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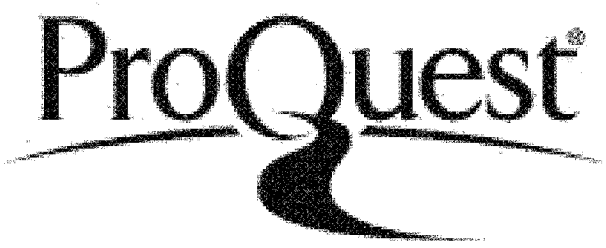

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ABSTRACT

The mystery novel is often thought of as a modern literary form. It is, in fact, a modern manifestation of the traditional story of the quest. All of the elements of a quest are present, although these elements are likely to be displaced into a variety of forms. These forms reflect attitudes, values, ideas, and images (dreams and nightmares) of the world contemporary to when the novel was written.

An exploration of twentieth-century mystery novels precedes the creative project, which includes a novel adapted from a screenplay written by the author and the screenplay itself. The novel uses a narrative form called multiple-selective omniscient, which is sometimes referred to as cinematic style, and pairs a mixed-race female and a Japanese male as protagonists. Using elements of Japanese culture as part of the plot, it explores this culture in a contemporary setting.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE CREATIVE PROJECT

This creative project is a mystery novel. It was written with the objective of being commercially published, so it was written within the parameters of today's mystery book market. The intended audience is the demographic group most likely to buy a written work in this genre: women.

The novel is adapted from a screenplay written by the author. Books adapted from movies are not a new idea. However, the general practice has been to adapt a popular movie to a book to capitalize on the popularity of the movie. Sometimes, characters of a popular movie or TV show have been used to make spin-off books. Deliberately writing a screenplay first with the objective of turning it into a novel is a new idea though. This represents a significant change from the traditional approach of adapting a screenplay from a novel. The creative project was written in a narrative form sometimes called third person multiple-selective omniscient. Both of these elements reflect the contemporary novel-reading public, whose perception of written stories is largely influenced by an electronic-media-driven world. In fact, the narrative form referred to as multiple-selective omniscient is sometimes called cinematic style.

In addition to the unique, new way it was created, the novel also has a nontraditional detective pairing: a mixed-race female and a Japanese male. It uses elements of Japanese culture as part of the plot and explores cultures in contact in a contemporary setting. This also represents a contemporary manifestation of the traditional

form. Thus, the project is a potentially important addition to the genre given the way it was written, its protagonists and their motivations, and its cultural content.

CHAPTER 2

THE MYSTERY NOVEL AS A POPULAR ART FORM

The mystery novel is the world's most popular literary form. Mystery novels are the most popular or nearly the most popular genre in nearly every country of the world. They are among the most international of books, frequently translated and successfully marketed in many foreign markets and appearing in a dazzling variety of settings. What is the reason why this genre is popular in so many different cultures? It is because it is a type of story that speaks to everyone. It does so because we intuitively understand it as an archetypal pattern: mystery novels are contemporary manifestations of mythological quest stories found in all cultures.

Mystery Novels as Displaced Romantic Quests

In his landmark 1949 book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell first articulated the idea of the "monomyth," that is, the observation that the myths of all cultures share enough similarities that they are, in fact, all the same quest story retold in different ways. This idea has been further expanded by literary critics such as Richard Hughes and Foulke and Smith. Different variations of the quest have been identified, as have reoccurring patterns of stages of the quest and reoccurring character types.

The most elemental type of quest literature is the narrative romance: "The romance narrative most often dominates the earliest period in the literary history of a culture" (Foulke and Smith 46). The pattern of the action in this is familiar to all:

1. There is a "call," some kind of problem that presents a compelling need for the hero to undertake a journey in search of something that will fix the problem.

2. The journey is not easy. All heroes undergo trials "designed to see to it that the intending hero should really be a hero. Is he really a match for this task? Can he overcome the dangers? Does he have the courage, the knowledge, the capacity to enable him to serve?" This usually involves his descent into a threatening place, a "dark underworld."

3. The hero must confront his dark "other," that is, a villainous being who is nonetheless a reflection of him.

4. Along the way he will encounter "helpers and guides." These can take the form of "wise elders."

5. He will also encounter "sirens," dangerous female characters who try and seduce him off his path.

6. The object of the quest is some kind of "treasure" that once brought back will benefit society.

7. The quest will "transform" the hero in such a way that he is a better person. (Campbell 126)

All of the elements of a romantic quest are present to some extent in detective and mystery fiction. In all murder mystery novels, the protagonist starts in a realm that has been or will be disturbed by an unsettling change, namely a murder. This crime not only affects the victim but also upsets the natural order or balance of society: if individuals are permitted to kill one another, society cannot continue to function. Society has been put out of balance by this catastrophe.

To restore the natural order, the killer must be found and brought to justice. The truth of what happened must be revealed. The detective gets a call to go on a quest in search of this truth. He must undertake a perilous journey in his quest and must enter a "dark underworld," wherein nothing is what it seems to be. Along the way he will

encounter wise counselors, sirens, and temptations and confront his own dark other, who is in fact the killer. To find the murderer, the detective must re-create the crime by projecting the killer's mind into his own. He must also face the awareness that finding the truth may not bring him any kind of reward, but may actually harm him. He undergoes a trial to see if he is worthy. He persists and is changed in the process. He gains new self-awareness and grows as a person. This "boon" that he brings back to society also serves to change some of those around him, and they in turn grow into greater awareness.

Thus, mystery and detective fiction re-creates displaced versions of all of the characters and elements of the quest. For instance, "in detective novels as in fairy tales and dreams, the same characters and props constantly appear in new combinations: the Watson figure, the locked room puzzle, the least likely suspect, the damsel in distress who turns out to be a femme fatale" (Lehman 24). Although Gertrude Stein pronounced the detective novel to be "the only really modern novel form" (Lehman 23), in some ways she might have been a bit off the mark. The popularity of detective novels is most likely based on their general adherence to notions of good storytelling that have been characteristic of quests for a long time:

> Crime novelists depend heavily on tight plot constructions, surprise and suspense, reversals and recognitions. The narrative line proceeds in gradual stages from mystification to revelation, a teleological progression towards the truth. The good survive and prosper. The evil are isolated and carted off. We are promised a happy ending, or something that resembles

> one. In these and other ways, the genre would seem to conform to the most ancient storytelling traditions. (Lehman 23)

While mystery novels are not modern in that they generally do not seek to consciously challenge notions of form, style, or character, they are contemporary in that the manifestations of the genre's traditional elements take on new, outward shapes, depending on the times when the novels were written. This is particularly true in the case of successful mystery novels. In literary terms, the mystery as quest is "displaced" according to what its contemporary readers will most relate to. The more the displacement reflects their tastes and values, the more popular it will be—so long as it retains the basic elements of the quest. The review of related literature that follows illustrates this point. The review begins with a brief overview of the chronological history of detective fiction and continues with contemporary examples from 2006.

CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Chronology of Mystery Novel Trends: A Mirror of Society

Mystery novels are displaced romantic quests whose displacement reflects the reading public of the society in which they are written. Edgar Allan Poe is often considered to be the inventor of the detective novel with his trio of tales of "ratiocination" featuring the French detective Dupin. The series started in April 1841 with "Murders in the Rue Morgue" and continued with "The Mystery of Marie Roget" and "The Purloined Letter." Although these may have been the first detective stories in the Western world, the form is actually much older: "Crime literature and the investigator who searches for the perpetrator is as old as time" (Browne 6). For example, in 1949, a Dutch diplomat named Robert van Gulik translated some ancient Chinese writing into the book *The Celebrated Cases of Judge Dee*. These feature a Chinese magistrate and jurist of the era of the Tang Dynasty (618-906) who solves otherwise baffling mysteries. There may be other instances of detective or mystery fiction that predate Poe, but in the interest of brevity, this chronology will start with Poe's Dupin and his English cousin who appeared a few decades later, Sherlock Holmes.

Both detectives are heroes in the romantic mode in which "the hero's powers, once learned, are nearly limitless" (Foulke and Smith 47). But their powers are strictly cerebral, not physical. Both are men of extraordinary intellect. Dupin confronts his

other—the criminal—not by challenging him in combat but by consciously trying to think like him to understand his method and motivation.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's detective, Sherlock Holmes, is undoubtedly the most famous detective in the world. Doyle's first Sherlock Holmes story, "A Study in Scarlett," appeared in 1887. He uses a narrative technique wherein Holmes's companion, Dr. Watson, chronicles the story. Like Dupin, Holmes is an eccentric. He enjoys taking drugs, being alone, playing the violin, and engaging in deep study. Neither man needs to work to survive: Dupin has an inheritance that allows him to pursue his lifestyle, and Holmes is apparently well off financially and moves in upper-class circles. The Holmes books and stories do not criticize Victorian English society—Holmes' London is not a menacing city. Holmes may be eccentric, but he is also an elegant, upper-class English gentleman.

