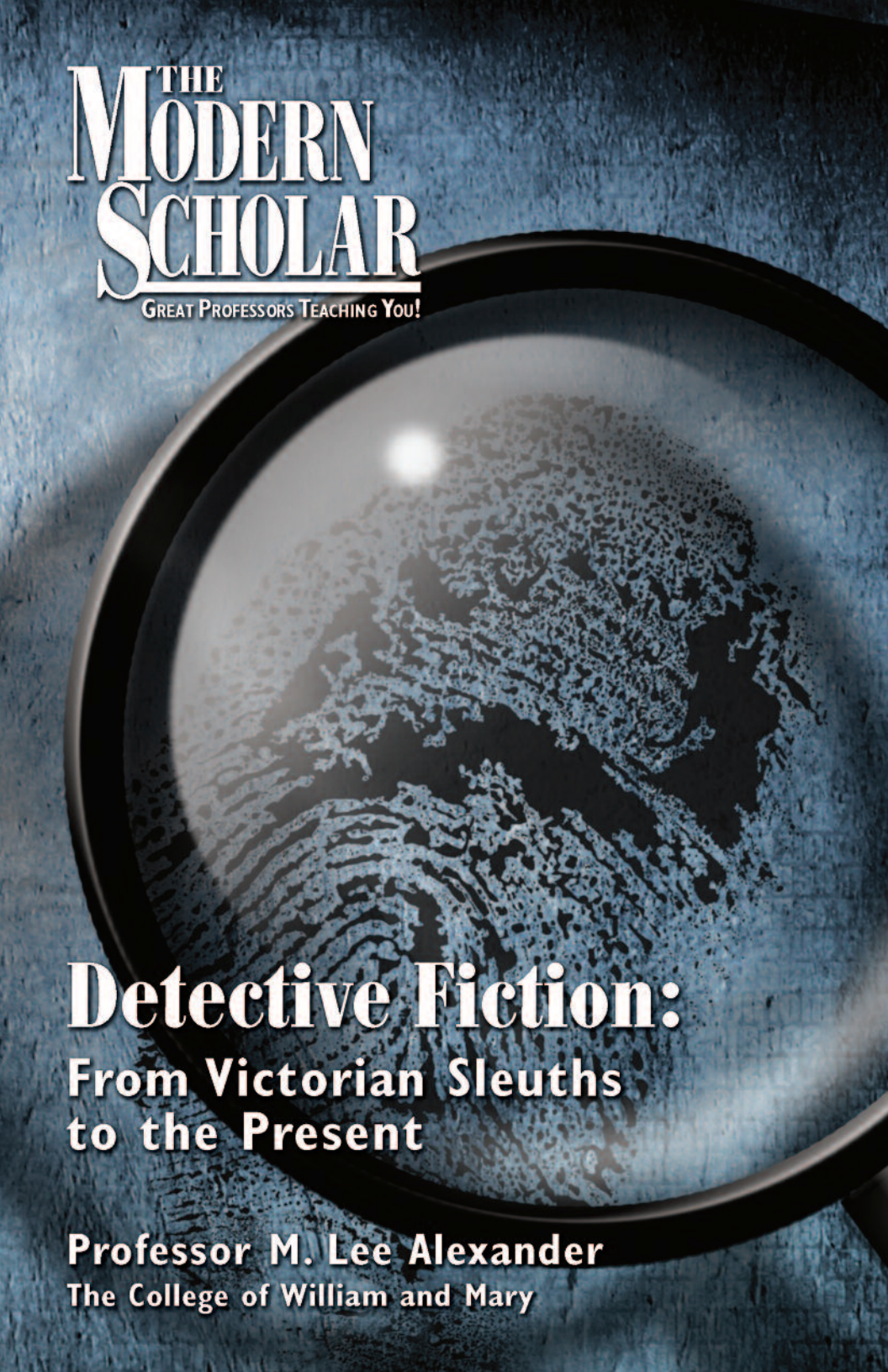
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Detective Fiction:
From Victorian Sleuths to the Present
Professor M. Lee Alexander
The College of William and Mary

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Course Syllabus

Detective Fiction:
From Victorian Sleuths to the Present

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About Your Professor

M. Lee Alexander

Dr. M. Lee Alexander is a visiting assistant professor of English at the College of William and Mary. She teaches detective fiction, creative writing, and "Tolkien and His Circle," a course on the Inklings authors. She also teaches English as a second language courses for the graduate school. Professor Alexander is the author of numerous scholarly articles and poems, and a chapbook of poetry, *Observatory* (2007). Dr. Alexander has presented scholarly papers on the subject of detective fiction with an emphasis on links between modern popular culture and the classic tradition at international conferences, including "Mr. Monk Meets Sherlock Holmes: Disability and the Consulting Detective" at Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes: Their Cultural Afterlives Conference at the University of Hull, England (2009), and "To Make a House a Holmes: Sherlockian Subtext of *House, MD*" at Sherlock Holmes: The Man and His Worlds Conference, Bennington College, Vermont (2010). She has also taught "Detective Fiction as Art and Social Commentary" at the George Washington University. Dr. Alexander resides in Williamsburg, Virginia.

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~M. Lee Alexander

Introduction

In this course, we will explore together the intriguing world of the fictional sleuth. It has been estimated that about a quarter of all books published in English today fit into this broad category—that's an extraordinary statistic and we will discover why so many people enjoy mysteries and what lies behind their popular and diverse appeal.

During the course we will cover a number of key topics. We will examine origins and history of the genre from the pre-Golden Age to the present day; look at the distinct approaches to detection in subgenres, including amateur, PI and hard-boiled, police procedural, espionage, medical, legal, historical, ethnic, and international; and finally consider current and possible future trends for this most enduring and delightful form of fiction as well as the multiple and not always obvious reasons for its increasing popularity.

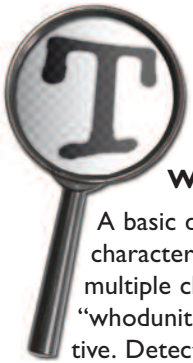
As we proceed through the lectures several course themes will become apparent: 1) the artistic merit of detective fiction, including plot elements, character development, literary devices, and writing style; 2) ways in which understanding the authors' life stories further illuminates the works they have composed; and finally 3) the significant role detective fiction plays, because of its unique subject matter and focus on crime and justice, to act as commentary and sometimes criticism on the society, times, and culture that it reflects.

So now, without further ado, let us enter into the fascinating world of the fictional detective—the game is afoot!

Lecture 1

Mysterious Origins

The Suggested Readings for this lecture are Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone*, edited by John Sutherland, and Edgar Allan Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue," "Mystery of Marie Rogêt," and "The Purloined Letter" in *Collected Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*.



he most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science."

~Albert Einstein

What Is Detective Fiction?

A basic description of the term is that it is a narrative in which a main character solves a crime, usually, but not always murder, by examining multiple clues and considering a closed circle of suspects. In a classic "whodunit," the reader tries to solve the crime along with the detective. Detective fiction by definition contains a sleuth, a villain, and a victim or victims of a crime, usually murder. Classic works have a closed circle of suspects; there are of course exceptions to this classic formula, increasingly so in modern writing. The solving of the crime is the driving force for both plot and character.

The approach to the genre in this course will be historical. The history of detective fiction will be traced from its early roots in Victorian literature through today's modern trends to discover why it remains so enduringly popular, often of high literary merit, and reflective of and responsive to society.

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Popularity

It is one of the most popular genres in the twentieth century, and increasingly so in the twenty-first. An estimated one-quarter of books published in the English language today are in the detective fiction genre. Reasons for this popularity include the following: there is much pleasure derived from reading this type of fiction; a sense of justice is usually involved; detective fiction restores a sense of order; it explores the human condition; it demands both interesting characters and well-crafted plots in intriguing settings; it contains suspense and mystery; and it functions to comment on society. It has equal appeal to men

and women (though some subgenres differ), and it also appeals to teens and younger children. A wide variety of subtypes means there's something for everybody. Detective fiction also adapts well to new media as they appear: print, radio, television, film, graphic novel, computer games, virtual reality—and to new crime-solving technologies.

Types

There are three major types of detective fiction, and these are usually ranked by the sleuth involved. The amateur sleuth uses skills from other walks of life: religious, animal, academic, art/antiques expert, journalist, culinary, or housewife, for instance. There are usually no realistic counterparts.

The private investigator (or private eye) sleuth, of which the "hard-boiled" type is the most well-known, does have a real-life counterpart in Pinkerton's Detective Agency and other similar examples.

The protagonists in police sleuth stories have some official capacity. They are police officers (most often detectives), crime scene investigators, coroners, and medical examiners. In police procedurals, readers follow the methods of the police as they unravel the case.

Subtypes

A list of popular subtypes in the detective fiction genre include "cozy" (cozy mysteries began in the late twentieth century as a reinvention of the Golden Age "whodunit"; these novels generally shy away from violence and suspense and frequently feature female amateur detectives), hard-boiled, espionage, techno-thriller, historical, medical, legal, ethnic, "whodunit," "whydunit," "how-catchem" (inverted), and others.

Milieu

The realm or world in which mysteries take place and tend to cluster, as opposed to the physical or chronological setting, is the nature of subtypes in the genre. The themes can be, for example, academic, culinary, horseracing, antique and art world, archaeology, sports, country house, fashion, journalism and publishing, pets, library, and museum. The list is extensive and continually growing.

Conventions and Motifs

Many mysteries involve sleuths, characters, or situations that appear in various types of the genre. There is the clever sleuth, the less bright loyal sidekick, a gathering together of all the suspects at the end, further murders, "red herrings" (purposeful diversions from the true suspect or evidence), "least likely" suspects, and continual suspense.

In addition, the mysteries often include such traditional motifs as locked rooms, missing jewels, disguises, changed wills, mysterious daggers, and unbreakable alibis.

Early Detection

Origins of the genre are difficult to define because all narrative contains conflict. For instance, oral tradition contains mysteries and problem solving, and often insight by the protagonists. Was the story of Cain and Abel the first murder case?

Early Arabic stories such as *The Three Apples* and *Arabian Nights*, told by Scheherazade, contain elements of the detective mystery genre. The *Judge Bao* stories in the Chinese tradition, along with medieval dragon-slaying knights, and some of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, contain murders.

During the Renaissance period and after, many writers relied on murders and assassination in their plays and tales. For instance, Shakespeare's writing involved murder and assassination as key plot elements in his tragedies and historical plays. Characters motivated by desire for power or revenge are central to the themes, although they are not central in classic mysteries, as the audience always knows "whodunit." Murder has long been part of narrative, but to be a work of detective fiction, the story needs a detective as the central character.

Edgar Allan Poe: "Father of the Detective Story"

Edgar Allan Poe, 1848

Most scholars today agree that the first short stories in detective fiction were by Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849), American poet, author, and literary critic. Poe had an interest in puzzles, codes, and cryptograms. His first story, "Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841), reflected this interest. When the story opens, the crime of two women violently murdered has already been committed. Paris police arrest the wrong man. Using more imagination to consider outside possibilities and a more objective analysis of the crime scene, Poe's detective, C. Auguste Dupin, solved the puzzle.

It has been posited that Poe wrote this story as a reflection of earlier tragedies. He had had a tumultuous personal life, including a traumatic childhood, marriage to his younger cousin, heavy drinking, and drug use. He had seen his mother suffer and die from tuberculosis, and he witnessed the death of a woman who had cared for him and who suffered from a terrible illness.

Dupin appeared in two more Poe stories, "Mystery of Marie Rogêt" (1842), among the first stories based on a real crime, and "The Purloined Letter" (1844). So Poe is also credited with writing the first detective series. In these stories, Poe founded another staple of detective fiction. The stories are told by an unnamed first-person narrator—a friend in awe of the detective—to act as a foil to his brilliance. "The Purloined Letter" uses psychology, by which the protagonist thinks like a criminal and again outsmarts both the villain and the police, who had been unable to solve the crime or to see beyond the politics of the case.

The First Detective Novel?

William Godwin (1756–1836), an English journalist, political philosopher, and writer, is recognized by some as having written the first detective novel. His book *Caleb Williams* (1794) describes the story of wealthy squire Ferdinando Falkland, who tries to ruin the life of his personal secretary Caleb Williams after Williams discovers a guilty secret about his employer's past. Despite Caleb's promise of silence, Falkland can't bear the idea of a servant having power over him and pursues him relentlessly by using false trials, imprisonment, and other so-called legal means. While the tale involves several elements of mystery, including a dark secret, a murder with two suspects, and fugitive flight and pursuit, the novel is more a social criticism of the times. Godwin's main interest in the work was to show the inequalities of social class and the governmental abuse of power more than it was to provide an entertaining story of detective fiction. It was not a major influence on the genre.

Art Imitates Life

There was no real detective fiction until there were real detectives. Émile Gaboriau's (1832–1873) fictional detective and former criminal M. Lecocq, introduced in *L'Affaire Lerouge* (1866) as a secondary character and then as the hero of three more novels, was based on real-life policeman Eugène François Vidocq (1775–1857), the father of modern criminology. Vidocq's fascinating life story of journey from criminal to first director of the Sûreté to his dismissal in disgrace is told, if exaggerated, in his partially ghost-written *Les Vrais Memoirs de Vidocq* (1828). Gaboriau was extremely popular for a time, but as Arthur Conan Doyle's fame increased, his decreased.

Related Genres:

Had I But Known (HIBK)

This type of story contains gothic elements; secrets from the past threaten romance and marriage. The story is usually told from the first-person point of view by a naïve young woman, in which solving the mystery—often murder—and discovering family secrets mark her journey to wisdom, and also often to true love. Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) was one of the first of this type, followed by Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860). The milieu is frequently a large country manor, seemingly haunted, though supernatural elements are usually explained away. The young woman is often of lower status and must learn to negotiate in an unfamiliar world; she is thus unable to ask direct questions of the male love interest, so she must investigate in other ways.

Sensation Fiction

A first cousin to the mystery, sensation fiction flourished in England in the 1860s, a period of rapid change in the role of women in society. Sensation fiction contains dramatic events involving hidden identities, secrets from the past, family documents, and dangerous marriages. Readers follow the crime as

it unfolds throughout the story rather than seeing it committed early and then trying to solve it along with the detective. A classic example is Mary Elizabeth Braddon's (1835–1915) *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), a huge best-seller, although some reviewers reviled it. Living a highly unconventional life herself, Braddon's protagonist is an inversion of the Victorian heroine of the romantic or gothic novel. Governess Lucy Graham is a blonde, petite, childlike "angel in the house," but wicked. Sir Michael takes her as his second wife without inquiring into her past. Her dual nature is slowly revealed as we see to what lengths she'll go to hold on to her social position. A blend of detective story and domestic drama, the narrative contains elements of sensation, including wealthy women with secrets, mistaken identity, vital documents, madness, bigamy, adultery, suspense, and murder. Yet even in the heroine's wickedness, her goals were traditional female domestic desires: home, marriage, family, security, and social position.

Charles Dickens: Inspector Bucket

Charles Dickens's (1812–70) *Bleak House* (installments, 1852–53) is about a case in the chancery division: "It is a melancholy truth that even great men have their poor relations." Dickens used detective fiction elements, including a murder, circumstantial evidence pointing to an innocent person, and the arrest of the real culprit. Inspector Bucket is at first hired to inquire into a woman's secret past by lawyer Tulkinghorn, and later investigates the lawyer's murder. There is emphasis on gathering physical evidence, and Bucket was based on real-life London police detective Charles F. Field (1805–74). Dickens wrote several stories based on Field in his weekly journal *Household Words*. He had an interest in the police, which were a relatively new invention. Some scholars credit *Bleak House* as being the first detective fiction novel, but others say the inspector does not have a central enough role.

Dickens's unfinished story (he was working on it the day he died) was shaping up to be a detective novel: *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870). In the story, Edwin Drood disappears under mysterious circumstances. We know much of what was to take place through a letter from one of Dickens's friends, who gave a secondhand account:

> [Dickens's] first fancy for the tale . . . was to be that of the murder of a nephew by his uncle; the originality of which was to consist in the review of the murderer's career by himself at the close . . . The last chapters were to be written in the condemned cell, to which his wickedness, all elaborately elicited from him as if told of another, had brought him . . . All discovery of the murderer was to be baffled till

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Inspector Bucket from "Dickens' Gallery," a card series packaged with Cope's Cigarettes, ca. 1905.

> toward the close, when, by means of a gold ring . . . not only the person murdered was to be identified but the locality of the crime and the man who committed it.

So in many ways the novel was intended to be what we would call today a classic detective fiction story. Plot elements included murder, opium addiction, and double identity.

Wilkie Collins

As earlier mentioned, the writing of Wilkie Collins (1824–1889) provided many of the elements of the classic detective story. In *The Moonstone* (1868), an example of Sensation fiction, the story crosses over to what may make it the first detective fiction novel. The plot turns on now familiar elements of a stolen gem with a curse on it. The moonstone is a yellow diamond that supposedly "waxes and wanes in luster with the phases of the moon." In a clever literary device, the story is told in a series of narrative voices in first person by some of the main characters—eleven in all—such as the butler Betteredge. This keeps the narrative fresh as they each share their perspectives on what they know of what transpired. At the beginning, through some family papers, we learn that Herncastle, an unscrupulous British soldier, commits multiple murder to steal the gem by looting an armory during a military conquest in India. A cousin writes, "It is my conviction . . . that crime brings its own fatality with it." And so the coming calamitous events are foreshadowed: Herncastle leaves the gem to his niece Rachel Verinder on her eighteenth birthday; it is stolen during a house party and all kinds of trouble ensues. Sergeant Cuff is called in to solve the case, and gets it wrong. Finally, after much turmoil, the diamond is restored to its rightful place.

In the novel, Wilkie Collins once again expresses his social views, including those related to poor treatment of Indians and servants, and he presents conflicting views of British imperialism, as when his character Betteredge observes, "I expressed my opinion on this, that they were a set of murdering thieves. Mr. Murthwaite expressed his opinion, that they were a wonderful people." Collins created sympathy to the situation in India for his readers with this novel.

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William Wilkie Collins, 1865

Conclusion

Modern detective fiction was born in part from related literary genres and in part from societal changes such as the advent of real policemen and detectives, as well as changing demands in the public's reading habits and preferences.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Some scholars have observed that detective fiction seems to flourish at times of social change and upheaval; why might that be so? What examples can you think of from early detective fiction and from your own reading?
2. What elements of detective fiction established in its early history can still be found in the genre today? And in what ways does modern detective fiction depart from its origins?
3. Poe, Collins, Dickens, and Braddon were all immensely popular yet controversial authors in their time. Why might many readers and critics in the 1800s have welcomed their stories, while others scorned them or even feared their impact on the mores of their day?

Suggested Reading

Collins, Wilkie. *The Moonstone*. Ed. John Sutherland. New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2008.

Poe, Edgar Allan. *Collected Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Ware, Hertfordshire, UK: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 2004.

Other Books of Interest

Braddon, Mary Elizabeth. *Lady Audley's Secret*. Ed. David Skilton. New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2008.

Dickens, Charles. *Bleak House*. Ed. Stephen Gill. New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2008.

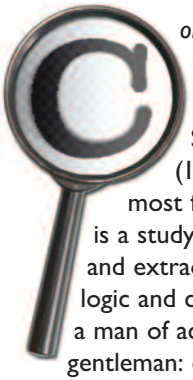
Websites of Interest

1. *The Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore* provides the collected works, a biography, articles and letters, and information about Baltimore during Poe's lifetime. — http://www.eapoe.org
2. The works of William Godwin are available for download at the Project Gutenberg website. — http://www.gutenberg.org/browse/authors/g#a380
3. The *Victorian Web* is a detailed site dedicated to Charles Dickens, his works, and links to other websites. — http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/index.html
4. *The Wilkie Collins Pages* website is an excellent resource for information about the author's life and works. — http://www.wilkiecollins.com

Lecture 2

Arthur Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes, and the Victorian Era

The Suggested Readings for this lecture are Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and *A Study in Scarlet*.



ome, Watson, come! The game is afoot."
~"The Adventure of the Abbey Grange"

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930), creator of "the most famous man who never lived," is a study in contradictions: an ordinary and extraordinary individual, a man of logic and credulity, a voracious reader and a man of action. He was a typical Victorian gentleman: chivalrous, proper, modest, loyal, and a defender of the underdog. Doyle wrote short stories, novels, historical fiction, science fiction, romances, and verse, and he is of course most famous for the fifty-six short stories and four longer stories that make up the Holmes canon. Sherlock Holmes is one of the most popular literary figures of all time, yet Doyle grew to regret his creation, once saying he'd had such an overdose of Holmes that "I feel towards him as I do toward *pâté de foie gras* of which I once ate too much, so that the name of it gives me a sickly feeling to this day." He even tried killing off his fictitious detective, but as he discovered, Holmes's popularity was such that he had become immortal.

Popularity

Doyle's Holmes stories have never been out of print since they first appeared from 1887 to the last in 1927. Holmes is one of the most imitated and admired figures in literature: over four hundred clubs and societies all around the world are dedicated to Doyle's great detective. The Sherlock Holmes Museum in Baker Street does a fine trade of gifts, souvenirs, games, film (Holmes is the most portrayed movie character of all time), TV, and videogames. Advertisers make money using his familiar image; people think he's real, and he still gets mail. Treating Holmes as a real person is known in literary and scholarly circles as "playing the game," so let's investigate this extraordinary figure who lived at the fictitious address of 221b Baker St. from 1881 to 1904. There are some contradictions and inconsistencies in the canon, but no one cares. Readers enjoy the quirkiness of Holmes, and the Holmes-Watson relationship. Some speculate his popularity is because Holmes is who we

desire to be, a knight who uses his unique brilliance and resourcefulness to solve crimes and rescue those in need from terrible dangers and dilemmas. How did this great detective come to be created?

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes

Arthur Conan Doyle was born in Edinburgh in 1859 to parents Charles and Mary. There was artistic skill in the family: his grandfather, father, and uncle were all artists. His father Charles took a civil service job, but after four more siblings were born, money became tight. He sold the occasional picture and was courteous, a dreamer, impractical. Fortunately, Arthur's mother was good at stretching funds. Doyle started writing at age six, describing a character's encounter with a tiger from which he learned "It is very easy to get people into straits, and very hard to get them out again." At age seven he began attending school, sometimes encountering abusive teachers. He became involved in fights as a child and teen, but he also became a voracious reader. There was a rumor he was the reason the local library committee tried to change their bylaws to limit patrons to change books no more than three times a day. He enjoyed Scots novels, history, and detective fiction, and he loved adventure stories: "Long e'er I came to my teens, I had traversed every sea." Later he did indeed traverse the seas, as the doctor on a whaling expedition, which he undertook for adventure and money, as his family was in need. The journey lasted seven months. He didn't like the seal killing and refused a second voyage. He eventually attended Jesuit school and Stonyhurst (where the headmaster's parting words to him were "Doyle, you will never come to any good!"). In his final year of college, he edited the college magazine. Young Doyle had better treatment at school in Felkirk, Austria, enjoying his time there. Doyle was a soldier and patriot. In fact, it was his pamphlet defending the Boer War rather than his creation of Holmes that earned him his knighthood in 1902.

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Doyle at work in his study, ca. 1900.

How Doyle Created Sherlock Holmes

First, the name. Doyle was an admirer of Oliver Wendell Holmes's essays, so that may account for "Holmes." He experimented writing on a paper the names "Sherringford Holmes," "Sherrington Hope," then finally, "Sherlock Holmes." (And for Watson, he toyed with the name "Ormond Sacker.") For Holmes's extraordinary character, scholars speculate there may have been multiple sources.

Possible Inspirations for Holmes

1. *Edgar Allan Poe's C. Auguste Dupin.* We know Doyle read Poe, and Dupin was, like Holmes, a pipe smoker and subject to moodiness. Dupin refused to talk about cases while pondering them, broke in on his friend's train of thought, trapped a man through an ad, arranged a tumult in the street, and had a low opinion of some officials. However, readers find Dupin stiff compared to Holmes.

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Dr. Joseph Bell
(1837–1911)

2. *Dr. Joseph Bell.* Bell was one of Doyle's medical school professors and a highly observant person. Doyle was his out-patient clerk, so he was able to see Bell at work, noting he had the "most remarkable powers of observation" and could often identify a patient's occupation as well as illness. "I thought I would create a character who would treat crime as Dr. Bell treated disease."
3. *Doyle himself*. Doyle's son Adrian and others were of the view that Holmes was based on the author. In an introduction to a May 1945 radio broadcast of "Adventure of the Speckled Band," Adrian said yes, Dr. Bell had some influence, but mainly the character comes from Conan Doyle himself: "A man cannot spin a character and really make it lifelike unless he has the possibilities of that character within himself." Adrian also said, "The power was innate within him. Dr. Joseph Bell helped develop those powers, but the powers were innate or no teacher could have developed them or brought them forth. They were within his creator." And finally, "I am in a position to answer. Sherlock Holmes was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle . . . Many cases that baffled the police were brought to him . . . he proved the innocence of a man convicted of murder. There were two attempts on his life . . . For the mental prototype of Sherlock Holmes we need search no further than his creator." However, others have speculated that it is actually Watson who is based on Doyle. Doyle was a born storyteller like Watson, and a physician, and in a way he played Watson to his own more brilliant and mercurial friend George Budd.
4. *Dr. George Budd.* Budd was bold, energetic, frenetic, mercurial, deceitful, and combative. In a way, Doyle played Watson to him by his comparative steadfastness. Budd had the energy of Holmes, but the deviousness of Moriarty. Friends as students, Budd contacted Doyle later to join his boisterous practice. Doyle's mother didn't like Budd, and said so in some letters to her son. Budd read them and a disagreement ensued. Budd claimed Doyle was not helping the practice, so Doyle removed his nameplate and left, setting up his own practice in Southsea from 1882 to 1890. His younger brother Innes went to help out. Doyle joined social and sporting clubs to drum up patients. His

practice never became large, but it did grow. He met his wife Louise through treating her brother, who unfortunately died a few days later under Doyle's care and while living under his roof. The couple was married in 1885. During this time Doyle started selling short stories, as he needed the money to support his struggling practice.

Publishing History

Doyle introduced Sherlock Holmes in *A Study in Scarlet* in *Beaton's Christmas Annual 1887*. It was published in the United States by Lippincott's and was followed by *The Sign of Four* (1890), written for Lippincott's. In *The Sign of Four* we meet "the unofficial force—The Baker Street irregulars" and learn more of Holmes's cocaine use. Neither novel established his reputation as a writer; it was his short stories that made Sherlock Holmes a household word. Doyle had the idea that a series of stories on one character would give a magazine loyal readers. The first story published was "A Scandal in Bohemia" (*Strand*, 1891, the first to be illustrated by Sidney Paget), which introduced the intriguing Irene Adler: "To Sherlock Holmes, she is always *the* woman. I have seldom heard him mention her under any other name. In his eyes she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex. It was not that he felt any emotion akin to love for Irene Adler. All emotions, and that one particularly, were abhorrent to his cold, precise, but admirably balanced mind. He was, I take it, the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen. . . . And yet there was but one woman to him, and that woman was the late Irene Adler, of dubious and questionable memory." Doyle continued to write short stories and novels, becoming an eye specialist in part to leave more time for writing. Eventually, one day ill with flu, the idea came to him to give up being an oculist and he began to write full-time. He averaged three thousand words a day, getting his ideas while walking, cricketing, playing tennis, or cycling.

Dr. Watson and Sherlock Holmes as rendered by illustrator Sidney Paget.

Holmes's Death and Resurrection

Doyle became tired of his creation and thought him a distraction from his other works. He tried killing Holmes off in "The Adventure of the Final Problem" (*Strand,* December 1893), based on an idea he had after visiting Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland with his wife. In the story, Holmes meets his nemesis Moriarty at the falls for a last combat and they both disappear over the edge. In his diary he wrote "Killed Holmes." However, readers, publishers,

and agents begged, even threatened, for Holmes's return. Readers wore mourning bands and *The Strand* lost twenty thousand subscriptions. Doyle wrote a prequel adventure for Holmes (*The Hound of the Baskervilles, Strand*, 1901–02). Finally, driven by public demand, Doyle resurrected Holmes in a new series starting with "The Empty House" (*Strand,* 1903), in which a startled Watson discovers his friend is still alive: "I moved my head to look at the cabinet behind me. When I turned again Sherlock Holmes was standing smiling at me across my study table. I rose to my feet, stared at him for some seconds in utter amazement, and then it appears that I must have fainted for the first and last time in my life." During the long hiatus between Holmes's death and resurrection, publishers scrambled for similar stories, creating many rivals to Holmes, such as Baroness Orczy's armchair detective The Old Man in the Corner.

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Holmes and Moriarty struggle before tumbling into Reichenbach Falls in Sidney Paget's 1893 illustration for "The Adventure of the Final Problem."

Doyle felt the ideal detective story should be short, though he did write one more longer narrative, *The Valley of Fear* (1914–15). He took pains over every story, choosing problems that would interest his own mind, and wanting the last story to be as good as the first. The Holmes short stories were collected into five books, beginning with *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1892), followed by the *Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (1894), *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (1904), *His Last Bow* (1917), and *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes* (1927). Favorites of both critics and Doyle himself include "A Scandal in Bohemia," "The Adventure of the Final Problem," and "The Adventure of the Speckled Band."

Real Cases

Doyle got letters asking for help addressed to Holmes, Watson, or Doyle himself. A few times he did become involved in real legal matters, such as the George Edalji case, in which he argued a falsely accused man could not have committed the terrible crime of animal maiming, as his eyesight was too poor. In fact, ethnic prejudice may have tainted the case, as Edalji was the son of a local cleric of Indian descent. The story was novelized by Julian Barnes in *Arthur & George*. In this fictionalized account, the two know each other as children before becoming involved in the legal battle.

