

Source 1b

Goulart, Ron. *An Informal History of the Pulp Magazines*. Ace Books, 1972.

The private eye was born in the early 1920s and flourished in the decades between the two World Wars. The private eye could only have happened first in those years after World War I, the years of Prohibition. There had always been aggressive, straight-shooting fiction heroes. But it took the mood of the '20s to add cynicism, detachment, a kind of guarded romanticism and a compulsion toward action. The disillusionment that followed the war, the frustration over the mushrooming gangster control of the cities affected the detective story as much as it did mainstream fiction. The same things began to unsettle the private detectives that bothered the heroes of Hemingway, Dos Passos and Fitzgerald. And the 1920's preoccupation with the American language, the dissatisfaction with Victorian rhetoric and polite exposition was nowhere more strongly felt than among the writers of private eye stories. The new private detectives of the pulps, while varied individuals, shared certain attitudes and qualifications. They usually stayed away from small towns, most of them working for detective agencies or on their own in the large cities. New York, Chicago, Detroit,

114

Miami and Los Angeles, which *Black Mask* called the New Wild West. They shared, many of the private eyes, a distrust of the police and politicians. They could patiently collect evidence, but they could also cut corners the way the law couldn't. Yet they were linked with reality, with the real crimes of the urban world and the real smell and feel of the mean streets, and this put the best of them in a different class than the essentially adolescent phantom avengers. They were sometimes drunk, oftentimes broke. A private eye would always help somebody in trouble, though he would downplay his compassion. "I could have walked away. I started to walk away and then the sucker instinct got the best of me and I went back." Taking action was important, even if it wasn't well planned always. Though the private eye was not always hopeful, he stuck to his word. "It wasn't worth it, but then it was a deal."

115

Source 2b

D'Ammassa, Don. *Encyclopedia of Adventure Fiction*. Facts on File, 2009.

hard-boiled detectives

Properly speaking, the hard-boiled detective story is a subset of the mystery genre. A typical mystery, however, is more frequently an intellectual puzzle rather than an adventure story-- static, with little action except perhaps in the closing chapters. The reader is usually engaged in a guessing game with the author, almost always involving the identity of the murderer. Sometimes-- as in locked room mysteries-- readers are also kept in the dark about the method used to commit the crime. There may be some latent danger that the protagonist might be the next victim, but the plot is comparatively passive, perhaps with suspense but little and often inconsequential physical action. The classic detective story involved interrogations, searches for clues, and sifting of evidence.

Hard-boiled detective stories may also involve a mystery, but often the solution is revealed well before the conclusion. Knowing who committed the crime and why, the reader is not as concerned about guessing the solution but is instead caught up in the adventures of the protagonist, usually a private detective, sometimes a reporter or other investigator, who takes risks to investigate

the circumstances of the crime and bring the party responsible to justice. Fist fights, gun battles, chases, captures and escapes-- all elements of generic adventure fiction-- are all standard features in hard-boiled mysteries. A particular style of slang is often employed, sometimes authentic, sometimes invented by the author.

75

Source 3b

Panek, LeRoy. An Introduction to the Detective Story. Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987.

On top of the physical and mental toughness, hard-boiled writers tried to convey toughness through the way their characters spoke. Hard-boiled detectives are wisecrackers, willing to sass anyone they meet. Their flippancy in the face of danger and in the teeth of authority goes a long way toward cementing the essential hard element of the hard-boiled hero. Staring down the muzzle of a .45 or telling an employer where to get off both illustrate, in not exactly nonchalance, then integrity and toughness in the hero.

With the mindlessly violent cretins of psychopaths as criminals and with a tough guy as a detective, we inevitably expect the action of the hard-boiled story to be sprightly. And it is. I have already quoted Erle Stanley Gardner as classifying the hard-boiled story as “the action type of detective story.” In his capacity as editor of *The Black Mask*, Shaw often exhorted his writers to rely on action and not talk: he wrote to Horace McCoy “my impression is that you agreed that it would be have a stronger punch to a character to have his strengths brought out by his acts rather than by the writer’s statement.”