By contrast, the "hard-boiled" or "tough guy" American novels and stories of the Depression '30s feature detective heroes who are at the lower strata of society. The world had changed, and "the elegant, deductive sleuth, the calm, calculating sifter of clues, gave way to a new breed—the wary, wisecracking knight of the .45, an often violent, always unpredictable urban vigilante fashioned in the rugged frontier tradition of the western gunfighter" (Nolan 13).

These novels and stories appealed to the general sentiment that the rich and the institutions of society, such as the police, were not to be trusted. In these works, the rich were generally decadent, and the police were usually on the take from them. There was little difference between the police and the high-class criminals they associated with. The detective hero was a lone man with his own strict morality. This meant that the detective

was usually at odds with society and not financially successful. In many ways, these hard-boiled novels and stories follow the pattern of the romantic quest the closest of all mystery fiction.

The case-hardened detective faces almost continuous trials. Like a knight, the character must journey to a literal "underworld" in his quest for the truth. What keeps the detective going is integrity and a desire to know and reveal the truth despite probably not receiving any personal benefit—or even be destroyed. The detective has "a code that must be adhered to no matter what the cost or consequences" (Connelly 61).

The hard-boiled school of detective fiction germinated in a magazine called *Black Mask*, which was published between April 1920 and July 1951. In contrast to the gentile London that gave birth to Sherlock Holmes, *Black Mask* came from a harsher world. Its writers "captured the cynicism, bitterness, disillusionment and anger of a country fighting to survive the evils of Prohibition and the economic hardships of the Depression" (Nolan 13).

Two writers who published short stories in the 1920s and 1930s in *Black Mask*, Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett, would become the two seminal writers of American hard-boiled detective stories. Their books are the best known of all American detective novels. Additionally, both writers' works have been made into movies. In the case of Hammett, the movie versions of his novels are probably better known than the novels themselves.

Hammett had actually worked for the most famous private detective company in the United States, The Pinkerton National Detective Agency, from 1915 to 1931. He

started publishing stories in *Black Mask* in 1922 and continued to do so until 1930. His most famous title, *The Maltese Falcon*, featuring detective Sam Spade, was originally published in five installments in the magazine and came out as a finished novel in 1930. The book has been made into a motion picture three times, the most noteworthy one in 1941 starring Humphrey Bogart. The movie version of Hammett's other extremely famous novel, *The Thin Man*, is one of the most important movies of the 1930s.

Chandler's *The Big Sleep*, published in 1939, was the author's first novel. Its first person narrative gives the reader the point of view of its strong and cynical private detective protagonist, Philip Marlowe. The first paragraph gives some inkling of Chandler's style, which is blunt, poetic, funny, ironic, and beautiful—all at the same time:

> 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, 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. (Chandler 1)

Chandler based Marlowe on Hammett's Sam Spade but made him considerably more complex. He would go on to become the iconic figure of classic American detective stories and appear in a total of seven novels and several film adaptations. He would be played by Humphrey Bogart in the 1946 version of *The Big Sleep* by Warner Brothers. Thus, Humphrey Bogart had the distinction of playing both of the most famous hard-boiled detectives.

The author, Ross Macdonald, is sometimes referred to as the third member of the holy trinity of hard-boiled detective novels, which also includes Chandler and Hammett. Macdonald played tribute to the latter by naming the detective in his first novel, *The Moving Target*, after Sam Spade's murdered partner (Lew Harper) in Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*. Macdonald's series of fourteen books featuring Harper would span three decades and would change in style somewhat over time. Whereas there is a palpable sense of romanticism that permeates Chandler, Macdonald was accurate when he described his evolving writing style as having gradually siphoned off the aura of romance and made room for a complete social realism. *The Moving Target* has elements of both. His later novels would be much less Chandleresque.

The Moving Target was published in 1949, ten years after *The Big Sleep*. The two novels share some characteristics: both are set in Los Angeles and feature tough-guy detectives who speak in first person narratives that sometimes—particularly when the detective is struck on the head—turn into stream-of-consciousness, poetic ramblings. Other similarities include incompetent police, decadent rich folk, and long night drives through a dark Southern California landscape that extends beyond Los Angeles to seaside locales with Spanish names. The scenery bears some mentioning because changes in the landscape over the years will affect its viability as a setting for this kind of mystery. Those changes are foreshadowed in *The Moving Target*.

The hard-boiled novels of the '30s spawned what would become a recognized movie genre of the '40s: film noir. Many hard-boiled detective novels were made into

dark films that reflected the underbelly of unease surrounding the ebullience that accompanied the end of World War II.

The Cold War produced a gradually evolving mystery trend. Some '50s writers, such as Mickey Spillane, included fear of the atomic bomb in their general scenario. There was an undertone of dread and paranoia in the '50s, but a sense of living for the day—the most obvious manifestation of this—saw a shift in popularity to the spy novel. This shift was exemplified by the British writer Ian Fleming's James Bond novels. Starting in 1952 with *Casino Royale*, Fleming "single-handedly transformed popular detective and spy fiction from the dark, middle-class heroes of Hammett, Chandler and Sapper, to the elegant world of his own, seen through the eye of James Bond, secret agent 007" (Cork and Scivalli 6).

Bond was the ideal man of the era of *Playboy* magazine. He was irresistible to women and skilled in all possible social situations and physical challenges. He always defeated every opponent and won at cards. Beyond this, he also displayed an uncanny awareness of worldly things by their brand names. This blending of a fictional world and the real, commercial one also reflected the increasingly consumer-driven world. Fleming's novels are now better known for their movie adaptations, which thrived from 1962 to 1967. That these films were popular during this time period while the hard-boiled detective was not, says a lot about the popular genre of mystery fiction.

As stated above, the circumstances, moods, and tastes of the times affect novels, scripts, and films. Macdonald's novel *The Moving Target* is illustrative of this. The novel's film adaptation was an awkward fit with the mid-1960s because the book had

been written at a very different time. In contrast, the James Bond film adaptations fit easily into the mid-1960s (Harper).

Some elements of what worked in Chandler's 1930s and Macdonald's postwar, late 1940s still fit in the mid-1960s. The movie industry still had a presence, although the studio system was gone. The idea that rich people were different from common people still resonated, and the fact that poor, everyman detectives had a kind of morality that seemed to heighten their decadence continued to speak to audiences.

Interestingly enough, however, although the '60s were more overtly sexual than the '40s, Macdonald's prose in the novel is seamier than the dialogue in the film. For example, the novel is full of references to breasts. Miranda is described thusly: "Her light-brown coat fell open in front, and her small sweatered breasts, pointed like weapons, were a half-impatient promise" (Macdonald 107). Mrs. Sampson is also described in terms of her breasts: "The round dark tips of her breasts stared through the silk pajamas like dull eyes" (Macdonald 238). The movie does not have these sorts of references. Besides its somewhat more vanilla sexuality, the film's setting is less threatening and does not surround the protagonist in the same way it does in the novel. How this affects the detective is fundamental: it became more difficult to make him the same character.

In the '30s and postwar '40s, institutions were mistrusted because they had let everyone down. The rich were decadent, while everyone else was suffering. The police seemed to be there to protect the rich and pad their own pockets, and there didn't seem to be much difference between business people and criminals. The lone detective was the only trustworthy person in this landscape. By the time of the prosperous mid-1960s, the

poor detective's relentless sense of duty and messed-up personal life seemed less operatic and heroic. Adding Harper's wife does make him seem more human, but he is still more of a lonely divorced man, somewhat more sad than heroic.

The movie's ambiguous ending fits with the questioning of established values that would become the hallmark of the late '60s, but it also negates Harper's whole existence. He rambles on to Graves about how his work is basically thankless, but there are occasionally moments of validation to his adherence to duty that make it all worthwhile. He insists that he must turn Graves in, and even says that Graves would have to kill him to stop him—then the ambiguous ending happens, which seems to suggest that Harper has changed his mind or that, at least, his resolve is breaking. If this means that Harper is not going to turn Graves in, what is he left with? It means that he lives in poverty, is estranged from his wife, and doesn't even have a rigid code of honor to justify it. Essentially it appears that, as of the '60s, the code of "A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do" didn't work so well anymore as character motivation.