Spiritualism and Cottingley Fairy Photos

Five photos of fairies were produced by two young cousins in 1917, when photography was a relatively new art. They seemed obvious hoaxes even then, but Doyle believed in fairies; he corresponded with the family and defended the photos as genuine, to the damage of his reputation. He also became interested in spiritualism, including theosophy, telepathy, and hypnotism. Yet his

detective was dismissive of the paranormal. In "The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire" (1924), to the idea of a paranormal explanation, Holmes replies, "This agency stands flat-footed upon the ground, and there it must remain. The world is big enough for us. No ghosts need apply." And in *The Hound of the Baskervilles,* he dismisses supernatural explanations of the glowing hound upon the moors. So why spiritualism? Perhaps partly because he had a powerful imagination, and partly because of the losses he experienced. Arthur Conan Doyle was acquainted with grief. He lost his wife Louisa in 1906, his beloved son Kingsley (of pneumonia in 1918 while convalescing from war wounds), his brother Innes (also of pneumonia, in 1919), his two brothers-in-law (including E.W. Hornung, whom he'd encouraged to publish his *Raffles*, "amateur cracksman" stories), and two nephews shortly after World War I. Thus Doyle became increasingly interested in spiritualism and its claimed ability to contact the departed, and he gave large sums of money, time, and energy to the cause in his later years.

Public Domain

One of the "Cottingley Fairy" photographs shows Frances Griffiths with the alleged fairies. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle used the images to illustrate an article on fairies he had been commissioned to write for the Christmas 1920 edition of *The Strand* magazine. Conan Doyle interpreted them as clear and visible evidence of psychic phenomena.

Literary Masterpiece: *The Hound of the Baskervilles*

The Hound of the Baskervilles was published in 1901–02 as an "earlier" adventure of Holmes, since he'd been killed off in "The Final Problem." It is considered one of Doyle's masterpieces, full of sensational elements such as family curses, seemingly supernatural events, burnt letters, ancestral halls and portraits, hidden identities, beautiful ladies, escaped convicts, and a wild creature on the moors. It was first published in *The Strand*, and it is told from first-person point of view by Watson. Typical Holmes elements included smoking reams of pipe tobacco, drinking copious amounts of coffee, donning disguises, and making brilliant observations and deductions.

Public Domain

First edition cover of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, published by George Newnes, 1902.

Authorship Controversy

In a letter to his mother Doyle wrote, "Fletcher Robinson came here with me and we are going to do a small book together '*The Hound of the Baskervilles*'—a real creeper." Doyle initially said his friend's name must appear with his, but in the end Robinson received only a cordial yet brief acknowledgment. There remains some ambiguity as to how much credit for the work Doyle owes to his friend, who did tell him of the family legend, but in their original story Holmes was not the hero. Doyle decided to make Holmes the protagonist later because there was no need to create a hero for the story when he already had one.

Plot

The novel begins with Holmes showing off his remarkable skills of observation as to the identity and character of their client, Dr. Mortimer, concluding he is amiable, unambitious, and absent-minded—all just from examining his walking stick. The great detective wonders what he wants of "Sherlock Holmes, a specialist in crime?" The story contrasts reason versus the supernatural. When Dr. Mortimer, physician to Sir Charles Baskerville, first tells the fantastic family legend, Holmes yawns. Ancestor Sir Hugo kidnapped a local girl; she escaped, but died running away. Hugo gave chase and was found with his throat torn out and a giant hound over him. Dr. Mortimer's concern is that Sir Charles had recently died, collapsed outside the hall, and the doctor saw footprints nearby: "Mr. Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound!" And now he is picking up Sir Henry, nephew and heir, at the station. Sir Henry tells them he's had two mysterious incidents: a letter warning him off the moors and the theft of one boot. They go to Baskerville Hall, run by a butler and his wife; neighbor Stapleton and his sister (or is she?) Beryl live in Merripit House nearby. In the story, Holmes's methods and personality are revealed in his words to his faithful assistant: "The world is full of obvious things, Watson, which nobody, by any chance, ever observes. . . . We balance probabilities and choose the most likely. It is the scientific use of the imagination. . . . There is nothing more stimulating than a case where everything goes against you." The atmospheric, well-plotted tale continues to entertain readers today.

"Incorrect" Solution to *The Hound of the Baskervilles*?

Pierre Bayard "plays the game" and has fun practicing a form of literary analysis he has dubbed "detective criticism," reinvestigating cases in detective literature. In *Sherlock Holmes Was Wrong: Reopening the Case of the Hound of the Baskervilles* (2008), he uses evidence from the text to defend the hound and suggest that Sherlock Holmes was "incorrect" in his identification of the killer, which Bayard reveals to be another character entirely.

Conclusion

Holmes has inspired imitators and spinoffs from Victorian times, including female Victorian-era sleuths we'll meet later. He has easily transitioned from the Victorian era to each new medium: radio, TV, film, and videogames. Indeed, one computer game expert has suggested the original stories were somewhat like videogames in that readers could press "new game" to restart Holmes in every new adventure. And Holmes continues to appear reincarnated in print: Laurie R. King is one of many authors to revive the sleuth for modern readers. Doyle's consulting detective has also inspired current characters such as TV's House, MD (Lecture 14), so his immortality endures, but for now we will say, as did his creator Arthur Conan Doyle, "And so reader, farewell to Sherlock Holmes!"

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. G.K. Chesterton admired Doyle's detective, noting, "In no other current creation except Sherlock Holmes does the character succeed, so to speak, in breaking out of the book as a chicken breaks out of an egg." Holmes does seem exceptionally real to readers; why is that so?
2. Some critics maintain that though Holmes is supposed to be logical and an admirer of scientific method, many of his "deductions" come from intuition, luck, and leaps of logic. To what extent might that be so, and if so, how does it impact your view of the detective and author?
3. Holmes has leapt from the printed page into every new medium technology brings us; the game is now digitally afoot! What does Holmes look like in our modern age? Why has he transitioned so smoothly?

Suggested Reading

Doyle, Arthur Conan. *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. New York: Penguin, 2009.

———. *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. New York: Penguin, 2010.

———. *A Study in Scarlet*. New York: HardPress Publishing, 2010.

Other Books of Interest

Bayard, Pierre. *Sherlock Holmes Was Wrong: Reopening the Case of the Hound of the Baskervilles*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2008.

Lycett, Andrew. *The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes: The Life and Times of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*. New York: Free Press, 2007.

Websites of Interest

1. The *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Literary Estate* website provides a specially written biography of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and information on books and the films inspired by his writing. — http://www.sherlockholmesonline.org
2. Lock Haven University (Lock Haven, PA) provides a website page by Donald E. Simanek entitled "Arthur Conan Doyle, Spiritualism, and Fairies." — http://www.lhup.edu/~dsimanek/doyle.htm
3. The *New York Times* website provides an archive of news articles about Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. — http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/people/d/arthur_conan_doyle/index.html

Lecture 3

The Queen of Crime: Agatha Christie and the Golden Age

The Suggested Readings for this lecture are Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None*, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd: A Hercule Poirot Mystery*, and *The Tuesday Club Murders: A Miss Marple Mystery*.

here is no detective in England equal to a spinster lady of uncertain age with plenty of time on her hands."

~said of Miss Marple in *The Murder at the Vicarage*

Public Domain

The first known illustration of Agatha Christie's character "Miss Marple" appeared in the December 1927 issue of *The Royal* magazine in London.

The "Golden Age"

Like many art forms, the classic detective fiction novel can be said to have had a "Golden Age," usually identified as occurring between the two world wars (1918–1939). It was known for its puzzle plot structure, unpopular victims, and cozy settings (country house parties, quaint villages, and gardens). Fair play rules of the detection club were also part of the motif. For example, all clues were presented to the reader (though there could be some red herrings) and the murderer was introduced early.

The "big four" authors of this era were British: Agatha Christie, Margery Allingham, Ngaio Marsh, and Dorothy L. Sayers. Other British writers were Freeman Wills Crofts, Michael Innes, and Josephine Tey. Some American authors included John Dickson Carr, Ellery Queen, and S.S. Van Dine. By far the most prolific and best known author of this period (and very much representative of its style) is one of the most extraordinary authors of the twentieth century, Agatha Christie.

Agatha Christie: Most Influential Author of All Time?

Agatha Christie (1890–1976) is the most widely published author and arguably the most popular detective author of all time. She wrote seventy-eight crime novels, over one hundred fifty short stories, and twenty plays. One of her plays, *The Mousetrap,* is the longest running play in history. She also wrote a book of poems and (unknown for twenty years) six romantic novels under the pseudonym Mary

Agatha Christie in 1946.

Westmacott. Christie also authored five nonfiction books, including her autobiography. Christie's works have been translated into over seventy languages, have never gone out of print, and have reached sales of over two billion copies.

Agatha Christie was born a clergyman's daughter in Torquay, Devonshire. She was a hospital dispenser and a nurse in World War I, so she knew about poisons. Over half of her works involve poison in some way, which was also a less overtly violent method, as fit the style of the times. She said she got her best ideas while "doing the washing up." Some say that her occasional character detective-fiction-writer Ariadne Oliver is Christie; others say she's doing a send-up of herself.

Agatha's first marriage to Archibald Christie in 1914 became unhappy, and in 1926 he asked for a divorce; that night she left the house and disappeared for eleven days, creating a nationwide search until she surfaced at a seaside hotel (registered under the name of her husband's mistress) and claiming amnesia. They divorced two years later. She disliked and avoided the press after her "disappearance," and almost never spoke of it again. Her second marriage to archaeologist Max Mallowan in 1930 was much happier, although he also had a mistress in later years. They enjoyed going on digs, which shows up in her works. Christie bought the beautiful and beloved property of Greenway (in Devon), now owned by the National Trust and open to the public. She was made Dame of the British Empire in 1971, and died in 1976 at the age of eighty-five. Critics consider it extraordinary that she created not just one but several exceptional sleuths who gained wide popularity.

Hercule Poirot: "These little gray cells"

One of the "Great Detectives," retired Belgian police officer Hercule Poirot becomes one of the best-loved and most enduring characters in fiction. Known for his eccentric mannerisms and "little gray cells," Poirot eventually solves crimes in thirty-three novels beginning with Christie's first work, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920), which was a blockbuster. Her publishers begged her for more Poirot, and readers awaited the next Poirot book the way some do Harry Potter stories today. Christie got the idea for the character from observing the Belgian immigrants in Torquay during the war.

Dust-jacket illustration of the first edition of *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*.

Poirot in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*

Some critics maintain that this Poirot novel (1926) is Christie's finest work; it is certainly her most controversial. When it was published, some reviewers and readers delighted in its surprising ending and others said it didn't follow the fair play rule. The setting is part sleepy English village and part country house. Roger Ackroyd is murdered in the study of his home Fernly Park, located in the village of King's Abbot. We find the

usual assortment of suspects: the servants in the house (including a butler and a parlor maid), houseguests, a young male secretary, the local doctor and his sister, a niece, an adopted son, even a mysterious stranger in the village seen asking for directions to the house.

Enter Poirot, who has retired to the village and has already tired of growing vegetable marrows. Captain Albert Hastings (Poirot's assistant) is in South America, so the doctor, Poirot's neighbor, takes on the role of assistant while his spinster sister does some inquiring of her own, becoming a prototype of Miss Marple. Classic clues include the disappearance of one of the suspects, a discarded ring, a phone call, and a chair out of place. The solution itself is an ingenious departure from formula. The book, Christie's sixth, appeared to mixed reviews at the time, some critics praising its ingenuity, others calling the solution a "dirty trick." In her autobiography, Christie defended the work, saying, "A lot of people say that *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* is cheating, but if they read it carefully they will see that they are wrong. Such little lapses of time as there have to be are nicely concealed in an ambiguous sentence." Christie acknowledged the idea for the book came from similar ideas suggested by her brother-in-law James, and Lord Mountbatten.

Poirot on TV

The BBC approached Christie's family in 1989 about doing a Poirot television series. David Suchet was asked to play Poirot. Ironically he had played Detective Chief Inspector Japp in another production and they thought he was the worst Japp ever. Thirteen years after Christie's death, the first episode appeared starring Suchet; the public and family liked his performance. Suchet researched all Christie's books. Her daughter Rosalind asked him to *not* play Poirot as a clown, because one should never laugh at, but always smile with, Poirot. The television series added Japp and Miss Lemon and sometimes Hastings to episodes in which they did not appear or had smaller roles in the original works, thinking that Poirot needed a family of sorts to react with and against. However, Christie's family insisted that plots stay as true to the original works as possible. The most recent series is more faithful, not adding characters that weren't in the original stories. The new producers prefer a slightly darker vision, since they are, after all, murder mysteries. They decided to place all the stories in 1936, in sets of 1930s modernism rather than ornate art deco.

Actor David Suchet (1946–) as he appears in his role as Hercule Poirot on television.

Poirot's Curtain Call

Poirot's last case, *Curtain*, was written in the mid-1940s, but Christie's daughter persuaded her not to kill off Poirot so soon, for her public's sake. The novel brings him back to Styles, the locale of his first adventure. The mansion has been converted to a guesthouse where Poirot is living; Hastings returns as well. Poirot dies at the end, and the plan was to publish the story of Poirot's death posthumously to coincide with Christie's, but it turned out to be a year before, in 1975. Poirot was so popular his "obituary" made the front page of the *New York Times* on August 6, 1975.

The New York Times

Hercule Poirot Is Dead; Famed Belgian Detective

By THOMAS LASK

Hercule Poirot, a Belgian detective who became internationally famous, has died in England. His age was unknown.

Mr. Poirot achieved fame as a private investigator after he retired as a member of the Belgian police force in 1904. His career, as chronicled in the novels of Dame Agatha Christie, his creator, was one of the most illustrious in fiction.

At the end of his life, he was arthritic and had a bad heart. He was in a wheelchair often, and was carried from his bedroom to the public lounge at Styles Court, a nursing home in Essex, wearing a wig and false mustaches to mask the signs of age that offended his vanity. In his active days, he was always impeccably dressed.

Mr. Poirot, who was just 5 feet 4 inches tall, went to England from Belgium during World War I as a refugee. He settled in a little town not far from Styles, then an elaborate country estate, where he took on his first private case.

The news of his death, given by Dame Agatha, was not unexpected. Word that he was near death reached here last May.

His death was confirmed by Dodd, Mead, Dame Agatha's publishers, who will put out "Curtain," the novel that chronicles his last days, on Oct. 15.

The Poirot of the final volume is only a shadow of the well-turned out, agile investigator who, with a charming but immense ego and fractured English, solved uncounted mysteries in the 33 full-length novels and collections of short stories in which he appeared.

Dame Agatha reports in "Curtain" that he managed, in one final gesture, to perform one more act of contrition that saved an innocent bystander from disaster. "Nothing in his life became him like the leaving it," to quote Shakespeare, whom Poirot frequently misquoted.

Dodd, Mead had not expected another installment in the heroic achievements of the famous detective.

No manuscript came in last year, and none was expected this year, either. However, there had been many rumors to the effect that Dame Agatha had locked up two manuscripts — one a Poirot and one a Marple — in a vault and that they were not to be published until her death. Christie Dodd, Mead, said that the Poirot was the one now being published.

Although the career of Poirot will no more engage his historian, a spokesman for the author said that Dame Agatha, who will be 85 Sept. 15, intends to continue writing. In her long writing career, one that parallels the literary existence of her detective, she has written 85 full-length novels and collections of short stories, which have sold 350 million copies in hard cover and paperback all over the globe.

This figure does not include the pirated editions behind the Iron Curtain, of which no count can be made.

In addition, under the pseudonym of Mary Westmacott she has written a half-dozen romances. What is perhaps more significant is that her first title, "The Mysterious Affair at Styles" is still in print.

At least 17 of her stories have been made into plays, including the famous "The Mouse Trap," which opened in London in 1952 and is still running, setting all kinds of records for longevity in the theater.

Twelve of her tales have become motion pictures, many of which have centered on Jane Marple. Dame Agatha's other famous detective.

In the person of the late Margaret Rutherford, Miss Marple developed her own devoted following.

The most recent of Dame Agatha's movies, "Murder on the Orient Express" opened last year, with excellent box office returns. And Christie properties have been used for television mystery dramas and for radio shows.

Her hold on her audience is remarkable in a way because the kind of fiction she writes is, well, not exactly contemporary. Her characters come from the quiet and exceedingly comfortable middle class: doctors, lawyers, top military men, members of the clergy. The houses in her fiction are spacious, teas are frequent and abundant, servants abound. True, the comforts have been cut back as the real England in which her mysteries are set has been altered over the years. But the polite, leisurelass settings have been retained.

"I could never manage miners talking in 'pubs,' she once confided in an interview, "because I don't know what miners talk about in pubs."

"Undisputed Head Girl"

Not everyone has agreed

to her high ranking. Robert Graves complained that "her English is schoolgirlish, her situations for the most part artificial, her detail faulty."

On the other hand, Margery Allingham, herself a writer of whodunits, called her the "undisputed head girl," and the late Anthony Boucher, who reviewed mysteries for this newspaper, remarked, "Few writers are producing the pure puzzle novel and no one on either side of the Atlantic does it better."

Dame Agatha, who has been described as a large woman looking both kind and capable, is the daughter of a well-to-do American father and English mother. She was tutored at home and attended, as she recalled, innumerable classes: dancing, singing, drawing. In World War I, she worked in a Red Cross hospital, and this experience gave her a good working knowledge of poisons, ingredients that turn up rather frequently in her books.

In 1926, she suffered an attack of amnesia, left home and was discovered some days later in a hotel under another name. The furor stirred up by the newspapers over her disappearance has made her shy of newspapers and reporters ever since. She has kept herself inconspicuous in public, even avoiding for a while that no picture of herself appear on the dust jackets of her books. She has declined to be interviewed about the death of Poirot. In 1928, she was divorced from her first husband, Archibald Christie, and in 1930 she was married to Max Mallowan, an archeologist.

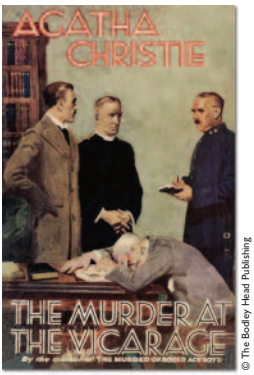
It has been said that she has brought Victorian qualities to her work—a charge she does not deny. She dislikes sordid tales and confesses that she could not write them. But another side of that Victorianism is that in all her years as a writer she has had one publisher in America, Dodd Mead. Such steadfastness is surely of another age.

© New York Times

The *New York Times* obituary for Hercule Poirot.

Miss Marple: Village Spinster Turned Sleuth

Elderly village spinster in the town of St. Mary Mead, Miss Marple uses her understanding of human nature and parallels to village life to solve murders. Marple features in twelve novels and numerous short stories. She continues the Victorian and Golden Age tradition that sleuths are single without many entanglements. Miss Marple debuted in the short story collection *Tuesday Club Murders* (1927, also known as *The Thirteen Problems*), which is considered one of Christie's best works. A group of friends meets at Miss Marple's house and decides they'll meet each Tuesday, when each person must relate a story from the past regarding a mysterious death. Some members of the group have professions well-suited to crime solving, but in each case Miss Marple is able to get to the truth of the matter.



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Cover of the first edition of *The Murder at the Vicarage* (United Kingdom version).

Miss Marple is first introduced in novel form in *The Murder at the Vicarage* (1930). Many critics think the best Marple novels are *The Body in the Library* (1942), in which Miss Marple solves the case that saves her friend's reputation, and *A Murder Is Announced* (1950), in which a notice of an upcoming "murder" appears in the paper. Neighbors show up out of curiosity thinking it's perhaps a game. The lights suddenly go out, and a real murder takes place. There are lots of lovely red herrings and hidden identities in this tale, which

keeps most readers guessing to the end. Marple says in *At Bertrams' Hotel*, "It is because I live in St. Mary Mead that I know so much about human nature."

Tommy and Tuppence: Romance and Adventure

Christie's romantic couple-turned-sleuths first appear in *The Secret Adversary* (1922) as childhood friends who have returned from World War I and are seeking adventure and employment. They decide to place an ad in the paper: "Willing to do anything, go anywhere. Pay must be good. No *un*reasonable offer refused." They next appear in *Partners in Crime* (1929), a collection of short stories with each gently spoofing the style of leading detective fiction authors of the day, including Christie herself.

Public Domain

The first known illustration of Agatha Christie's characters Tommy and Tuppence from the December 1923 issue of the *Grand Magazine*.

Other Tommy and Tuppence adventures include *N or M?* (1941), a World War II espionage novel; *By the Pricking of My Thumbs* (1968); and *Postern of Fate* (1973), the last novel Christie ever wrote, although not the last published. Tommy and Tuppence age naturally throughout the series, from their twenties in the first work and into retirement age in the last. Thus the novels provide a window on that generation's experience of both wars and the social changes of the 1950s and '60s. Christie also wrote romances and enjoyed portraying a romantic and happy couple.

Other Christie Detectives

Christie also made use of other characters as sleuths. Anne Beddingfield and Colonel Race appeared in *Man in the Brown Suit* (1924), which was considered her best novel not featuring a series detective. Superintendent Battle was featured in *Towards Zero* (1944). Colonel Race made a second appearance in *Sparkling Cyanide* (1945), which was based on a Poirot short story. There was the mysteriously appearing (and disappearing) Harley Quin in *The Mysterious Mr. Quin* (1930). And finally there was Mr. Parker Pyne, retired statistician and self-described "detective of the heart," in *Parker Pyne Investigates* (1934).

Plays

Christie wrote many plays. The most famous featured non-series detectives. *The Mousetrap* began running at the West End of London Theatre in 1952 and is still in production with over twenty-three thousand performances. She used to attend performances and wave to the audience. It is the longest run in theatre history. In order to keep the long run going, an actor comes out at the

end of the play and asks the audience to please not tell whodunit. The play version of *And Then There Were None* (1943) is counted among her best works. Her favorite was *Witness for the Prosecution* (1939), based on one of her short stories and later made into a classic film.

Criticisms of Christie

Critics of Christie's work have found in its pages evidence of xenophobia and racism, anti-Semitism, classism, gender stereotypes, unrealistic plots, and cliché characters. Others disagree or minimize these points, or point to the era they were written.

Christie's Legacy

Agatha Christie was influenced by authors before her (she admired Doyle's Watson and read Anna Katharine Green) and has influenced countless authors in turn. Many contemporary detective fiction authors still want to be called the "new Agatha Christie." Her legacy continues to be honored in popular culture. In Carolyn G. Hart's *The Christie Caper* (1991), the action takes place at an Agatha Christie conference. It was published for the centenary of Christie's birth. And in an episode of *Dr. Who*, "The Unicorn and the Wasp" (2008), the plot is an homage to Christie's work, taking place in a country house. In this story, Christie arrives on what turns out to be the day of her disappearance, which is explained in a new way. Christie teams up with the Doctor and his assistant Donna to identify two culprits, the jewel thief and a murderer (an alien) among them. The script writers had fun working the titles of all her mysteries into the dialog. At the conclusion we learn Christie's books are still best-sellers millions of years into the future: a true testament to her enduring legacy in popular culture. Christie's works are also now in graphic novel form, and computer and virtual reality games. Her legacy will indeed last long into the future.

Conclusion: Survival of the Golden Age Form

Not only do Christie works remain popular today, but also the Golden Age style that her work exemplifies remains in use by modern authors. It is still the preferred form of some current authors in the guise of "cozy" mysteries: a style in which many wrote and still choose to write.

© Andy Hackett/Genesis • Ark/BBC Television

A promotional still from "The Unicorn and the Wasp" episode of BBC's *Dr. Who* television series featuring a portrayal of Agatha Christie (played by Fenella Woolgar, front center) along with "The Doctor" (David Tennant) and "Donna Noble" (Catherine Tate). The episode first aired on May 17, 2008.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Marple and Poirot never met—and Christie thought if they did, they may not have liked each other—but they're often compared. Christie grew tired of Poirot, who appears in many more stories, and Marple was her favorite. How do they compare in terms of method and appeal?
2. Both Poirot and Marple are single and have no immediate family attachments, typical of Golden Age sleuths. How does that impact their role as crime solver and central character?
3. Tommy and Tuppence, unlike Marple and Poirot, have a family life and age in real time. What new dimensions do those features bring to the detective story and what of Christie's own life and other works might she be expressing through this fun-loving couple?

Suggested Reading

Christie, Agatha. *And Then There Were None*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2004.

———. *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd: A Hercule Poirot Mystery*. New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, Inc., 2006.

———. *The Tuesday Club Murders: A Miss Marple Mystery*. New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, Inc., 2007.

Other Books of Interest

Christie, Agatha . *A Caribbean Mystery: A Miss Marple Mystery*. New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, Inc., 2007.

———. *Death on the Nile*. New York: Berkley Books, 2004.

———. *The Man in the Brown Suit*. New York: Minotaur Books, 2001.

———. *Sparkling Cyanide*. New York: Minotaur Books, 2001.

———. *Towards Zero*. New York: Minotaur Books, 2001.

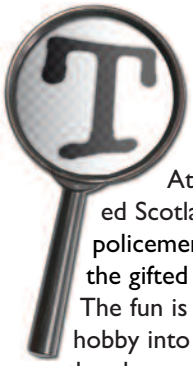
Websites of Interest

1. The *Agatha Christie, Ltd.* website provides information on the author and the worldwide interest in her works. — http://www.agathachristie.com
2. The *Christie Mystery* website focuses on Agatha Christie's style and methods, the plot devices used to trick the reader, and her work itself. — http://www.christiemystery.co.uk
3. The *Internet Movie Database* website provides a detailed listing of the many television and film adaptations of Christie's stories. — http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0002005

Lecture 4

Gifted Amateurs: Academics to Zoologists

The Suggested Readings for this lecture are G.K. Chesterton's *The Innocence of Father Brown*, Diane Mott Davidson's *Catering to Nobody* and *Tough Cookie*, and Dick Francis's *10 Lb. Penalty* and *Bonecrack*.



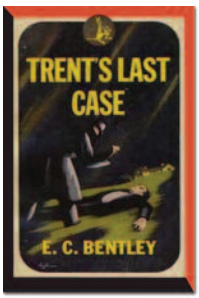
he detective story differs from every other story in this: that the reader is only happy if he feels a fool."

~G.K. Chesterton

At the end of Alfred Hitchcock's *Dial M for Murder*, the frustrated Scotland Yard Inspector observes, "They talk about flat-footed policemen—may the saints protect us from the gifted amateur!" In fact, the gifted amateur is a resourceful addition to the literary landscape. The fun is in how they bring the knowledge of their occupation or hobby into the crime-solving arena. Many start as accidental sleuths and then become amateurs when they turn into a series detective, applying the special knowledge of their professions or hobbies to solving murders as they have developed a reputation for crime solving. Some are both literally and figuratively crafty as they bring knowledge of quiltmaking, embroidery, knitting, and other handwork to the case; the types of hobbies and professions run the gamut from academic to zoologist. Amateur detective fiction tends to cluster round a type of job, hobby, or milieu, such as railway crimes.

Early Amateurs

E.C. Bentley (1875–1976) was an English author, lawyer, and journalist. He has been called the father of the *modern* detective novel for his *Trent's Last Case* (1913), which was an early example of detective fiction. Ironically, it was written partly as a spoof on mystery writing of the day. Bentley's friend from schooldays, author G.K. Chesterton, urged him to write it, so Bentley dedicated the novel to him. Another friend from Oxford, John Buchan, helped with its publication, and the novel was admired by Dorothy L. Sayers.



Cover of a 1950s edition of *Trent's Last Case*.

Bentley's sleuth is Philip Trent, artist-journalist and amateur detective. In the story, an American millionaire is murdered on his English estate and Trent is retained to cover the story and perhaps solve the crime. During his investigation, he falls in love with the main suspect. Also on the case is Scotland Yard Inspector Murth. Bentley wanted to write a story in which "the detective is recognizable as a human

being" and has a good sense of humor. It was written with wit and graceful prose, and without much action or violence. Typical elements are a likeable character and organized plot. Unusual elements are that the detective becomes romantically involved with a suspect and, by examining clues, comes up with the wrong conclusion for the case. Bentley and Chesterton were founding members of the London Detection Club. Chesterton was president until his death in 1936, when Bentley took over.

G.K. Chesterton's Father Brown

G.K. Chesterton

G.K. Chesterton (1874–1936) is author of the Father Brown stories. The modest, unassuming priest was created as an opposite to Sherlock Holmes, to be smaller than life rather than larger. There are five collections of stories in the Father Brown series, all beginning and ending with similar titles: *The Innocence of Father Brown*, *The Wisdom . . .*, *The Incredulity . . .*, *The Secret . . .*, and *The Scandal . . .* The first collection, *The Innocence of Father Brown*, introduces Chesterton's clergyman sleuth in "The Blue Cross," followed by eleven more tales.

One of the most ingenious and oft-imitated stories is "The Invisible Man." It was the fifth story in the first collection and the title was purposely borrowed from H.G. Wells's highly influential work.

The story involves the murder of the inventor of "mechanical servants" in a locked room, one of the first appearances in literature of what we now call robots. Has a mechanical servant killed the inventor? And how can a man enter a doorway that is being watched, even leave footprints in the snow, yet no one sees him? Father Brown is ultimately more concerned with souls than crime-solving: the story concludes with these haunting lines: "But Father Brown walked those snow-covered hills under the stars for many hours with a murderer, and what they said to each other will never be known."

The fourth story in this collection, "The Queer Feet," is rife with Chesterton's astute social observations and criticism. Father Brown solves the case by listening to footsteps in a passage. In this story, the mild-mannered priest observes, "A crime is like any other work of art."

Chesterton delights in paradox: "It isn't that they can't see the solution. It is that they can't see the problem" ("Point of a Pin," *The Scandal of Father Brown*). Many of his stories turn on Father Brown's ability to see another interpretation to seemingly obvious events. In "The Vampire of the Village," a stranger visiting a small town is overheard in an argument with locals and sneers out, "wretched little hamlet." When he's later found murdered everyone assumes one of the locals killed him defending civic pride. Only Father Brown notes that

"Hamlet" can also refer to Shakespeare's character and that it was, in fact, an actors' quarrel. Chesterton preferred that his sleuth tackle small domestic crimes: "The soul of detective fiction is not complexity, but simplicity."

