, it provides an interesting example of changes in the format of crime fiction and in social norms in England. The earlier novels are all less than 200 pages, the standard length for a murder mystery from the interwar period onwards. However, as public demand for longer novels grew – multi-generational romances and suspense thrillers became typically much longer – the Wexford stories now are usually between 400 and 500 pages. The same increase in length can be seen in P.D. James' novels. There are a number of standard structural devices that are typical of these long novels in series. Writers increase the length by adding apparently minor crime puzzles which often turn out to be connected to the main crime, or by using a serial killer format, as well as by giving more space to the presentation of the detective's psychological problems or family problems.

At the same time, the writer of a series rarely allows the detective to age normally. In the 1960s Reg Wexford appears at the beginning of the series as a man in his early fifties, but never goes much beyond this in the next five decades. Still, his attitudes change strikingly. In one of the early novels, *Murder Being Once Done* (1972), for example, his wife Dora is presented as a rather silly woman whose wishes he pays no attention to. When he has

gone off for several hours in London without leaving news, and his wife becomes very worried, he never considers apologizing: “Dora’s manner, when she came down, was injured and distrait, but the chief inspector had been married for thirty years and had seldom permitted petticoat government” (Rendell, *Murder Being Once Done* 44).

Further, in the British tradition of intellectual crime detectives, he frequently quotes lines from English literature or recognizes them when others do. For example, when Wexford’s nephew takes him to a pub in Kenbourne Lane in London, he then quotes lines from the poet Thomas Hood, adding that they come from “an unpublished poem”, a bit of intellectual snobbery designed to appeal to the elite reader (Rendell, *Murder Being Once Done* 28). There are very few references to popular culture in such novels. Even the titles of these early novels are mostly phrases taken from literary works.

By 1998, in *Road Rage*, however, Wexford is much more sensitive to women’s issues, while Dora has become a strong person who means a great deal to him and figures in the action. Wexford’s two daughters often play major roles in the later novels, along with his feelings of guilt that he loves one very dearly and finds the other irritating. His partner at work, Burden, also changes from being a very prudish and moralistic young man to a more tolerant one: he suffers the loss of his wife but gradually recovers over the series and finds happiness with a second wife who is much more feminist. Even the title of this novel, “road rage”, is a recent term to describe drivers who become violent under stress, while the novel is very sympathetic to the efforts of ecologists to save a stretch of woods that is being threatened by the building of a new superhighway.

Moreover, the conservative British community Wexford is responsible for has evolved. Now there are female officers on his staff, as well as people of colour. Wexford remains a conservative man in many ways, but he is perfectly happy eating ethnic food, and is tolerant to those from other cultures and religions. The number of literary allusions greatly diminishes as changes in education have reduced the number of readers who might recognize such allusions.

Most important, throughout the series Wexford remains a fatherly figure in the best of senses, feeling a deep responsibility for his own family, for his staff and for his community. He rarely loses his temper, uses violence only when absolutely forced to in stopping crime, and inspires other police officers with the desire to work hard. He may occasionally bend the rules a little in the course of an investigation, but he never breaks the law. Like both Golden Age detectives and Gideon in Creasey’s series, he speaks up for moral principles and is uneasy with changes in society that have made drug-taking, the abuse of women and children and violence of all kinds very common. The novels conclude with the victory of right over wrong, the complete identification of the killer and his or her arrest or death, as well as the resolution of whatever personal problem Wexford, his family members or a police officer may have had.

Although Wexford and P.D. James’ Adam Dalgliesh have certain features in common – both are very talented police detectives who are presented as working with younger colleagues who respect them – they are basically very different. Dalgliesh has the prestige of belonging to the London C.I.D. and is often demanded for a case outside London by rich and powerful people. His younger colleagues worship him; in the later books they take up the rather irritating habit of referring to him by his initials as “AD”, whereas Wexford’s closest associates call him ‘Reg’. Moreover, Dalgliesh is very rarely rebuked by his

superiors or ordered to follow a different line in his investigation. Reg Wexford, on the contrary, is much more realistically presented, and in any case is socially a whole class below Dalgliesh. Although in charge of his station, he is often called up by superiors, taken off cases or criticized for his handling of them. His younger colleagues do not seem in awe of him, and his closest associate, Burden, feels free to disagree strongly with him – and sometimes is proved right in the end. Both men enjoy the classics of English literature and quote from them, but Dalgliesh is a poet himself. Finally, James' policeman lives in an atmosphere of upper-class luxury, while Rendell's has a pleasant but not especially large house and no expensive habits. Indeed, Dalgliesh is the descendant both of Sherlock Holmes and Dorothy Sayers' aristocratic private detective, Lord Peter Wimsey, while Wexford is far more like the first major figure in police procedurals, John Creasey's Gideon.