As action fiction, the hard-boiled story either rests upon a semi-episodic structure of capture and escape or upon the hero blasting his way through one obstacle after another until he finally reaches his objective. There is also Hammett’s favorite plot of the feud, where the detective encourages criminals to destroy one another. Hard-boiled writers, even though some of them display expertise as plotters, do not do much that is new either with their adventure plots or their detective plots. We will see this later.

What is remarkable about hard-boiled plots is that their use of character and incident is enlivening and enables them to achieve some new effects. First of all, hard-boiled stories bring together so many corrupt and nasty people the writer can both play the game of the hidden criminal and prominently draw psychological points about the nature of criminals. Secondly, the hard-boiled writer can avoid giving too much away to his readers because there are so many crimes. Finally, the hard-boiled story uses all of its elements in concert to create confusion: the number of crimes, the number of criminals, and the pace of the action, as well as other factors, join to create one grand muddle. Ironically, however, many of the features of the hard-boiled plot go against the avowed intention of hard-boiled writers, for they serve mainly to make the detective’s job more difficult, and they reduce the writer’s opportunities for careful explanation. When the detective does solve the crime, therefore, he seems to be in the same genius class as the heroes of golden age writers.

The last characteristic of the hard-boiled story is its style. From the opening sentence, readers know they are reading a hard-boiled story. Hard-boiled style consists of six elements: direct, uncluttered active description;

153

jokes and wisecracks; slang and street talk; purposely ungrammatical dialogue; clipped descriptions of events which have serious implications; and metaphors that vividly apprehend the everyday

experiences of the common man. In the tradition of the dime novel, hard-boiled writers knew their particular readers wanted direct, uncluttered description of rousing action, and they gave it to them. The narration of a hard-boiled story begins at a fast clip and keeps up the pace. The smart comeback and the wisecrack serve to enhance the hero's toughness, as do the clipped descriptions of events that have serious implications.

154

Source 4b

Worthington, Heather. Key Concepts in Crime Fiction. Palgrave, 2011.

In contrast to the mannered, middle-class bourgeois material of Golden-Age crime fiction, which offered comforting resolution and in which even the violence inherent in the act of murder was muted and discreet, the pulp magazines delivered hard-hitting, often graphic and frequently sadomasochistic and misogynistic representations of crime and its omnipotence in society which more closely resembled reality. In the face of such realism, the rarified intelligence of a Sherlock Holmes or the little grey cells of a Poirot were clearly going to ineffectual, inappropriate, and incredible. The man - and it was always a man-- who investigated the crime and corruption on the city streets of America during the 1920s and 30s, the time of Prohibition (1920-1933) and the Great Depression (1929-1939), facing gangster and corrupt police and government officials, needed to be tough and to understand the streets; to speak the right language and possess the right skills for the job.

122

The urban setting of the city is central to the hard-boiled crime narrative as it been to the nineteenth-century detectives in Britain and America. [...] The city brought wealth and poverty into close proximity and so encouraged crime; it provided the anonymity which enabled the criminal to avoid capture by the police [...] For the later hard-boiled detective, the city retained these functions, but was also a breeding ground for corruption in the forces of law as well as criminals, the ideal location for gangsters to carry out their business, and an environment that fostered alienation [...]

123

Source 5b

Marling, William. "Characteristics of the Genre: The Detective's Code." detnovel.com. June 2007, <http://www.detnovel.com/DetectiveCode.html/>.

When the protagonist is a detective, she or he is presumed to have a set of ethics or moral values. These are called "the detective code," or simply "the code," when discussing the genre. The basics of the code are best summarized by Richard Layman in his discussion of what James Wright of the Pinkerton Detective Agency taught Dashiell Hammett (see Hammett section) To summarize, the detective should be anonymous, eschew publicity, be close-mouthed, and secretive. He or she protects good people from bad people, who do not live by the rules; thus, one may break the rules in dealing with them. The detective ignores rules and conventions of behavior, because the client pays for this. Loyalty to the client is very important, but may be superseded by a personal sense of justice or the rule of law. The detective must keep an emotional distance from the people in the case, retain an objective point of view, and consider all pertinent clues.

The classic articulations of the detective code are those delivered by Sam Spade at the end of Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* and by Philip Marlowe in Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep*. But these set-pieces are already variations on the basic credo above. Spade's speech stresses his loyalty to his ex-partner, his profession, his sense of self-preservation, and his refusal to be a romantic "sap."