Dorothy L. Sayers: Lord Peter Wimsey and Harriet Vane

Dorothy L. Sayers and an illustration of Lord Peter Wimsey.

Dorothy L. Sayers (1893–1957) is considered one of the "Big Four" Golden Age authors along with Christie, Margery Allingham, and Ngaio Marsh. She had a difficult personal life that shows up in her works. Her aristocratic sleuth Lord Peter Wimsey first appears in *Whose Body?* (1923) and must exonerate his brother in *Clouds of Witness* (1926).

Murder Must Advertise (1933) is considered one of her best works. Wimsey goes undercover in an ad agency to see whether an accidental fall down a circular staircase was really something more sinister. Sayers worked in an ad agency for nine years, so she knew the setting well and has fun with this story. The crime involves one of the employees sending secret messages in the ads.

Sayers's other masterwork is *The Nine Tailors* (1934), which centered on the world of churchbell ringing and an understanding of campanology (the study of bells). Harriet Vane is the female sleuth who is featured in four novels by Sayers: *Strong Poison*, in which Vane is falsely accused of murdering her lover (for a motive drawn from Sayers's own life) and rescued by Peter; *Have His Carcase* (1932), in which Vane must solve a murder based on photographic and other limited evidence; *Gaudy Night* (1935), which explores the role of women and education as Harriet is called to her alma mater to find who's writing poison pen letters (they don't want to go to the police lest the public see what happens when women pursue an education); and *Busman's Honeymoon* (1937), in which Harriet and Peter, finally married, find a body in their new home. Sayers's fine literary style puts her at the forefront of literary detective fiction.

Modern Amateurs: A Sampling

The World of Horse Racing

Dick Francis (1920–2010) was a jockey and racing journalist and therefore had an insider's understanding of the horse racing world. He started racing at the age of twenty-five. Once, when he broke his collarbone, his wife asked how long it would be before he could ride again, to which he replied, "I'll ride tomorrow!" Francis was also an RAF pilot for six years and so he can vividly

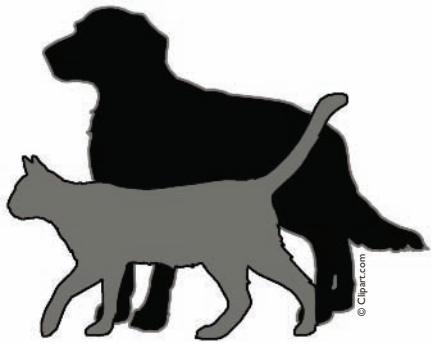
describe flying scenes as part of his stories. In 1996, he was named Grand Master by the Mystery Writers of America. Four of his novels feature injured jockey Sid Halley: *Odds Against, Whip Hand, Come to Grief*, and *Under Orders*. Other novels star non-series protagonists. In each story—all to do in some way with crime and the world of horseracing—Francis explores a different subtheme, such as grief in *Proof* or father-son relationships in *Bonecrack.*

Animal Sleuths

Lilian Jackson Braun (1913–) launched the cat mystery craze with her *The Cat Who Could Read Backwards* (1966). After a hiatus, the series took off and the publishing world's never been the same. Braun's sleuths are Jim "Qwill" Qwilleran, a divorced retired journalist and recovering alcoholic, and his two Siamese cats: Koko, who is highly sensitive and possesses extra whiskers, and demure Yum Yum. (Qwilleran has his own whiskers, proud of his salt-and-pepper mustache.) Braun started the series after the loss of her own beloved Siamese. In the series, Qwilleran receives an inheritance and moves to a converted apple barn near Pickax in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, where he romances local librarian Polly Duncan. The series has an enormous following and has received Edgar and Anthony Award nominations, and inspired a plethora of *ailuro*-mysteries. The series is somewhat sentimental, but fun with the inter-species interplay between Qwill and the felines, trusting their instincts and ability to seemingly (coincidentally? He's not sure) point out clues: "That cat knows when people are up to no good." The last entry to date is *The Cat Who Had 60 Whiskers* (2007).

Other feline detectives appear in the works of Lydia Adamson (1936–), who has written twenty-one cat mysteries, and Rita Mae Brown (1944–) and "Sneaky Pie Brown" (her cat), in whose stories the animals talk to each other and are active in solving the crime.

Dog lovers may enjoy reading Iris Johansen (1938–) or Stuart Woods's police procedurals. The appeal of animal sleuths may be the fun of interspecies communication, the unique contributions of the animal to crime solving, and also perhaps that many mystery readers are pet owners and so enjoy the combination of interests.



Culinary

Diane Mott Davidson (1949–) launched the culinary mystery. She was born in Hawaii and grew up in Washington, DC, and Charlottesville, Virginia. She was educated at Wellesley, Stanford, and Johns Hopkins University. Her first novel, *Catering to Nobody* (1990), was praised by Sue Grafton and introduced Goldy Bear, of Goldilocks Catering, "Where everything is just right." She values her family and friends: eleven-year-old son Arch, an abusive and still dangerous ex-husband Dr. John Richard Korman (who is killed off later in the series), and her best friend Marla, who is Korman's other "ex" and who calls him "The Jerk." Goldy lives in Aspen Meadow, Colorado. In the first novel, her father-in-law dies after sampling her wares at a wake for her son's favorite teacher. The police shut down her business during the investigation, so Goldy decides to protect her income by sleuthing on her own. She sees detection as making cake without a recipe: "It was like having a large group of ingredients and not knowing how they were all combined." Thus Goldy is a prime example of the accidental sleuth, who becomes a detective at first because crime enters her sphere, so that solving it in this case protects her livelihood. As she says: "I just want to solve this crime and start making money again." Goldy is also a real person: she's independent and intuitive, wants to be a good mom, sometimes feels inadequate, and makes mistakes. Investigator Tom Schulz is assigned to the case, becomes a love interest, and later in the series they marry.

Davidson's novels include original menus and recipes and detailed descriptions of cooking. She is known for clever titles and grabber first lines: *Tough Cookie* (2000) begins "Show business and death don't mix."

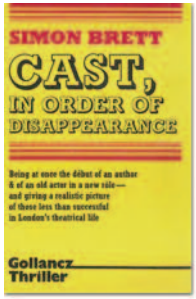
Other authors in the culinary line include Michael Bond's humorous series starring restaurant critic Monsieur Pamplemousse and bloodhound Pommes Frites, and the popular author Joanne Fluke (ca. 1943–), creator of series sleuth cafe owner Hannah Swenson in novels featuring the delicious combination of recipes, comedy, and romance.

Theatre

© Christopher Doyle

Simon Brett at home, 2009.

Simon Brett (1945–) is a prolific author and a writer for the BBC. "I love writing crime fiction," he once said, because it provides "a great way of exploring an area." In detective fiction "plot is important, but character and dialog are at least as important." He has written seventeen "Charles Paris" novels, beginning with *Cast in Order of Disappearance* (1975). Brett developed the character while producing radio dramas, especially the Lord Wimsey series. The Paris series is known for its humor. In Brett's opinion, humor and detective fiction go well together, and he observes that Agatha Christie's stories, especially early ones, are quite light. The balance between crime and comedy is difficult to get right. Brett also admires Raymond Chandler (1888–1959), who used jokes to heighten tension.



© Thriller Book Club, 1975

The process of crime and comedy writing are similar; jokes and crime both turn on a pivotal piece of information to make them work. Brett says he "writes on the hoof" and writes quickly, producing a novel in about a year, thinking and researching for about nine months and then writing it in two to three months. His sleuth Charles Paris is a middle-aged actor, fond of scotch, and still friendly with ex-wife Frances. They have a daughter, Juliet. The plot of *A Series of Murders* (1989) involves the intricacies of the actor's world: petty jealousies, confused relationships, crazy authors, and thieving prop boys all rendered with authenticity and humor. The seventeen novels in the series take place at various types of theatres and in different cities and countries, including forays into television drama. In each story, Paris solves the crimes that have erupted and struggles with his drinking and relationships with women. For the moment, Brett has retired his actor sleuth, but has said he hopes to write another Paris mystery at some point.

Conclusion

The amateur sleuth who reigned in the Golden Age survives and thrives even in this era of increasingly diversified detective fiction subgenres and high-tech crime-solving techniques.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Simon Brett sees an affinity between comedy and crime: a joke is like a murder story, as both narratives rely on tension created by an uncertain outcome revealed at the end, either the punchline or solution. Thus, humor is an appropriate ingredient in detective fiction—do you agree or disagree and why?
2. In your view, does the lack of emphasis on realism inherent in the amateur category make it somehow inferior to other subgenres, such as private eye, police procedural, legal, or medical, and if so, how? What are the strengths of the amateur subgenre?
3. Part of the fun of amateur sleuthing is seeing the detectives draw from the specialized knowledge of their professions or hobbies to solve crimes. What are some examples, and in what ways might the sleuths' background both help and hinder their investigation?

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Sayers, Dorothy L. *Murder Must Advertise: A Lord Peter Wimsey Mystery*. New York: HarperTorch, 1995.

Websites of Interest

1. The *American Chesterton Society* website includes the author's works of mystery and a comprehensive bibliography of his other works. — http://chesterton.org
2. HarperCollins*Publishers* provides a Diane Mott Davidson website. — http://www.harpercollins.com/authors/25347/Diane_Mott_Davidson/index.aspx
3. Author Simon Brett's official website. — http://www.simonbrett.com

Lecture 5

Private Investigators and Hard-boiled Heroes

The Suggested Readings for this lecture are Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep* and Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*.

own these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean."

~Raymond Chandler
The Simple Art of Murder

Unlike amateurs, private eyes (PIs) have real-life counterparts. The hard-boiled PI is an American invention: like jazz and baseball, one of the few truly unique American cultural contributions. The PI was born in the chaotic times of post-World War I, through Prohibition and the Great Depression. The genre first appeared in pulp magazines that began after World War I. Two of the most popular were *Black Mask* and *Dime Detective*. Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler were first published in these pulp magazines. The reason "PI" is sometimes written "private eye" may be based on the logo of the Pinkerton Detective Agency (for which Hammett worked for a time): an eye with the motto "We never sleep."

Characteristics

The primary characteristics of PI fiction are that it is idealistic yet cynical, and gives an unsentimental depiction of crime and murder. The sleuth is usually intelligent and savvy, a tough guy, a loner with a strong sense of justice who abides by a personal code. He distrusts the police, but is not intimidated by them. The PI is stoic, physically fit, able to take care of himself in a fight, and capable of handling weapons. The urban setting of hard-boiled narrative is key: the city—such as New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, or Chicago—is often portrayed with a life of its own, to the point it becomes like another character in the novel. The descriptions of wharves, nightclubs, and back alleys create a dark and brooding atmosphere: corrupt, shadowy, and dangerous.

Themes

The genre features themes of loyalty, the importance of the individual, the corrupting power of money and privilege, and nonprivileged persons fighting against wealth and corruption. The city plays a role and there is a blurring of the lines between good and evil and right and wrong. Women in hard-boiled detective fiction are usually victims, loyal secretaries, or *femmes fatales*: alluring, but dangerous.

Dashiell Hammett

Credited with inventing the hard-boiled genre, Dashiell Hammett (1894–1961) dropped out of school at age thirteen and eventually served eight years in the Pinkerton National Detective Agency in San Francisco and Baltimore. He contracted tuberculosis while in the Army during World War I, so he wasn't able to resume his Pinkerton job after the war. Because of chronic illness, Hammett read a lot. While at a library, he found a book on the Knights of Malta, which became the background for *The Maltese Falcon*. Hammett first published short stories in *Black Mask*. Espousing leftist political leanings and a declared communist sympathizer, he was jailed in 1953 for contempt of court for refusing to "name names" and was blacklisted.

Public Domain

Cover of the November 1924 issue of *The Black Mask*. "The" was later dropped from the title of the pulp magazine.

Hammett's Detectives

The Continental Op was never named. He was a San Francisco operative based on Hammett's Baltimore Pinkerton boss James Wright. The Op is fat, middle aged, yet tough and professional. He sometimes enjoys the violence he inflicts in the course of his cases. The Op appears in *Red Harvest* (1929), *The Dain Curse* (1929), and *Return of the Continental Op* (1945).

Nick and **Nora Charles** were a husband-wife team who debuted in *The Thin Man* (1934). Nick is an ex-playboy detective for a San Francisco agency and Nora a wealthy socialite. Nora was based on Hammett's longtime companion, playwright Lillian Hellman. The film series of the same name starring William Powell and Myrna Loy later expanded the adventures of these characters.

The quintessential hard-boiled detective **Sam Spade** was a private eye introduced in *The Maltese Falcon* (1930), and he appears in a few more stories. He is tough, idealistic, cynical, and comfortable in both respectable and shadowy worlds. Spade's paradoxical nature is captured in the way Hammett describes his appearance: "He looked rather pleasantly like a blond Satan."

The Maltese Falcon (1930; serialized in *Black Mask* in 1929) takes place in San Francisco during December 1928. In Hammett's view, this novel and *The Glass Key* (1931) achieved what he was aiming for, "the absolute distinction of true art." Its literary merit was recognized by critics, as in the *Times* (of London)

Literary Supplement review: "*The Maltese Falcon* is not only probably the best detective story we have ever read, it is an exceedingly well-written novel." And a *New York Times* reviewer agreed: "Hammett's prose is clean and entirely unique. His characters are as economically and as sharply defined as any in American fiction." Themes in the story include loyalty, the corrupting power of money, and the futility of dreams. *Femme fatale* Brigid O'Shaughnessy comes to Spade's office with a wild story, and she makes an impact on Spade: "Her eyes were cobalt blue prayers." Villains Casper Gutman, Joel Cairo, and Wilmer Cook are in pursuit of the jewel-encrusted prize.

© Library of Congress

Author Dashiell Hammett, ca. 1930s, and the statue prop that served as the object of treasure in the 1941 film adaptation of *The Maltese Falcon*.

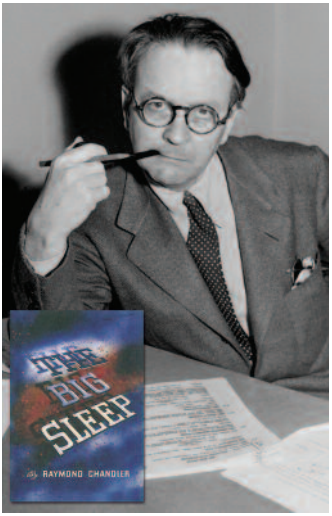
The novel has undergone several film adaptations. Critics consider the version starring Humphrey Bogart and Mary Astor the best. It is so faithful to the novel that a joke at the time was that the director gave the book to his secretary and said, "Change the margins over the weekend so we can start shooting on Monday." It was the first recognized American *film noir*.

"The Flitcraft Parable" is a story Sam tells Brigid in chapter seven of *The Maltese Falcon* and a seeming digression. It reinforces the novel's themes of randomness and the futility of dreams. A man named Flitcraft is almost hit by a falling beam, and so he leaves his suburban life and family: "He went like that," Spade said, "like a fist when you open your hand." When Sam catches up with him five years later, Flitcraft is living in a nearby town and is remarried, re-creating his former life: "He adjusted himself to beams falling, and then no more fell, and he adjusted himself to them not falling."

Money does not impress the hard-boiled detective. Spade calls the treasure everyone's searching for a "dingus." Also, loyalty trumps love: Spade tells Brigid three times, "I won't play the sap for you." Another time, he says, "When a man's partner is killed he's supposed to do something about it. It doesn't make any difference what you thought of him. He was your partner and you're supposed to do something about it." And also, "Don't be too sure I'm as crooked as I'm supposed to be." To his secretary Effie, who expresses surprise at his final decision: "Your Sam's a detective."

The Slumming Angel

Raymond Chandler (1888–1959) also helped create and shape the hard-boiled genre. He was a slow writer, completing only seven novels, all featuring one man battling against corruption and power. Philip Marlowe novels have now sold more than five million copies and been translated into many languages. Fellow hard-boiled detective fiction author Ross MacDonald said of him that "Chandler wrote like a slumming angel and invested the sun-blinded streets of Los Angeles with a romantic presence."



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Raymond Chandler in 1946, working on a screenplay in Los Angeles, and the cover of the first edition of his first novel *The Big Sleep*.

Chandler was an Anglo-American, born in Chicago. He moved to the United Kingdom as a child after his father abandoned the family (his mother was born in Ireland). He studied at Dulwich College in London and later traveled to Paris and Munich. He became a naturalized British citizen in 1907 so he could take the civil service exam, but he disliked civil service and soon quit. Chandler became a freelance journalist, for which he was no better suited. He returned to Los Angeles in 1911. During World War II he served in the Canadian army and the Royal Air Force, then returned again to Los Angeles after the war and got a job in the oil industry. In 1924, he married Cissy Pascal. From 1925 to 1931 he moved frequently, at times disappearing. He was suicidal, a heavy drinker, and he had several affairs.

Chandler became vice president of California-based Dabney Oil Syndicate in the 1920s, an experience he later drew on when creating characters such as aging oil baron Mr. Sternwood in *The Big Sleep*. In 1933, he became a full-time writer and sold his first story to *Black Mask*. He authored numerous short stories (beginning with "Blackmailers Don't Shoot" in 1933), which later became the basis for some of the novels. His first novel was *The Big Sleep* (1939). Chandler's other works include *The High Window* (1942), *The Lady in the Lake* (1943), *The Little Sister* (1949), *The Long Goodbye* (1953), *Playback* (1958, and subsequently made into a graphic novel), and *Poodle Springs* (1959; completed by Robert B. Parker in 1989). Chandler wrote the screenplay for the 1942 film *Farewell, My Lovely*. He wrote a screenplay for *Strangers on a Train* (1951) after Hammett turned it down. This was Alfred Hitchcock's film version of Patricia Highsmith's novel; however, the final version contained almost none of Chandler's original work. Chandler received the Edgar Award for *The Long Goodbye* in 1955. Between 1956 and 1958 his health declined, and he was sometimes hospitalized for alcoholism. He served as president of Mystery Writers of America briefly before his death from pneumonia in March 1959.

Chandler had this to say about the hardboiled hero:

> He is the hero, he is everything. 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, by instinct, by inevitability, without thought of it, and certainly without saying it. He must be the best man in his world and a good enough man for any world.
>
> ~Raymond Chandler from a critical essay, "The Simple Art of Murder" *Atlantic Monthly*, December 1944

Chandler's character Philip Marlowe was a Los Angeles private eye. The precursor to Marlowe was John Dalmas, who appeared in some stories in the pulp *Dime Detective*. The name Dalmas was sometimes changed to Philip Marlowe when the stories were reprinted or adapted from stories to the novel. Marlowe is a study in contrasts, a knightly figure and a tough guy. Chandler's sleuth is similar to the author in some ways (for example, both drank vodka gimlets). Marlowe is introduced in novel form in *The Big Sleep* as a heavy-drinking, wise-cracking tough private eye. Mostly cynical, he lives by his own code, a man of action, yet at times thoughtful and philosophical. His clients are often corrupt themselves. Chandler wrote this description of Marlowe in *The Big Sleep*:

> It was about eleven o'clock in the morning, mid-October, with the sun not shining and a look of hard wet rain in the clearness of the foothills. I was wearing my powder-blue suit, with dark blue shirt, tie and display handkerchief, black brogues, black wool socks with dark blue clocks on them. 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.

Writing Style

Chandler was known for his vivid similes, as in these samples from *Farewell, My Lovely:* "He looked about as inconspicuous as a tarantula on a slice of angel food," "She was as cute as a washtub," and "The voice got as cool as a cafeteria dinner." He also builds contrasts such as "I needed a drink, I needed a lot of life insurance, I needed a vacation, I needed a home in the country. What I had was a coat, a hat and a gun."

Chandler and the Critics

Chandler was concerned that his work be evaluated as literature, not just detective fiction. To that end he thought he was taken more seriously by the critics in England than the United States, where he felt he was only thought of as a crime fiction author.

The *Adventures of Philip Marlowe* radio show was a popular series appearing on the BBC in England in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and in the 1950s appeared as *The New Adventures of Philip Marlowe* on the CBS network in the United States.

Other Hard-boiled Authors

James M. Cain (1892–1977) was an American journalist and author and influential in the hard-boiled genre. His first novel was *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1934), followed by *Mildred Pierce* (1941) and *Double Indemnity* (1943; first published in *Liberty* magazine in 1936). Cain once said about writing hard-boiled fiction: "I make no conscious effort to be tough, or hard-boiled, or grim, or any of the things I am usually called. I merely try to write as the character would write, and I never forget that the average man, from the fields, the streets, the bars, the offices and even the gutters of his country, has acquired a vividness of speech that goes beyond anything I could invent, and that if I stick to this heritage, this *logos* of the American countryside, I shall attain a maximum of effectiveness with very little effort."

Ross Macdonald (1915–1983) was American-Canadian and married to mystery author Margaret Millar. Macdonald had a difficult family life, was often short of money, and forged a long road to success. His detective Lew Archer is named after Spade's partner. Macdonald's selected works include *The Moving Target* (1949) and *The Goodbye Look* (1969). He is thought to have added motivation and psychological depth to characters in addition to following the terse hard-boiled style.

The hard-boiled detective is evident today in the work of author Robert B. Parker (1932–2010), whose tough guy Spenser appears in *The Godwulf Manuscript* (1973), *Promised Land* (1976), and *The Professional* (2009). In more recent times the hard-boiled genre has expanded to include ethnic and female sleuths.

Femmes Fatales

The women who use their considerable sexual charms to get what they want from men—often with disastrous results for the men and their world—are *femmes fatales*. Both Chandler and Hammett make use of the *femme fatale*. Brigid O'Shaugnessy uses her sexual power to get what she wants from Sam—even to lure a man to his death. Most of Chandler's novels contain such a character, a woman who attempts to use sexuality to compromise the case or Marlowe's own moral code. James M. Cain's *Double Indemnity* and *The Postman Always Rings Twice* use *femmes fatales*. The iconography is reflected in the cover art of the crime novels into the 1950s. *Femmes fatales* are intensely present in Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer stories. The motif was turned on its head when women became the hard-boiled detectives in the work of Sue Grafton, Sara Paretsky, and others.

Public Domain

The June 1938 cover of *Dime Detective* featured a *femme fatale* and a story by Raymond Chandler, "Bay City Blues."

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Dashiell Hammett's sleuth Sam Spade is a prototype for many to come. Why is that so and in what ways did Hammett's character depart from previous detective heroes?
2. Raymond Chandler felt that his work was taken more seriously by critics in England—and dismissed as "mere" detective fiction in the United States. What might explain the different critical responses?
3. In recent times, the hard-boiled genre has expanded to include ethnic and female sleuths. How might this diversification reflect changes in contemporary society and changes in the genre's core readership?

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Hammett, Dashiell. *The Maltese Falcon*. 4th ed. New York: Vintage, 1989.

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Websites of Interest

1. The PBS *American Masters* portrait of Dashiell Hammett. — http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/episodes/dashiell-hammett/about-dashiell-hammett/625/
2. The *Free Old Time Radio Shows* website features the *Adventures of Philip Marlowe* program recordings that were broadcast on BBC Radio from 1949 to 1951. — http://www.freeotrshows.com/otr/a/Adventures_Of_Philip_Marlowe.html
3. The Raymond Chandler website edited by Robert F. Moss was founded in 1997 to provide an online resource for scholarship on Raymond Chandler. — http://home.comcast.net/~mossrobert

Lecture 6

Cops, Capers, and Police Procedurals

The Suggested Readings for this lecture are M.C. Beaton's *Death of a Gossip*, Colin Dexter's *The Jewel That Was Ours*, Elizabeth George's *With No One as Witness*, and Ed McBain's *Cop Hater*.

y family, in my series, is a family of working cops. Their house is the squadroom; their backyard is the precinct territory; their world is the city."

~Ed McBain, *87th Precinct*

Early History

In early and amateur detective fiction, police appeared as foils to make the detective's skills shine by comparison. They were often well-meaning but incompetent, and in hard-boiled fiction, they were sometimes corrupt. Only in the next development in detective fiction, the police procedural, do police detectives truly come into their own. The police in Poe's Dupin stories were incompetent. In Holmes, the police detectives were well-meaning, but not as bright. In hard-boiled fiction, they were corrupt. Remember that police inspectors were featured in Dickens's *Bleak House* and Collins's *The Moonstone*. Some Golden Age works in which police are central characters include Freeman Wills Croft's (1859–1957) Inspector French of Scotland Yard (Croft is considered the father of the British police novel) and New Zealander Ngaio Marsh's (1895–1982) Inspector Alleyn. Belgian Georges Simenon (1903–1989) is considered the creator of the French police procedural. Simenon wanted to be a writer from his youth, so he took jobs at a bookstore and as a journalist on the crime beat to enhance his writing. He wrote his first novel at age seventeen. Simenon lived in Paris and introduced Detective Jules Maigret in *The Death of Monsieur Gallet*, in 1931. The first true police procedural novel may have been Lawrence Treat's *V as in Victim* (1945).

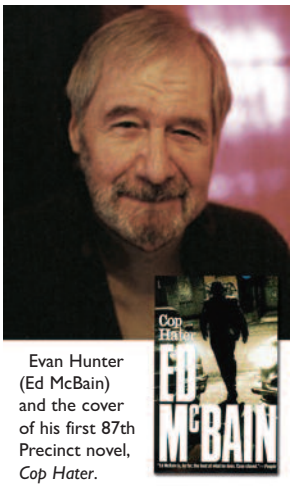
Unique Features

In the police procedural, detectives have to abide by certain rules in the solving of the crime. They may have subordinates helping them in the role of assistant, and they may also, for the first time, have authorities to whom they're accountable. They also often work with a team of other officers, with teamwork becoming part of the plot. Police, like private investigators and unlike amateur detectives, have real-life counterparts and require more research, because authors must be familiar with rules and regulations governing procedures the police must follow, the structures of the police force, the rules of

evidence and crime scenes, and the information needed for crime reports and other forms and paperwork. Crime scenes are now not neat puzzle plots, but messy and complicated. There's more emphasis on realism than in the previous two types, and authors of this form are aware critics expect accuracy. In terms of their roles in society, amateur sleuths have no official association with public institutions. The private investigator distrusted them, but the police detective is part of them—he or she represents them, and must do so as part of a team. So relationships in the squad room, including personalities, male-female relationships and ambition, sexism, promotion, and office politics, all come into play; also, police procedural authors emphasize their sleuths' family lives and the impact of the stressful job on family relationships. Police must also rely on other professionals in the city: informants, coroners, and experts of various types. Therefore, there are no hard-boiled loners here. The police procedural acts as a commentary on society. Sometimes police are frustrated, as they know the guilty party, but are blocked by the rules of evidence. Readers enjoy entering the closed world of the police force and entering the police detective's public and private life as impacted by the job. Indeed, social criticism and commentary may be even more pronounced in this subgenre.

Ed McBain's 87th Precinct

Ed McBain (born Salvatore Albert Lombino, and also known as Evan Hunter, 1926–2005) was a prolific American author and screenwriter. He grew up in East Harlem, in an Italian working-class family. His father was a letter carrier and stressed to his children that they were "Americans." McBain served in the Navy and after World War II started writing out of boredom. He took different jobs in New York City, including as a substitute teacher, a lobster salesman, and a publishing agent. He legally changed his name to Evan Hunter in 1952, as he thought a less ethnic sounding name would have more appeal.



Evan Hunter (Ed McBain) and the cover of his first 87th Precinct novel, *Cop Hater*.

Works

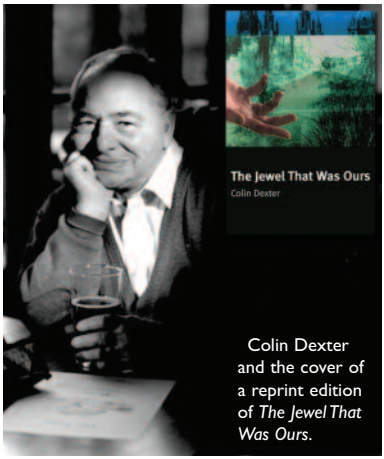
McBain wrote fifty-five books in the 87th Precinct series and over one hundred novels total. The 87th Precinct was one of the first series to introduce

ethnic detectives and to introduce a team rather than one individual sleuth. The NBC television network produced *87th Precinct* (1961–62), a show that was based on the McBain novels.

Inspector Morse

Colin Dexter (1930–) was classically trained at Cambridge and lives in Oxford, where his novels take place. He is an avid crossword puzzle solver. On a rainy holiday in Wales, he had nothing to do but read a few books. He picked up a mystery and thought, "I can do better than that!"—and did.

Inspector Morse of the Thames Valley Police first appeared in *Last Bus to Woodstock* (1975). *The Silent World of Nicholas Quinn* (1977) is set in an examinations board and features a deaf character, whom Dexter understands, as he also worked on an examination board and suffers from hearing loss. All thirteen novels take place in Oxford, in various neighborhoods and academic milieu. Morse attended Oxford, but did not finish (because he became involved with a woman). Like his creator, Morse loves crosswords, classical music, and good beer. As an Oxford-trained policeman, he's part of both worlds, but fully at home in neither. He's cynical, unambitious, and contentious with both superiors and underlings, so he misses promotions. He's brooding and contemplative, arrogant, yet aware of his own weaknesses. His sidekick Sergeant Lewis is more straightforward and prosaic, less educated and cerebral. Lewis balances Morse, whose plodding methods are graced with sudden flashes of insight and multiple theories, often coming to the right conclusions for the wrong reasons. Morse's ill-fated romances also contrast with Lewis's stable family life. Dexter likes showing readers documents related to the case: in *The Wench Is Dead* (1989), Morse solves a historical murder on a canal through examining old documents. We're shown handwritten letters in *The Jewel That Was Ours* (1991), in which murders take place amidst a tour group visiting Oxford. To the grief of many readers, he kills off Morse in *The Remorseful Day* (1999). Morse novels are celebrated for their Oxford settings, interesting characters and criminals, intriguing plots, and rich, witty style.