19. IAN RANKIN'S INSPECTOR REBUS SERIES: THE MAVERICK POLICEMAN

More recent police detective series than Ruth Rendell's and P.D. James's move away from the cozier features of Golden Age fiction and prefer to feature a troubled and often violent police officer struggling to solve crimes in a corrupt society, most often in a large urban setting. Even this brief description clearly links these newer works of crime fiction to the noir tradition, though elements from police procedurals – team work, having to deal with a number of crimes at the same time, from minor to major, and the growing technology used in solving a crime, along with increased bureaucratic requirements – still figure in very significant ways in the newer crime novels.

Although there are a large number of maverick policemen series, the current best-seller is Ian Rankin (b.1960) with the Inspector John Rebus series, which began in 1987 and has apparently concluded in 2007 with Rebus' retirement in the aptly named novel *Exit Music*. Like many protagonists of series novels, Rebus alters a little from the very first to the middle works. Rankin started by making him more intellectual and fond of classical music, in the tradition of a great number of British detectives, but quickly he becomes distinctly working-class and devoted to rock music, which he plays and quotes throughout the novels. The movement from elite culture to popular culture signals a real change in readers' knowledge and interests: few readers are expected anymore to recognize minor poets but rock songs are considered to be familiar to many. Moreover, like Rankin himself, who in the brief biographies given in his books is always said to have been born not simply in Scotland but in the Kingdom of Fife, an older regional designation, John Rebus is very much a Scottish figure while the novels explore the darker history of the city of Edinburgh.

The series is very rich in social analysis, referring to real political figures and sometimes even bringing them into the novels briefly in a way that is unusual in detective fiction. In *Set in Darkness* (2000), for example, the crimes take place against the events around the meeting of the G8 world leaders in Edinburgh; the protestors and their confrontations with the police are described in detail. Later the real-life terrorist bombings in the London subway system also enter the narrative in a meaningful way. Rebus himself is highly skeptical of all politicians and does not support Scottish independence, but these issues are discussed and are significant in depicting one character or another. With seventeen Rebus novels in twenty years, Ian Rankin, like Ruth Rendell, provides a picture of a changing society.

From the beginning of the series, Rebus himself appears as a tough police detective with great flair but one whose preference for working by himself and not sharing his information is treated as a serious problem by his superiors. Indeed, like other maverick police detectives, it strains credibility that Rebus gets away with some of his flagrant rule-breaking, to say nothing of a suspiciously close relationship with an Edinburgh underworld boss, Big Ger Cafferty. The dramatic closing scene of *Exit Music*, with Rebus frantically trying to revive Cafferty as the latter's heart stops in the hospital, gives more of a sense that the series is over than the fact of Rebus's retirement from the police force, as in almost all the novels the cat-and-mouse game between the two men is so important.

Rankin gives his protagonist all the characteristics that can be found in many other maverick policeman series: Rebus's wife has left him and he has only a distant relationship with his daughter, something that makes him feel guilty. His periodic affairs with other women are usually limited to one novel and indeed seem obviously doomed, as he never gives his lovers the normal attention or affection that a person would expect. He drinks heavily, not only at home but during the day while working as well, so that the bars of Edinburgh and its environs become familiar places to readers: some of them, like the Oxford Bar, which Rebus favours, are real city bars. Moreover, Rebus is haunted by his traumatic experiences in the British army in Northern Ireland and his training to be a commando, as well as murders which he felt he could have prevented. This leads to nightmares so troubling that he rarely sleeps in his bed, but instead falls asleep drinking in an armchair. He also smokes heavily, becomes overweight, and is often reminded that he is running the risk of serious health problems.

As a detective, however, like all detective heroes in crime fiction, Rebus is a superlative figure. First, he is a classical workaholic, continuing investigations at night and when he is not on duty. Indeed, he is afraid not to be working, as then he drinks even more than usual. Furthermore, like detectives from Agatha Christie's creations, Rebus often operates according to instinct and will go against hard facts when his intuition tells him that the real suspect has not been caught. It is an ironic feature of detective fiction written by men and featuring male protagonists that intuition, which is stereotypically associated more with women than men, plays a major part in the success of most fictional criminal investigations.