Macdonald's self-described social realism is also problematic. Novels and movies of this sort began to predominate in the '50s, '60s, and '70s. It is a shocking experience for someone who was of movie-going age during the '70s to recall so many films with socially relevant messages that have been completely forgotten. Watching some of these films today, they seem to have a quaint quality to their seriousness. The problem with social realism is that often issues that seemed so central in one time period can seem dated in a few short years.

The world and the U.S. continued to change, and the mystery novel form began to include black and female detectives. African American writer Chester Himes wrote an autobiographical novel with a theme of racism called *If He Hollers Let Him Go* in 1945. He wrote four more novels before turning to mysteries in 1957 with *A Rage in Harlem*. He was not very well known in the U.S. in the '40s and '50s, but his work began to be discovered in the late '60s and '70s and achieved critical and popular recognition. The black power movement brought an awareness of African Americans. Suddenly, films, books, and television shows about black Americans began to pour out. Himes's achievements, which had been virtually unknown, were suddenly thrust into the American public eye.

Himes wrote a detective series from 1957 to 1969 about a pair of black New York City police detectives in Harlem named Gravedigger Jones and Coffin Ed Johnson. Those names are a clue to the rather funereal tone of the books. Funeral homes are often locations for action in the stories and one of the reoccurring characters, H. Exodus Clay, is a funeral director. The best-known books in this series are probably *A Rage in Harlem* and *Cotton Comes to Harlem*, both of which were made into films. The time setting for the latter was re-set in 1970, which is the year the film was made.

In 1990, African American mystery writer Walter Moseley burst onto the scene with *Devil in a Blue Dress*, which featured his flawed but interesting black detective Easy Rawlins. Moseley received a tremendous boost when President Clinton declared him to be one of his favorite authors. Moseley's books are superbly written, but they are definitely about the black experience. While this constituted a healthy inclusion, it also

marked what would be the gradual but steady fractionalization of the American mystery novel market into subgroups.

Searching the Barnes and Noble website for "multicultural mysteries" brings up a group of hyperlinks to subgroups such as Africana Mystery & Crime, Christian Mystery, Gay & Lesbian Mystery and Crime, Irish American Mystery & Adventure, Latin American Mysteries & Detective Fiction, and Native American Mystery & Detective Fiction. There are others as well, of course. With mystery book buyers looking for detective protagonists from their own ethnic, religious, or sexual-orientation group, creating a "mainstream" detective has become as elusive as the perpetrator in a whodunit.

However, although many readers have been siphoned off from the general mystery market by the appearance of books by and about members of their group, the appearance of another type of mystery novel may have signaled a change in the general mystery market altogether.

Sue Grafton's *A Is for Alibi* appeared in 1982. The first paragraph introduces her detective:

> 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. I'm a nice person and I have a lot of friends. My apartment is small, but I like living in a small space. I've lived in trailers most of my life, but lately they've been getting too elaborate for my taste, so now I live in one room, a "bachelorette." (1)

Compare this to the first paragraph of Chandler's first novel, quoted above; the similarity to the hard-boiled terseness of Chandler is unmistakable. If anything, *A Is for Alibi* is more hard-boiled than *The Big Sleep*. At the book's end, when the killer is attempting to sweet-talk Millhone as he approaches, her final words are simply "I blew him away"—and she does (Grafton 214). What is missing is Chandler's humor and poetry, but virtually everything else resonates with his influence. Millhone and Marlowe are about the same age and have similar issues with the opposite sex. The book would become extremely successful and spawn a series, with each successive book having a title that begins with the next letter of the alphabet: *B is for Burglar*, *C is for Corpse*, up to the latest (as of the writing of thesis), *S is for Silence*.

Grafton was certainly not the first female mystery writer, and Kinsey Millhone was certainly not the first female mystery detective, but where Moseley and the multicultural mystery writers would carve out niches in the mystery novel market that occasionally crossed over into the mainstream, Grafton and other female writers would *become* the mainstream.

The American Reading Market in 2006: The Female Reader

The current form of the popular mystery novel reflects the facts that there are only 8,000,000 regular fiction readers in the United States, and 80% of them are women. Thus, most successful mystery novels feature women protagonists or strong female characters working equally with the male protagonist. The male protagonist (if there is one) must be

appealing to women. This has spelled the end of any narrative where a Lew Archer-type, hard-boiled detective is talking or thinking about "pointy breasts."

Even Robert B. Parker, best known for his durable Spencer series (34 titles as of this writing) and the man approved by the Chandler estate to finish the last Philip Marlowe book, *Poodle Springs*, now has a female detective series. Launched in 2000 with *Family Honor*, the protagonist is Sunny Randall, a pretty, 35-year-old ex-cop who works as a private investigator in Boston. She is a single, divorced woman who lives with her little bull terrier Rosie and paints as a hobby and secondary career.

Although the contemporary female detective started with Kinsey Millhone, her ancestors were considerably less hard-boiled. English mystery writer Agatha Christie began with an eccentric male detective, Hercule Poirot, in *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, which was published in 1920. Poirot's character would continue for an extraordinary fifty-four short stories and thirty-four novels, ending in 1975 with *Curtain*. He would be joined by Miss Marple in 1930. She would appear in a respectable twelve novels and twenty short stories. Miss Marple is the prototypical nonthreatening, "old maid" detective. Miss Marple would never calmly shoot someone and state casually, "I blew him away."

The female detective as personified by Kinsey Millhone had her roots in the feminist movement and the idea that a woman did not have to be feminine. Thus, she is kind of female version of a male detective. This evolved to where more recently conceived female detectives are not so "macho." They can be quite capable and don't need to turn to a man to rescue them but have a female's tastes, interests, and sensitivity.

The contemporary, post-Kinsey Millhone female detective also is more likely to find herself romantically involved. This has led to a blurring of boundaries between the mystery fiction genre and another genre traditionally associated with women readers.

The Romance Mystery or Suspense Genre

As of this writing, the fastest-growing segment of the book market is the romance mystery genre. Note that the term *romance* is placed first to indicate that the mystery part is a subset of the romance genre. The fact that romance is actually the larger genre in the United States and that the subset of romance mystery may be the coming trend is illustrated by a recent book by bestselling mystery writer Tami Hoag. Hoag is known for somewhat violent and suspenseful serial-killer mysteries, such as *Guilty as Sin*. Her latest—and highly successful book—is *The Last White Knight*, which is a pure romance with no mystery to it at all.

An extremely popular writer in this genre is J. D. Robb, better known by her pen name, Nora Roberts. Roberts got her start in 1981 with *Irish Hearts*. The book was published by a new company, Silhouette, which wanted to create a new, somewhat higher-status version of the Harlequin Romance. Writing as J. D. Robb, her bestseller *Death Becomes Her* is a blending of romance, mystery, and science fiction and features a female NY police detective named Eve Dallas.

One of the most successful of all mystery and crime writers is Janet Evanovich. She now has two series going, but the one that put her on the map was the wildly successful Stephanie Plum series, which debuted in 1994 with *One for the Money*. Like

Grafton, Evanovich writes in a first person style that allows the reader to see the world from her character's point of view—but the contrast with Kinsey Millhone's character and internal monologue could not be more pronounced. Whereas Kinsey Millhone is like a female Marlowe, Stephanie Plum is not a west coast private eye, she is a very Jersey girl, a former lingerie buyer turned bounty hunter (actually a skip tracer for her relative's bail bond company) out of financial necessity. Her monologue is not tough; rather, it is a breezy, hilarious, and unabashedly female take on modern life.

Stephanie Plum is someone who a contemporary American woman can both like and relate to. This comes through in the very first paragraph of *One for the Money*: "There are some men who enter a woman's life and screw it up forever. Joseph Morelli did this to me—not forever, but periodically" (Evanovich 1). She makes many comments about men, but her complaints are comic, not tragic, and are made in a manner of a woman joking with another woman about men. She also covers her relationship with her family, which includes coming home for pot roast dinner and being subjected to her mother's nagging about her dress and unmarried status.

Evanovich actually started as a romance fiction writer, using the name Steffie Hall. Evanovich wrote twelve romance novels between 1988 and 1992. They quickly went out of print, but nine of the twelve are being resurrected and re-released. This is both a testament to Evanovich's popularity and to the strength of the romance market.