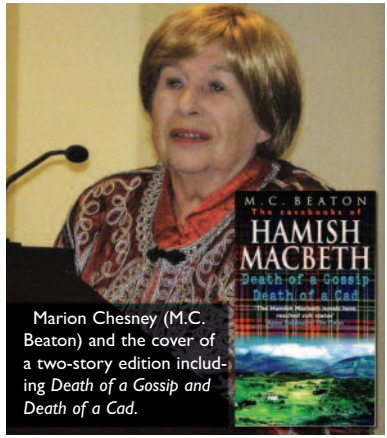


Colin Dexter and the cover of a reprint edition of *The Jewel That Was Ours*.

Constable Hamish Macbeth

M.C. Beaton (1936–) is the pen name for romance author Marion Chesney, who is also the author of the Agatha Raisin series set in the Cotswolds of England. Her detective Hamish Macbeth debuted in 1985 in *Death of a Gossip* and is still going strong. Macbeth is a constable in the fictional fishing village of

Lochdubh in the Northwest Scottish Highlands. He loves his village and resists promotion so as not to be transferred from it, often allowing superiors to take credit for his successes, particularly the ambitious and obnoxious Detective Chief Inspector Blair. Macbeth is tall and lanky with flaming red hair, and his highland accent becomes more pronounced when he's stressed. He puts on a dull-witted appearance as part of his method, but he is also lazy and a bit of a scrounge, yet kind and well-liked and respected in the town. Hamish has a star-crossed love life that keeps readers rooting for him; lady friends include the beautiful but cold Priscilla Halburton-Smythe and reporter Elspeth Grant. Hamish is also a bit of a loner. Highland character is revealed and explored in each novel, for example, the highlanders' ability to feel at home wherever they are, or ambivalent attitudes to English tourists. Each novel in the series is titled "Death of a . . . " and presents Hamish with a new case and new complications to his professional and personal life. Though featuring a policeman as the main character and including police methods, this series contains some elements of the cozy: when a superior chides him for wanting to stay a village constable, Macbeth replies, "It's because I'm a village constable that I solve your murders for you. I know people better than I know police procedure" (*Death of a Celebrity*). In contrast, our next author definitely doesn't write cozies.



Marion Chesney (M.C. Beaton) and the cover of a two-story edition including *Death of a Gossip* and *Death of a Cad*.

Detective Inspector Thomas Lynley

Elizabeth George (1949–) is known for her suspenseful, complicated plots, artistically landscaped settings, and psychological exploration of characters, considering both "who done it" and why. She's an American author, but her novels are set in England. Her first novel was rejected by publishers for being too old-fashioned, featuring suspects in the drawing-room style—however, she heeded the advice to create a thoroughly modern and compelling series.

In the tradition of Dorothy L. Sayers's nobleman sleuth Lord Peter Wimsey, aristocratic (Eighth Earl of Asherton, though he doesn't use his title) Scotland Yard Detective Inspector Lynley first appeared in *A Great Deliverance* (1988), a grisly decapitation case set in Yorkshire. Lynley and his working-class sergeant Barbara Havers have a rocky relationship that grows closer during the series. Lynley's other relationships are complicated, including that with his adored wife Helen. In friendships, he feels responsible for the paralysis of forensic scientist Simon Allcourt-St. James, because Lynley was behind the wheel in the drunk-driving accident that led to his injuries. The Lynley novels feature intricate plots, complex characters, and realistic settings and situations. George

addresses current and difficult social concerns such as racism, classism, Alzheimer's and family care issues, and child welfare. She is not afraid to take risks: in *With No One As Witness*, she takes the bold step of killing off a beloved character, and then in the following book, *What Came Before He Shot Her*, she examines the events leading up to the central crime of the previous novel. Lynley is a deep character, and in early novels George reveals him largely through the thoughts and observations of others. Extensive research goes into each of her works, which have received many awards and nominations.

Elizabeth George and the cover of the first edition of *A Great Deliverance*.

Future Trends

The police procedural, created in the United Kingdom, quickly expanded around the globe, exploring the police methods of many countries: In the United States, police procedurals are often ethnically based (see Lecture 13): Ed McBain, Dana Stabenow, John Ball, Tony Hillerman, Joseph Wambaugh, and Michael Connelly. Examples of authors of this style in other countries are Arthur Upfield and Claire McNab (Australia); H.R.F. Keating (India); James MacLure (South Africa); Iaian Pears (Italy); Timothy Hemion (Japan), and many others (see Lecture 12).

Conclusion

Detective fiction featuring police is also heading boldly into the future, literally and figuratively. It adapts well to science fiction (for example, Isaac Asimov's robot-human police pairing of R. Daneel Olivaw and Elijah Baley, whose partnership grows through three novels). And because police forces and methods are evolving with changes in society and technological advances, the police procedural can develop right alongside and remain fresh and innovative. Indeed, some scholars speculate the influence is mutual: the ideas and methods in literature also impact modern crime solving.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Inspector Morse is described as a poor policeman but a very good detective. To what extent is that paradox possible and to what other fictional police detectives might it be ascribed? Could the opposite also be true of some: a good policeman but a poor detective? How so and who?
2. The female authors featured in this chapter have created male protagonists; fictional female police as main characters were for the most part a later addition to the subgenre of the police procedural. What social and literary reasons might account for that choice?
3. Elizabeth George takes risks with her series, even allowing major characters to die because she didn't want to create a static world for them to live in. Other authors disagree, allowing their characters' world to stay largely the same; which in your view makes better detective fiction? Is there a place for both? Does the subgenre, in this case police procedural, have an impact?

Suggested Reading

Beaton, M.C. *Death of a Gossip*. New York: Warner Books, 1999.

Dexter, Colin. *The Jewel That Was Ours*. Eleventh printing. London: Pan Books, Ltd., 1992.

George, Elizabeth. *With No One as Witness*. New York: Harper, 2006.

McBain, Ed. *Cop Hater*. 87th Precinct Mysteries. New York: Pocket Books, 1999.

Other Books of Interest

Grimes, Martha. *The Man with a Load of Mischief*. Reprint. New York: Onyx, 2003 (1981).

McBain, Ed. *Fat Ollie's Book: A Novel of the 87th Precinct*. New York: Pocket Books, 2003.

Rankin, Ian. *Knots and Crosses: An Inspector Rebus Novel*. Reprint. New York: Minotaur Books, 2008 (1987).

Websites of Interest

1. The *Agatha Raisin* website maintained by Constable and Robinson in the United Kingdom features works by M.C. Beaton, including the Hamish Macbeth series. — http://www.agatharaisin.com
2. The *Mystery List* website provides an extensive bibliography of the Inspector Morse series by Colin Dexter and links to other websites featuring the works of Dexter. — http://www.mysterylist.com/morse.htm
3. The official website of author Evan Hunter (Ed McBain). — http://www.edmcbain.com

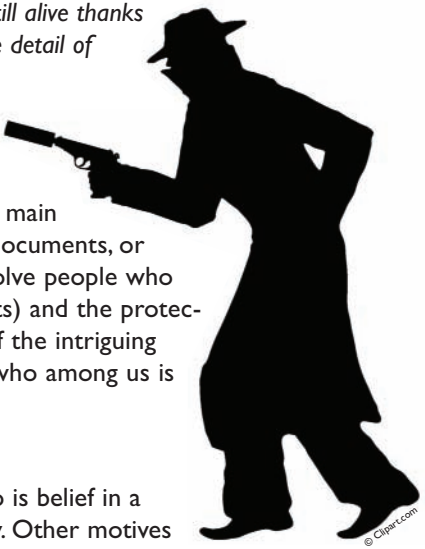
Lecture 7

Spies Among Us: Espionage and Techno-thrillers

The Suggested Readings for this lecture are Dorothy Gilman's *The Unexpected Mrs. Pollifax*, John le Carré's *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy,* and Tom Clancy's *The Hunt for Red October*.

e was a secret agent, and still alive thanks to his exact attention to the detail of his profession."

~Ian Fleming, *Casino Royale*



What Is Espionage Fiction?

Usually, espionage fiction involves a main character attaining information or documents, or keeping them secret. It may also involve people who know those secrets (such as scientists) and the protection of spies who operate secretly. One of the intriguing aspects of the genre is revelation: just as who among us is a murderer, who among us is the spy?

Motive of the Hero

The primary motive of the spy-story hero is belief in a cause, or loyalty to country, or to ideology. Other motives include money, revenge, and a sheer love of the game. Stakes are raised to national and international levels.

A Straightforward Pattern

One could almost use a "boiler plate" for the basic style used in espionage fiction: 1) introduce the hero; 2) encounter difficulties; and 3) resolve those difficulties. However, within that framework plots can become convoluted and involve spies and counter-spies and double or even triple agents. There is also often friction between those running an operation from behind a desk and the field agents on the ground.

Early History of the Genre

Before the twentieth century, spy stories were not common because spying wasn't considered a "gentleman's" activity. It seemed distasteful. It's difficult to pinpoint the precise origin of the genre, but some examples can be found from nineteenth and early twentieth-century authors, as well as from actual historical events.

The first spy novel should probably be credited to James Fenimore Cooper for his second book, *The Spy*, published in 1821. Cooper set his tale in what was then rural Westchester County, New York, during the Revolutionary War. It was an immediate and, for the time, huge success.

A late-nineteenth-century international spy case known as the "Dreyfus Affair" (1894) revealed German espionage activities in France that had deep anti-Semitic overtones (Dreyfus was Jewish), political scandal, and military coverups. This event helped give espionage fiction a wider audience in tabloids throughout Europe and in North America.

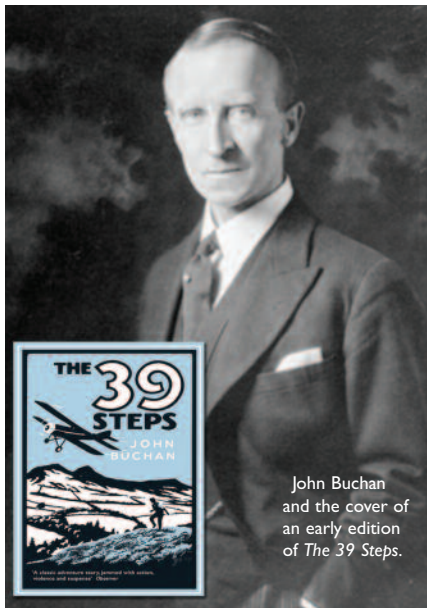
Public Domain

Other works in the genre were Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901), Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907), and an early Arthur Conan Doyle story related to World War I espionage: "His Last Bow" (1917).

The period just before and during the Great War was a time when many intelligence agencies were founded. Reality and history became sources for espionage fiction. Somerset Maugham's *Ashenden, or the British Agent* (1928) was a series of loosely linked stories partly based on Maugham's World War I experiences as a member of British intelligence.

Adventure to Spy Yarn

Scottish author John Buchan's (1875–1940) Richard Hannay, one of the first spy heroes, appears in five novels starting with *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915). Hannay is pursued by German spies in this brisk adventure. Four of the ten chapters begin with "Adventure of the . . ." in their titles. The book is a short and fast read and reflects the social class attitudes of the day. Several film versions have been made of the book, of which director Alfred Hitchcock's 1935 version is the most well-known (although it took quite a few liberties with the plot).



John Buchan and the cover of an early edition of *The 39 Steps*.
© Penguin Publishers

Buchan was Oxford educated, called to the bar, and elected to Parliament. He became a Baron in 1935 and was appointed as the fifteenth Governor-General of Canada, where he died in 1940. His protagonist Hannay is characterized by resourcefulness, bravery, and shrewdness. Unlike Ian Fleming's James Bond and other spy heroes, he's uncomfortable around women;

there's no romance at all in the first two books, and the stories are told in the first-person point of view. Buchan maintained "Every man believes at the bottom of his heart that he is a born detective."

Spy Fiction in the Golden Age

There were many more male than female authors and protagonists during the years between World War I and the end of World War II. There were, however, two notable exceptions to that general statement.

Agatha Christie wrote several spy novels during her long career. The first was *The Secret Adversary* (1922), which was also the first of the Tommy and Tuppence series. This was followed by *Murder in Mesopotamia* (1936), and one of her best novels, *N or M?*, was written during the Blitz, in 1941. In that tale, British intelligence again contacts Tommy and Tuppence and the couple hunts down Nazi agents. A little past the Golden Age were Christie's *They Came to Baghdad* (1951) and *Destination Unknown (*1954). *Passenger to Frankfurt* (1970) was Christie's last spy novel. In *Passenger*, the motif of a chance encounter at the beginning of the story is a bit muddled and improbable.

Another exception to the male-author-dominated spy novel was Helen MacInnes's (1907–1985) *Above Suspicion* (1941). Her first book, this story is about espionage in pre-war Europe and follows a young couple who have been recruited to find out what happened to a missing spy who was part of a conduit of information. There is suspense and humor as they travel to pre-war Germany. The couple shows quick thinking and courage as they become involved in more danger than they realized.

Eric Ambler in London and the first edition cover of *The Mask of Dimitrios*.

But during the 1920s and 1930s the genre was overwhelmingly dominated by male authors. Eric Ambler (1909–1998) introduced a new realism into the spy novel—*Epitaph for a Spy* (1938)—by blending detective and spy stories. His *The Mask of Dimitrios* (1939) was the definitive work in the genre, while *Journey Into Fear* (1940) was a psychological exploration.

British author Graham Greene's (1904–1991) prolific writing career included more psychologically complex characters, as in *A Gun for Sale* (1936), published as *This Gun for Hire* in the United States and the inspiration for a film by that same name, and *Our Man in Havana* (1958), which explored the uneasy post-war political environment.

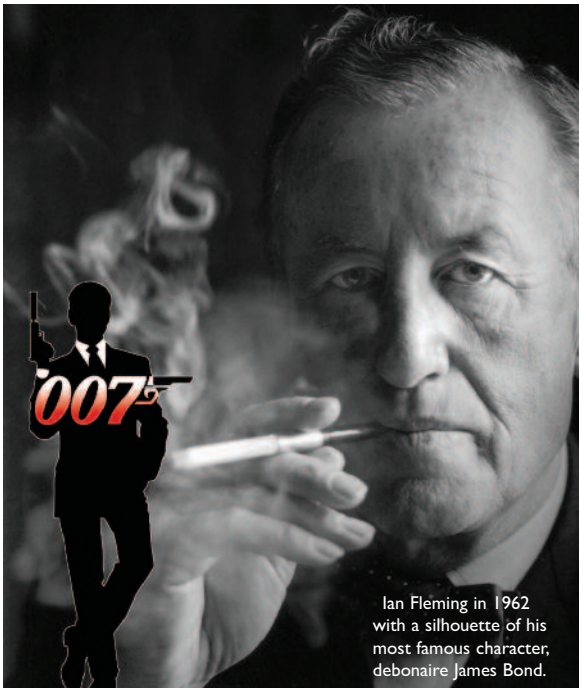
Four Cold War Espionage Authors

Some say the Golden Age of Espionage was during the Cold War Era. Detective fiction reflected and developed with the culture of its day, as did the more specific spy novel. A growing interest in the genre was fueled by examples of real-life spy cases during the Cold War: the espionage cases of England's "The Cambridge Five," a spy ring that operated from the mid-1940s into the early 1950s, supplying Soviet agents with intelligence; the case of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg (1953), who were accused of leaking secrets to the Soviets about American nuclear weapons; the Army-McCarthy Hearings (1954), notorious for the inaccuracy of Senator Joseph McCarthy's "evidence" and his blanket accusations of Army and government personnel; and the Bay of Pigs (1961) invasion of Cuba fiasco, during the first months of the Kennedy Administration.

Ian Fleming: "Bond . . . James Bond"

The quintessential Cold War hero is Ian Fleming's (1908–1964) James Bond 007, licensed to kill: the civilized spy. Fleming chose the name "James Bond" to sound strong and unornate, and he borrowed it from the author of *Birds of the West Indies*. Bond debuted in *Casino Royale* (1953) and was featured in eleven more novels by Fleming. Then, like Sherlock Holmes, he was taken over by other authors and filmmakers. Bond is an agent for the British Secret Service who reports to "M," head of his division. M's private secretary is the professional, but love-struck (for Bond) Miss Moneypenny. The bad guys were known as SMERSH (a Russian acronym for a phrase that translates to "death to spies"), the most powerful and feared organization in Soviet Russia.

In *Casino Royale*, Bond is chosen because of his excellent gambling skills to out-gamble a Communist agent known as Le Chiffre at the baccarat table at a French resort to expose him to ridicule and ruin, rather than assassinating him, which would make him a martyr. Bond goes to the casino undercover, but his cover's soon blown. He's a connoisseur: "I pay ridiculous attention to what I eat and drink." He drives his Bentley

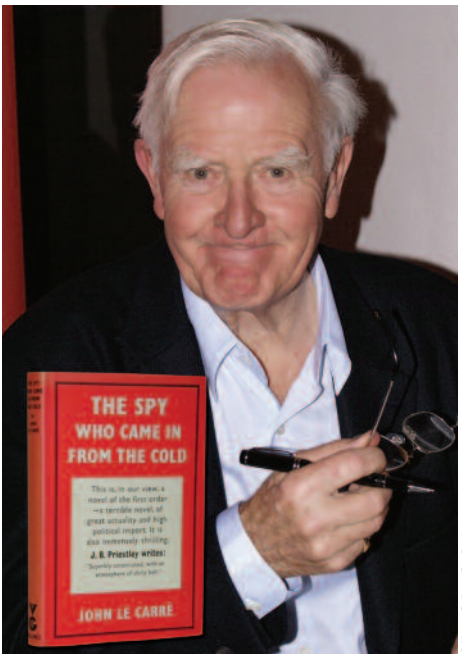


Ian Fleming in 1962 with a silhouette of his most famous character, debonaire James Bond.

"with an almost sensual pleasure." Fleming takes care with the setting as well as plot, providing the reader rich details of the gambler's world, and he has fun with his new hero. He based the Le Chiffre character on English occultist and possible spy Aleister Crowley. Female characters in this and other Bond novels are "women . . . for recreation; on the job they got in the way." *Casino Royale* contains prime Cold War spy elements: a beautiful woman, bomb explosions, lots of action, car chases, sudden plot twists, and suspense. At one point in the story, a gunman points a gun secretly at Bond at the crowded tables and counts ten. Yet we see a thoughtful Bond at times reflecting on the nature of heroism and patriotism, of good and evil, and of the murky world of modern politics. He also seriously considers developing genuine love for a woman while maintaining his mental toughness as a man of action.

John le Carré

John le Carré is the pen name of David John Moore Cornwell (1931–). His early life was marked by the fact that his father was a con-man "gaol bird." Le Carré dropped out of school, but later studied languages at the University of Bonn and taught at Eton. He joined the British Foreign Service, working for MI-5 and MI-6 early in the Cold War. He later served as Second Secretary in the British Embassy in Bonn and subsequently as Political Consul in Hamburg. Le Carré started writing novels in 1961 and resigned from British Intelligence to write full-time in 1964. Since then, he has published twenty-one novels, numerous short stories, and several screenplays.

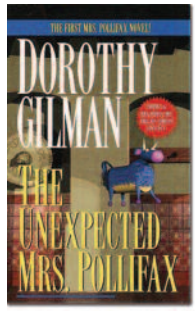


Le Carré, at a book signing in 2008, is shown with the cover of an original hardbound edition of *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold.*

Le Carré's first novel, *Call for the Dead* (1961), was his first George Smiley novel. *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold* (1963) was a best-seller (his first). It featured the renowned character Alec Leamas and is considered a definitive work in the genre. *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (1974), another best-seller, featured George Smiley, who hunts "Gerald," and the novel asks the question, "Is it acceptable to betray your country if you feel your country has betrayed you?"

Some of le Carré's other works include the last Smiley novel, *The Secret Pilgrim* (1990); *The Constant Gardener* (2001), featuring Diplomat Justin Quayle; and *A Most Wanted Man* (2008), which explores contemporary issues.

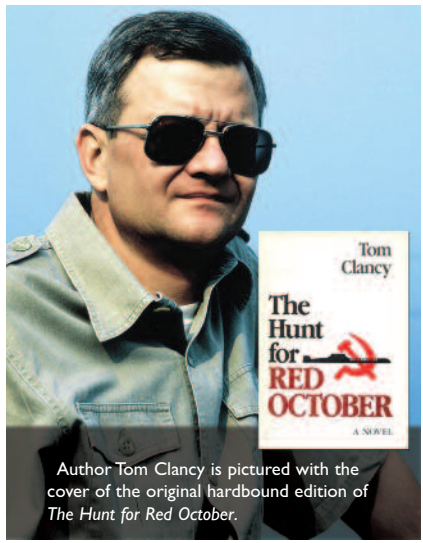
Dorothy Gilman



A 1985 edition of *The Unexpected Mrs. Pollifax*.

Mrs. Emily Pollifax is a delightful character introduced in *The Unexpected Mrs. Pollifax* (1966). A widow in her sixties who's sinking into boredom so deeply she's considering suicide remembers her girlhood dream of becoming a spy. She walks into the CIA in a flowered hat and tells them she'd like to join up. Through a mix-up, Mrs. Pollifax gets a courier assignment and proves to be a very resourceful agent indeed. Mr. Carstairs hires Pollifax for a seemingly simple job in Mexico, but it becomes much more complicated and dangerous. She ends up in an Albanian prison and meets the handsome agent John Farrell, who becomes a series character. Pollifax, despite her lack of formal training, shows great courage and determination as a spy. Debuted in 1966, the fourteen-novel series spans thirty-five years and takes her all over the world. The series contains Cold War and global tensions; plots unfold with humor and suspense. Pollifax is a realist, practical, and she often depends on her ability to make friends and relate to all types of people. She has other skills as well, such as marksmanship (from shooting rats with her cousin as a child), and she eventually becomes skilled in karate. Later in the series she meets and eventually marries lawyer Cyrus Reed. In the final entry in the series, *Mrs. Pollifax Unveiled* (2000), avoiding boredom remains a theme—the hell of "not having enough to do, and too much time to contemplate one's deficiencies." Looking back over her career in the last novel, Mrs. Pollifax decides the detour her life had taken into spy adventures had "enriched . . . . and changed her."

Tom Clancy



Author Tom Clancy is pictured with the cover of the original hardbound edition of *The Hunt for Red October*.

Clancy is the inventor of the techno-thriller, a suspenseful work with a plot relying on accurate detailed technology new to most readers and often featuring the inner workings of institutions. *The Hunt for Red October* (1985) was Clancy's first novel. The story contains details on both Soviet and United States Naval technology and on government positions and operations during the Cold War. In the novel, Soviet submarine commander Marko Ramius and his coconspirators attempt to defect to the United States with the ballistic-missile sub *Red October*. The sub becomes hunted by both the Soviets and the United States.

The book is a compelling read as Clancy switches back and forth between the two sides as they hunt for the sub. First published by the Naval Institute Press, it offers a sophisticated depiction of advanced hydrotechnology. It's an exciting, fast-paced military adventure, but it has been criticized for stereotyping Soviets and for its pro-Western view that exaggerated the two sides of the Cold War.

Ronald Reagan praised *The Hunt for Red October,* saying that it was "un-put-downable." This statement about the novel helped launch Clancy's career. Although there are no female characters, Captain Ramius is motivated in part by the loss of his beloved wife. Some of the criticism that the novel was pro-American and anti-Soviet stemmed from entries such as "Marko was surprised that his government had them [missile submarines] at all. The crew of such vessels had to be trusted." And later in the novel, "The Americans fed their men decently, gave them a proper mess room, paid them decently, gave them trust."

Conclusion

The techno-thriller remains popular and has produced new offshoots such as the bio- or eco-thriller—Michael Crichton's *Prey* (2002) and *State of Fear* (2004), in which nanotechnology and environmental issues are featured. Another offshoot are cyber-thrillers, such as Dan Brown's *Digital Fortress* (1998), in which the characters' knowledge of the Internet, mathematics, and computing plays a major role in the plot.

Espionage fiction remains popular. Many authors in the genre, such as Robert Ludlum (1927–2001; the Bourne series) and Ken Follett (1949–; *The Key to Rebecca*, *Lie Down with Lions, Triple*, and *World Without End*), make the best-seller list.

Spy stories are also a popular genre for spoofing (for example, movies such as *Spies Like Us*, starring Chevy Chase and Dan Ackroyd [1985], and *Spy Hard* [1996], starring Leslie Nielsen) and for television programs such as *Get Smart*, *I Spy*, *The Avengers*, and *Burn Notice*, to name four. The genre also crosses over into nonfiction with tell-all books from former agents such as Peter Wright's *Spycatcher* (1987). Finally, espionage fiction not only draws its inspiration from society, but also influences society in turn.

Actor Don Adams starred as Maxwell Smart ("Agent 86") in the television series *Get Smart*, which ran on American television from 1965 to 1969 and was created by Mel Brooks and Buck Henry.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. In your view, can both romanticized and realistic portrayals of the spy take an equal place in espionage fiction? If yes, then how can the two disparate views be reconciled, and if not, which should take precedence and why?
2. Why might there be fewer female authors and protagonists in espionage fiction? The subgenre also has fewer female readers—is that a cause or a result of the lack?
3. Quite a few espionage novels are written by insiders from the spy game; what are some examples and how does their inside knowledge draw the reader into the spy's world? What successful espionage fiction has been written without that inside knowledge?

Suggested Reading

Clancy, Tom. *The Hunt for Red October*. New York: Berkley Books, 1992.

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1. Official website of Ian Fleming Publications, Ltd. (the Ian Fleming family company). — http://www.ianfleming.com
2. The Dorothy Gilman fan site. — http://mrspollifax.com/blog
3. Official website of author John Le Carré. — http://www.johnlecarre.com

Lecture 8

In the Teeth of the Evidence: Lawyers and Legal Eagles

The Suggested Readings for this lecture are John Grisham's *The Firm: A Novel* and John Mortimer's *Rumpole and the Age of Miracles*.

rime doesn't pay, but it's a living."

~Horace Rumpole
Rumpole of the Bailey

Legal detective fiction revolves around lawyers, the law, courtrooms, and the criminal justice system. It seems a natural leap for lawyers and others associated with the legal profession to become sleuths on behalf of their clients. Defense lawyers who exonerate their innocent clients by detecting the real guilty party are sometimes said to be working "Perry Mason" style; *Matlock* is another example. Challenges for legal sleuths come when they meet corruption in the system, sometimes in very high places, or are tempted to flout the law for their own ends. They are also often hampered by the limits of what the law allows them to do and sometimes encounter laws that need to be changed. And finally, they must work with other members of their profession and often must engage the unpredictable and powerful force of a jury. Legal mystery authors originally focused on British and American locales and therefore justice systems, but have more recently branched into international locations, demanding a knowledge of the legal systems of those countries. The legal mystery focuses on a struggle for justice: justice for the victims and for the falsely accused. Like the police procedural, legal procedurals focus on the process that lawyers and others must follow in order to see justice served. Legal sleuths face an additional opposition in the form of the other side of the aisle and, sometimes, the other side of the bench. Legal detective fiction runs the gamut from small-town trials to sweeping legal thrillers involving companies and governments. In the legal thriller, the protagonist must fight for justice, often at the risk of his or her own career or even life.

Early History

Stories involving court and court cases are nearly as old as the law itself, since the core of narrative is conflict, and court cases embody conflict. For example, Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* contains a dramatic court scene. The modern legal mystery can be traced in part to the nineteenth century and is rooted in true-crime narrative. In the United Kingdom, Newgate Novels were based on circulars handed out at prison executions, and in the United States, barely fictionalized accounts of real cases were written up for publication. One such was Abraham Lincoln's "The Trailor Murder Mystery" (1846). Lincoln admired Poe, which possibly inspired him to publish this true-crime-based story, the strange case he himself defended of the three Trailor brothers who were falsely accused of murder. It was common in the day for lawyers to write up their cases as fiction, and these accounts became increasingly popular with readers. In this case, only the sudden reappearance of the supposed victim in another town spared the lives of the accused.

Legal Detective Fiction with a Historical Twist: Robert Hans Van Gulik

Robert Hans Van Gulik (1910–1967) was a Dutch diplomat, linguist, musician, and scholar who later turned his hand to writing. Since his central character was a judge, his stories can be considered legal detective fiction. Born in the Netherlands, Van Gulik studied Sanskrit, American Native Indian languages, and Chinese. He entered the Dutch foreign service in 1935, and in 1940 he came across an anonymous eighteenth-century manuscript telling of the exploits and case solving of a wise Chinese judge. He translated the manuscript as "The Three Murder Cases Solved by Judge Dee" and published it as *The Celebrated Cases of Judge Dee* in 1949.

The manuscript dated from the eighteenth century, but the stories concern Judge Dee, a character based on a real historical personage of the seventh century, Chinese Judge Di Renjie. The stories had been circulating in oral literature long before they were written down and collected as a set.

Cycles or collections of oral tales of Chinese detective fiction are called Gong An, so these stories about Judge Dee were known as *Dee Gong An*. Who was this illustrious Judge Dee? From what we can gather, in the 600s Judge Dee was a magistrate of various districts.

Dutch diplomat Robert Van Gulik with a baby gibbon named "Bubu." The photo was taken while Van Gulik was serving in Kuala Lumpur in the early 1960s. In 1967, he published a book about Chinese painting called *Gibbon in China: An Essay in Chinese Animal Lore*.

He rose through the ranks and eventually became Lord Chief Justice.

After translating and publishing the stories from the manuscript he found, Van Gulik began writing his own Judge Dee stories (seventeen in all), concluding with *Poets and Murder* (1968) by drawing on his experience studying Asian language and culture. He also illustrated the works with his own woodcuts.