In part this can be attributed to the necessities of fictional narrative, in which coincidence and sudden flashes of insight are used to solve mysteries in ways that do not happen very often in real life. A writer has to put together a plot in a compact way and cannot drag it out according to the more normal pattern of events in real life. At the same time, this ability to work according to an inborn knack for solving crimes sets the detective hero apart from colleagues who follow normal procedure and are not sensitive to atmosphere or tiny details of human behavior. The detective, after all, has to be a superior character in crime fiction. Even in suspense thrillers, the detective, who may become a victim, still finds out the truth and often succeeds in stopping the career of a major criminal.

Therefore, because the maverick detective works according to a special flair for mystery, many of the conflicts in these novels are those between the hero and his colleagues or superiors. As in a suspense thriller, the maverick detective runs the risk of being beaten up, taken off a case, subjected to demotion or suspension or even of being killed by criminals who prove to have links with the power structures within society and the police force itself. This upsets the detective less than one might expect: usually this kind of

character may have sensitive points, but cares little about the opinion of others and is not afraid of violence or the loss of a job. In general, the maverick detective is not unnecessarily violent, but can easily turn to violence if the situation requires it. In all these ways, the maverick police detective is closely related to the hard-boiled detective.

In the Rebus novels, as in many of those that feature a police detective, the hero is often given a partner, either of equal or lower rank. In Rankin's novels, at first this is one policeman or other but then settles very successfully into the figure of a woman police detective, Siobhan Clarke. Despite her Irish first name, she is English and so somewhat of a foreigner in Edinburgh. Siobhan is an interesting figure despite or perhaps even because of many inconsistencies in presentation. She has a university degree, unlike Rebus, and is much younger, apparently representing a new breed of police officers. She drinks moderately and does not smoke, and is more at home with computer technology than Rebus. Still, though less temperamental than him, she turns out to be just as much of a loner, for she seems to have no close friends except, eventually, Rebus. Although an ardent football fan, she attends the games by herself.

Perhaps most strikingly, she seems asexual, never falling in love, as Rebus in part does, and indeed never having a steady boyfriend or even an occasional lover. Nor are there any references to earlier partners or sexual experiences. While colleagues assume that she and Rebus are or were lovers, this is not true; they are colleagues and close friends. There is a degree of sexual tension in their relationship, but it is one created by the traditions of narrative, in which a male and female hero eventually pair off. Although Rebus does have a brief affair with another woman officer who eventually becomes his immediate superior, nothing similar happens with Siobhan even when male colleagues show a distinct sexual interest in her. Yet the combination of Rebus and Siobhan Clarke does add a psychological dimension to the novels. Like characters in crime fiction in general, they are more flat than round, but Rankin makes them seem to have depth by not trying to make them completely consistent, just as people in real life are full of inconsistencies and surprises.

A final feature of the Rebus series that is interesting is that this is the first Scottish series to have become so popular and, indeed, influential. Although one speaks of British crime fiction, until recently it has almost all been set in England and only very exceptionally in Wales, Scotland or Ireland. Characters from these places tend to appear as minor figures, stereotypically portrayed and often comic. Ian Rankin is part of a general Scottish literary renaissance that has accompanied the movements for political autonomy and independence, and his mode of depicting a dirty world of crime and corruption from the highest to the lowest classes is connected to what is sometimes known as Scottish Noir writing. Indeed, with time the crime fiction genre has been successfully infiltrated by a number of minority groups within the English-speaking world as well as by women writing about women detectives, far more successfully than, say, genres like science fiction. In this way crime fiction gives a voice to previously silenced groups within popular culture. This can be paralleled with similar changes in television drama and series – and many successful crime series are turned into successful TV series.

In a similar way, the English-speaking world, which is so impermeable to writings in other languages, is beginning to open up in the genre of crime fiction. Earlier it was hard to find examples of crime fiction writers other than the Frenchman, Georges Simenon, the creator of the Maigret series of detective novels, who were regularly translated and attracted substantial Anglo-American readerships. Now Scandinavian writers in particular,

supported by strong state programs of translation, have broken into the Anglo-American market. The bestseller here is Henning Mankell, a Swedish writer born in 1948, whose Inspector Kurt Wallander series is extremely popular on an international scale. Mankell's first Wallander novel appeared in Swedish in 1991; translations of the series were made into other languages quickly, but only starting in 1997 into English, suggesting that even a very strong detective writer from the non-English world has problems entering the Anglo-American market. However, with his success, many other Scandinavian writers of detective series are being regularly translated and sell well. Most of these, such as Anne Holt, Jo Nesbo and Karin Fossum, also use a police detective as the protagonist.