Police Procedurals and the "CSI Effect"

In many ways, the police procedural is the opposite of the classic whodunit mystery. Rather than a private or amateur detective who succeeds by working in a typically unconventional manner outside the regular police force, the police procedural attempts to depict the workings of a real police investigation as accurately as possible: "The procedural thrusts the detective into the middle of a working police force, full of rules and regulations. Instead of bypassing the police, as did its predecessors, the procedural takes the reader inside the department and shows how it operates. These are stories not just about policemen, but about the world of the policemen" ("American Police"). The genre is said to have begun with Lawrence Treat's 1945 novel *V is for Victim*. It was nurtured by a postwar spate of semidocumentary films, such as Jules Dassin's Academy Award-winning *The Naked City* in 1948, which were based on real crimes. The same year as Dassin's film, another film in the same genre (*He Walked by Night*), featured a young radio drama actor named Jack Webb. Webb developed a friendship with the movie's technical advisor, a Los Angeles Police Department detective sergeant named Marty Wynn. From their conversations, Webb got the idea for a radio drama that would realistically depict police investigations of crimes. He called it *Dragnet*. In addition to its emphasis on showing police work as accurately as possible, another difference from the traditional detective story was that the police worked as a team and solved several cases simultaneously. The show was a hit and branched into the new medium of television, where it expanded its popularity and inspired numerous other

police shows. Thus, the relationship of the police procedural to television was established shortly after its inception as a literary genre.

If Hammett and Chandler are the deans of the hard-boiled school of detective fiction, Ed McBain is the god of the police procedural. His *87th Precinct* series began in 1956 with "Cop Hater" and concluded upon his death in 2005 with "Fiddlers," a run of a fifty-three titles spanning half of a century. His reason for choosing the genre gives a clue as to why it has become the dominant form for television. When the series began, he "had written every type of mystery possible, and [he] had written some short police stories." When he was approached by Pocket Books to do a new series, he had decided that "the only valid people to be investigating crimes were cops" (Silet 189). Apparently, the television-watching public agreed with this assessment.

The number of police procedural TV shows has steadily increased over the years, as has the detail of the presentation of the forensic investigation. *Law and Order* is the longest-running crime show on network television. A new level was reached in October 2000, when the CBS television show *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* premiered. It soon became one of the most popular television shows in America. The show was created by Anthony E. Zuiker, who graduated from Chaparral High School in Las Vegas and attended the University of Nevada–Las Vegas. TV legend has it that Zuiker developed the idea for the show while working as a valet parking attendant at the Mirage Hotel. The action is set in the Las Vegas Crime Lab, the second most-active in the United States.

The show is an extremely clever reworking of the police procedural genre into a contemporary format. Each episode opens with a corpse. Several members of the CSI

team arrive and do a preliminary examination of the crime scene, some strange or extra gruesome element is discovered, and then the show cuts to commercial. Usually, shortly after the first mystery develops, a second corpse appears and a second investigation begins. The characters perform the lab work in pairs and exchange some sexy repartee if the pair consists of a male and female or wise and insightful observations if the pair consists of two males or two females. The boring and repetitive laboratory work can be reduced to MTV-type flashes of activity punctuated with music.

This is an important development: "In the old shows, no one could figure out how to make the analysis of evidence interesting" (Lovgren 2). Sometimes the corpses are shown with gruesome detail. Part of the reason the show speaks to a contemporary audience is that it is driven by visual imagery rather than dialogue. With the advent of computer-enhanced imagery, this can go beyond depicting lab work. If the technician doing an autopsy says "the bullet punctured the aorta," an image can suddenly appear on the screen of a bullet ripping into the victim's heart and blood spurting out—or any other internal mayhem that the lab technician is describing.

In September 2002, the first spin-off, *CSI Miami*, debuted to impressive viewer ratings. It featured many of the same elements, including an old song by The Who as the theme song. The protagonists are criminalists, but they are considerably less polished than those on the original show, though they are as physically attractive. The success of the first two shows generated a third show, *CSI New York*, which debuted in September 2004. This show featured acclaimed actor Gary Sinese as the head of the crime lab. Most of the

members of this team have New York Italian accents, and their dialogue is New York tough.

An interesting element of many of the episodes is that when one of the crime scene investigators has a lapse of professional detachment and acts from emotion rather than following procedure, the head of the crime lab often rebukes him or her stingingly. Following procedure as opposed to hunches and keeping focused on the evidence are the codes that these seekers of truth must follow. This is in direct contrast to the old-style private eye or Dirty Harry-type rebel policeman's style: "You can't be a loner in a team operation" ("American Police"). This change is another nail in the coffin of the traditional, American, male, hard-boiled private eye. It also solves a huge problem in television. To maximize ratings, the show must appeal to as many people as possible. A *CSI*-type police procedural show requires an ensemble cast. An ensemble cast makes it quite easy to have a mixture of ages, races, and types.

Another change from the traditional detective scenario to the *CSI* formula is the elevation of technical elements of crime detection and the technicians who use it to heroic stature:

> The stars of the shows are often the equipment—DNA sequencers, mass spectrometers, photometric fingerprint illuminators, scanning electron microscopes. But the technicians run a close second. . . . "It's 'geek chic,' the idea that kids who excel in science and math can grow up to be cool," says Robert Thompson, who teaches the history of TV programming at

> Syracuse University." This is long overdue . . . cops and cowboys and doctors and lawyers have been done to death." (Willing 3)

It is no coincidence that the geeky lab technician who does the DNA testing on *CSI* is young, has spiky hair, and likes Pink and other trendy young musicians.

The extreme popularity of *CSI* was not lost on Fox television network, which followed up with its own forensics police procedural show, *Bones*, in September 2005. It is very loosely based on the Kathy Reichs series about a female forensic anthropologist named Temperance Brennan.

In addition to its adaptability to the medium of television, there are many other reasons why a *CSI*-type police procedural speaks to a contemporary audience. For one thing, the idea of a solo private detective solving crimes that the "bumbling" police cannot fathom doesn't have the same appeal it once did. Today, in the public's mind, a lone vigilante figure is more likely to be perceived as a disenchanted crackpot who would just as soon shoot up a high school as solve a crime. Further, the notion of the "nobility" of poverty (resulting from choosing to not fit in) has crumbled in the face of the abject fear Americans have of falling off the ladder. The investigators on *CSI* are well-paid professionals. In one episode, a drug dealer who is being interrogated makes a snide comment about how little money the crime scene investigator probably makes compared to him, and she coolly replies that she makes $97,000 a year.

In an era of terrorists and cyber-identity theft, no one wants to see the police as inept. Also, the nationally televised O. J. Simpson trial showed an obviously guilty man escape justice via the machinations of a clever attorney convincing a jury that the police's

evidence was somehow tainted. It is a disquieting thought that events such as this might be the norm, rather than a spectacular exception.

Perhaps the most potent and pervasive result of the influence of *CSI* and other TV crime shows that use forensic evidence, such as *Law and Order*, is what has come to be known as "the CSI effect." This is the name given by law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and defense attorneys to "a phenomenon in courthouses across the nation" (Willing 2). The CSI effect is that jurors expect the same type of clear and conclusive forensic evidence that they see on TV. These expectations have changed the way attorneys prepare their cases and made it more difficult for prosecutors to "win convictions in the large majority of cases in which scientific evidence is either irrelevant or absent" (Willing 2). The enormous influence of these TV shows was demonstrated in a 2004 survey of 500 prospective jurors: 70% of them reported that they had watched a *CSI*-type of crime show.

A parallel development has been the increase in popularity of "true crime." As its name suggests, the genre is more than a realistic depiction of police investigation, it is a retelling of the events and details of a real crime. Even mystery-suspense superstar writer John Grisham penned a true crime book (*The Innocent Man*). These books also appeal to male readers, who overwhelmingly prefer nonfiction to fiction.

However, regardless of the domination of television by *CSI*-type police procedural mysteries, it would be an overstatement to say that the police procedural and true crime genres have completely taken over the mystery novel market. A parallel development that

runs in a completely different direction has been the growth in the depth and popularity of the historical and multicultural mystery novel.

Historical and Multicultural Mysteries

To say that historical novels in general and historical mysteries in particular are popular because they are escapist is true enough as a starting point. Historical settings provide an escape from many things and on many levels. They can also provide a fresh place to displace the murder mystery or quest: "One of the pleasures of reading a good historical is that it's like a trip to a foreign country without the inoculations" (King 246).