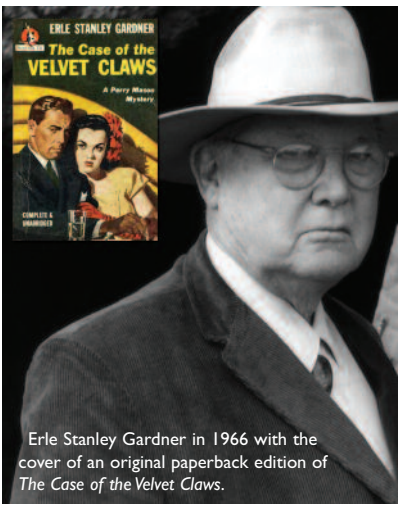
The stories address matters of Chinese law, and because the main character is a judge, he acts as both the detective and the dispenser of justice in the narrative. The tales provide detailed insights into the Chinese legal and penal code of their time, in which justice was often swiftly administered, not necessarily imprisonment, but more likely beatings or even execution, vividly described. The theme of the stories is the cleverness of the judge, who sometimes investigated by showing up in other villages in disguise so his true identity would not be known, and the restoration of justice not just to the individuals involved, but also to the community as a whole. Van Gulik has observed that Chinese detective fiction differs from its Western version in that often the criminal and crime are introduced early in the story, so it is not in the classic Western whodunit style. Rather, the focus is on the excitement the reader gains from following the detective and criminal as they strategize against each other until the game ends, lawbreakers are caught, and justice is clearly and publicly served, restoring the community's sense of order and balance.

The Twentieth Century

Erle Stanley Gardner

One of the best-known twentieth-century examples of a legal sleuth is American author and lawyer Erle Stanley Gardner's (1899–1970) brilliant defense attorney Perry Mason. Gardner is considered one of the first authors to combine the action of the detective story (Gardner had written pulp fiction) with the case preparation details and courtroom drama of the legal procedural. He was himself a practicing California lawyer and gave Mason some tactics based on his own experience.

Gardner's lawyer hero Perry Mason first appeared in *The Case of the Velvet Claws* (1933) and finally in *The Case of the Postponed Murder*, published posthumously in 1973. Gardner was bored by legal routine, though he enjoyed trial prep and strategy; he turned to writing in his spare time and was able to write full-time after Mason debuted. Gardner filled a total of eighty-two books and three decades of the brilliant defense attorney freeing his innocent clients from false accusation by discovering and revealing the real culprit



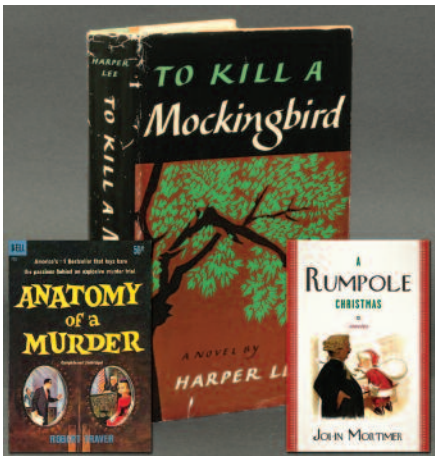
Erle Stanley Gardner in 1966 with the cover of an original paperback edition of *The Case of the Velvet Claws*.

with the help of private investigator Paul Drake and faithful secretary Della Street. The stories were usually set in Los Angeles. They had titles starting with "*The Case of the* . . ." and were often alliterative, such as *The Case of the Careless Kitten*. Gardner's style is humorous and heavy on dialog. By today's standards, Mason's methods don't bear close scrutiny: he's out and about during the case, finding, hiding, or manipulating evidence, if necessary, interrogating and hiding witnesses, or even hiring people to impersonate them, causing frustration for police lieutenant Tragg and District Attorney Hamilton Burger. Gardner's sleuth inspired several films, radio programs, and an extremely popular television series, *Perry Mason* (1957–1966). Thus, in many ways, Mason was more private eye than lawyer. His character changed somewhat as the series and popular tastes progressed. In the 1930s, Mason was more of a tough guy. He became a smoother operator in the 1940s and beyond. Though best-sellers for decades, their popularity has fallen off and they are less frequently reprinted. Gardner was a prolific writer and confident in his work, once remarking, "It's a damn good story. If you have any comments, write them on the back of a check."

Robert Traver

Another important twentieth-century legal mystery, and reflecting the move toward realism, is Robert Traver's (1903–1991) *Anatomy of a Murder* (1958). Traver was a pen name for Justice John D. Voelker, a member of the Michigan Supreme Court. The novel is based on a real case that Voelker defended when he was a defense attorney. It's set in Upper Michigan, an area with which he was familiar, and here the setting adds to the story just as cities do in hard-boiled detective fiction. He also incorporates a love of fishing into his main character Paul Biegler. Traver wrote several books on fishing and in an interview revealed "I'm a fisherman who likes to observe and tell yarns, and so I told stories about things that I knew about."

Stark and truthful for its day, the narrative presents in an unadorned way a difficult case of a soldier accused of murdering the man who raped his wife. The crime was not witnessed, so the defense becomes proving the rape, putting her reputation on trial. Thus the novel was daring for its time and received mixed reviews, some slamming its length and saying Traver's writing was "as limp as a watch by Dali" and "the grammar resembles that of a cigarette commercial." Others, including novelist J.M. Cain, praised it as entertaining, and Don



Covers for the first paperback issue of *Anatomy of a Murder* (1958), the original hardbound edition of *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960), and a recent issue of a collection of *Rumpole* Christmas stories (2009).

Mankiewicz pointed out its legal accuracy, saying it "contains surely the fullest, most authentic, most detailed account of the preparation of the defense of a murder case ever put into fiction." In 1959, very soon after its release and thus reflecting the impact of the work in its day, Traver's novel was made into a hard-hitting film starring Jimmy Stewart and Lee Remick, directed by Otto Preminger and set to a score by Duke Ellington.

Harper Lee

Some count Harper Lee's (1926–) masterpiece *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) as a legal procedural since a courtroom case rests at the heart of the novel and a lawyer is featured as a main character.

John Mortimer and Rumpole of the Bailey

John Mortimer (1923–2009) was the creator of Rumpole of the Bailey, one of the great characters of English literature. This Wordsworth-quoting, cigar smoking, claret-swilling barrister lives by one creed: never plead guilty. He describes himself as "an Old Bailey Hack" for hire—like a taxi—to the highest bidder, and fears nothing but his wife Hilda, known as "She Who Must Be Obeyed." Hilda is formidable. In "Rumpole's Slimmed-Down Christmas," Hilda tries to convince Rumpole to go to a health farm to lose weight. "I'll think it over," he told Hilda. "Don't bother yourself, Rumpole," she said. "I've already thought." In another instance, Hilda convinces Sam Ballard, head of Rumpole's Chambers, to help Rumpole. When he agrees reluctantly, saying, "God, give me strength," Hilda replies, "Don't worry, Sam. If God doesn't, I certainly shall."

Rumpole is bolder in court. He has fun teasing judges and sometimes helping, other times frustrating, his fellow Chambers members, all for the sake of his unusual parade of clients, from doctors to nonliterate teenagers to violinists to clergymen to safecrackers. Rumpole uses his understanding of human nature and uncanny ability to sway juries more than his legal knowledge to keep his clients out of the nick, of which he heartily disapproves.

Mortimer is a storyteller and collector of anecdotes that become woven into his stories, as does his wicked sense of humor. He decided early in life to become a lawyer. During his legal career, he devised a character "to keep me alive in my old age." He thought of the barristers he knew who called judges "Old Darling," but not their wives, and of the contentious judges. Halfway through his legal career he became a QC (Queen's Counsel), which meant working on important cases, including murders: "I've got great respect for juries." He observed later that he learned literary lessons in divorce court, such as the importance of sports metaphors and when to cut dialog, finish the scene, and pull down the curtain.

Mortimer was born into the law and grew up surrounded by literature. His father, the most famous and successful divorce barrister of his day, went blind halfway through his legal career. John's mother read the cases' evidence aloud

to her husband, as did John, who also often read poetry to him. John said he started to write "in order to have something to read to my father." His father knew Sherlock Holmes and the plays of Shakespeare by heart; he would spout long passages and quotes. They went to all the plays at Stratford, and for fun would take quotes from Shakespeare out of context and use them for other purposes. When John told his father he wanted to be a writer, his father told him to get a job that "gets you out of the house." Mortimer later wrote a well-received play, *Voyage Round My Father*, in honor of his memory. He said of his father, "he taught me everything."

Rumpole and the Age of Miracles contains seven stories: "Rumpole and the Bubble Reputation," "Rumpole and the Barrow Boy," "Rumpole and the Age of Miracles," "Rumpole and the Tap End," "Rumpole and the Chambers Party," "Rumpole and Portia," and "Rumpole and the Quality of Life." Each story presents Rumpole with a new case, and Mortimer is a genius at weaving together plot and related subplot; the intrigue in Chambers or at home often parallels the legal case he's defending—and of course he is defending—"Rumpole always defends!" It is in his nature.

John Grisham and the Legal Thriller

The legal novel and legal procedural have given way in recent days to the legal thriller. One of the best known and most popular authors of legal thrillers, John Grisham (1955–) started writing when he'd been a lawyer for about ten years, and he got his first idea while doing a trial; he saw an idea for a courtroom drama and started writing it down on a yellow legal pad. That first story became *A Time to Kill,* which was turned down by the first fifteen or so publishers and the first fifteen or so agents. It finally came out in June 1989 in a run of five thousand copies, but it didn't sell well: "We practically had to give them away." It sold well in the Southern town where it was set, but that's all. Grisham almost gave up after *A Time to Kill* didn't sell, but then he thought, "Okay, I'll try this just one more time." That story turned out to be *The Firm: A Novel* (1991), originally just a working title, but it stuck. This time it all changed. A bootleg copy wound up in Hollywood before it had even been accepted by a publisher, and he sold the movie rights. The movie rights were sold before the book rights, which is unusual, so when it got around that it would be a Hollywood movie, many publishers were interested in it. He's now sold over a quarter billion books; one of the most recent is *Ford County* (2009). Grisham observed in an interview that the decline of books in print has made it more difficult for new authors to break into publishing. Established writers will do all right, but today's new Faulkner will struggle to break into the business.

Conclusion

Other masters of the modern legal thriller include Brian Haig, Steve Martini, and Scott Turow. The legal procedural and thriller are going international, giving avid readers of detective fiction further glimpses into the differing legal systems of countries around the world.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What are some examples of early legal detective fiction from both Eastern and Western cultures based on real legal cases and persons, and how do they compare?
2. What elements do the legal procedural and the legal thriller have in common, and how do they differ?
3. Authors of legal detective fiction have ample opportunity to reflect on and also to criticize societal norms and the legal system. What examples of societal criticism can be found in the works of the authors from this lecture?

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Mortimer, John. *Rumpole and the Age of Miracles*. New York: Penguin, 1989.

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Traver, Robert. *Anatomy of a Murder*. 25th anniversary edition. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2005.

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2. The *Telegraph* newspaper (London) website obituary article on John Mortimer provides extensive background on his life and career. — http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries
3. This Erle Stanley Gardner fan website contains a biography of the author, information on the *Perry Mason* television series and movies, and a list of characters appearing in Gardner's novels. — http://www.grooviespad.com/esg
4. The *John D. Voelker Foundation* website provides detailed information on author Robert Traver and features the work of the foundation he established. — http://www.voelkerfdn.org

Lecture 9

Medicine for Murder: The Medical Mystery

The Suggested Readings for this lecture are Patricia Cornwell's *All That Remains: A Scarpetta Novel*, Jonathan Kellerman's *When the Bough Breaks*, and Kathy Reichs's *Deja Dead*.

violent death is a public event, and it was this facet of my profession that rudely grated against my sensibilities."

~Patricia Cornwell's protagonist
Dr. Kay Scarpetta

Medical Mysteries

The world of medicine has a natural overlap with detective fiction in that it is also a science of investigation. Diagnosis, after all, is a kind of detection, where the disease takes the place of the criminal, which must be identified and stopped by the doctor. Medical professionals have long made capable sleuths—and sidekicks and villains—in a variety of detective fiction works. Sleuths related to the medical profession can include doctors, nurses, medics, and other military personnel, psychiatrists, psychologists, and medical examiners. An exciting newer branch of this subgenre, the medical thriller, may include encounters with pandemics and bioterrorism, as medical professionals do battle with natural and man-made enemies on a large scale. Sometimes these deadly threats are released by accident, but in other instances the villains are also medically trained and using their specialized knowledge for evil. And forensic crime fiction focuses on the methods of forensic pathologists and anthropologists in the solving of crimes. In addition, the medical milieu of a hospital, nursing home, or research facility provides a closed society and set of suspects for the classic whodunit, for example, Ngaio Marsh's *The Nursing Home Murder* (1937) or P.D. James's *A Mind to Murder* (1963) and *The Black Tower* (1975).

Doctors in Early Detective Fiction

Doctors sometimes played the role of assistant in early detective fiction, for example, Dr. Watson in the Sherlock Holmes mysteries. One of the first fictional physicians dedicated to crime solving was R. Austin Freeman's scientific sleuth Dr. Thorndyke, who first appeared in 1907. Physicians were also cast in the role of villains, as in some of Agatha Christie's works and other classic

stories. And sometimes doctors from real life provided material for mystery novels—paging Dr. Crippen (Hawley Harvey Crippen, hanged for the murder of his wife in 1910).

Nurses as Sleuths: Two Golden Age Examples

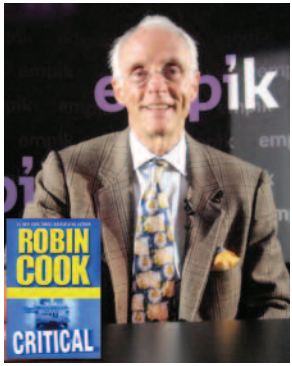
Mary Roberts Rinehart in 1914, with a well-worn copy of a collection of Miss Pinkerton stories that have been in print since their original publication.

Mary Roberts Rinehart (1876–1958) was known as the "American Agatha Christie." She had trained as a nurse and knew the difficulties of the job. Her sleuth Hilda Adams first appeared in the story "The Buckled Bag" in 1914, thus debuting over ten years before Agatha Christie's Miss Marple. Her cases are collected in the volume *Miss Pinkerton: Adventures of a Nurse Detective* and include "The Buckled Bag," "Locked Doors," "Miss Pinkerton," and "Haunted Lady." In "The Buckled Bag," Hilda nurses George Patton, county detective and later inspector, who notices her cleverness and asks her to take a job as nurse in a home where the daughter has disappeared. In "Miss Pinkerton," Inspector Patton calls in Hilda to act as nurse in a home where there has been an apparent suicide—or was it something more sinister? The first three stories are written in the first person from the perspective of Nurse Adams. We are made privy to her thoughts, when she is angry with herself, and what she's thinking about the mystery as it unfolds. She describes her dual role as nurse and detective: "Every trained nurse plays a game, a sort of sporting proposition—her wits against wretchedness. I play a double game—the fight against misery and the fight against crime—like a man running two chessboards at once."

Mignon G. Eberhart (1899–1996) began writing to combat boredom. Her nurse-turned-sleuth Sarah Keate debuted around the same time as Miss Marple. Eberhart, like Mary Rinehart, also became known as "America's Agatha Christie." Eberhart wrote *Patient in Room 18* (1929) and fifty-nine more novels, many in the romantic suspense genre. She wrote in a stark but haunting style that draws the reader in, and she wove the world of nursing into the plot, whether in a hospital or as a home nurse. The latter case creates an interesting mystery, as the nurse is stationed in the home and can observe the family dynamics and the behavior of visitors firsthand. The detectives in the first five novels are Nurse Sarah Keate and private investigator Lance O'Leary. Eberhart was a prolific author, publishing throughout her long life. Her last book, *Three Days for Emeralds,* came out in 1988.

The Medical Thriller: Robin Cook

Robin Cook (1940–) is one of the pioneers of modern medical thrillers, which began with *Coma*, released in 1977. Cook specializes in one-word grabber titles, such as *Blindsight* (1992), *Shock* (1999), *Seizure* (2003), *Crisis* (2006), *Critical* (2007), and *Intervention* (2009). Cook's protagonists are usually brave, resourceful individuals who discover and try to expose, at risk to their own lives, elaborate conspiracies and murder hiding behind the facades of elite medical bureaucracies. Thus the novels take on a mood of paranoia, but the hero is right to be paranoid.



Robin Cook at a book signing in Warsaw in 2008 and the cover of his popular book *Critical*, released in 2007.

It's All in the Mind: Jonathan Kellerman

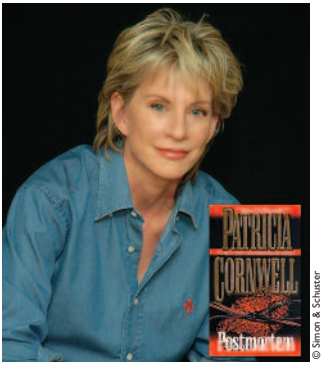
Jonathan Kellerman (1949–) has a Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Southern California, where he is a clinical professor of pediatrics. He is the husband of novelist Faye Kellerman, and together they coauthored best-sellers *Double Homicide* and *Capital Crimes*. He has written some twenty-five novels, beginning with *When the Bough Breaks* (1985), featuring child and forensic psychologist Alex Delaware. He solves cases and often works with his friend, gay LAPD homicide detective Milo Sturgis, who is a recurring character and who drew Alex out of retirement to help with his first case. Delaware has various romantic relationships throughout the series, particularly with Robin Castagna. He owns a French bulldog. Professional and empathetic in his approach, Delaware is a prime example of the post-modern detective. In *Deception*, Delaware and Sturgis investigate an unspeakable crime at an elite prep school, where they must deal with layers of secrecy and social class. In *Evidence*, a young couple is found murdered in a mansion, and as the case progresses, Alex and Milo find themselves in danger. Kellerman novels can be harrowing, as it is the psychologist's job to enter the thoughts of a killer.

Forensic Crime Fiction: Two Grand Masters

Patricia Cornwell (1956–) is the creator of Dr. Kay Scarpetta, chief medical examiner of Richmond, Virginia. She is also a forensic pathologist and lawyer. Cornwell's heroine, like her, is divorced and had a poor relationship with her father, who was emotionally abusive and abandoned the family. Cornwell struggled in her teen years and beyond. Ruth Bell Graham, wife of Billy Graham, encouraged her to take up writing, and Cornwell later wrote a biography of Ruth's life: *A Time for Remembering* (1983). Cornwell worked as a journalist on the crime beat and then took a job in the office of the medical examiner.

The first Kay Scarpetta novel, *Post Mortem* (1990), garnered huge critical acclaim, receiving the Anthony, Macavity, Edgar, and Creasy Awards and the Prix du Roman d'Aventure. In the novel, Scarpetta must solve the case of a

series of bizarre stranglings. One of her methods is trying to get inside the head of the killer: "He would want to get inside my mind as much as I wanted to get inside his." In her third Scarpetta book, *All That Remains* (1992), Kay is called out to investigate serial slayings of young couples found murdered and barefoot in the woods near Williamsburg, Virginia. Their bodies are not found until months later, leaving Kay to work with "all that remains" of the victims. The most recent victim is the daughter of a prominent woman, suggesting possible political motives. Reporter Abby Turnbull is writing a book on the case that's stirring up trouble and possible FBI and CIA interest. A jack of hearts playing card placed near the crime scenes may hold a key to the killer's identity, and Scarpetta finds herself up against a clever culprit well-versed in ways to avoid leaving forensic evidence. The novel was based in part on a real case, the "Colonial Parkway Killings," and some family members sued her over it.



Patricia Cornwell and the cover of her best-selling medical mystery *Postmortem*.

Scarpetta is a likeable sleuth, feeling empathy for victims and others involved in her cases. Readers find themselves rooting for her as she struggles to find the truth behind each crime, remain professional in a male-dominated field, steer clear of political pitfalls that come with her official position, and maintain her personal relationships, including romantic entanglements. Helpers in the series include FBI profiler Benton Wesley, Richmond homicide detective Pete Marino, and niece Lucy.

Cornwell has written other fiction and nonfiction as well. She reexamines a famous unsolved series of murders in *Portrait of a Killer: Jack the Ripper* (2002).

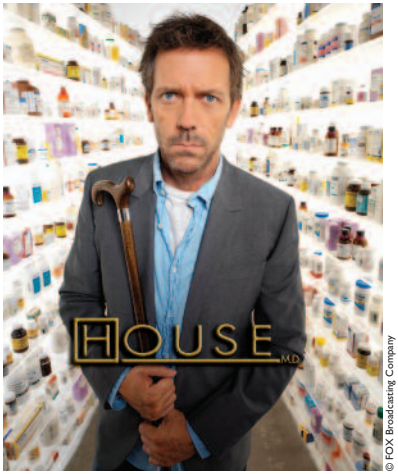
Kathy Reichs (1950–) uses her experience as a forensic anthropologist and professor to bring realism to her work. Dr. Reichs has a Ph.D. in physical anthropology and spends part of her time working for the chief medical examiner in Charlotte, North Carolina, and part as an examiner for the Province of Quebec. Reichs is a producer for the TV series *Bones,* featuring her detective Dr. Temperance Brennan (younger than in the novels and with a different backstory), and she sees a major part of her role as getting the science right for the show. Debuting with the extremely successful *New York Times* best-seller and award-winning *Deja Dead* (1997), she has written a series of novels featuring Tempe, who is based on herself, at least professionally. Reichs created her to have a personal as well as professional life and to have some flaws. *Break No Bones* (2006) deals with the trade in human organs, and *Bare Bones* (2003) with trafficking in endangered species, while *Bones to Ashes* (2007) involves the discovery of an unidentified child's remains. *Grave Secrets* addresses the "disappeared" in Guatemala and is based on Reichs's own experience when she assisted teams there searching for evidence of the atrocities.

She was drawn to the field originally when, as an archaeologist and bone specialist at a university, local law enforcement sometimes brought her skeletal remains for analysis. She bases her books loosely on real cases. Reichs observes that forensic novels have had a positive impact in terms of attracting young people, especially girls, to this important science, but these works have also tainted juries with the "CSI Effect": expecting elaborate DNA and other high-tech scientific evidence for every case.

Doctor Sleuths Twenty-First-Century Style

House, M.D.: To Make a House a Holmes

Modern television series such as *House, M.D.* further the link between the field of medicine and fictional crime. Greg House, the central character of the immensely popular show (played brilliantly by British actor Hugh Laurie), is purposefully based on Arthur Conan Doyle's iconic creation Sherlock Holmes. Dr. House's extraordinary powers of observation and deduction and his mercurial brilliance allow him to diagnose and solve complicated medical cases just as Holmes tracks down diabolical criminals involved in unusual crimes. And it is interesting to consider that Arthur Conan Doyle himself, along with one of the inspirations for Holmes, Dr. Joseph Bell, was also a physician. Some of the parallels between the two fictional sleuths are surface-level fun, such as House's surname (House/Homes/Holmes), his living in apartment number "221," his enjoyment of playing a stringed instrument, the similar names of his closest friend and sidekick (James Wilson, John Watson), and the name of his shooter: Moriarty. Other similarities are more serious and more significant, such as his eccentric genius, deep mood swings, difficulty relating to women (though House certainly has more interest), and struggle with addictions. Certainly his outlook is darker; Holmes maintained a belief in honor, but House's cynical philosophy is "everybody lies," making him in some ways more like the loner private investigator of the hard-boiled genre. On the other hand, despite his brilliance, he needs his team for "crime" solving (diagnosis), much like police detectives do.



Actor Hugh Laurie portrays doctor Greg House in the popular FOX network television series *House, M.D.*

Conclusion

Other medical thriller authors include Ann Benson (*The Burning Road*), Edna Buchanan (*Pulse*), Stephen J. Cannell (*The Devil's Workshop*), Michael Crichton (*A Case of Need*), Ken Follett (*The Third Twin*), Leonard Goldberg (*Deadly Exposure*), James Patterson (*When the Wind Blows*), and Douglas Preston (*Mount Dragon*).

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Nurses, doctors, psychologists, and medical examiners each bring the specific expertise of their professional fields to crime solving. How does each job bring a different perspective and approach? What advantages and limitations come with each role?
2. Doctors in detective fiction run the gamut from Dr. Watson to House, M.D.: how does each reflect the ethos of his day? Since doctors are often assigned high social status, how does that impact their role as sleuth? What happens when patient confidentiality and justice collide?
3. Two current and highly popular offshoots of medical detective fiction are the medical thriller and forensic crime fiction. What recent social and scientific changes might have led to their development and popularity? How do they compare in terms of focus and tone?

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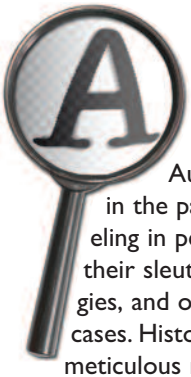
1. *Project Gutenberg* provides links to its archive of Mary Roberts Rinehart stories. — http://www.gutenberg.org/browse/authors/r#a183
2. Penguin Group Publishers Robin Cook website. — http://us.penguingroup.com/static/packages/us/robincook/start.htm
3. Author Patricia Cornwell's website provides the latest news on recent publications, adaptations of her stories for television, and dates and locations of future appearances. — http://www.patriciacornwell.com

Lecture 10

Probing the Past: Historical Detective Fiction

The Suggested Readings for this lecture are Ellis Peters's *Monk's-Hood* and Elizabeth Peters's *The Crocodile on the Sandbank*.



"A lady cannot be blamed if a master criminal takes a fancy to her."
~Amelia Peabody in *The Hippopotamus Pool*
by Elizabeth Peters

Authors enjoy setting their mysteries in the past partly to evoke another era, reveling in period detail, and partly to challenge their sleuth by eliminating modern technologies, and occasionally to reinvestigate past cases. Historical detective fiction demands meticulous research and provides insight into the daily lives of people of the era. Historical sleuths are of all types: amateur, private, police, medical, and so on. Sometimes historical detective fiction investigates real past cases, such as Jack the Ripper, and increasingly authors choose real historical personae as their sleuths, a controversial practice. Do the life and times of well-known figures from the past enter into public domain for us to reinvent as we like? To what extent do authors have an obligation to "play fair" with someone's historical legacy? Historical detective fiction is exceedingly popular, perhaps because it draws readers into another era in which the sleuth must use the resources and technologies available at the time, and it also combines the best of mystery and historical fiction, a popular genre in its own right.

Eras

Historical detective fiction has been set in eras from the earliest stirrings of civilization, both Western and Eastern, to just before the present day: ancient China, ancient Egypt, classical Greece and Rome, Middle Ages Europe, the Renaissance, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe and Asia, World War I, World War II, the Cold War, the 1960s, and the 1980s and Glasnost.

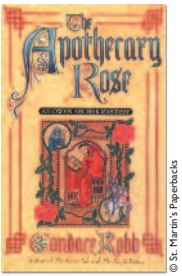
Historical Persons as Fictional Sleuths

Authors have increasingly chosen to make famous historical figures the sleuths in their mysteries. For example, the following well-known names can

be found solving cases in crime novels near you: Aristotle, Leonardo da Vinci, Samuel Johnson, Shakespeare, Queen Elizabeth I, Benjamin Franklin, Mark Twain, and Eleanor Roosevelt. Sometimes the historical figures turned sleuth were mystery writers in real life: Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Agatha Christie have all turned their hands to sleuthing in modern historical detective fiction. This trend is controversial. Not everyone agrees it is right to ascribe elaborate words, actions, and events to real people who can't "defend themselves" as it were, and to take liberties with the details of their lives and times. The objection gets stronger the closer in time we get to our own era. Others see no harm in the practice and point to the genre's broad appeal and to the assumption that reading historical fiction assumes a certain latitude and suspension of disbelief.

The Middle Ages

English author Candace Robb (1950–) has written a series of books featuring archer-turned-sleuth Owen Archer. The stories are set in York and Wales in the 1300s. The first novel, *The Apothecary Rose* (1993), is set in 1363. Archer is a Welsh retired captain of archers, and steward and spy for Thoresby, Archbishop of York, who is also his nemesis. Archer is married to Lucie Wilton, an apothecary. Robb is a Medievalist, so draws on her expertise in the area. She even wore an eye patch on her left eye to see how her protagonist would be affected by limited eyesight. Archer is a marksman and lost his left eye in battle, a wound that he blames on his own pride. Political intrigue abounds in this and the other novels in the series. Thoresby's scheming character is based on a real historical figure. Throughout the series Archer investigates murders and solves crimes while dealing with the tumultuous political times, his family life, and personal struggles of conscience. In later entries, his cases involve him with historical figures such as Chaucer. Robb is a master at evoking medieval daily and court life.



The cover of Candace Robb's first Owen Archer mystery, *The Apothecary Rose*.

Fifteenth Century

Josephine Tey (1896–1952) reopens the case of King Richard III and the little princes in the tower in *The Daughter of Time* (1951). Recuperating Scotland Yard Investigator Alan Grant reinvestigates the case and finds the king innocent of the murder of the young princes.

Eighteenth Century

Bruce Alexander (1932–2003) was the pen name of Bruce Alexander Cook, whose Blind Justice series featured real historical figure Sir John Fielding, magistrate of Bow Street and founder of the Bow Street Runners, the precursor to London's first police force. Fielding lost his sight in an accident at age nineteen while serving in the Royal Navy. He is said to have been able to recognize a host of criminals by the sound of their voice. Alexander's fictional character still enjoys a large following.

Benjamin Franklin is cast in the role of sleuth in Robert Lee Hall's *Benjamin Franklin Takes the Case* (1988), set during the time Franklin was representing Pennsylvania's interests in London in the mid-1700s. Franklin happens to visit a printer's shop only to find a twelve-year-old orphan at work and the printer murdered in a particularly grisly fashion.