Mankell's Kurt Wallander is strikingly like Rankin's Rebus, though there is little likelihood of any direct influence. He too is divorced with a daughter, though the novels also depict his father, who has never approved his choice of a profession and with whom he has many conflicts. He is not as strongly addicted to alcohol as Rebus but does drink and live alone, though his favourite music is classical opera. Wallander is more of a team worker than Rebus, but he also angers his superiors by insisting on continuing on cases they want to close, targeting as suspects rich and powerful people and often acting alone when this violates police regulations. For example, in *The Man Who Smiled* (2005 translation of *Mannen som log*, 1994), Wallander breaks into a castle owned by the villain when he suspects one of his informers is in danger, though he should never do something like this without telling his superiors and having other police as back-up. He does maintain telephone contact with a colleague but, even after finding a dead body, he still refuses to call in the rest of the police. As a result, though the villain confesses all his crimes, he nearly escapes in his private airplane. In an exciting final episode very much in the suspense thriller tradition, Wallander stops the plane by ramming it with an airport luggage vehicle. In general, Mankell uses more action scenes characteristic of thrillers than of police procedurals than does Ian Rankin.

However, like Rankin, Mankell also explores and questions changes in Swedish society, which he depicts in the 1990s and early twenty-first century as deeply corrupt and far from its original socialist ideals as a welfare state. His view of Sweden is broader than Rankin's of Scotland, as Wallander works in a town, Ystad, not the capital, and frequently has to go to the countryside as well as to urban locations. Further, as Sweden is a small power, there are far more references to other countries in the world than in Ian Rankin's work. Mankell has spent much of his life working in Africa and his activism in leftist causes, though not at all part of Inspector Wallander's interests, is reflected in the subjects of his novels in general. Still, his basic formula is very similar to that of Rankin, focusing on police work, social corruption and the personality of the detective in his often unsatisfactory relations with family and colleagues.

20. KATHY REICHS' DR TEMPERANCE BRENNAN SERIES: THE FEMALE PROFESSIONAL IN THE POLICE TEAM

There are many women police officers in crime fiction written in the past twenty years, but only recently have these been given upper posts within the system. This reflects reality: though women have worked in the police for much longer, their roles and opportunities to advance used to be strictly limited. Even today, it is not common for a police chief to be a woman, though writers have been experimenting with such figures lately: Ian Rankin

promotes Gill Templer, once Rebus' colleague and even short-time lover, to become his superior. The Canadian writer L.R Wright, after her chief of police Karl Albright retires, started a series with a woman chief of police.

Still, in keeping with social realism, some of the series that have achieved major popularity have women within the police department in specialized professional roles. First Patricia Cornwell created Dr Kay Scarpetta, a chief medical examiner working in Virginia, and later a real forensic anthropologist, Dr Kathy Reichs, a major figure in her own field, in 1997 introduced Temperance Brennan, an American forensic anthropologist who, like her creator, works in both Charlotte, North Carolina and in Montreal, Quebec.

Cornwell is a very successful writer, but there is no denying that her depictions of autopsy evidence are often not especially essential to the mystery and its solution, while Reichs has succeeded in real scientific processes within the structure of her crime fiction. The first novel featuring Dr Kay Scarpetta, *Post-Mortem* (1990), uses the popular structure of a serial killer and shows Scarpetta aided by Sergeant Pete Marino, who becomes a standard feature in the novels. His close collaboration with her –at first reluctant and later extremely friendly – is not realistic according to police procedure, but allows Kay Scarpetta access to information without which she could never solve the crime. The novel concludes with the killer attacking Scarpetta herself and being shot by Marino.

As the series continues, Dr Scarpetta takes on the features of the superwoman, not in any supernatural sense, but in her extreme competence not only in carrying out autopsies, but also in more stereotypically feminine activities like cooking gourmet food (Cornwell has published books of Scarpetta's recipes). Though she is not married, she more or less brings up her niece Lucy from the age of ten in the first novel. At the same time, Scarpetta carries a gun with her much of the time and adds more and more physical skills to her list. In *Cause of Death* (1996), for example, she is an experienced diver who makes a risky descent to bring up a drowned body. This particular novel turns into a suspense thriller, with the FBI being called in, Scarpetta dealing with American generals and flying to London to meet important people there, and a culminating scene in which she foils the attempts of criminals who have seized an atomic plant. By the final third of the novel, all sense of probability disappears, but the action is certainly very exciting.