A multicultural mystery is a subgenre that can designate one of two types. The first is a contemporary mystery in a non-American setting. Sujata Massey's Rae Shimura series (set in modern-day Japan), John Burdett's series (set in Bangkok), or Alexander McCall Smith's books (set in Africa) would fall into this category. The second is an American mystery with basically any nonwhite detective, usually working within a realm of characters of the same race. Walter Mosley's books would fit into this category.

Sometimes historical and multicultural overlap, as in the case of Nobel-prize winner Orhan Pamuk's *My Name is Red*, which is set in sixteenth-century Turkey, or Lindsey Davis's extremely popular Narcus Didius Falco series (seventeen books as of this writing), which is set in Ancient Rome. Depending on the knowledge of the writer, these books can be both escapist and educational. They are satisfying to a modern reader because they supply a feeling of learning something, like a nonfiction book. A feature of

these types of books is that they do not usually have much forensic science, and the detective is not part of a team.

In all of these ways, historical and multicultural mysteries are a kind of antidote to the high-tech, *CSI*-style police procedural. This is well articulated by Laura Joh Rowland, author of the popular Sano Ichiro series set in Edo period Japan:

> I realized that in order to sell a book in the crowded mystery market, I would have to write something really special. I wanted to explore a time, place, and characters that didn't appear in other books I'd read. I wanted to experience a world other than my own. I wanted to stake out some new territory so I could sell a book. I decided on a historical setting because I was more interested in classical detection than in modern detection, with its emphasis on forensic science. I'd rather write about witnesses, alibis, motives, and deduction than about fingerprinting, DNA analysis, and ballistics, which seem too much like the technical work I did for almost 20 years. By writing a historical mystery, I would be free of modern technology.

Herein lies a dilemma for the would-be mystery writer. Because of the CSI effect, a contemporary detective has to use accurate forensic science in his investigation or he or she will not be credible to a modern reader. To depict forensic science accurately, the detective has to know it: "One of the real restrictions on the procedural writer is that he has to research police procedure. He has to learn what can and can't be done in real life" ("American Police"). Writing a multicultural or historical mystery allows him or her to

sidestep this necessity. It also allows the readers of these books to likewise avoid the prosaic reality of the likes of DNA testing.

In addition to the aforementioned attractions for historical and multicultural novels, a final reason for their popularity may be that the American urban setting is simply worn out. Some of the desire to escape might specifically stem from the desire to escape the American urban setting, which is omnipresent in the news and done to death in mystery novels. The American urban environment has quite a different connotation than it did in the 1930s. This is especially true of Los Angeles.

In Chandler's times, Los Angeles was part of the far west. It was Hollywood and warm weather in the winter and, most of all, a new and exciting setting. It boomed as a Defense Department manufacturing Mecca during World War II and then became the natural setting for film noir after the war. In 2006, Los Angeles is not new anymore. Also, it is no longer a noir setting for a tough-guy detective; this had become painfully obvious in the movie version of Macdonald's *The Moving Target*—renamed *Harper*—back in 1966. Whereas in the 1946 movie version of Chandler's *The Big Sleep* and in Macdonald's book the action is mostly at night and in the dark, *Harper* is awash with light. The long, dark drives to lonely places outside the city in *The Moving Target* are replaced with shots of freeways and boulevards lined with palm trees. While in the '30s and '40s, outlying areas of Los Angeles were sparsely inhabited and could contain mysterious hiding places, by the'60s, the city had sprawled out into endless, hardly mysterious suburbs. The camera shots of Harper's car proceeding in bright daylight along

Pacific Coast Highway past crowded luxury homes on the beach are totally removed from the images and feeling in Chandler's and Macdonald's novels.

In 2006, the situation has evolved even further. At this point, there is nothing mysterious at all about Los Angeles. Also with the growth of criminalistics and forensic science, audiences know more and are less willing to believe. If the detective is working in a contemporary American urban setting, they expect him or her to solve the crime using high-tech science.

The ironic conclusion to this is that, though on the surface the multicultural or historical mystery appears to be a new genre, it is actually a throwback to the more traditional detective story. Either an atypical modern setting in a foreign culture or the oldness of a historical setting serve to take the reader out of the contemporary American world and remove or alleviate the new rule of the mystery novel, which is that accurate forensic science must be used to solve the crime.

Stylistic Considerations

The mystery novels of the '30s and '40s were written during a time when readers' minds and tastes were primarily literary. The average person kept abreast of the times by reading a daily newspaper and communicated with friends and business associates by written letter. The number one form of electronic entertainment was radio, which is of course a nonvisual medium. In those days, radio often featured spoken-word dramas. Television was still very new and was only found in a few homes. Of course, there was

no generation of people raised with TV since childhood. A person might go to the movies once a week.

Today's readers were raised in a primarily nonliterary, visual, electronic-media world. He or she might see several movies a week in a variety of media. There is, of course, some variation in the degree of this. While there is a core mystery readership of women who enjoy reading for pleasure and may prefer reading to movies, even this readership probably has only a partially literary orientation. They probably spend a significant part of their workday staring at a computer screen and continue this visually oriented day when they get home, with a choice of network and cable television, DVDs, and the occasional First Run feature film in a movie theater. The once-a-week trip to the cinema has expanded into a more common experience (multiple times a week or even daily) at home. Thus, the perception of contemporary literary narrative style comes from visual media, not the other way around. This affects the writer's choice of style if he or she is writing for the general market.

First Person Narrative

The first person narrative could be called the style of choice for many classic mysteries. There are two types used in detective fiction: the witness narrator and the protagonist narrator. In the former, Dr. Watson narrates his adventures with Holmes, and in the latter, Philip Marlowe speaks to us as he journeys to the underworld of crime. Both styles take the reader on more or less the same trip as the detective, with some differences:

> Because of his subordinate role in the story itself, the witness-narrator has much greater mobility and consequently a greater range and variety of sources of information than the protagonist proper, who is centrally involved in the action. The protagonist narrator, therefore is limited almost entirely to his own thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. Similarly, the angle of view is that of the fixed center. (Friedman 153)

In this way, first person narratives are a decidedly literary rather than cinematic form. The reader knows the thoughts of the detective or witness (or at least the ones shared by the narrator). Also, the reader is limited to the point of view of the detective because the detective must be present in all scenes. This is not consistent with how a visual medium such as film operates, and this is abundantly clear from studying the different film adaptations of Chandler's novels.

The script for Warner Brothers' film version of *The Big Sleep* is remarkably similar to the novel. In fact, some of the dialogue is exactly as it was written by Chandler. To re-create the point of view of the first person narrative, the director made sure that the actor playing Marlowe, Humphrey Bogart, was in every scene in the film. This is one way of ensuring that the audience doesn't know any more than the detective. This creates some intimacy with the detective, but nothing like the book. Another film version of a Chandler novel, *Murder My Sweet*, based on the book *Farewell My Lovely*, had Marlowe speak to the audience in a voice-over narration. This made the film closer to the novel, but the connection with the audience was still not as intimate as it was when reading the book. The climax of this struggle was Robert Montgomery's 1946 film version of

Chandler's *The Lady in the Lake*, in which the entire movie was made by having the camera actually show the point of view of the detective. The movie poster proclaims boldly, "Starring *You* and Robert Montgomery. You are invited to a blonde's apartment! You are socked in the jaw by a murder suspect! You slug the crooked cop who tries to frame you! You look into the gun of a fear-maddened criminal!" Although the results of this are mixed and the film is now more of a curiosity than a beloved classic, it was quite innovative. It also illustrates the essential difference between the first person narrative and film: one is a literary form, the other is visual, and the two don't exactly mix.

The first person narrative offers personal contact with the protagonist to a degree impossible with any type of third person narrative, even the multiple-selective omniscient. The first person narrative creates a distinct character that the reader has an inside window to. The reader has so much to like and identify with—or to be turned off by—and they will be with this character throughout the entire book. So, much like the person sitting next to you on an intercontinental flight, they can make or break the voyage.

This wasn't a problem during the 1930s of Raymond Chandler. There were no issues with a white male heterosexual who was honest and tough but somewhat rough around the edges. America in 2007 is divided into groups—women, men, black, Hispanic, Asian, gay—with each group being urged by its more politically active leaders to not identify with anyone outside their group. This is with the exception of white, heterosexual males, who are reminded directly and indirectly that excessive group identification in their case may be considered racist, sexist, and homophobic.