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.... Then it happens we were in the detective business. Well, when one of your organization gets killed it's bad business to let the killer get away with it. It's bad all around – bad for that one organization, bad for every detective everywhere.... Since I've also got something on you, I couldn't be sure that you wouldn't decide to shoot a hole in me some day.... I don't even like the idea of thinking that there might be one chance in a hundred that you'd played me for a sucker. (183-84)

This is already a narrower, more cynical version of the code. Not surprisingly, Chandler liberalized Philip Marlowe's code in *The Big Sleep*, stressing his "insubordination" of authority and his personal thriftiness, instead of a narrow professionalism.

I'm thirty-three years old, went to college once and can still speak English if there's any demand for it. There isn't much in my trade. I worked for Mr. Wilde, the District Attorney, as an investigator once. ... I was fired. For insubordination. I test very high on insubordination... (7)

Marlowe charges \$25 a day and expenses. For solving General Sternwood's blackmail case, he merits "fifty dollars and a little gasoline" (69), which he volunteers to return when his client complains:

"I'd like to offer you your money back. It may mean nothing to you. It might mean something to me."

"What does it mean to you?"

"It means I refused payment for an unsatisfactory job. That's all." (127-8)

When Vivian Regan supposes that money motivates Marlowe, he mocks her:

"All I have the itch for is money. I am so money greedy that for twenty-five bucks a day and expenses, mostly gasoline and whiskey, I do my thinking myself, what there is of it; I risk my whole future, the hatred of the cops and of Eddie Mars and his pals, I dodge bullets and eat saps and say thank you very much, if you have any trouble, I hope you'll think of me, I'll just leave one of my cards in case anything comes up." (137-38)

Marlowe also defines more clearly than Spade did the detective's relation to the law. When Mona Mars asserts that "as long as people gamble there will be places for them to gamble, Marlowe tells her: "That's just protective thinking. Once outside the law you're all the way outside.... Don't try to sell me on any high-souled racketeers. They don't come in that pattern" (117). But Marlowe doesn't believe in toadying to the police either: "It's against my principles to tell as much as I've told [the police] tonight, without consulting [the client]. As for the cover-up, I've been in the police business myself, you know. They come a dime a dozen in any big city. Cops get very large and emphatic when an outsider tries to hide anything, but they do the same things themselves every other day...." (69-70).

Most versions of the "code" share these common points. The private eye is 1) dedicated to the client, 2) economical, if not thrifty, in his expenses and personal habits, 3) loyal to his profession, 4)

cooperative, to some degree, with the police, 4) concerned with self-survival, and 5) unwilling to be duped by anyone. Later detectives, such as Archer, Spenser, and Warshawski, add a considerable amount of empathetic humanism to the first feature above.

Source 6b

Cawelti, John G. "Myths of Violence in American Popular Culture." Critical Inquiry, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1975, pp. 521-541.

The Myth of the Hard-boiled Hero and His Code

For the hard-boiled hero, violence is a test of honor and integrity, a means of proving an individual code of morality which transcends both the law and the conventional morality of society. He is prepared to risk his life in man-to-man confrontations with the criminal, but it is also significant that he uses his violent abilities with extreme moral restraint. [...]

535

Though the Code is an unwritten law, engraved only on the hearts of its adherents, it is, nevertheless, a stringent set of moral rules concerning, above all, the proper uses of individual violence. The Code assumes that neither written law nor the conventional standards of society are adequate guides to moral conduct. True morality can be judged only by a man who is prepared to face extreme situations of violence with trust in his own individual judgment backed up by a willingness to place his life on the line at the proper moment. The tough private investigator and the heroic policeman are both usually presented as being deeply concerned with the moral conditions of their acts of violence. A substantial part of their special tough-guy heroism results from their willingness to bend or break the law when it seems right to them to do so. [...] The hard-boiled hero's acts do not derive from an unrestrained delight in violence or from a willingness to use violence for personal ends of wealth and power. This is the immoral mode of criminal and outlaw. The hard-boiled hero's violence must be accomplished in such a way as to prove the validity and propriety of his personal code. He is a curious sort of crusader who wanders through the endemic criminality, violence, and corruption of the frontier West or the urban jungle attempting not so much to save society as to preserve the honor and integrity of his character. [...]