Kathy Reichs' Tempe, as she is generally known, moves within more realistic boundaries and, as has been noted, uses forensic anthropology to solve crimes. She is a fairly complex character for a crime fiction detective, as a highly independent and ambitious person who regularly has to deal with sexist prejudice against her as a woman in a man's world. These tensions are especially well drawn in the novels that take place in Montreal, where Tempe is also an outsider as an American who has just learned French. Then, too, the novels regularly present Tempe as the loving and anxious mother of Katy, first a wayward teenager and then a university student, as well as a woman who has left her unfaithful husband Pete but has not divorced him, and feels very ambivalent about men. Over the series of many novels, Tempe becomes involved with a Quebec policeman, but still hesitates about commitment.

In many ways Tempe Brennan is more similar to Sue Grafton's Kinsey and Ian Rankin's Rebus than Cornwell's Kay Scarpetta. She has no interest in cooking and dresses mostly in very practical clothes. She does not drink, but has been an alcoholic and still feels she could become one again. Like Rebus, she develops instinctive feelings about links between apparently separate crimes and insists on pursuing them despite the open opposition of

senior police officers and police colleagues. Like him, too, she takes many personal risks, heading off to investigate even when she knows she may be in danger. Unlike most female police officers depicted in fiction today, however, she has no training in self-defence and rarely carries any kind of weapon.

The first novel in the series, *Deja Dead* (1997), does introduce a romantic interest for Tempe, but the novel, aside from the complex sequence of murders, is more concerned with her desire to win the respect of Montreal police officers, especially Luc Claudel, a hard-headed man who makes it clear he thinks that she is both out of place and out of line. At the end of the novel, when Tempe, emotionally drained by the harrowing investigation, considers leaving her post in Montreal, it is a brief letter from Claudel praising her work and hoping she will stay that convinces her to do so.

In terms of narrative structure, Reichs' novels, like those of Sara Paretsky, Sue Grafton, and Patricia Cornwell, usually feature a major scene near the end in which the killer attacks the woman detective herself; Tempe escapes through a combination of determined resistance and police intervention – but not, it should be noted, that of her boyfriend. One can speculate that it still seems more natural for a woman, whether a detective or not, to figure as a victim of violence, while a novel with a male protagonist may end with the successful pursuit of the criminal. These scenes, along with a number of others featuring violence, give the novels the flavor of suspense thrillers at times, though like Rankin's novels, which are sometimes advertised as thrillers, this term is not really applicable. Like most detective fiction, both Reichs and Rankin give a good deal of space to scenes in which the detective by him or herself or with colleagues, reviews the evidence and argues about possible suspects.

In addition, Reichs creates variety in her novels not only by moving back and forth from North Carolina to Quebec but also by focusing on more than the rather over-used device of the serial killer. To date, Reichs' novels have included topics like the Guatemalan genocide, motorcycle gangs in Montreal, ecological issues and several others, most of them based on experiences that the author Kathy Reichs has actually had. In all these cases, Tempe Brennan is motivated not only by the investigator's desire to know the truth (for, unlike most protagonists in crime fiction, she is not a private or police detective whose job it is to do this), but also by moral ideals which underlie investigators even as cynical as Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe. For example, in the opening novel in the series, before starting the autopsy of a sixteen-year-old girl who was badly beaten, killed and then dismembered, Tempe first sees the body as that of an individual: "With a stab of pain, I'd noticed that her toenails were painted a soft pink. The intimacy of that simple act had caused me such an ache that I wanted to cover her, to scream at all of them to leave her alone (Reichs, *Deja Dead* 46). More than once, she explains why her work is so important that she dedicates herself to it; in the 2006 *Break No Bones*, she states, "Violent death is my job [...] Friends ask how I can bear to do the work that I do. It is simple. I am committed to demolishing the maniacs before they demolish more innocents [...] While I cannot make the dead live again, I can reunite victims with their names, and give those left behind some measure of closure" (Reichs, *Break No Bones* 36),

With this kind of underlying moral dedication, the protagonist of new crime fiction, like that of older forms, continues to serve the cause of good against evil. Readers do not merely get a thrill from exciting action or the intellectual satisfaction of solving a mystery: they also participate through identification with the detective in a moral act.