© Picador

Nineteenth Century and the Victorian Age

The 1800s are a particularly popular era for many historical mystery writers because of Sherlock Holmes. Authors have reinvented famous figures from both fiction and history to act as sleuths from this era, including more adventures of Holmes himself as the main sleuth (sometimes from the first-person point of view and sometimes not).

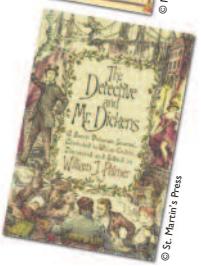
© St. Martin's Minotaur

In *The Beekeeper's Apprentice*, author Laurie R. King (1952–) introduces a young American female apprentice, Mary Russell, into Sherlock Holmes's household. The collaboration results in the rescue of a kidnapped politician's daughter and attempts on the lives of Russell and Watson.

Sherlock Holmes has also been projected into other historical eras of the past, present, and future. The sleuth in some of these stories is author Arthur Conan Doyle himself. *The Problem of the Missing Miss* by Roberta Rogow (1942–) has writers Lewis Carroll and Doyle called in to solve the mystery. Other writers made into sleuths can be found in Stephanie Barron's Jane Austen series and Peter Heck's Mark Twain series.

© Mysterious Press

English author Peter Lovesey's (1936–) Albert Prince of Wales series (son of Queen Victoria) was launched with *Bertie and the Tinman* (1987). In 1886, Bertie (as Albert is known to his friends) investigates when popular jockey Fred Archer (known as the Tinman) shoots himself—or did he? Written in first-person memoir style, the stories involve real characters from society and racing history. Lovesey is also the author of the Sergeant Cribb novels.



© St. Martin's Press

William J. Palmer's *The Detective and Mr. Dickens* (1990) was ostensibly taken from the journals of Wilkie Collins and explores the relationship of Charles Dickens and real-life Scotland Yard Inspector William Field as Dickens and Collins assist him in solving a series of murders.

Non-Historical Nineteenth-Century Sleuths

The Mrs. Jeffries series by Emily Brightwell is a fun twist on the simple-assistant motif. Plodding Scotland Yard Inspector Witherspoon is aided by his adept housekeeper, Mrs. Jeffries, who directs the household staff to keep him pointed in the right direction to solve the crimes. The twenty-seventh novel in this series was released in June 2010.

Barbara Hambly's (1951–) *A Free Man of Color* (1997) portrays all levels of society in 1830s New Orleans through her sleuth Benjamin January. A doctor by training, January performs music for a living because he isn't allowed to practice medicine, despite having spent ten years doing just that in Paris. He is drawn in to solve the mystery of the murder of a woman of color who was mistress to a recently deceased local plantation owner.

Two Grand Masters:

Ellis Peters

© Mysterious Press

Ellis Peters and the cover of the first Brother Cadfael book, *A Morbid Taste for Bones*.

Ellis Peters (1913–1995) is the pen name for Edith Pargeter, who is credited with igniting the trend in historical detective fiction through her Chronicles of Brother Cadfael series, set in the twelfth century. Cadfael is a Welsh monk in a Benedictine Abbey in Shrewsbury. As an apothecary, he is knowledgeable of herbal medicine and has permission to leave the abbey regularly to treat cases, drawing him into intrigues in the Abbey and town. Cadfael uses his herbal expertise and knowledge of the world from his pre-cloistered youth to solve crimes. He had been a soldier and had traveled widely. He does not judge people based on class, ethnicity, or social status, and having once been in love himself, he shows sympathy for the plight of star-crossed young lovers. We first meet Brother Cadfael in *A Morbid Taste for Bones* (1977). Peters researched the journey the brothers take in this novel, as it was a real historical event. This novel shows Cadfael's interest in true justice and happiness for those he is helping. Cadfael's outsider identification as a Welsh monk in an English monastery conflicts with his loyalties to the abbey. He also wrestles with his own human nature and matters of conscience in each adventure.

Peters had not originally planned Cadfael as a series sleuth, but he continued to solve crimes through twenty volumes. In the sixth entry, *Virgin in the Ice* (1982), he discovers to his joy that he has a son. In the final volume, *Brother Cadfael's Penance* (1994), in which an aging Brother Cadfael risks his life for his son, he concludes, "The colours of late autumn are the colours of the sunset; the farewell of the year and the farewell of the day. And of the life of man? Well, if it ends in a flourish of gold, that is no bad ending." Peters received the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1994 and is a recipient of the Diamond Dagger Award from the Crime Writers' Association of Great Britain.

Elizabeth Peters

Elizabeth Peters (1927–) is the pen name of Barbara Mertz, whose remarkable sleuth Amelia Peabody debuts in *Crocodile on the Sandbank* (1975). Peters earned a graduate degree in Egyptology in an era in which few women pursued such studies and found it difficult to find a job. She decided to turn her

expertise to mystery novels, thus creating one of the most delightful sleuths in the genre: independent, strong-minded, Victorian archaeologist Amelia Peabody.

In *Crocodile on the Sandbank* (1975), set in 1884, Amelia is a single woman (and anticipating no change in that direction) who, having just lost her father, travels to Egypt. An interest in archaeology draws her to a dig, where she meets archaeologist Radcliffe Emerson. Outspoken and strong-willed as she is, they first clash and then join together to solve the mystery of who's trying to drive them away from the site and to kill or kidnap Amelia's traveling companion. Amelia is an unconventional heroine, defying the gender expectations of her day: "I embroider very badly. I think I would excavate rather well." It was (and is) an extremely popular series, with each title taken from an Egyptian text. Peters pours out her knowledge of Egyptology and also references real archaeologists of the day.

Elizabeth Peters at the pyramids in the 1960s and the cover of the first Amelia Peabody book, *Crocodile on the Sandbank*.

Armed with passion, wit, and a weaponized parasol, Amelia investigates through a total of eighteen meticulously researched adventures, ending with *The Tomb of the Golden Bird* (2006). The focus shifts from Amelia and Emerson to their brilliant son Ramses and his physician wife Nefret, a defender of women's rights. Themes include romance—Amelia and Emerson are very much in love—equality of genders, class and cultures, even kindness to animals. Amelia, for example, observes, "Marriage should be a balanced stalemate between equal adversaries." Written in first person as though in a private journal, Amelia makes candid observations such as, "I have known several villains who were perfect gentlemen." Though some find the humor and romance cloying, the novels continue to draw and delight many fans. Peters has been made a Grand Master by the Mystery Writers of America for her contributions.

Conclusion

One method of historical detective fiction authors is to take fictional characters from past literary works and turn them into sleuths: Holmes's landlady Mrs. Hudson, for example. Again, is that fair to the authors who invented them? Is this less or more of a problem than using real historical figures? Critics disagree. Meanwhile, the taste for historical detective fiction shows no sign of dissipating: recent authors of note include Susan Wittig Albert, whose series includes *The Tale of Briar Bank* (2008), and Victoria Thompson, whose Gaslight Mystery series includes *Murder on Astor Place* (1999).

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. The trend in historical detective fiction is increasingly toward using well-known figures from history or literature as sleuths. Is it "fair" for authors to use real historical persons such as Shakespeare or Jane Austen as their main detective character? What are the pitfalls and what's the appeal?
2. The two Peterses—Elizabeth and Ellis—have both created compelling historical sleuths. One's male and the other female, and they're placed in very different eras, but they both rely on inside knowledge of their fields to solve crimes. What other similarities and differences are there?
3. Cast yourself in the role of author: if you were to create a historical sleuth, in what era would you place him or her, and why? Would you use a known historical or literary figure as either a main or secondary character, and if so, who? Finally, consider what research would be necessary to bring your detective to life.

Suggested Reading

Peters, Elizabeth. *The Crocodile on the Sandbank*. New York: Mysterious Press, 1988.

Peters, Ellis. *Monk's-Hood*. New York: Sphere/Mysterious Press, 1980.

Other Books of Interest

Albert, Susan Wittig. *The Tale of Briar Bank: The Cottage Tales of Beatrix Potter*. New York: Berkley, 2008.

Robb, Candace. *The Apothecary Rose*. 6th ed. New York: St. Martin's Paperbacks, 1994.

Tey, Josephine. *The Daughter of Time*. New York: Touchstone, 1995.

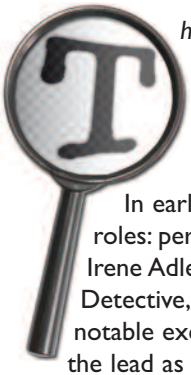
Websites of Interest

1. Amelia Peabody.com features the novels by Elizabeth Peters starring Egyptologist/sleuth Amelia Peabody. — http://www.ameliapeabody.com
2. Candace Robb's home page provides a synopsis of each of her novels, the author's biography, a newsletter, events, and Robb's description of fourteenth-century York, England, which serves as the backdrop for her fiction. — http://www.candacerobb.com
3. The official site of author Laurie R. King. — http://www.laurierking.com
4. Emily Brightwell updates her readers on her latest novels with letters posted on her website. — http://www.emilybrightwell.com

Lecture 11

Women of Mystery: Beyond Female Intuition

The Suggested Readings for this lecture are Sue Grafton's *A Is for Alibi* and *U Is for Undertow*, P.D. James's *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*, and Sara Paretsky's *Indemnity Only* and *Killing Orders*.



"There's no place in a P.I.'s life for impatience, faintheartedness, or sloppiness. I understand the same qualifications apply for housewives."

~PI Kinsey Millhone in *B Is for Burglar* by Sue Grafton

In early detective fiction, women often played mainly supporting roles: perhaps as victim, suspect, or plucky assistant. The character Irene Adler is admired by Sherlock Holmes and outwits the Great Detective, but she is not a main character. However, there were some notable exceptions even in early detective fiction in which women took the lead as central crime-solver. In the Golden Age, amateur female sleuths such as Miss Marple were accepted. Although lesser-known, there were also female Golden Age PIs. Women were slower to enter the private investigator's role. In the hard-boiled genre, they were at first cast as *femme fatale*, representing danger and distraction to the male sleuth and his code. It was not until the 1980s that women took the role of hard-boiled PI themselves. Juvenile detective fiction will also enter into our discussion as we investigate the impact on society of one of the most influential fictional characters in literature: Nancy Drew, Girl Detective.

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Two Examples of Female Detectives and Authors in Early Detective Fiction

Anna Katharine Green (1846–1935) was an American author and is considered "mother of the detective novel." Her book *The Leavenworth Case: A Lawyer's Story*, published in 1878, was a best-seller and praised by Wilkie Collins. Green helped shape the genre with now-common elements such as a partially burnt letter, a changed will, a body in the library, a locked room, and even ballistic evidence. Her sleuth police officer Ebenezer Gryce debuted nine years before Sherlock Holmes. The novel is written in literary style, with quotes from Shakespeare and other classic works as epigraphs for chapters. Green also created spinster sleuth Amelia

Butterworth, who appeared in a series of novels beginning with *That Affair Next Door* (1897).

A series of detective stories by Catherine Louisa Pirkis (1841–1910) featured Loveday Brooke and debuted in *Ludgate Magazine* in 1893–94. The stories were published under the title *The Experiences of Loveday Brooke, Lady Detective* in 1894. Brooke is portrayed as a businesswoman, not beautiful, but smart: she uses keen observation, logic, and deduction rather than "feminine intuition" to solve baffling cases.

Female Sleuths of the Golden Age

In the Golden Age of detective fiction, female sleuths were more common: Agatha Christie's Miss Marple, Tuppence Beresford, and Ariadne Oliver; Dorothy Sayers's Harriet Vane; and one not as familiar to many readers: Patricia Wentworth's (Dora Amy Elles, 1878–1961) spinster PI Miss Maud Silver.

Maud Silver lives in London and specializes in art-related crime, thefts, and forgeries. A retired governess, she suddenly comes into possession of a home and housekeeper and becomes what she calls a "private enquiry agent." Miss Silver is a mild and traditionally feminine figure: small, prim, and polite. She wears old-fashioned clothes, quotes literature and the Bible, and knits. Like many private eyes, Miss Silver lives by a code: "Love God, honour the Queen, keep the law, be kind, be good, think of others before yourself, serve Justice, speak the Truth." Her approach to detection is more professional than Miss Marple's, and one of her favorite methods is undercover work. She works with the police; Chief Inspector Lamb of Scotland Yard is sometimes embarrassed by her success as he comes in at the end to make the arrest. Inspector Abbott admires her and they call on each other for help—she used to be his governess. Wentworth wrote more than thirty crime novels featuring Miss Silver, starting with her first appearance in *Grey Mask* (1928), as a minor character, and becoming a main protagonist in *The Case Is Closed* (1937). Miss Silver makes her final appearance in *The Girl in the Cellar* (1961). Wentworth's novels featured mainly female characters. Her work was quite popular in its day, so much so in the United States that the British author moved to Philadelphia. Wentworth's writing perhaps seems old-fashioned to modern readers and therefore has not aged as well as some other works.

Covers for two of Patricia Wentworth's novels, *The Key* (1944) and *Silence in Court* (1945).

Nancy Drew: Influential Juvenile Detective

Like her older crime-fighting sisters, girl sleuth Nancy Drew also appeared in the Golden Age, this time in juvenile literature. "Author" Carolyn Keene is the pseudonym for a syndicate of writers who invented the teenage sleuth and who became a key component of American popular culture for several decades. Her character was conceived in 1929 by Edward Stratemeyer, successful publisher of dime novels and fifty-cent juvenile stories. As with his other series—after he came up with the idea—ghostwriters were left to flesh out the character and invent adventures for Drew. Journalist Mildred Wirt Benson wrote twenty-three of the first thirty books and deliberately made Nancy independent, believing girls could do anything boys could do. And when Stratemeyer died twelve days after Nancy Drew debuted in *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930), his daughter Harriet Stratemeyer-Adams became CEO of her father's company and also contributed to writing the stories, often supplying outlines for Benson to complete. She was more conservative than Benson, giving Nancy more traditional values, and some scholars speculate that Nancy is a "dichotomous heroine" because of the divergent influences of these two chief ghostwriters.

The Nancy Drew Crew

Pictured are creator and publisher of the Nancy Drew series Edward Stratemeyer (ca. early 1900s), his daughter Harriet Stratemeyer-Adams (ca. 1930s), who took over after her father's death (oval inset), the first issue of *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930), and a reprint of the same title from 1959. At the bottom is journalist Mildred Wirt Benson, who wrote many of the books in the series.

Nancy is described in the series as sixteen, blonde, blue-eyed, and pretty, though "Her friends declared that she was as clever as she was attractive" (*The Hidden Staircase*, the second entry in the series). Drew lives in the Midwestern town of River Heights, has graduated from high school, and has no job or plans for college; she is thus free from responsibilities. Her mother has died and a housekeeper looks after her, so there are no maternal controls. Her father, prominent attorney Carson Drew, and boyfriend, Ned Nickerson, dote on her. She's also financially independent, wearing fashionable clothes and driving about in a blue roadster. Nancy Drew retained that independence through the 1930s and '40s as the economy and women's roles were changing. When women emerged from World War II stronger and more powerful,

Nancy's influence increased. The plots are formulaic and predictable, but they have inspired generations of female readers. The mysteries she solves include thefts, restoring rightful inheritances, and finding hidden treasures. She's a young woman of action, gets kidnapped and tied up frequently, and escapes through her wits. Her faults, if any, include recklessness. Nancy shows independence, intelligence, and courage. She is feminine, yet also strong, brave, and independent. Nancy has been considered a pre-feminist role model. She has inspired generations of women, including author Nancy Pickard, Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, Laura Bush, and Hillary Clinton. The early series does contain some examples of racism and classism, but the series has undergone several transformations, publishers, and incarnations—the new Nancy Drew Girl Detective 2005 series is told in the first person, and she now drives a hybrid. The Nancy Drew phenomenon remains in print and also in film, television, graphic novels, and computer games. Nancy Drew has been translated into over twenty-five languages and has sold over a hundred million copies around the world, making her one of the most influential fictional female characters of all time—another example of the impact on society of detective fiction.

Women as Private Detectives

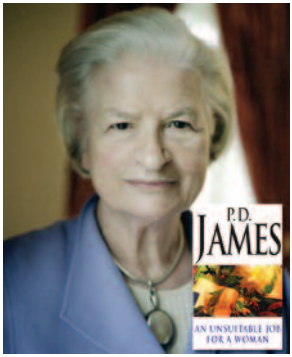
At first authors, reflecting societal views, seemed to suggest that women could act as amateur sleuths or consulting detectives, but the realm of the lone private eye was off limits. In fact, as we've observed, the chief role of women in hard-boiled detective fiction was often as victim or *femme fatale*. However, the 1970s and 1980s brought a change to that thinking.

P.D. James and Cordelia Gray

English author P.D. James (1920–) is highly acclaimed and one of the few to cross the difficult divide into mainstream fiction. Her husband returned from World War II suffering from mental illness and she cared for him until his death in 1964. This gave her insight into various aspects of society and the human condition. James had a variety of jobs that have informed her work. For example, she was an administrator for a psychiatric unit. She was also a magistrate and served on the liturgical commission of the Church of England. Each novel examines in some way the failure or weaknesses of an established social institution, such as a home for unwed mothers in *Cover Her Face*, a psychiatric outpatient clinic in *A Mind to Murder*, and the court system and barristers' chambers in *A Certain Justice*. Her most well-known sleuth is Inspector (later Commander) Dalgliesh, who is introduced in James's first novel, *Cover Her Face* (1962), and featured in a number of following works.

However, James decided to break the mold when she created one of the first modern female PI characters in *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman* (1972). The

novel is set in Cambridge, and it introduces detective Cordelia Gray. Cordelia is the young assistant to a private eye and inherits the business suddenly when he commits suicide. She takes the next case that comes her way, a prominent father wanting to know why his son—who had been studying at Cambridge—committed suicide. Cordelia solves it with cleverness and persistence, even though several characters remark that she's taken up an unsuitable job for her gender. She even manages to survive being thrown down a well, eventually climbing out inch by inch through sheer mental and physical determination. "Detection requires a stubborn patient persistence which amounts to obstinacy" is a maxim of Dalgliesh as quoted by Cordelia Gray, and she shows that persistence. It's revealed during the novel that Cordelia had a difficult upbringing, her mother having died at her birth and her father a Marxist poet who spent most of his time with a group of cronies. Cordelia is compassionate and goes to great personal risk to protect one of the culprits from arrest (unlike the hard-boiled male private eye). James has said she identifies with Cordelia, though the character has only been featured in two novels (unlike Dalgliesh), and that she has resisted readers' speculations that the two sleuths marry. Cordelia is also featured in *The Skull Beneath the Skin* (1982). Cordelia is a courageous and resourceful PI, but not of the hard-boiled tradition, unlike our next two examples, introduced a decade later.



P.D. James and the cover of her *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*.

Two Hard-boiled Female PIs

Sue Grafton's Kinsey Millhone

Sue Grafton (1940–) is known for her sharp writing and keen sense of humor. Her father was also an author and he published several mysteries. Grafton began writing while going through a difficult divorce and found herself plotting ways to kill her soon-to-be ex. She decided to get paid for her ideas instead. Grafton had several jobs related to the medical field. She observes, "Mystery fiction is the one genre in which the reader and the writer are pitted against each other. My job is to pull the wool over your eyes, and your job is to see if you can figure out what I'm up to." Grafton worked for a while in Hollywood writing screenplays, which she hated, but she does admit it gave her insights into how to get in to and out of a scene, write action scenes, and compose realistic dialog. Grafton says of her heroine Kinsey that she is the woman she might have been.

A *Is for Alibi* (1982) introduces Grafton's sleuth Kinsey Millhone, a private eye in the California town of Santa Teresa, a fictional place invented by Ross McDonald. Kinsey is in her thirties, a twice-divorced loner and former cop. She is wise-cracking, independent, tough, and strong. Client Nikki Fife comes

to her because she's served a sentence for killing her husband Laurence, a prominent divorce attorney in town, and says she didn't kill him. Fife wants Kinsey to get her reputation back and find out who framed her. Millhone has some knowledge of the case and agrees to take it. Lt. Con Dolan, Homicide, helps her by sharing some case files. The book opens with "My name is Kinsey Millhone. I'm a private investigator, licensed by the state of California. I'm thirty-two years old, twice divorced, no kids. The day before yesterday I killed someone and the fact weighs heavily on my mind." She concludes, "You try to keep life simple, but it never works, and in the end all you have left is yourself." During the case she reveals: "Private investigation is my whole life. It is why I get up in the morning and what puts me to bed at night. Most of the time I'm alone, but why not? I'm not unhappy and I'm not discontent." Kinsey left the police force because of its entrenched sexism and bureaucracy, and throughout the series she continues to battle these foes. She solves her cases not with so-called female intuition, but methodically, and with attention to detail. Each volume includes a "Report to client," which concludes "Respectfully submitted, Kinsey Millhone." Grafton is keeping Kinsey in the 1980s, as she prefers to stay away from high-tech gadgetry and super-realistic forensics. In each case, Millhone brings her matter-of-fact approach to investigation with courage and humor. The series remains popular with readers and critics—it has won numerous Shamus and Anthony Awards—and is successfully on its way to the final anticipated volume, *Z Is for Zero*.

Author Sue Grafton at a book signing and the cover of *A Is for Alibi*, the first of the Kinsey Millhone Alphabet Mysteries.

Sara Paretsky is pictured at a recent book signing. Actress Kathleen Turner (on the laser disc cover) appeared as private eye Victoria "V.I." Warshawski in the 1991 movie directed by Jeff Kanew.

Sara Paretsky's V.I. Warshawski

Sara Paretsky (1947–) was born in Iowa, grew up in Kansas, and earned several advanced degrees from the University of Chicago: an MBA in finance and a Ph.D. in history. Paretsky founded Sisters in Crime in 1986, an organization to promote female mystery writers. Her work has won the Silver Dagger, Diamond Dagger, and Anthony Awards.

Paretsky's hard-boiled female sleuth V.I. Warshawski debuted in *Indemnity Only* (1982) and has appeared in thirteen novels to date, ending with *Hardball* (2009). V.I. (or Vic—but never Vicky!) is strong and tough, living alone and avoiding men and romantic entanglements. Like

the original male hard-boiled PIs, she lives by her own moral code. Her methods include logic and observation. V.I. is proud of her mixed ethnic heritage: her father was a Polish cop in Chicago and her mother a Jewish Italian opera singer. She grew up poor on the south side of Chicago. The city of Chicago becomes a vital part of the series again, as in the classic hard-boiled genre, where the city plays an integral role. And Warshawski's cases frequently lead her to take on corruption in powerful institutions, such as government and corporations. Since Warshawski's cases are often first brought to her by friends or acquaintances, or may involve relatives, her personal and professional lives sometimes intertwine. She is aware of patriarchal structures around her and has leftist and feminist views, but not blindly so. She's gutsy and smart, and values friendships and relations, but still remains a loner. Her attitude to life and work can be summed up in these words from *Indemnity Only*: "I'm the only person I take orders from."

Conclusion

Because of these groundbreaking female authors and their female sleuth creations, some of them mild and some of them tough, women are no longer playing only the role of victim, villain, or vamp—they are now solving crimes in all the major subgenres.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. To what extent have female characters in detective fiction, both amateur and PI, had an impact on society? Is it fair to say they have had more impact than their male counterparts? Why or why not?
2. It seems more female authors create male sleuths than men create female detectives; what are some examples and why might that be so? What challenges come with creating a sleuth who is the opposite gender of oneself? Authors such as Christie and James have created sleuths of both genders; how do they compare?
3. Why might female detectives have been more acceptable to the reading public in amateur roles before becoming private eyes? Is literature following or leading society in this matter? There are also more male than female leads in the police procedural—for the same reasons?

Suggested Reading

Grafton, Sue. *A Is for Alibi: A Kinsey Millhone Nov*el. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2008.

———. *U Is for Undertow: A Kinsey Millhone Nov*el. New York: A Marian Wood Book/Putnam, 2009.

James, P.D. *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*. New York: Touchstone, 2001.

Paretsky, Sara. *Indemnity Only*. V.I. Warshawski Novels. New York: Dell, 1991.

———. *Killing Orders*. V.I. Warshawski Novels. New York: Signet, 2005.

Other Books of Interest

Green, Anna Katharine. *The Leavenworth Case*. Penguin Classics. New York: Penguin, 2010.

———. *That Affair Next Door* and *Lost Man's Lane*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003.

Wentworth, Patricia. *The Case Is Closed*. New York: Warner Books, 1991.

Websites of Interest

1. The Random House website for author P.D. James. — http://www.randomhouse.com/features/pdjames
2. Sue Grafton's website offers the latest news and information on the popular author's works. — http://www.suegrafton.com
3. Along with the usual author features, Sara Paretsky's website features a popular blog. — http://www.saraparetsky.com

Lecture 12

International Intrigue: Detective Fiction Goes Global

The Suggested Readings for this lecture are Donna Leon's *Through a Glass, Darkly*, Henning Mankell's *Faceless Killers*, and Alexander McCall Smith's *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* and *Tears of the Giraffe*.

ystery novels, like mythological thought or ancient Greek poetry, bring to the center of a fictional narrative the most intense and fundamental questions of the human being."

~Luiz Garcia-Rosa

The diversification of detective fiction has continued and has now become a global phenomenon. The genre has spread to every corner of the globe, featuring sleuths representing myriad nationalities and authors delighting in describing settings and cultural detail. Some of these novels are composed by writers representing their own land and people, and others by authors from outside that country who have done meticulous research to make their heroes come alive and to give them a genuine voice. These works are enjoyed by the reading public as a kind of travelogue in addition to the solving of the mystery. Readers are left wondering, what took them so long? Since concern for justice is a human universal, valued by all societies, it makes sense for detective fiction to circle the globe.

Early History

As we observed in Lecture 1, detective fiction is not exclusive to the West. There is a long tradition of detective literature in Chinese culture, for example. We discussed Judge Dee in Lecture 8. There was also Judge Bao, a much revered historical figure, a magistrate of the Song Dynasty, who became the subject of legend and also a series of plays in which he acted as both detective and judge, sometimes disguising himself to discover the truth, and with emphasis on restoration of justice. In Western detective fiction, Poe created one of the first international sleuths in his French detective Dupin, a different nationality than Poe's, but the stories don't really draw on French culture. And global locales were sometimes used in the Golden Age, as in Christie's mysteries set in digs in the Middle East, or in espionage fiction, where spies run operations all around the world. Only as a relatively recent development have authors discovered the joys of creating a sleuth from countries

other than the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, or France. Such sleuths solve crimes unique to their cultures and laws with methods equally unique. Many of these newer works are police procedurals, as writers explore the rules and challenges of police forces of various nations.

India

H.R.F. Keating (1926–) created one of the first international police detectives, Inspector Ghote of the Bombay (Mumbai) CID. Inspector Ghote is a seemingly bumbling police inspector who must deal with the complicated cultural aftermath of British imperialism, the diversity of class, culture, wealth, and ethnicity in Bombay, and also the crippling limitations of caste. Like many police heroes, he must also cope with difficult superiors and subordinates. Keating said that Ghote "is me . . . inside him is a lot of me." In his first case, *The Perfect Murder* (1964), he "solves" the case of a perfect murder (that never really happened) quite literally as the ostensible victim's name was Perfect. Inspector Ghote has a family life, including formidable wife Protima and Western-culture loving son Ved. He is sensitive, polite, and principled, and he wrestles with matters of conscience, when to follow rules and occasionally to break them, and possesses a deep concern for justice. His last case is *Breaking and Entering* (2000), but he comes back for two flashbacks into his early career: *Inspector Ghote's First Case* (2008) and *A Small Case for Inspector Ghote?* (2009).

Cover of *The Perfect Murder*, 1997.

Japan

Japan has a long tradition of detective fiction, beginning with trial narratives in the seventeenth century, and the genre remains extremely popular in Japan today. Modern examples include German author I.J. Parker's Samurai series, her historical mysteries featuring Sugawara Akitada and beginning with *Rashomon Gate* (2002); Jiro Akagawa's (1948–) humorous series featuring bumbling Inspector Onuki; British author Timothy Hemion's (1961–) Inspector Morimoto series set in Okayama; and a growing trend in *yakuza* or Japanese mafia crime novels. Japanese crime fiction tends to reflect a cosmopolitanism and grapples with the sudden violence, brought on by the pressure to conform, that can erupt in a relatively safe and stable society. There is also a crossover into anime, Japanese animation, and *manga*, or Japanese comics; some novels have been put into anime or manga form, and anime and manga traditions themselves sometimes explore detective fiction themes.

Author I.J. Parker, 2004.

Africa

Alexander McCall Smith (1948–), a Scottish author born in Zimbabwe, is currently a professor of medical law at the University of Edinburgh. He is the creator of a delightful series set in Botswana and honoring of its culture. The sleuth is Precious Ramotswe, traditionally built, kind, patriotic, and proud of her late father, who was knowledgeable about cattle. She is introduced in *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* (1998) with the sentence "Mma Ramotswe had a detective agency in Africa, at the foot of Kgale Hill," which the author modeled on the first line in Isak Dinesen's *Out of Africa*: "I had a farm in Africa, at the foot of the Ngong Hills."

Mma Ramotswe discovers she is good at finding out things. She decides to invest the money inherited from selling her father's cattle into setting up Botswana's first detective agency, sometimes consulting her copy of *Principles of Private Detection* by Clovis Anderson (a fictitious work). She hires as her secretary Mma Grace Makutsi, who achieved 97 percent on her typing test, and she eventually marries Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni; they eventually adopt two children, a brother and sister. The young girl is in a wheelchair, and the author shows particular sensitivity to those with disabilities through this character and also challenges gender stereotypes as Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni discovers it is she, and not the younger brother, who shows great aptitude for mechanics.