Thus, a best-selling mystery written with a first person narrative spoken by a character like Philip Marlowe is unlikely today. Most editors would see the attacks coming. There is even a published book of literary criticism of Chandler, *The Street Was Mine: White Masculinity in Hardboiled Fiction and Film Noir* by Megan E. Abbott, which lambastes Chandler for extolling "the myth of white male invincibility" while extracting quotes that supposedly prove Marlowe's closet homosexuality. The author then proceeds to extol the virtues of Chester Himes. This type of academically sanctioned disrespect is generally permissible only in the case of white male authors and white male characters, and it may have contributed to the diminishing of the marketability of traditional detective novels from authors that feature these types of characters.

It could be speculated that this division of the United States into groups and the hegemony of encouraging people to only identify with their own group has contributed to the fractionalization and specialization of the mystery market. There are now niche markets for gay mysteries, black mysteries, Hispanic mysteries, and others. Women represent the biggest group, so the majority of first person narratives feature women detectives.

A good example of this is Sujata Massey's Rae Shimura series, set in contemporary Japan. Massey's style is a first person narrative. The reader doesn't know anything that Rae doesn't know. The relationship of this narrative to the reader is fascinating. As the narrator, Rae is simultaneously in the action of the novel and speaking to the reader in small explanations of some of the places and experiences of the protagonist—somewhat like a tour guide. She is like a female friend showing the reader

around. It is a testament to the skill of the author that this does not seem forced or contrived. On the contrary, it is done in an easy, personal way that makes Rae seem that much more likeable—especially to a female reader.

Massey transports the reader to modern Japan, but more than this, we are there with a decidedly female perspective. For example, in *The Flower Master*, Rae prepares for a meeting in a Tokyo nightclub:

> At home I changed into a short, flaring red slip dress appropriate for Salsa Salsa, if not my emotional state. I hunted for a pair of sheer stockings without any snags; not finding any, I went bare-legged. This was a bit unusual for Tokyo, where women wear panty hose under shorts in ninety-degree summer heat. The temperature had gone down into the fifties, so my legs were chilled, and my bare feet stuck to the lining of the black patent sling-back pumps, making squishy sounds as I walked. With luck, the bar would be noisy and nobody would hear. (Massey 74)

This is a first person narrative that a female reader can identify with. Rae is always getting a run in her nylons just before a dinner at some stuffy Japanese woman's house or is chasing after someone and getting her dress wrinkled or ruining her shoes. Rae will always note what other women are wearing as well. She is a decidedly amateur sleuth and follows more in the tradition of Nancy Drew and Jessica Fletcher than Kinsey Millhone. The author states on her website that Rae could never have a gun.

Rae Shimura is also a cultural hybrid (American and Japanese); she speaks Japanese very well but can't read it. She partially fits in—but not completely. She can

communicate and get around in her foreign surroundings, but she is still unquestionably American. This contributes to the reader's ability to identify with her and also gives the books a trendy quality somewhat like the celebrated Indian writer Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*, which is about mixed cultural identities. Massey explains on her website that this came from her own personal experiences.

The author also has an uncanny awareness of her readers. In addition to the smooth and unobtrusive explanations she gives of Japan and Japanese culture, she displays a subtle sense of American superiority to the Japanese way of doing things and a not-so-subtle feminist bitterness. Thus, Rae is a character with whom her readers can identify and like. She is young, but not too young. She can make her way around Japan but is also "American." The example of the Rae Shimura series—and other extremely successful mystery series, such as Janet Evanovich's Stephanie Plum books—offers a caveat to would-be mystery writers. That is, for a first person narrative to be viable in the general contemporary mystery market, the protagonist-narrator must be a character with whom the target-marketed group can identify.

Third Person Multiple-Selective Omniscient

The third person narrative is the most common in fiction. Third person distances the reader from the protagonist and consigns the detective to being a part (rather than all) of the overall action. The narrator is omniscient and can know all the true facts of the mystery but may choose to not reveal some of them to the reader. Third person multiple-selective omniscient modifies this to varying degrees and changes the perspective

according to the characters in the current scene. The style is cinematic, and as such, shares some of the limitations of that medium.

The limitations of film create an overall picture, a grid, an outline of the action within which the characters are parts. From this, the parts are forced to fit into types. Actors for film or television are auditioned primarily for how well they match the characteristics of those types, not necessarily simply for the excellence of their talent. The important thing is how well they fit into the required "slot." Within the parameters of this slot, if they are interesting, likeable or "hateable," funny or serious, this is a bonus. But primarily, the supporting actors must be a part of the overall action.

To a large extent film consigns all of the players (except perhaps the major stars) to a supporting role in the movie as a whole. A first person narrative is like a film with one polyglot star and several supporting players. The multiple-selective omniscient style is more like film in that it also reduces all of the characters to players in the overall action. It is *the* style of today for this reason: it is a cinematic rather than a literary style. In the past, the general public was principally print oriented, and movies came from a literary tradition. Now the opposite is true: the general public is primarily visual-image oriented, not literary-print oriented. Thus, the literary market has become the secondary market.

The technique of multiple-selective omniscient narrative involves having the omniscient narration change according to the focal character. The best-known practitioner of this is crime writer Elmore Leonard. His books are hilarious and have a street roughness to them, but sometimes they can be quite subtle. For example, early in the book

52 Pickup, the protagonist Mitchell has confessed his infidelity to his wife. She still loves him and can't be as harsh with him as she might wish. He offers her a drink, which is followed by this paragraph:

> "I might as well," his wife said. The glass was something to touch and turn and look at thoughtfully. She couldn't stare at the wallpaper or the cupboards for very long. She couldn't look at Mitchell for more than a few minutes at a time. She couldn't press down on him with her gaze and purposely make him uncomfortable. The son of a bitch. (Leonard 59)

This deceptively spare paragraph with its final sentence taken from the mind of the character, compresses the combination of her anger, grudging respect, and love for her husband. The word choice of the final sentence is perfect and takes away the need for long exposition.

Another illustrative example of the economy of this technique occurs at the beginning of chapter 14, when the leader of the blackmailers, Alan Raimy, is trying to convince his partners that Mitchell cannot pay. Mitchell had come to the porno theater that the character Raimy manages and struck him in the face. The first line in the chapter has Raimy saying, "Are you listening to me?" The text then switches to the point of view of violent black killer Bobby Shy. No words are wasted in describing the scene. They are in "Doreen's apartment" and after establishing Shy's cocaine high, another paragraph continues from Shy's perspective: "Bobby had to grin at Alan's cut-up puffed up mouth. Man had hit him good. That shit, are you listening to me? Talking but trying not to move his mouth. Like the mouth wasn't there. Like the man hadn't hit him. The man had

looked easy, but the man didn't fuck around, did he?" (Leonard 202). This simultaneously establishes Shy's perspective of Raimy and his awareness of the situation and further defines Shy's character.

Leonard's third person multiple-selective omniscient style is efficient at establishing characters and scenes, but it requires a familiarity on the part of the reader with the character type and the setting. Descriptions are so spare and so specific in their references that they can be somewhat vague to a reader who is not familiar with them. For example, he describes Shy's black girlfriend Doreen's apartment as having Aretha Franklin on the stereo. A young contemporary reader would not have the associations with the singer's music necessary to form the mental pictures of a '70s apartment that someone familiar with Franklin's music and that period might be capable of making.

A more recent example of this narrative style is found in Dennis Lahane's *Mystic River*, made into the Academy Award-winning film by director Clint Eastwood. The book's style is both literary and cinematic. The narrator's words and style (in third person omniscient) change depending on the focal character. Poetic words and similes are used to go deeply into the character's inner psyches. But changes of scene can happen abruptly, just like a movie. By shifting back and forth, information about the mystery is given to the reader in pieces. Some of those pieces serve to deceive the reader—and some of the characters. The reader is led down the wrong path, and so are some of the characters. Third person multiple-selective omniscient "preserves mystery through the limited vision of the narrator of the moment" (Estleman 118).

The beginning of the novel shows the pasts of the three central characters as boys together and focuses on the seminal event of their lives—the abduction and implied abuse of Dave Boyle. What happened to him is never completely explained, other than that it was something bad and he escaped, that he was changed by it, and that the town tried to forget what happened.

When the action switches to the present day, when the boys have grown up, this unresolved past puts the adult Dave Boyle squarely in the reader's line of vision. The night of Katie's murder, Dave comes home covered in blood. The reader believes what the characters around Dave come to believe as well—that he killed Katie. The fact that he killed someone else at the same time when Katie was murdered is unlikely to enter the reader's or viewer's mind until more facts are given. The multiple-selective omniscience style focuses the reader or viewer on the action at hand and effectively disguises omissions of events that would clarify the complete picture of what happened. It can also be used to insert a red herring, as is the case here. Thus, the style is ideally suited for telling a mystery story.