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EXERCISES

These exercises are intended to check your ability to see a text as belonging to a specific sub-genre within crime fiction. Answers are provided after the exercises.

IDENTIFY EACH OF THE FOLLOWING AS GOLDEN AGE, HARD-BOILED, POLICE PROCEDURAL, MAVERICK POLICE DETECTIVE OR THRILLER, INDICATING THE PHRASES IN THE TEXT THAT ARE THE BASIS FOR YOUR ANSWER.

1. [the detective is addressing suspects after a series of murders]

“X said quietly: ‘When Colonel Carbury mentioned this business to me, I gave him my opinion as an expert. I told him that it might not be possible to bring proof – such proof as would be admissible in a court of law – but I told him very definitely that I was sure I could arrive at the truth – simply by questioning the people concerned. For let me tell you this, my friends, to investigate a crime it is only necessary to let the guilty party or parties *talk* – always, in the end, they tell you what you want to know!’”

2. [a child molester has killed a little girl]

“Downstairs in the Information Room, uniformed men were standing by the big maps spread out on tables in front of them [...] All the Divisional Police Stations and the sub-stations in the south-western area of London were reporting regularly. Police in uniforms and in plainclothes were calling on shopkeepers throughout the huge area, with descriptions of X. Photographs, some prints hardly dry, were already being distributed in large numbers. Special forces were watching spots like Clapham Common, Battersea Park and Tooting Bec – all places where children played.”

3. [the woman protagonist lies her way into a building of national importance now controlled by criminals]

“I pointed the flashlight at Bear as I pushed a button, and he shrieked at the dazzling pop as he grabbed his eyes and I swung the heavy flashlight like a baseball bat. Bones shattered in his wrist, the pistol clattering to the floor [...] I flung myself down flat on my face, covering my eyes and ears as best I could, and the room exploded in blazing white light as a concussion bomb blew off the top of Toto’s head. There was screaming and cursing as terrorists blindly fell against consoles and each other, and they could not hear or see when dozens of HRT agents stormed in.”

4. [a group of investigators discuss the problem of solving the murder]

“He said, ‘Let’s be absolutely plain about the layout of the house. As you see, it’s H-shaped, south facing and with western and eastern wings.’ [...]”

He paused, then looked at X who took over.

‘Our problem is that we have a group of seven people in the Manor, any of whom could have killed Miss Gradwyn. All knew where she was sleeping, knew that the suite beyond was unoccupied providing a possible hiding place, knew where the surgical gloves were kept, and all either had or could have obtained keys to the west door.’”

5. [two police officers, one senior, the other junior, are sitting in a car; the male police officer is going to enter private property illegally in search of evidence in a murder case]

"They sat there in the dark.

"I'll be in touch every hour," said A. "If you hear nothing for more than two hours, phone Bjork and tell him to organize a full emergency call-out."

"You shouldn't be doing this, you know," she said.

"All my life I've been doing things I shouldn't be doing," X said. "Why stop now?"

They tuned their radio telephones."

6. [the detective has been beaten up and taken to a Mafia boss, Earl Smeissen]

"Earl Smeissen. How absolutely delightful. But you know, Earl, if you'd called me up and asked to see me, we could have gotten together with a lot less trouble. [...] He had a small piece of the drug business, and the rumor was that he would arrange a killing to oblige a friend if the price was right.

"Earl, this is quite a place you've got. Inflation must not be hurting business too much."

7. [the private detective winds up with a bunch of dangerous crooks, two men and a woman, Carol Donovan]

"The girl slipped her hand under her bag. The bag lifted an inch. The gun that was caught there in a trick clip [...] spat and flamed briefly.

Sunset coughed. His Colt boomed and a piece of wood detached itself from the back of the chair Madder had been sitting in. Sunset dropped the Colt [...] his long legs slid out in front of him and his heels made a rasping sound on the floor. He sat like that, limp, his chin on his chest, his eyes looking upward. Dead as a pickled walnut.

I kicked Miss Donovan's chair out from under her and she banged down on her side in a swirl of silken legs. Her hat went crooked on her head. She yelped. I stood on her hand and then shifted suddenly and kicked her gun clear across the attic. I sent her bag after it – with her other gun inside it. She screamed at me.

"Get up," I snarled.