The series presents a charming and funny depiction of daily life in Botswana, frequently contrasting new and old Botswana, as the country has changed through its independence declared in 1966, modernization, and the diamond industry. Mma Ramotswe's methods are intuition, common sense, and understanding of her own culture and human nature. She is also philosophical, at times giving thought to various problems and musing about the differences between men and women, observing in *Morality for Beautiful Girls* (2002), "something which women had known for a very long time—they could tell what men were like just by looking at them." The books are gentle and polite and slow-paced, reflecting a non-Western approach to time, as in Botswana itself. Serious subjects are broached, however, such as the ravages of AIDS (referred to as "the disease"), spousal abuse, dangerous animals, and the kidnapping of children by witchdoctors. Precious is kind and sympathetic, having known loss, both of her father and child. Her abusive first husband, Note Makoti, beat her so badly she lost the baby she was expecting. Still, the overall tone is positive, even in the face of difficulties. The framework of the novels is generally organized around several small cases (never murder), though they may be interconnected. McCall Smith's great strengths are the use of

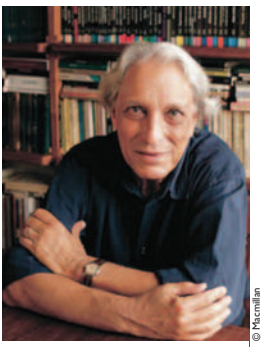
Alexander McCall Smith with the cover of *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*.

simple but precise language, a gentle sense of humor, a genuine love of all his characters, and of the land and people of Botswana itself. He travels there frequently to research and prepare for each book. A recurring character is Miss Silvia Potokwane, matron of the orphanage who does everything she can for the children. McCall Smith has imparted to his heroine a love of her land and also great compassion: "That is what makes our pain and sorrow bearable—this giving of love to others, this sharing of the heart." Another line reads, "There is plenty of work for love to do" (*Teatime for the Traditionally Built,* 2009). And he writes of detecting: "She had not made a lot of money, but she had not made a loss, and she had been happy and entertained. That counted for infinitely more than a vigorously healthy balance sheet. In fact, she thought, annual accounts should include an item specifically headed 'Happiness,' alongside expenses and receipts and the like" (*Tears of the Giraffe,* 2000).

Other titles in the series include *Tears of the Giraffe* (2000), *Morality for Beautiful Girls* (2001), *The Kalahari Typing School for Men* (2002), *The Full Cupboard of Life* (2003), *In the Company of Cheerful Ladies* (2004), *Blue Shoes and Happiness* (2006), *The Good Husband of Zebra Drive* (2007), *The Miracle at Speedy Motors* (2008), *Teatime for the Traditionally Built* (2009), and *The Double Comfort Safari Club* (2010). McCall Smith is also the author of another series, the Isabel Dalhousie mysteries, set in Edinburgh, beginning with *The Sunday Philosophy Club* (2004).

Brazil

Luiz Garcia-Roza (1936–) is credited with inventing "Rio Noir." Formerly a psychology and philosophy professor, he is the creator of Rio homicide detective Inspector Espinoza. He wrote his first mystery, *Silence of the Rain* (1996), at the age of sixty. Garcia-Roza has said that Rio de Janeiro is the muse for his fiction. Thus the city takes on a central role just as it does in classic hard-boiled detective fiction. Garcia-Roza is philosophical in his approach: "Crime is not an accident for human beings. From Greek tragedy to Freudian psychoanalysis, crime, more than an accident, is an essential part of the human being, a principle of his or her constitution." His detective Espinoza's methods are to patiently examine all possibilities and scenarios of a crime. And of his sleuth, he explains that he deliberately cast him against type: "Espinoza is a common man. He is not a hero, he is not always fighting against dangerous criminals, and he does not get all the beautiful blondes and brunettes that cross his path. He is a public employee, a middle-aged person, and a solitary man. He could be our neighbor. He has a critical mind and a romantic heart; he feels he is an eccentric in the police world and out of place in general." Here again we see the detective as outsider. And because in the past police forces in Brazil had been subject to corruption,



Luiz Garcia-Roza, 2006.

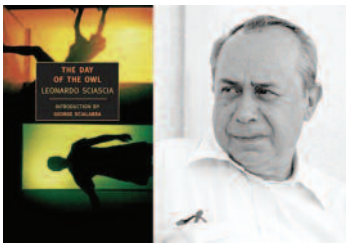
Garcia-Roza wanted to create the antithesis: "With Inspector Espinosa I intended to create a character that provided the image of an ethical policeman."

Euro Crime: Murder Italian Style

Donna Leon (1942–) wrote the Commissario Guido Brunetti mysteries, set in Venice. They generally have rather cynical endings, with the perps often getting away at least in part, as justice comes up against corruption in the system. She wonderfully evokes Venice and Brunetti's family life. The first in the series is *Death at La Fenice* (1992), and Leon has published about one a year since then. Leon is an American author who has lived in Venice for many years.

Michael Didbin (1947–) is an Irish crime writer and creator of the Aurelio Zen series that began with *Ratking* in 1988 and ended with *Endgames* in 2007. Zen is a bit of an anti-hero, coping with personal relationships and the demands of his job against the realities of modern Italian life. The novels are set in various cities and regions around Italy.

Magdalen Nabb (1947–2007) was an English author who lived in Florence. Her sleuth Marshal Guanarccia is featured in a series that began with *Death of an Englishman* (1981) and ended with *Vita Nuova* (2008). Her style has been compared to Simenon. All of the above-named authors represent the outsider's view as they have set their mysteries in Italy, but are not Italian.



The Day of the Owl by Leonardo Sciascia (right) was published in 1961. The novel was inspired by the 1947 assassination of Accursio Miraglia, a communist trade unionist. Damiano Damiani directed a movie adaptation in 1968. Sciascia used this story as refutation against the Mafia and government corruption at the highest levels.

Italian mystery authors writing about their own country from an insider's point of view include Andrea Camilleri (1925–), whose works feature Sicilian detective Montalbano and draw richly from Sicilian language and culture, and Leonardo Sciascia (1921–1989), who explores themes of political corruption.

Murder Most Norse

Recently there has been a boom in Norse crime fiction, including the countries of Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland, which do not have a high crime rate and from the outside seem to have stable social systems. Norse detective fiction, set against the unique history and location of the region, tends to be world-weary and realistic. The detectives, usually police, grapple with the challenges to their society that come from living in a harsh Northern climate: cold and dark, the population's struggles with alcoholism, people's reserve, repressed emotions, secretiveness, the underside of the state welfare system, and so on. The new wave of Nordic fiction shares some features in common, such as simple, stark settings and direct, unornate language.

Sweden

Per Fredrik Wahlöö (1926–1975) and his wife Maj Sjöwall (1935–) were self-defined Marxists and creators of homicide detective Martin Beck, unhappily married, then separated, father of two. They conceived of the Martin Beck novels, which they wrote from approximately 1965 to 1975, as ten parts of one great novel three hundred chapters long, an extended yet single "Novel of a Crime." (And, indeed, "report of a crime" was the subtitle for every volume in the original versions.) The authors had openly political aims, and the work criticizes Sweden's government for abandoning socialism and for faults in its police system (*Abominable Man*, 1971). The collaboration ended when Wahlöö died in 1975. Beck is chief inspector of Stockholm's homicide bureau, working with his friend and subordinate Lennart Kollberg, a sarcastic Socialist who refuses to carry a gun after having killed someone in the line of duty. In the first novel, *Roseanna* (1965), he solves the murder of a young woman. A double plot is featured in *Locked Room* (1973), and Beck protects a visiting American senator in *The Terrorists* (1976). *The Laughing Policeman* (1968), which criticizes the Swedish welfare system, is considered one of the best in the series, which does have a touch of humor despite its serious purpose of political criticism.

Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö in the late 1960s.

Henning Mankell (1948–) is the creator of Detective Inspector Wallander of the Ystad Police Department. Weary and divorced, Wallander struggles with depression and is concerned about his appearance. He drinks heavily, attends the opera, and has affairs to block the pain of his job investigating brutal crimes. Wallander is also dealing with family issues such as an aging father and a rebellious daughter. In *Faceless Killers* (1991), Wallander and his colleagues must solve the brutal murder of a farmer and his wife who is found hanging—not quite dead—from a noose. The wife manages to say one word: "foreigner." That clue opens up the possibility of the crime relating to Sweden's open immigration policy, which Wallander doesn't like: "You can spend a lifetime in Sweden without anyone checking up on you." His mentor, Detective Inspector Rydberg, taught him to trust his hunches and first impressions, and patiently view each crime scene or home as though it were the cover of a new book or a voice trying to tell him the story of its occupants. Wallander particularly battles the bureaucracy and conformity that have become part of modern Swedish life, observing at one point, "Sweden had turned into a country where people seemed to be afraid of being bothered more than anything else. Nothing was more sacred than ingrained routine." Eventually, his daughter Linda enters the

police force and they work together; the first Linda Wallander novel is *Before the Frost* (2002). Crimes in these stories sometimes enter the cyber world and new technologies make the criminals even more faceless, and the novels sometimes explore issues of national identity. There are nine Wallander books in all.

Stieg Larsson (1954–2004) was the author of the Millennium Trilogy (published posthumously), which has sold twenty-seven million copies in more than forty countries. *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* features a socially awkward young woman, Lisbeth Salander, who has a photographic memory and is partially conceived as a grown-up version of children's literature character Pippi Longstocking, and middle-aged financial journalist Mikael Blonkvist, partially based on Larsson himself. The novel received the Glass Key Award for best Nordic novel in 2005. Others in the series include *The Girl Who Played with Fire* and *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest.*

Norway

Karin Fossum (1954–) has been called the Norwegian Queen of Crime. She writes the Konrad Sejer mysteries set in rural Norway. Sejer is a brooding detective with his own hang-ups, like Inspectors Morse and Dalgliesh. The novels, beginning with *Eve's Eye* in 1995, are procedurals in which the perpetrator is discovered, but treated with compassion.

Iceland

Arnaldur Indriðason (1961–) is the author of Icelandic mysteries, generally rooted in the discovery of long-past secrets. His sleuth, Inspector Erlendur, lives alone after his divorce and is haunted by the death of his younger brother years earlier during a blizzard, which he himself survived. The first in the series is *Sons of Dust* (1997). *Silence of the Grave* (2001) won the Golden Dagger in 2005.

Controversies

First, even to define some works as international may imply a certain jingoistic perspective—international to whom? And the same concerns that are raised over ethnic detective fiction, that authors should be careful depicting lands and nationalities not their own, apply here, too, though not to the same extent. After all, writers have been creating fictional characters different from their own nationalities for centuries, and increasingly authors from around the world are expressing their own cultures through the detective fiction genre.

Conclusion

This lecture represents just a sampling of the authors and regions represented in international detective fiction available today, as it simply isn't possible to fully capture the boom in this increasingly popular genre.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. To what extent is it legitimate for authors to create sleuths of nationalities other than their own? What are some examples, and what might be some of the advantages and disadvantages of that outsider's perspective?
2. In modern international detective fiction, politics sometimes plays a key role. Authors use the crime and its aftermath as a way to explore the political landscape and the injustices of that society. What are some examples, and for you as a reader, does politics have a legitimate role in the genre or distract from its entertainment value?
3. What are some common elements of Norse detective fiction that might account for its surge in popularity? Though there may be some commonalities, how do some of the countries and societies of Scandinavia, and therefore detective fiction works set in them, differ?

Suggested Reading

Leon, Donna. *Through a Glass, Darkly*. New York: Penguin, 2010.

Mankell, Henning. *Faceless Killers*. Trans. Steven T. Murray. New York: Vintage, 2003.

Smith, Alexander McCall. *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*. New York: Anchor, 2002.

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Nabb, Magdalen. *Death of an Englishman*. New York: Soho Crime, 2001.

Parker, I.J. *Rashomon Gate*. New York: Penguin, 2006.

Wahlöö, Per, and Maj Sjöwall. *The Laughing Policeman*. New York: Vintage, 2009.

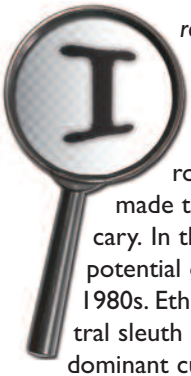
Websites of Interest

1. Author H.R.F. Keating's website. — http://hrfkeating.com
2. Alexander McCall Smith's website provides summaries of his books along with the author's views on Botswana and other resources. — http://www.alexandermccallsmith.co.uk
3. *The Independent* newspaper (London) provides an article entitled "Around the World in 80 Sleuths" that includes a short summary of crime fiction from different countries. — http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/crime-fiction-around-the-world-in-80-sleuths-873660.html

Lecture 13

Investigating Identity: Ethnic Sleuths

The Suggested Readings for this lecture are Tony Hillerman's *The Blessing Way* and *Skin Walkers* and Walter Mosley's *Devil in a Blue Dress*.



I really love these characters and I want to make them as real in the world as I can."
~Walter Mosley

In early detective fiction, ethnic characters usually took the role of villain or suspect. Indeed, it was their "otherness" that made them suspect: the suspicious gypsy, strange Chinatown apothecary. In the mid-twentieth century, authors began to explore the potential of ethnic characters as sleuths, and the genre took off in the 1980s. Ethnic detective fiction can be defined as works in which the central sleuth is a member of and identifies with a minority group within a dominant culture. Thus Simenon's Maigret would be considered an international rather than ethnic detective. However, these categories become blurred by the perspective of the reader. Usually ethnic mysteries do not just happen to be based within an ethnic group; the sleuth's identification and familiarity with that ethnicity contributes to an understanding of and the solving of the crime, and sometimes to the motive for the crime. Also, the sleuths often find themselves considering matters of their own identity and roots as the case unfolds. They must also often negotiate in both worlds, that of the dominant culture and their own ethnicity.

Early Ethnic Detectives

Earl Derr Biggers's Charlie Chan

An American author and creator of Chinese-American Honolulu police detective Charlie Chan, Earl Derr Biggers (1884–1933) grew up in Ohio and received a degree from Harvard in 1907. He got the idea for the character after reading about some real Chinese-American police detectives. His character was groundbreaking for its day, creating a counterpoint for the evil Chinese villain, though it does play off stereotypes such as inscrutability and large families. He spoke in polite, broken English and spouted Chinese proverbs and words of wisdom. However,

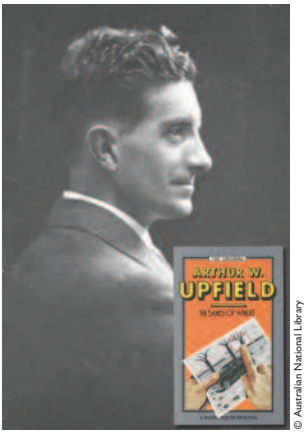
The cover of Earl Derr Biggers's fifth Charlie Chan mystery *Charlie Chan Carries On* (1930) and the author (inset), ca. 1920s.

he was wise and a police officer, as opposed to the Asian criminal type such as Fu Manchu. His character was made into a number of films in the 1930s and '40s and, shockingly by present-day standards, was played by several actors, but none of them Asians, although the actors portraying his sons were Asian. There were six titles in the Charlie Chan series: *The House Without a Key* (1925); *The Chinese Parrot* (1926); *Behind That Curtain* (1928); *The Black Camel* (1929); *Charlie Chan Carries On* (1930), and *Keeper of the Keys* (1932).

Arthur Upfield and "Bony"

Arthur Upfield (1888–1964) created Detective Napoleon Bonaparte ("Bony"), a half-Aborigine, half-white sleuth. Upfield was born in England, but he was sent to Australia by his father after doing poorly on exams to become a real estate agent. He fell in love with the land, particularly the Australian bush, and traveled widely across the Outback doing a variety of jobs, which is how he gained knowledge of Aboriginal culture. There are twenty-nine entries in the series.

The first novel is *The Barrakee Mystery*, published in 1929. The second, *The Sands of Windee* (1931), caused controversy when the clever murder method Upfield devised for it was overheard and actually used in some real killings known as the Murchison Murders. Upfield was called to testify at the trial. *The Bone Is Pointed* (1938) is considered one of his best. The last book in the series is *The Lake Frome Monster* (1966). Upfield was admired by other authors, such as Tony Hillerman, who featured ethnic sleuths. Like Holmes, "Bony" used observation and inductive reasoning and craved the mental stimulation of an interesting case. Upfield's work is hard to find in print today and can be less appealing for the modern reader because of its sometimes melodramatic tone, elaborate sentence structure, and depictions of racial prejudice. However, his sleuth Bonaparte is truly a man of two worlds, thus making him an outsider, a role scholars have observed is often a part of fictional detectives' character and may indeed contribute to their understanding of and ability to solve crime and deal with injustice.



Author Arthur Upfield and the cover of the first edition of *The Sands of Windee*.

Tony Hillerman's Leaphorn and Chee

The son of a farmer, Tony Hillerman (1925–2008) grew up in a rural area of Oklahoma, where he had Potawatomi and Seminole friends. In those cultures, storytellers were valued, and he also soon discovered the works of Arthur Upfield, to whom he later gave credit as the inspiration for his own writing. Hillerman served as a mortarman during World War II and was awarded a Silver Star, Bronze Star, and Purple Heart. On his return from the war, he met

members of the Navajo, who extended hospitality to returning soldiers. Hillerman earned a master's degree at the University of New Mexico in 1966. He helped his parents with their general store and worked an assortment of other jobs, including stints as a truck driver, journalist, crime reporter, political reporter, executive editor of a newspaper, and chairman of the journalism department at the University of New Mexico. In his novels, Hillerman attempts to capture the geography, culture, and religion of the Navajo people.

Hillerman's Detectives

Joe Leaphorn and Jim Chee are members of the Navajo Tribal Police. Leaphorn is based on a Texas sheriff Hillerman once met, and Chee is a combination of a number of young men he knew at college in New Mexico. Leaphorn is an older, smarter sheriff who is practical and humane. His character reflects more traditional Navajo upbringing. Chee is younger, less educated, and more immature. He is connected to Navajo lifestyle, but more in the spiritual rather than the practical traditions. Leaphorn first appeared in *The Blessing Way* (1970) and Chee in *People of Darkness* (1980). Their lives and work take place at the cross-section of Anglo and Native American cultures, and they sometimes clash with the FBI and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. At first, Hillerman wrote alternating narratives of Leaphorn and Chee. Readers, however, expressed interest in seeing the two characters work together, which Hillerman finally did in *Skinwalkers* (1986). They clashed at first and then adjusted to each other's approach for the next eleven novels.

Style and Criticism

Readers and critics have commented on their appreciation of Hillerman's clean style and vivid depictions of the Southwest. Some think his detectives are too similar and fault his writing outside his ethnic group. Others see his portrayal as sensitive to and honoring of Native American culture. Hillerman himself said, "It's always troubled me that American people are so ignorant of these rich Indian cultures . . . I think it's important to show that aspects of ancient Indian ways are still very much alive and are highly germane even to our ways." Navajo groups have honored his works with awards that include the Navajo Special Friend of the Dineh or Tribe.

African-American Detective Fiction

Early African-American Detective Fiction

In most early and Golden Age detective fiction, the sleuths were white. However, there were some exceptions. In 1900, Pauline Hopkins published

the locked-room short story "Talma Gordon" in *Colored American Magazine*. W. Adolph Roberts published several mysteries, including *The Haunting Hand* (1926), and Rudolph Fisher wrote *The Conjure Man Dies: A Mystery of Dark Harlem* (1932). African-American detective fiction authors have brought a new paradigm to the genre. Changes include aspects of the detective persona and cultural elements such as music, speech, and sociopolitical worldview. Their work has produced change in detective fiction structure and characterization, in part by placing more emphasis on the family life of the detective, including the extended family.

Chester Himes

The "grandfather" of African-American detective fiction and creator of the African-American police procedural was Chester Himes (1909–1984). Himes was born into a struggling middle-class family in Missouri that frequently had to relocate, in part to find medical treatment for a son accidentally blinded. The family finally broke up in 1923 while Chester was still an adolescent. He became a gambler and hustler and was convicted of armed robbery in 1928. Himes's novels reflect violence and encounters with racism. His literary excellence went relatively unnoticed within the United States, but he was popular in France, where he lived for a while as an expatriate. In 1958, he won France's Grand Prix de Littérature Policière. Himes's sleuths—Harlem detectives Coffin Ed Johnson and Grave Digger Jones—were featured in a tough and darkly comic series in which funeral homes were a recurring location.

Chester Himes in Paris, ca. 1957 (with his much older car), and the cover of *The Five-Cornered Square*, which won the 1958 Grand Prix de Littérature Policière.

Literary Style

Himes is known for his hard-boiled style and an element of violence taken to a new level of expression, presenting a social critique that explicitly demonstrates the effects of racism and poverty. *A Rage in Harlem* (1957) and *Cotton Comes to Harlem* (1965) were both made into films and were followed by other novels in his Harlem series. Themes include the impact of violence and the frustration and struggle of the individual black male in a hostile society.

Hugh Holton

A captain in the Chicago police department, Holton (1947–2001) authored seven novels featuring Detective Larry Cole. His works sometimes combined police procedural with fantasy or science fiction elements. Holton was the only son of a police officer and became interested in writing after a lifetime of reading detective fiction himself. He enrolled in an Iowa writing program to hone his craft. Part of Holton's genius is that unlike the structure of the classic mystery,

he tells readers at the beginning who did it, and how, and yet readers are still swept up in the suspense created by twists and surprise revelations as the story unfolds. His novels include *Windy City* (1995) and *Criminal Element* (2002).

Walter Mosley's Easy Rawlins

Walter Mosley (1952–) grew up in south-central Los Angeles, which became the setting of his first novels. His writing rose in popularity after President Bill Clinton named him as one of his favorite authors. He has also written science fiction, in the afro-futurist genre. Mosley's detective private eye Ezekiel "Easy" Rawlins is introduced in *Devil in a Blue Dress* (1990). He's a World War II vet and a newly unemployed defense plant worker in 1948 racially segregated Los Angeles. He solves crimes and helps the defenseless from the post-war period through the civil rights era. Each novel chronicles events that take place at crucial times in African-American history and the history of America as a whole during that time. Easy is definitely a hard-boiled hero, but not a superhero; he ages in the series and is forced to move forward with his life.

© David Shankbone

Walter Mosley at the 2007 Brooklyn Book Festival.

Devil in a Blue Dress was made into a film starring Denzel Washington in 1995. *Blonde Faith* (2007) is the final Rawlins novel. Other detectives include Fearless Jones, Socrates Fortlow (a hero trying to redeem himself after a twenty-seven-year prison sentence for murder), and F.J. and Paris Mintoin, acting as a tag team.

Mosley's more recent creation is Leonid McGill, introduced in *The Long Fall* (2009). He's an old school, ex-boxer, African-American PI and family man living in modern-day Manhattan. He also appears in *Known to Evil* (2010), a "classic of contemporary noir."

Mosley's Rawlins novels have colors in the title (as did the works of John D. McDonald): *Devil in a Blue Dress* (1990); *A Red Death (*1991); *White Butterfly* (1992); *Black Betty* (1994); *A Little Yellow Dog* (1996); *Bad Boy Brawly Brown* (2002); *Little Scarlet* (2004); and *Cinnamon Kiss* (2005).

Mosley's work has won numerous awards, including the John Creasy Memorial, Shamus Award, O. Henry Award, Chester Himes Award, and Golden Dagger.

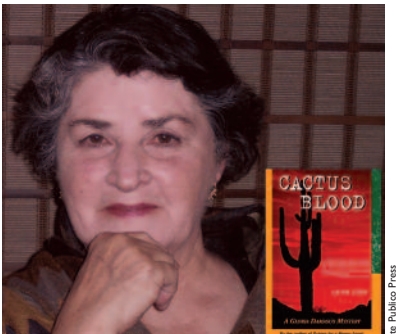
P.J. Parrish's Louis Kincaid

P. J. Parrish is the pen name for two sisters, Kristy Monty and Kelly Nichols, co-creators of the biracial sleuth Louis Kincaid. They decided to take one name to fit on the book cover better and to go with initials because they had observed that, unfortunately, some publishers and readers do still respond bet-

ter to the idea of a male author, especially in a tough-guy genre. Mainly, Kelly devises plots and Kristy develops characters. They live in different states, but they communicate and then meet once a year to finalize the project. They get along well and collaborate well. Kristy points out, "It's not a solo, but a harmony." The character of Louis was inspired in part by Kelly's great-granddaughters, who are biracial, and they started to think about what it would be like to, as Louis describes it, "walk in two worlds." Again we see the idea of the detective as outsider, not fully fitting into any one realm. Louis Kincaid is young, twenty-five years old in *Dead of Winter* (2001). The idea was to purposefully create a younger policeman who still had some idealism, as the genre seemed overloaded with aging, jaded cops. The novels are intricately plotted and take place in various locales, including Michigan, Florida, and Mississippi. The sisters do significant research, including consulting police sources that they've developed and researching online. They also deliberately set the series in the 1980s to get a more old-fashioned feel and avoid elaborate DNA evidence.

Chicana/Chicano Crime Fiction

The boom in Chicana/Chicano mainstream fiction has impacted the detective fiction genre as well. Few Chicano/Chicana characters in detective fiction acted in the role of sleuth until recently. Early examples were by non-Mexican authors: Robert Somerlott's short stories about Detective Sergeant Vincente Lopez of the Jaisco State Police, which appeared in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* in the 1960s. Although he was not of Mexican descent, he did live for a time in San Miguel de Allende and drew from his experience there. Rex Burns won an Edgar for his police procedurals featuring Gabriel Wager, half-Mexican, half-Anglo detective. Earlene Fowler created Gabriel Ortiz, police chief of San Celena, California. And Marcia Muller is credited as creating the first Chicana detective with Elena Oliverez in *The Tree of Death* (1983). But Rudy S. Apodaca is credited with writing the first mystery novel by a Chicano, *The Waxen Image,* in 1977. Lucha Corpi (1945–) is the creator of Gloria Damasco, a private eye. Corpi teaches English as a second language to adults in California and wrote in Spanish until her longer fiction works. In 1992, she published her first crime novel, the award-winning *Eulogy for a Brown Angel*, followed by *Cactus Blood* in 1995 and *Black Widow's Wardrobe* in 1999. Latina PI Gloria Damasco is smart, educated, and ambitious, and also has a unique ability to "see" visions that give her insight but that are also unclear and sometimes disturbing. She works in San Francisco. Like Walter Mosley's works, Corpi's plots draw from significant political and historical events in the Chicano community.



Lucha Corpi and the cover of a recent edition of *Cactus Blood: A Gloria Damasco Mystery*.

Jewish Detectives

In early detective fiction, Jewish characters were frequently stereotyped, as for example in some of the works of Agatha Christie. They were sometimes cast as shrewd or even scheming bankers or crooks, but not as the sleuth. Jewish detectives vary in how closely they identify with their ethnicity, culture, and faith. Ed McBain's 87th Precinct police detective Meyer Meyer was one of the first fictional Jewish cops. Harry Kemelman's (1908–1996) sleuth Rabbi David Small first appeared in 1964 in *Friday the Rabbi Slept Late* and ended thirty-two years later with *The Day the Rabbi Left Town*, in 1996. His methods are to use skills he learned in his Talmudic studies (and the root of Talmudic study is to ask questions), and he often must battle anti-Semitism during his cases, which he's often drawn into by, and talks over with, his Catholic police chief friend Hugh Lanigan.

Other authors featuring Jewish sleuths include Kinky Friedman and Faye Kellerman (1952–), who writes the Peter Decker/Rina Lazarus series. They first appear in *Murder at the Ritual Bath* (1986) and, as is often the case in ethnic detective fiction, part of the novel involves the sleuth exploring his identity. As the case unfolds, Peter is compelled to reconsider his own faith and decides to become an observant Orthodox Jew. Faye Kellerman is a practicing Orthodox Jew and the wife of author Jonathan Kellerman. Thus, for Jewish detectives, their understanding of ethnic identity and the detective methods they bring to their cases are rooted not only in centuries of cultural tradition, but also to what degree they wish to identify with and practice their faith as part of that tradition.

Controversies

When the author is of a different ethnic group than the sleuth (such as John Ball's Virgil Tibbs and Tony Hillerman's Chee and Leaphorn), that approach can meet with both criticism and praise. Some say the authors can't fully know the world they're describing, and it also raises the concern that they're using the culture and struggles of that ethnic group for their own financial ends: profiting from someone else's story as it were. Others point out that outsider portrayals are often sensitive and carefully drawn, and bring attention to the group's culture to a wider reading audience.

Conclusion

Ethnic characters in detective fiction have come a long way on their journey from bit parts as villains, victims, and comical assistants to the main sleuth still reflecting stereotypes to today's realistic and complicated ethnic sleuth. Many of today's ethnic detectives are of mixed ethnicity, further complicating their struggle for identity as they negotiate multiple worlds in their pursuit of justice. Female ethnic sleuths also have issues of gender to contend with, as cultures tend to define roles for women and definitions of femininity. And the definition of justice itself can shift based on culture, making their path to case solution and self-discovery a complicated one, but fascinating for the reader.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Is it legitimate for authors to portray detectives of ethnic groups different than their own, especially when the sleuth's methods are drawn from an understanding of that ethnicity, and the story takes place within the culture of that group?
2. Should early works in ethnic detective fiction be avoided because they still embrace stereotypes? Or should they be read because at least they ushered in the beginnings of ethnic inclusion and also because early authors inspired some modern ones?
3. Ethnic sleuths must negotiate two worlds, that of their own ethnic group and the dominant culture; that delicate balance becomes even more complicated when the sleuth is also of mixed ethnicity. What are some examples of both types and in what ways does their struggle to understand their own identity intertwine with the cases they're investigating?

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Hillerman, Tony. *The Blessing Way*. Reprint ed. New York: Harper, 2009.

———. *Skin Walkers*. New York: Harper Torch, 1990.

Mosley, Walter. *Devil in a Blue Dress*. New York: Washington Square Press, 2002.

Other Books of Interest

Biggers, Earl Derr. *The House Without a Key: A Charlie Chan Mystery*. Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 2008.

Parrish, P. J. *Dead of Winter*. New York: Pinnacle, 2001.

Upfield, Arthur W. *The Sands of Windee: An Inspector Napoleon Bonaparte Mystery*. New York: Scribner, 1985.