The Da Vinci Code

The mystery novel *The Da Vinci Code* deserves special consideration because it was the most popular book in the world and is one of the most popular books of all time. It opens with a murder in progress. The reader witnesses the crime, so there is no mystery regarding who the perpetrator is. The mystery that unfolds is who the mastermind is

behind the triggerman and why the murder was committed. The answer to this involves a still-greater mystery, which takes the reader into a complex retelling of history.

Although the story has a contemporary setting, the extended passages detailing the persecution of the Knights Templar by the Catholic Church and the history of the Holy Grail qualifies it as a historical mystery. It could also be called a multicultural mystery because the reader accompanies the protagonists on a wild ride from Paris to London and gets to experience the feeling of being in Europe.

Although the hero is ostensibly American symbol expert Robert Langdon, it also features a strong female protagonist, Sophie, who although purportedly French, exhibits no sign of it except her occasional exclamations of "*gran per*!" She could easily be American, and thus American readers can identify with her easily. The book's third person multiple-selective omniscient style does not favor Langdon's point of view, so there is no feeling that he is the main protagonist.

The book became famous for its controversial reading of history, which told that Jesus Christ had a child with Mary Magdalene and that her remains are the much sought-after Holy Grail. This, plus the detail that Leonardo da Vinci was in possession of this secret and communicated it cryptically through his art (notably in the painting "The Mona Lisa") was enough to generate immediate and sustained buzz about the book.

Ultimately, not only is the mystery solved in a plot that either consciously or unconsciously recognizes both the quest elements of the mystery and the underlying conservative nature of both the genre and the times, but it also reaffirms the social institution of Christianity, which the novel seemed to be challenging and criticizing

throughout much of the novel. In an extraordinary twist, in the end, the liberal, antichurch character, Teabing, is proven to be the villain, and the previously monstrous albino murderer Silas is redeemed as he valiantly carries the wounded Bishop Aringarosa to the hospital and then dies a sad and poetic death. Also at the end, the seemingly Machiavellian Bishop Aringarosa, head of the cult-like Opus Dei—an ultra-conservative Catholic sect whose members practice self-flagellation—is transformed into a kindly priest who piously says, "a little faith can work wonders" (Brown 464).

Thus, despite its seemingly modern challenge of the established order with its titillating historical premise that the Holy Grail is, in fact, the long-hidden corpse of Jesus's wife, Mary Magdalene, and that Western history is rife with the age-old conflict between the secret followers of the Goddess religion and the evil empire-like Christian church, in the end the story is as conventional as a British drawing-room detective story. We have the least-likely suspect (Teabing), a locked-room puzzle, and a man-and-woman detective pair who display about as much overt sexuality in their relationship as Homes and Watson. Ultimately, it is even more conservative than this genre because another element of traditional detective stories, the bumbling police commander, initially appears but ultimately turns out to be more astute than either of the two amateur detectives. He initially suspects the wrong person but actually figures out the identity of the true killer before they do. He is also a deeply religious man and very much a part of the established order.

The update of the detective pair reflects the times in which it was written. Although Robert Langdon is ostensibly the hero, he is in many ways the sidekick. For

most of the book, he is literally along for the ride. He is described as "looking like Harrison Ford," but he is no Indiana Jones. Sophie is the "woman of action." When the albino killer attacks, Langdon is felled and lies on the floor like the swooning girlfriend of the adventure stories of different times, while Sophie dispatches the killer with a kick. Another situational reversal is that Langdon cannot drive a stick shift, so it is Sophie who must take the wheel for their escape, while Robert sits in the passenger seat, scared by her aggressive driving.

Robert is exactly like the imaginary companion a single, successful professional woman might imagine: intelligent, handsome in a masculine way, but without any irritating macho qualities. He is more or less unobtrusive, but he is helpful when he is needed. He would be someone nice to have for company on a romantic vacation—which is exactly how the book ends. After all of the mystery and mayhem—and the astounding revelation that Sophie is the descendent of Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene—in the end, the two glibly plan a romantic tryst together. The latter is the ultimate statement of the "world view lite" conservatism of the book: world-changing secrets and murder are fine, but at the end of the day, nothing changes, so let's go shopping.

The revealed history of the Catholic Church, shown to be nothing more than a gigantic lie constructed for the purpose of controlling the subjects of the Roman Empire, seems like it is going to turn the world upside down. Yet as the book's end approaches, somehow the impression of the church has flipped back to being warm and fuzzy. The book toys with being revolutionary in its message but ultimately challenges nothing.

Despite its contemporary setting, *The Da Vinci Code* is classified as a historical mystery novel, and the crossover of male readers was no doubt facilitated by its "nonfiction" quality. It is also a romance. In addition to getting Robert, Sophie also discovers her long-lost grandmother in a scene brimming with the purple prose of a romantic novel:

> A board squeaked beneath Sophie's feet, and the woman turned slowly, her sad eyes finding Sophie's. Sophie wanted to run, but she stood transfixed. The woman's fervent gaze never wavered as she set down the photo and approached the screen door. An eternity seemed to pass as the two women stared at one another through the thin mesh. Then, like the slowly gathering swell of an ocean wave, the woman's visage transformed from one of uncertainty . . . to disbelief . . . to hope . . . and finally, to cresting joy. (Brown 474)

The *Da Vinci Code* is not an example of superior writing; it is the ultimate example that the presence of certain essentials in a commercially published book is likely to produce success. It is an intersection of nearly all of the elements of a successful contemporary mystery novel. It is designed to appeal to female mystery readers by providing a female protagonist and point of view that they can identify with, has a romantic ending, and takes readers to places they might want to travel to, such as the Louvre in Paris. On its surface, the book seems like something new and challenging, but it is actually something conventional with new parts. The story dodges the need for police procedure and forensic science with its emphasis on history. It is appealing to male

readers because much of it reads like nonfiction. And finally, it has an unbeatable hook with its astonishing premise.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

The creative project is an adaptation of an existing screenplay to a novel form. The basic physical process of converting a movie screenplay to a novel is the changing of the screenplay's dialogue format to a novel's narrative one. Instead of a name superimposed over a character's spoken lines, a sentence is embedded into the text with "he said" or "he exclaimed," and so forth. As mentioned above with the case of *The Big Sleep*, sometimes the exact dialogue from a novel can make its way into a screenplay version. The reverse can obviously be true as well.

Beyond this elemental physical change, two considerations were made:

1. What other stylistic modifications would be necessary as a result of the change in genre?
2. What character, setting, and plot modifications would be necessary to make the book appeal to the general (female) mystery-reading consumer?

The novel version is found in Appendix A, and the screenplay in Appendix B.

Movie script scenes are relatively easy to convert to the multiple-selective omniscient narrative style. As has been mentioned, changes in scene in a film and in a multiple-selective omniscient novel, such as *Mystic River*, are quite similar. A novel of the latter type also has many of the advantages of the first person narrative. The first of these is the ability to create a comic tone. First person narratives offer the natural ironic juxtaposition of the narrator's thoughts with the outside world. In a multiple-selective

narrative, the inner thoughts of the character—whose point of view is the subject of a given scene—allow for this same ironic (and potentially comic) tone. This is responsible for much of the delight in reading Elmore Leonard. A second advantage shared by first person narratives and multiple-selective narratives is the ability to limit the perspective to that of the protagonist or narrator and thereby heighten the mystery by withholding information from the reader.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

As mentioned in the introduction, the purpose of this creative project was to produce a commercially publishable mystery novel. By definition that means something that has the potential to sell. The scholarly discussion attempts to establish that the mystery novel is a popular contemporary genre because it is actually an enduring archetypal form that is displaced into different outward manifestations that depend on the tastes and circumstances of the times in which it appears. The relative popularity of a given example is related to how well it fits with the tastes of the readership of its day. The literature review provided a chronology of examples that related this idea to a succession of time periods leading up to the present reading market. This culminated with an examination of *The Da Vinci Code*, the most popular mystery novel of all time.

The spine of the thesis, then, is that the varying aspects of mystery novels over time are reflections of what the marketplace wants at that time. A writer who wishes to succeed in this marketplace must have some awareness of how his or her work fits with market demand. In many ways, this makes a traditional academic thesis a dubious place to begin.