ANSWERS TO THE EXERCISES

1. Agatha Christie, *Appointment with Death*. 1938. London: HarperCollins, 2001, 255-256.

Classical Golden Age detective fiction. Hercule Poirot shows the absolute self-confidence of this kind of detective (*I told him very definitely that I was sure I could arrive at the truth*) and explains his methodology – no violence or unnecessary action, simply logical analysis of what the suspects say.

2. John Creasey, *Gideon's Day*. 1955. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1964, 58.

Another classical example, this time of the police procedural. The child molester will be caught by teams of police officers checking hundreds of places in London. The way the police really work is described clearly here (*the Information Room; big maps; calling on shopkeepers throughout the huge area; photographs were being distributed*).

3. Patricia Cornwell, *Cause of Death*. New York: Penguin Putnam, 1996, 330.

Here the police procedural, since the protagonist is a medical investigator for the police, turns into the thriller, with the necessary elements of a major crime that has national significance and in which significant technology is used to deal with the criminals (*a concussion bomb blew off the top of Toto's head; terrorists; dozens of HRT agents stormed in*). But if you thought it was a hard-boiled woman detective, you could probably argue that as well, as she takes the major risks and succeeds in the essential first step in the operation against the terrorists.

4. P.D. James, *The Private Patient*. London: Penguin Books, 2008, 248-249.

This scene is classical Golden Age detective narrative: a closed circle of suspects in a particular place (*we have a group of seven people in the Manor, any of whom could have killed Miss Gradwyn*). The characters here are police detective officers, led by Adam Dalgliesh, so that there are elements of the police procedural, but this particular scene moves away from how the police really work to formulate a clue-puzzle for the readers.

5. Henning Mankell, *The Man Who Smiled*. 1994. Transl. from Swedish by Laurie Thompson. London: Random House, 2006, 401.

The maverick police detective, Mankell's Kurt Wallender. Contemporary police procedural with emphasis too on the detective as working outside the system and refusing to obey the rules (*All my life I've been doing things I shouldn't be doing. Why stop now?*).

6. Sara Paretsky, *Indemnity Only*. New York: Dell, 1982, 80.

The typical tough talk and wisecracks by the detective, a woman here, when in grave danger of being hurt or killed make it clear that this is a hard-boiled detective narrative (*Earl Smeissen. How absolutely delightful; this is quite a place you've got*).

7. Raymond Chandler, "Goldfish". In *Trouble Is My Business and Other Stories*. 1946. London: Penguin, 1950, 172-173.

Classical hard-boiled detective at work, using violence freely to deal with dangerous criminals (*I kicked Miss Donovan's chair out from under her; I stood on her hand*). Miss Donovan can be seen as a fatal woman as well.

Crime fiction is part of popular literature, and critics who do not seem to remember this should be treated with caution. Those who speak of crime fiction with a degree of contempt as merely formulaic narrative are behind the times: critics take popular fiction very seriously nowadays. At the same time, if a source starts to claim that a particular writer of crime fiction belongs to elite literature ('serious literature', 'high literature'), this source is either publishing propaganda or a critics who does not want to see the formulaic nature of all crime fiction.

You should automatically cite any source without considering whether what is being said is right or wrong. The genre distinctions made in this learning aid are based on current critical thinking about crime fiction – for example, that thrillers are a special kind of crime fiction. Nor do you have to agree with any critic, including the one who wrote this text. Keep in mind as well as any individual writer plays with narrative formulas and often does not follow all the rules for a sub-genre. Agatha Christie, for example, wrote thrillers as well as Golden Age detective fiction, as in *The ABC Murders*, which about a serial killer. She also did crossover crime fiction with strong elements of the supernatural and others which are in large part romance novels.

Generally, books on crime fiction written by acknowledged specialists, often university professors, are more reliable than articles on the internet that have no author or are authored by students. Never use dictionary definitions and avoid encyclopedias, unless these are specifically on literary criticism. The terminology used in analyzing crime fiction gives ordinary English words a different meaning from that which they have in a regular dictionary.

You should always start with the books on crime fiction in university libraries. In the Vytautas Magnus Library system, some of these are in the Biržiška Reading Room at 52 Donelaičio Street, while others are in the library stacks so that you need to hunt them up on the library catalogue and ask for them on the first floor. Vilnius University and the National Mažvydas Library may also have something worth consulting: you can look at their holdings through the internet.