Websites of Interest

1. The *Mystery Readers International* website provides the text of articles printed in *Mystery Readers Journal*, volume 23, number 1, Spring 2007, featuring Part 1 of "The Ethnic Detective." — http://www.mysteryreaders.org/Issues/Ethnic1_07.html
2. Professor Martin Kich (Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio) provides a comprehensive website listing authors and their featured ethnic detectives. — http://www.wright.edu/~martin.kich/DetbyProf/Ethnic.htm

Lecture 14

Regional Sleuths and Future Trends in Detective Fiction

The Suggested Readings for this lecture are Janet Evanovich's *One for the Money: A Stephanie Plum Novel*, Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, Margaret Maron's *The Bootlegger's Daughter: A Deborah Knott Mystery*, and Val McDermid's *A Place of Execution*.

"Even the gravest of dangers can wear a friendly face."
~Val McDermid, *Place of Execution*

You Gotta Know the Territory

Regional sleuths are similar to ethnic sleuths in that they identify as insiders with a community. A fuller understanding of that community informs their ability to negotiate that world and solve crimes within it, and also shapes their personality and worldview. Recently, regional detective fiction has become increasingly popular and has come to represent a widening array of regions and cities.

George P. Pelecanos at the 2008 Brooklyn Book Festival and the covers to the mysteries in his DC Quartet: *The Big Blowdown*, *King Suckerman*, *The Sweet Forever*, and *Shame the Devil*.

Washington, DC

A third generation Washingtonian, George P. Pelecanos (1957–) switches his narrative voice and protagonists, and has written numerous novels, including the DC Quartet. *The Night Gardener* (2006) is gritty noir fiction, with DC taking the role of the city as character as in the classic hard-boiled tradition. *Esquire Magazine* called Pelecanos "The poet laureate of the DC crime world." To research his novels, he rides with police officers and other city officials. Pelecanos is also on the writing team for HBO's *The Wire*.

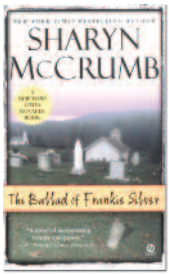
New Jersey

Janet Evanovich (1943–) began by writing romances, then created Stephanie Plum, Bounty Hunter. The series is set in Trenton, NJ. In the initial novel, *One for the Money* (1994), Stephanie is a blue-collar Jersey girl who's out of money; her relative Vinnie is a bondsman and offers her a job. She stumbles into the work because she needs the cash, takes on a difficult case, and is able to pull it off. We are introduced to her mixed feelings about her relationship with Joe

Morelli, as she has a history with him and has to bring him in. Overall, the series has a positive tone and brims with sexual tension, action, and humor. Smart and savvy, Plum has a Jersey attitude and is great fun.

Appalachia

Sharyn McCrumb (1948–) is the *New York Times* best-selling author of the Ballad Books, set in Appalachia. These include *If Ever I Return Pretty Peggy O*, *The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter*, and *The Ballad of Frankie Silver*. McCrumb draws from Appalachian folklore, culture, and local history to create atmospheric tales and makes use of alternating narrative viewpoints. In *She Walks These Hills*, the sleuth is Sheriff Spenser Arrowwood. The books take on the lyrical, sometimes sad, romantic, haunting tone of a ballad. McCrumb has won the Agatha, Anthony, and Macavity awards. She lives and writes in the Blue Ridge mountain region of Virginia, where her family has lived for generations. She is also the author of the Elizabeth MacPherson series.



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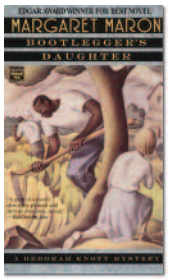

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Covers of four popular regional detective fiction novels that have national and even international fans.

The Rise of the South

Anne George (1927–2001), born and raised in Alabama, was a poet and also the author of the eight-volume Southern Sisters mysteries, which begin with *Murder on a Girls' Night Out* (1996) and end with *Murder Boogies with Elvis* (2001). The series features sixty-something sibling sleuths Patricia Anne "Mouse" Hollowell, retired schoolteacher, and her take-no-prisoners three-times-widowed sister Mary Alice Crane. George has won the Agatha Award for her work. The series is light in tone, but it does tackle serious subjects; the characters are witty and their relationship believable.

Carolyn Haines (1953–) grew up in Mississippi and is the author of the Mississippi Delta Mysteries featuring intrepid private investigator Sarah Booth. The series starts with *Them Bones* (1999) and her work truly captures the ambience and atmosphere of the South. Sarah lives on a farm in Alabama and is an advocate for animal welfare. Haines received the Harper Lee Award for a distinguished Alabama writer in 2010.

Margaret Maron (1930s–) was born and raised on a tobacco farm in North Carolina. She is the author of the series featuring District Court Judge Deborah Knott, daughter of an ex-bootlegger and youngest sibling of eleven brothers. Her first appearance in *The Bootlegger's Daughter* (1992) won several awards, and it has been followed with about one novel a year since then. In *Home Fires* (1998), she tackles issues of race in the South.

Trends in Detective Fiction

As the second decade of the twenty-first century begins, detective fiction is growing in subgenres with each passing year. A listing of trends includes traditional forms of detective fiction, but enters new areas as social and technological advances are made. Everywhere technology goes, detective fiction follows.

- *International crime fiction* is growing in popularity as a subgenre, in particular Norse and Latin American detective fiction. Brazilian, Mexican, and Cuban writers explore ideological plots and themes. In post-Revolution Cuban crime fiction, the individual does violence to the state, whereas in Mexican stories the police are the primary force of chaos and the citizens the source of order. One example of the Cuban style is Leonardo Padura's Lieutenant Mario Conde series set in Havana, which provides an intriguing look into life and society in post-Revolution Cuba.
- *Ecomysteries*. In these works, the environment is not just the setting. Environmental issues and people are integral to the crime and plot. Nevada Barr's Anna Pigeon Park Ranger series is one example.
- *Irresolution*. A blurring of the concept of justice reflecting societal realities is playing a bigger role in novels such as Val McDermid's *A Place of Execution*.
- *High-tech and cyber thrillers*. Physicist and engineer James Riordan's qualifications shine in *The Dark Net*, about the "other half" of the Internet that users don't see. Promising writers and established authors alike are making their presence known in these stories.
- *Themed short story collections with multiple authors*. George Pelecanos has edited two volumes of *DC Noir*, while Andrew Blossom edited a volume of *Richmond Noir*.
- *Post-September 11 terrorism thrillers*. The fight against global terrorism is featured in works by Lee Boyland (the Clash of Civilizations Trilogy) and Stella Rimington (Liz Carlyle novels).
- *Detectives with Disabilities*. Investigators with physical or mental challenges appeared in classic works and are also part of more recent trends (see the following sections).
- *Hyper-realism*. Crime scene investigation-type novels feature ultra-graphic and accurate medical and forensic detail.
- *Literary thriller and literary historical thriller*. Umberto Eco launched this trend with *The Name of the Rose* (1980), and a recent example is John Hart's *The Last Child* (2009). This trend provides further evidence that detective fiction can indeed be considered a literary art.
- *New media*. Graphic novels, animé, and stories written for television or film and then converted to books (opposite to the usual direction) are

considered part of this subgenre. There are also a growing number of high-tech options, such as video games, virtual reality, e-books, vooks, and interactive books.

Three Trends In-Depth

Ecomystery

Nevada Barr (1952–) is considered one of the first ecomystery writers. Her sleuth is Anna Pigeon, a park ranger, and each novel takes place at a different National Park, beginning with *The Track of the Cat* (1993), set in the Guadalupe Mountains National Park in Texas. In ecomysteries the crime, criminals, and law-enforcement all have some relevance to the ecology and environment. In this story, a ranger has been killed and, despite appearances, Anna doesn't believe she was killed by a mountain lion. In this case, the crime threatens the park as well as people. Anna struggles with her own personal life and relationships along with environmental concerns and crime, and she ages during the series. The vastness of the parks dispels the claustrophobia with which she struggles. Nevada Barr is herself an ex-ranger—a law enforcement position—at various parks. She says Anna is based on herself, but has evolved in a different direction. Modern park rangers do not concern themselves with just the occasional campfire or stolen sign; they must deal with meth labs, border issues, people smuggling, and post-September 11 terrorism issues.

Detectives with Disabilities: Classic Examples

Initially, disability in detective fiction marked villainy, for example, the one-armed man and six-fingered thug. Disfigurement or deformity was somehow associated with evil. (Dick Tracy cartoonist Chester Gould said he made his criminals ugly because crime was ugly.) There are examples of portrayal of disability in early detective fiction.

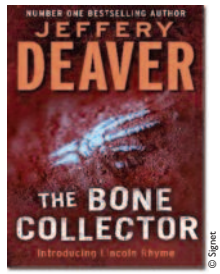
Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes may have had a mood or anxiety disorder, and possibly an addictive personality. Occasional characters in Sherlock Holmes stories were disabled, such as the deformed Henry Wood in "The Adventure of the Crooked Man."

Other examples are Ernest Bramah's detective Max Carrados, who is sight impaired; Rex Stout's private eye Nero Wolfe has agoraphobia and mobility-restricting obesity; Baynard Kendrick's Captain Duncan MacLain, like Max Carrados, is sight impaired; and hearing-impaired detective Drury Lane was a creation of Barnaby Ross (also known as Ellery Queen, a pen name for a pair of cousins who wrote together).

Detectives with Disabilities: Modern Examples

Colin Dexter's Inspector Morse suffers from fits of depression, over-dependence on alcohol, and temporary hearing loss. In *The Silent World of Nicholas Quinn* (1977), hearing-impaired Quinn lipreads at an office party and discovers cheating at the Oxford examinations board where he's employed, and he is murdered. He says, "I hear with my eyes. That is my curse. And that is my

honesty." Dexter has devised a parallel plot in which Morse's ears get blocked up from swimming. (To reinforce the theme, Morse is listening to Beethoven, "music written by a deaf man.") From his own struggles, Morse figures out the mystery lies in lipreading, and how some words and names look similar, even identical, when lipread. The story is drawn from Dexter's own experience suffering from hearing loss, which led to his leaving his job at the board of examiners.



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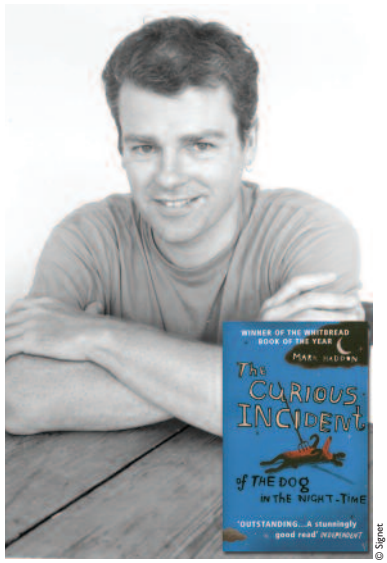
Former attorney, journalist, and folk singer Jeffery Deaver (1950–) has created a series of forensic crime fiction novels with interesting and complex characters. The best-selling Lincoln Rhyme series begins with *The Bone Collector* (1997). Lincoln is the ex-head of the New York Police Department forensics unit. An accident on the job has left him a quadriplegic. He can move just one finger and his great mind is strapped to a bed. (Thus Rhyme becomes an extreme example of the armchair detective, such as Nero Wolfe and Baroness Orczy's The Man in the Corner, who stay in one place and figure out the crime through facts presented from others.) The trauma has left Rhyme sarcastic and hiding, but he sees a news report of a found body and tracks down the serial killer with the help of partner Amelia Sachs, his "arms and legs." (Note the parallel to Archie Goodwin, Nero Wolfe's "legman.") Voice recognition software on a computer allows Rhyme to communicate and command the computer cursor. Deaver explores issues of disability in the story. He describes the origins of the fascinating character of Rhyme in this way, "I wanted a Sherlock Holmes-type that was purely cerebral and whose essence was his mind, heart, and soul . . . (he) cannot be in a situation where he can pull out a hidden gun and shoot the bad guy." Deaver has not only created an extraordinary sleuth, but is also known for his skill at creating chilling villains.



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Author Mark Haddon and the cover of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time.*

Mark Haddon (1962–) is the creator of teenage protagonist Christopher Boone in his brilliantly written The *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003). The extraordinary story is told from the point of view of Christopher Boone, a fifteen-year-old boy who may have autism or Asperger's syndrome. Christopher admires Sherlock Holmes, observing "he notices things like I do," and makes use of references to Doyle's creation in the title and throughout the work. The title is taken from Holmes's observation in the story "Silver Blaze," when Gregson of Scotland Yard asks

Holmes, "Is there any other point to which you would wish to draw my attention?" Holmes replied, "To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time." Gregson said, "The dog did nothing in the night-time." Holmes answered, "That was the curious incident." Christopher identifies with Holmes, saying, "If I get really interested in something . . . I detach my mind at will and concentrate." So when Christopher finds the neighbor's dog Wellington killed, he decides to investigate. Christopher likes math and logic and numbers, and he uses prime numbers for the chapters in his book. The dog's murder becomes for him a math problem, an equation to solve. It's difficult for him to read people's emotions and to meet strangers, so investigating the case proves challenging. We're drawn into Christopher's thought processes, seeming detachment, and social isolation. Slowly, painful family truths emerge (the decoding of his mother's supposed death) and come to a crisis point. The novel explores the theme of truth and lies and trust, as Christopher is unable to lie and can't understand why others do. Eventually the case is solved and the beginnings of family trust restored in this remarkable and original work.

Detectives with Disabilities: Television

A classic example of a television series featuring a detective with disabilities was Universal Television's wheelchair-bound San Francisco Police Chief Detective Robert T. Ironside, played by actor Raymond Burr in the series *Ironside* from 1967 to 1975.

In another classic, actor James Franciscus played sight-impaired insurance investigator Michael Longstreet in the ABC series *Longstreet* from 1971 to 1972.

A list of modern disabled detectives includes Adrian Monk (Tony Shalhoub), who has multiple phobias and obsessive-compulsive disorder in *Monk*; Gil Grissom (William Petersen), who suffers from hearing loss and a genetic disorder on *CSI*; Frank Pembleton (Andre Braugher), who is recovering from a stroke in the series *Homicide*; Sergeant Paul Milner (Anthony Howell), who lost a leg in World War II on the British drama *Foyle's War*; and Dr. Greg House (Hugh Laurie), who deals with an injured leg, chronic pain, and addictions in the popular television series *House, M.D.*

Detectives with Disabilities: Film

Alfred Hitchcock directed three movies featuring detectives with disabilities. Gregory Peck played John Ballantyne, who suffered from amnesia, in *Spellbound* (1945); Detective Scottie Ferguson (Jimmy Stewart) in *Vertigo* (1958) must save the day in a tall bell tower while dealing with acrophobia; and magazine photographer "Jeff" Jefferies (Jimmy Stewart again) is temporarily immobilized because of a broken leg in *Rear Window* (1954), which was based on Cornell Woolrich's 1942 short story "It Had to Be Murder."

Christopher Nolan directed *Memento* (2000), based on the short story "Memento Man" written by his younger brother. The central character, Leonard Shelby (played by Guy Pearce), suffers from anterograde amnesia,

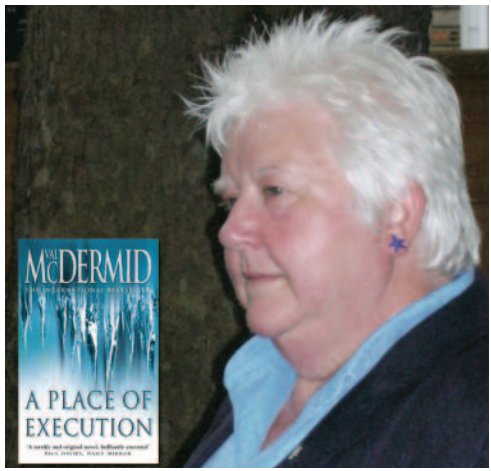
which means he's unable to retain any new memories. The film is shot in two narrative sequences, one black and white in chronological order, and one in color in reverse chronological order, giving the viewer a sense of the protagonist's confusion about the sequence of events, memory, and time as the story of murder and revenge unfolds.

Irresolution

This term refers to crime fiction in which the ending does not bring a clear sense of resolution, not only that justice might not have been served because the criminal gets off (as in some police procedurals), but a genuine confusion as to what justice might be in the case. In Scottish author Val McDermid's (1955–) *A Place of Execution* (1991), there is a blurring of the boundaries of right and wrong. The classic sleepy English village mystery is turned on its head as a police procedural with a twist. It explores the nature of justice and truth—are they always the same? And if not, which should take precedence? It also explores the conflict of insider versus outsider, and whether truth is worth the destruction of innocent people's lives. "If Alison Carter's story tells us one thing, it is that even the gravest of dangers can wear a friendly face," journalist Catherine Heathcote observes at the beginning of the novel, and so it becomes as the story unfolds.

In the story, Alison Carter, age thirteen, goes missing from the village of Scardale in early December 1963. Her mother is Ruth, a local girl, and the wealthy stepfather is outsider Philip Hawkin. George Bennett is the young inspector who becomes obsessed with the case, which he pursues while the seemingly unhelpful villagers, led by matriarch "Ma" Lomas, close ranks. McDermid deftly weaves dated newspaper articles and trial excerpts into the narrative. There were some real child murders going on at that time—the Moors Murders—and reports of the real killings are also interwoven into the story, re-creating the atmosphere of the era and giving the narrative an immediacy, authenticity, and even an urgency. Early on in the case, Bennett considers his own pending fatherhood as his wife tells him she's expecting; he "felt in his life for the first time the tug of vigilantism." When his sergeant says, "I thought you didn't believe in the dark alleyways of justice," Bennett replies, "It's different with kids, though, isn't it?"

Evidence, including clothing and a gun, is found, and accusations



Val McDermid at a party given for the author in 2007 and the cover of *A Place of Execution*.

of assault and murder against stepfather Philip stick even without the body. During the trial, it comes out that Bennett had photographic experience; the defense attorney implies he could have faked the photos. In the summation, the barrister blames "one man's arrogant conviction that he knew where justice lay." The summation transcript follows: Hawkin is found guilty on both charges and a sentence of death imposed because it was a gun crime. Bennett can't attend the execution, but he pictures it second by second, and that very day his son is born.

The narrative then leaps ahead thirty-five years to 1998. Journalist Catherine Heathcote has a contract to write a book on the old case and is interviewing people from the village. Bennett has agreed to help her, though he's stayed silent on the case for so long. He's been cooperative, but suddenly Catherine receives a letter from him that she must halt the project; he can't explain why except that fresh information has come to light, and "the only person who should pay for my mistakes is me." The solution challenges the central characters' basic assumptions of the nature of justice, and the investigation leads to "effects that nobody could have predicted . . . everybody's life goes under the microscope." In the end, the characters are left to consider whether revealing new and startling truths would serve the cause of justice.

Conclusion

Detective fiction has made the winding and extraordinary journey from a time when there were no detectives and murder was outed only by forced confession or witnesses, to the first appearance of the word in English in 1842, when London created a new department of the Metropolitan Police: "The Detective Division." The word was coined based on the word "detected," which had been in the language since the fourteenth century and means "disclosed, open, or exposed." The diversification of the genre continues in our modern era, producing new offshoots and appearing in new technologies. Julia Wisdom, in an article in *BBC News Magazine*, provides a theory for detective fiction's enduring popularity: "We like harmony and shape and that's what a good crime novel gives you—a lovely story arc with a beginning, middle, and end, and a morally acceptable outcome, which a lot of post-modern literature will not give you. It can also give you humor, absolute horror, romance, a puzzle. Crime fiction is only going to get bigger." And P.D. James has observed, "The theory is that mystery flourishes best at times of acute anxiety and depression. It has something of a calming effect." Thus, in today's turbulent times, "We may be entering a second Golden Age." So devoted readers of the diverse and fascinating genre of detective fiction, take heart! There have been great works written, and the best days may yet be ahead.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. The diversification of detective fiction continues in our modern era, entering new technologies and finding new modes of expression. What are some examples, and can you think of some underrepresented regions, detective types, or technologies authors may have missed and which we may see in the future as the genre continues to diversify?
2. Do you agree with P. D. James that if detective fiction does indeed flourish in times of uncertainty, we may be entering a second Golden Age? If so, how do we balance that idea with the trend of uncertainty and malaise that has also now entered the genre?
3. The word "detective" is from a root that means to disclose, open, or expose. As we have seen throughout the progression of this course, all through its history detective fiction has artfully exposed for readers certain aspects of the society in which it's set. What are some examples, and among the new trends, what are some ways it seems poised to continue that role?

Suggested Reading

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Haddon, Mark. *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. New York: Vintage, 2004.

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Websites of Interest

1. *World's-Best-Detective-Crime-and-Murder-Mystery-Books* website by Drew Thomas provides a comprehensive listing of literature in the genre. — http://www.worlds-best-detective-crime-and-murder-mystery-books.com
2. The *Crime Online* website features reviews of current and past literature and a forum for discussion. — http://www.crimeonline.net/

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Suggested Readings:

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COURSE TERMINOLOGY

Accidental sleuth—A character drawn into the role of detective "by accident" because a murder takes place within his or her circle. Some amateur detectives start out as accidental sleuths.

Ackroydism—Named for Agatha Christie's title character in *Who Killed Roger Ackroyd*, refers to the "trick" of allowing a character who acts as first-person narrator of the story to have some role in the crime. Never repeated by Christie and seldom by other authors.

Amateur—A category of detective fiction in which the central sleuth has no professional employment related to crime solving, often instead using the expertise from his or her own profession or hobby to solve the mystery.

Armchair sleuth—A detective who solves crimes without ever visiting the crime scene or questioning suspects, simply through the information supplied by others. Orczy's The Old Man in the Corner and Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe are prime examples.

Baker Street Irregulars—The group of young street urchins Sherlock Holmes organizes to help him occasionally, or the society of the same name dedicated to Sherlock Holmes.

Black Mask School—A hard-boiled school of detective fiction that takes its name from *Black Mask* magazine, one of the most influential venues for mystery and detective fiction "pulp" publications that flourished from the '20s through the '50s.

Bloodless—A mystery in which no murder takes place; the central crime may be theft, kidnapping, or forgery, for example. A common form for juvenile and youth detective fiction, and sometimes capers and other subgenres.

Bow Street Runners—Founded in 1749 by author Henry Fielding, London's first "official" police force, attached to the Bow Street Magistrates' Court. At first just eight in number, their duties included serving writs and arresting suspects under the authority of the magistrate, traveling nationwide if necessary to apprehend criminals.

Caper—A subgenre of detective fiction featuring daring heists, often planned by a mastermind and executed by a team of specialists. Story usually told from the criminals' point of view and features fast action and fast thinking as elaborate plans may encounter sudden twists.

CID—The abbreviation for Criminal Investigation Department, the branch of British police concerned with investigating illegal activity.

Cozy—One of the most common types of amateur detective fiction, usually taking place in a comfortable environment such as a sleepy English village, free of graphic violence and thus making a "comfy" if unrealistic read.

Detection Club—A club founded by a group of Golden Age British detective fiction authors. Founding members include Chesterton, Sayers, and Christie; membership was by invitation only and authors agreed to abide by certain rules.

Detective criticism—A phrase invented by author Pierre Bayard to refer to reopening cases of fictional detectives using "more rigorous methods" than did the literary sleuths and their authors in order to discover "correct" alternative solutions to the crimes through evidence drawn from the original texts.

Dime novel—Cheap popular publications that flourished in the U.S. at the turn of the century containing lurid adventure yarns, including detective stories, often of anonymous authorship.

Eco-mystery—A mystery in which environmental concerns play a central role; often the crime is related to ecological issues and the sleuth also has a job related in some way to the environment.

Femme fatale—A woman who uses her considerable sexual charms to get what she wants from men, often with disastrous results for the men and posing a threat to their world and code of ethics; a staple of classic hard-boiled detective fiction.

Forensics—The use of science and technology to investigate and establish facts in criminal or civil courts of law; thus, any scientific methods used in the investigation of a crime.

Gumshoe—A slang term for a detective, private or police, referring to the rubber-soled shoes worn to sneak about more quietly on investigations.

Hard-boiled—The school of detective fiction featuring tough private investigators navigating cynically through a world of crime and corruption, usually cast in gritty urban settings, in contrast to the lighter and less realistic world of the amateur.

HIBK—The abbreviation for Had I But Known, a genre of fiction in which a naïve female character enters an unfamiliar world, usually through romance, and must uncover hidden misdeeds from the past often involving secret marriages and murder. By the end of the work she has unraveled the secrets, found domestic happiness, and also become wiser to the ways of the world.

Howcatchem—A mystery in which the culprit is known from early on and the plot focuses on how he or she is caught and brought to justice.

Howdunit—A mystery in which the focus is discovering how the crime was committed, either because of the ingenious methods used and/or seeming impossibility of the known culprit to have done the deed (see *unbreakable alibi)*.

Hyper-realism—The next step beyond realistic portrayal in which graphic detail becomes the subject of vivid and intense focus, sometimes even at the microscopic level.

Impossible crime—A crime so cleverly conceived in its planning and execution that seemingly it cannot possibly have taken place, such as stealing a diamond from a high-security display in front of hundreds of witnesses.

INTERPOL—The International Criminal Police Organization composed of over 180 nations that work together to combat international crime such as drug and human trafficking, banking fraud, and terrorism. The organization has no political affiliations so can facilitate cooperative anti-crime efforts even between nations with no diplomatic relations. INTERPOL is often featured in espionage fiction.

Inverted form—This refers to a mystery opposite to the classic whodunit style since the perpetrator of the murder or other crime is known from the beginning (see *howcatchem*).

Irresolution—This occurs when resolution or a neat satisfying ending is not achieved; criminals are perhaps not brought to justice, and characters (and therefore readers) may be left with loose ends and in some doubt or ambiguity as to the crime and its aftermath. The opposite of resolution, the standard of classic detective fiction, in which the mystery is resolved, justice is served, and order is restored.

MacGuffin—A term coined by Alfred Hitchcock to refer to the secret object or information that all characters, good and bad guys, are seeking in order to drive a narrative's plot and create a focal point for the central conflict.

Milieu—The realm in which mysteries take place and tend to cluster, not in terms of geographic or chronological setting but rather profession, hobby, or area of interest or pursuit, for example, academic or culinary or the world of racing or railways.

MO—The abbreviation for *modus operandi*, the method of operation of criminals when committing their crimes. The pattern is studied by police and other detectives, sometimes leading to identification and capture of the miscreants.

Newgate calendar—Publications distributed near Newgate Prison telling of the crimes of criminals about to face execution; a kind of early true crime writing that may have influenced sensation and other fiction genres of the day, such as Newgate novels.

Penny dreadful—Cheap weekly publications popular in England in the 1800s, containing lurid and sensational fiction stories of various types and targeting the tastes of so-called lower classes.

Perfect crime—A crime so cleverly conceived that it appears not to have been a crime at all, either because it is not discovered or because it suggests a perfectly reasonable natural explanation.

Private eye—An alternative way of spelling "PI," standing for private investigator, possibly originating from the unsleeping eye symbol of Pinkerton's Detective Agency.

Puzzle plot—A common form of classic detective fiction in which the plot hinges on a clever puzzle that the reader must figure out along with the sleuth; the puzzles may be quite elaborately presented, with little effort at or expectation of realism.

Ratiocination—A term invented by Edgar Allan Poe to refer to the mental process of figuring out a matter through reasoning and logic based on observation.

Red herring—A convention of classic detective fiction, refers to false or misleading clues purposefully planted in the narrative to lead readers astray. Originates from the practice of dragging the fish across a fox's trail to draw hounds off the scent.

Roman policier—French for "detective novel," refers to crime writing in France, and more broadly, to crime writing in general; can also refer to a subgenre of detective fiction focusing on milieu, moody atmosphere, and the psyche.

Sensation fiction—A branch of fiction flourishing in the 1860s mainly in England containing sensational elements such as bigamy, murder, insanity, and blackmail; an influence on early detective fiction.

Shamus—A slang term for a detective, usually private, originating from the Irish man's name "Seamus." The Private Eye Writers of America award for the best detective fiction work of the year is known as the Shamus Award.

Singleton—An author who has published only one book in the detective fiction genre (or the single work itself) either because that author has only ever written one work or because he or she writes primarily in another genre.

Sleuth—A detective of any sort, originating from Middle English "sleuth" meaning "a track" or "a trail." The term "sleuthhound" referred to a tracking dog and became shortened to "sleuth," meaning one who follows trails, such as a detective; has been in use in that meaning since the 1870s.

Syndicate—A group of authors cooperating on a single work, or a group of individual characters in a detective fiction work who act together to commit a murder.

Tartan noir—A type of crime fiction particular to Scotland and Scottish writers, combining elements from traditional and contemporary Scottish literature and hard-boiled detective fiction.

Unbreakable alibi—A convention of detective fiction in which one or several characters have seemingly airtight proof they could not possibly have committed the crime, such as dozens of impartial witnesses placing them elsewhere, and it becomes the sleuth's job to prove the impossible.

Urbanism—Especially in modern fiction, refers to a focus on cities not only in terms of setting but also culture; sometimes the city environment plays such a pivotal role that it almost becomes another character in the work, and is essential to the atmosphere and theme of the narrative.

Watson figure—Named for Sherlock Holmes's friend, refers to the character in a mystery who plays the role of assistant, foil, and possibly chronicler of the main and more brilliant sleuth.

Whodunit—The most common form of classic detective fiction in which the core mystery is for readers to discover, along with the sleuth, who has committed the crime among a closed circle of suspects.

Who-gets-away-with-it—A narrative in which the perpetrator gets away with the crime, possibly because the story is told from the criminal's point of view or because the sleuth does not fully solve the case or decides not to bring the matter to justice (see *irresolution)*.

Whydunit—A mystery focusing on discovering why a criminal committed the act, often through exploring psychological character and complicated motives as well as past events.

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