The academic world is a womb in which the student incubates before presumably going forth to succeed in the world. However, it is also an institutionalized womb, with its

own priorities, rules, and players. Succeeding as a player within this institution sometimes produces skills applicable to the outside world, but in the case of academic literature and writing classes to prepare for commercial fiction writing, this is probably not true (with the possible exception of courses taught by working professionals in professional workshop settings).

In a purely academic setting, authors are studied, dissected, and judged according to their form and style and to their adherence to the attitudes and beliefs deemed to be good within the academic world. The latter is often related to some hidden message or agenda within the work that is presumably "discovered" by the eager student, who is then graded according to how well he or she proves the veracity of that discovery. That the relevance of this uncovered truth exists solely within the context of the academic world is rarely questioned.

The reality is that the vast majority of writers are just people who want to sell books. This is rarely, if ever, discussed in an academic setting. Nor is the cold truth revealed that books are products in a marketplace that has millions of choices and a customer base that is shrinking and coalescing into fragmented groups and is being further diminished by other media that compete for people's attention.

To deliver a product to this marketplace, a writer must find some means of conveyance. Although this has expanded in recent years to include the Internet and self-publishing, commercial publishing still essentially entails obtaining a literary agent and then having this agent sell the book to a publisher. Both of these entities want the same

thing: a title that will be popular. Neither makes any money if the book doesn't sell. Furthermore, whereas an author may achieve some status or satisfaction from getting published—even if his book doesn't sell—for an agent or publisher, the reverse is true: agenting a book that doesn't sell harms the reputation of the agent, and publishing a book that doesn't sell costs the publisher a lot of money.

Thus, the agent and publisher must be acutely aware of the marketplace—what is selling and what isn't—and what patterns seem to be emerging from the sales figures. They correctly perceive these patterns as holy truths that must be adhered to. They see clearly that books that fit the market's pattern well will probably sell, and those that do not generally won't. Therefore, it follows that a writer's creative process—and by extension, the academic process of preparing a writer to depart from the womb and enter the real world—must start with a market analysis. This has to do with both practicality and compassion for the individual.

A writer often starts a book, and then it takes on a life of its own. The writer follows a muse into a dark labyrinth and gradually creates a world based on the rightness of how each piece falls into place. The writer labors along, listening to his or her muse, assembling a story. A writer's creative zone is a place where he or she hears and sees things that follow naturally from what is written. Applying elements later because they follow some set of rules outside this inner creative process doesn't work. The added elements become tacky additions in a different architectural style to an already completed building: they don't fit.

Additionally, the writer does not want these additions because they are not his or her own. The work has becomes like a child, a beautiful creation. The writer knows it as well as his or herself. The writer knows that it came from nothing and thus is in awe of it. But what happens if the beloved child is the wrong child for the marketplace? What if it is a truly beautiful child, that is, a very good book, but does not fit the pattern of what is selling? The answer is terrible pain and frustration for the author as he or she runs into a solid wall. The writer will read articles on how to get published, read inferior published works, and vainly send query after query to agents and publishers—and never get published. All that pain and wasted time. Doing a market analysis first will not guarantee publication, but it will at least give the writer a fighting chance and perhaps save a lot of wasted time writing something that is unlikely to be publishable.

A market analysis consists of going to bookstores, checking the Barnes and Noble website, and familiarizing oneself with what is selling. An analysis involves reading books that are currently popular within the genre in which one wishes to be published. It is thinking like an agent or publisher before the creative process begins. This is to establish parameters before the muse is allowed to take flight, before the writer has entered the dark void from which the story will come. The writer needs to have very definite boundaries within which his or her creative muse can roam; otherwise, the writer risks taking a long journey to a place of sadness and disappointment.

The changes in the nature of the mystery-reading market discussed herein should give pause to a would-be mystery writer starting to write a novel. The writer must think

about the potential for the product in the marketplace. This goes beyond thinking about the target segment of the market to today's readership as a whole. This may have changed the entire process of writing. In today's visual-media world, the order of "adaptation" has most likely changed: the screenplay should perhaps come first, with the novel being derived from the screenplay and not the other way around. An advantage of this is that it makes writing a novel in multiple-selective omniscient easy and natural because scenes are translated into words. Additionally, achieving the cinematic-like transitions that mark successful novels such as *Mystic River* and *The Da Vinci Code* come naturally because they *are* cinematic transitions.

Before writing a mystery novel, a writer must first think of what kind of (and how many) shelves he or she wants the book to rest upon. If content with one manuscript sitting on a home-library shelf or perhaps a bound copy sitting on the shelf of a university library among other unread master's degree theses, the writer can write exactly what he or she pleases without regard to the readership in the commercial market. If however, the writer wishes to have the final creation occupy multiple shelves in bookstores and in readers' homes, it is necessary to be aware of the commercial market and what is likely to sell in that market.

Certain caveats have emerged from this academic discussion:

1. In a contemporary American setting, the era of the private detective outwitting the police using superior deductive reasoning, powers of observation, or "hunches" is probably over. Because of the CSI effect, contemporary American crimes must be solved using forensic science to be believable. That forensic science must be depicted as accurately as possible, despite being in a

visual medium such as television, some liberties are permitted for the sake of compressing the action into a one-hour time slot. The only way around this is to write a historical or multicultural mystery or a supernatural mystery.

2. In a contemporary American setting, in a novel aimed at a general audience, a first person narrative featuring a female protagonist with a female perspective is more likely to succeed than one featuring a male protagonist. Additionally, the protagonist's narrative should reflect the tastes and interests of women.

3. If there is a male protagonist, he must be appealing to women, and his vision must not dominate. A way to accomplish this would be to use a third person multiple-selective omniscient narrative style and change the point of view frequently so that the male protagonist's viewpoint is only one of many—and the "many" should include women.

4. The contemporary American urban setting is possibly overdone; instead, a foreign, historical, or alternative American setting is probably a better choice.

Put another way,

> Variation within restriction is the rule of thumb for a new writer trying to break in. If you ignore the restrictions, you risk creating an un-publishable mystery. If you fail to create an original and unique variation, you'll have a book that, whatever its sheer quality, can't compete against the hundreds of new mysteries being published every year. (Galen 202)

How this relates to the novel adaptation of the screenplay *Kabuki Tattoo* is that it is dead on arrival. The decision to adapt the screenplay for the creative project was made prior to completing a market-based analysis in the academic literature. The conclusions of the academic literature basically led to the decision that a novel adaptation of the screenplay would be very difficult to publish and market. The project violates too many of the fundamental rules and would have to be mostly rewritten. Since the screenplay was

written in collaboration with a Japanese cowriter who is quite recalcitrant, this would entail another frustrating dead end. The cowriter would be unlikely to agree to the necessary changes for publication. Some of the difficulties with the screenplay-to-novel adaptation are as follows:

1. The general format of the story is of an old private eye solving a crime that the police can't solve using intuition. This is particularly unbelievable in the screenplay because the story involves a contemporary high-profile case of a celebrity couple in Southern California. The police procedures depicted seem quite quaint and fake due to the CSI effect.

2. The protagonist is a Japanese man who lives in America. Of all ethnic groups, Asian men are the least accepted as protagonists by American women. This is demonstrated clearly by the movie industry. Attempts by the motion picture industry to import Asian male stars to the United States as romantic leads, such as Jackie Chan and Chow Yun-fat, have met with failure. Jackie Chan's successful U.S. films were only in cases where he was a partner in a "buddy" situation and did not have the primary love interest. In most successful contemporary mystery novels where there is an Asian protagonist they are half Asian, half American. This is the case in Barry Eisler's Rain series, Massey's Rae Shimura series, Burdett's Bangkok series, and a host of others. Pure Asian protagonists seem to be more accepted in historical mysteries, however.

3. The female protagonist is described from a male point of view. She is young and sexy and calls her father "daddy." She exhibits little of the female awareness and sensibility typically displayed by female detectives written by female authors.

4. The love interests in the story involve relationships between older men and younger women. Female readers are likely to find this distasteful.

5. The setting is made up of Lost Angeles and its environs and is depicted in a gritty, "street" way that showcases its primarily immigrant population. This is not the type of environment that the largest group of readers would be most likely to want to be transported to.

While the plot has some interesting aspects, so many features would have to be changed and so much effort extended to bring it within the parameters needed for

publication that it is highly questionable if it would be worth it. The conclusion of this discussion is that the goal of the creative project, commercial publication, is more likely to be met by starting fresh with a new project that is written according to the rules of the contemporary commercial mystery market.

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