Books in the Vytautas Magnus University Library

Horsley, Lee. *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. [One of the best writers on crime fiction today, and the author of several books and articles. Even if she discusses a novel that is not the one you are looking at, it is worthwhile reading her analysis to pick up theoretic ideas and methodology. Note that she is a woman when referring to her.]

Palmer, Jerry. *Potboilers: Methods, Concepts and Case Studies in Popular Fiction*. London: Routledge, 1991. [Has a chapter on crime fiction. Useful introduction, though not very up-to-date in terms of theory]

Pepper, Andrew. *The Contemporary American Crime Novel: Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Class*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000. [the title indicates its special interests, with chapters on Afro-American detective fiction and the like]

Priestman, Martin, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. [An extremely useful collection of articles on different genres and periods of crime fiction. Includes very good discussions of the Sherlock Holmes stories, the Golden Age period, police procedurals, thrillers, hard-boiled detective fiction, women detectives and new trends. Use the index at the back to check for references to your author. Hard-boiled detective fiction appears in the article „The Private Eye“ by Dennis Porter. A book you must use.]

Pyrhonen, Heta. *Mayhem and Murder: Narrative and Moral Problems in the Detective Story*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999. **Available on the internet as well** [A deeper theoretical study of crime fiction and the issues violence and moral response that this kind of literature raises. Worth reading even if she is not dealing with your kind of novel or genre]

If the author you are dealing with is an older one, especially Conan Doyle or Agatha Christie, then you should check larger encyclopedic books in the Reading Room on British Writers, Women Writers and like.

Internet Sources

Again, remember to be cautious and evaluate any internet source before using it. But some very good things on crime fiction are available this way, as interest in crime fiction as popular fiction has grown very rapidly in the last 15 years, exactly the time when the internet developed.

Sources on Particular Writers and Particular Texts

If you simply google the name of a particular writer, you will face an alarming number of sources, most of which are simply lists of publications with a few simple biographical facts or offers to buy second-hand books by the author.

Therefore, in your search engine, type in phrases like „Ian Rankin and interviews“ or „Sara Paretsky and critical articles“ or P.D. James' The Private Patient and reviews“. Though the search engine will still produce a number of useless items, it should then also give you some that are good. Interviews with an author, even when not speaking about the text you are analysing, are helpful sources at times.

To evaluate a source without opening it, look at the information in the lines and address. A university journal is a good source. Wikipedia should never be quoted, as it contains many factual errors, but often has good links to better sources at the end of an article. CliffNotes is intended for secondary school students, not your level of analysis, but is not absolutely forbidden.

The critics listed above are all good, and often have other articles on the internet. You should also look at the critics they cite, and then try to find these on the internet.

Recommended

www.crimeculture.com An excellent website established by Lee and Katherine Horsley in 2002, and one that is academic in style and content. Through it you can access new articles that may not be precisely on your topic but are often very useful for theory, terms and critical approaches.

George Dove's Police Procedural (1982) is partly available for reading on the internet. Milda Danyte has photocopies of much of the book, which though older, is still significant.

Carl Darryl Malmgren anatomy of murder (2001) is not a very profound analysis, but has good things in it. It is also partly available for reading on the internet.

William Marling is an American university professor who is a specialist on hard-boiled American crime fiction. On the internet he offers very useful basic definitions, as well as analysis and history of this sub-genre. Google **detective fiction william marling** to find a list of his articles, including a brief but excellent one on the fatal woman in crime literature.

John Scaggs crime fiction (2005) is part of the Routledge Critical Idiom series and is quite a good book with both history and theory in it. On the internet every so often a few pages are omitted, but you can access most of it.

You should also consult BA theses on crime fiction held in Department of English Philology for their sources, as some of these direct you to specific internet sites of value.

Remember the basic rule of doing research, whether with print or internet sources: the source you find may be more useful for items in the list of references than for anything it says. You go from one source to another, gradually understanding who the major critics are in your area of research.

Do not despair if the source is an article in a scholarly journal. Many scholarly journals are now available free for reading on the internet, except for the latest two years.

Research is a kind of detective work as well, and can be fun!

Danytė, Milda

INTRODUCTION TO THE ANALYSIS OF CRIME FICTION, A USER-FRIENDLY GUIDE / Milda Danytė. –
Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas, 2011. – 59 p.

ISBN 978-9955-12-698-0

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INTRODUCTION TO THE ANALYSIS OF CRIME FICTION
A USER-FRIENDLY GUIDE

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