536

Source 7b

Walton, Priscilla L. "Form and Forum: The Agency of Detectives and the Venue of the Short Story." Narrative, vol. 6, no. 2, 1998, pp. 123-139.

The violent subject matter that propelled hardboiled detective fiction is illuminated by the mode's location in this historical moment. Taking its impetus from the success of frontier or adventure stories, the mode both catered to and helped to create popular tastes.

The bulk of the pulp magazines comprised short stories, which had also provided the locus for the advent of the literary detective in general. From the introduction of Edgar Allan Poe's Auguste Dupin through the premiere of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, short stories had been the preferred forum for the production of the mystery genre. The production of the pulp magazines, in

turn, allowed for a shift in the construction of the detective, occasioned by their form, their writers, and their audience.

The crime writing found in the pulp magazines offered a revisionary American egalitarian response to the class system inherent in earlier detective fiction. Significantly, up until the advent of the hardboiled narrative, detective stories had been dominated by country house “cosies” and puzzle mysteries. The British Sherlock Holmes, as detective extraordinaire, was both a quirky and somewhat marginal fig-

ure, and a man of status, whose class and the tastes resulting from it comprised essential elements of Conan Doyle’s short stories.

Clearly, the literary “hacks” who grew to prominence in the pulp magazines had interests that differed from their literary forbears. Their “pulp fiction,” as a response to the British mode, did not cater to the presumed cultural tastes of elite (or wannabe elite) readers, but was aimed at the masses, and took the corruption of the privileged for its subject matter. The hardboiled mode never features (wealthy) amateur detectives; instead, it concentrates on and works to create the professional private investigator, who is dependent upon his clients for daily subsistence. The detective is a working-class hero, whose venue is the street rather than the country house or the pied-à-terre.

Hardboiled detective story authors like Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler played to an audience that was conceived as “mass” for one of the first times in literary history. The hardboiled mode, in fact, is synonymous with mass culture. Targeting the “average consumer” as the market for their texts, the pulp writers set their stories in the “mean streets” of major urban centres. Heroes like Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe speak like “common men” and move in a world that requires urban savvy and street smarts. Conventionally, the hardboiled hero manifested a composite of the ethos of American individualism and pragmatism; he is a loner and a rugged individualist, and it is his “I” that coheres the fiction. This “I” incorporates an “eye” that sees systemic corruption and works to avenge it: “But down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean; who is neither tarnished, nor afraid. The detective in this kind of story must be such a man. He is the hero, he is everything” (Chandler 398). Hence, the fiction provides portraits of the underbelly of twentieth century urban life, and draws on the classically American tastes cultivated, at least in part, by the mythogenesis of the Wild West.

The similarities the hardboiled mode shares with the Western are apparent in the ideological bent of its subject matter. Like its frontier counterpart, the hardboiled narrative focusses on “man” vs. the elements, although the elements here comprise the corruption and greed that permeate big city life, and against which the detective must pit himself. The detective is by no means an untarnished avenging angel, but he is an angel, nonetheless, who represents decency and justice, and has the courage to administer it when the law and the legal system fail to perform their rightful duties. Violence is a staple of the hardboiled genre, for the detective must employ the apparatus of the crime in order to expose and avenge it. According to the logic of the hardboiled genre, the private eye cannot execute his own brand of retribution without resorting to violence.

The style of the hardboiled narrative is distinctive. The stripped-down prose of traditional exemplars of the mode draws significantly on the techniques of Modernist writers like Ernest Hemingway. Short pertinent sentences staccato the texts, which are generally written in the first-person, from the private eye’s perspective. In turn, as a “Low Culture” response to “High Culture” Modernism, the texts are riddled with what have come to be called “hard-boiled conceits” (Porter 67) and terse one-liners. For example, in James M. Cain’s “Cigarette Girl,” the protagonist reflects on a woman’s smile: “A smile is nature’s freeway: it has lanes, and you can go any speed

you like, except you can't go back. Not that I wanted to" (128). Such metaphors proliferate throughout the texts and work to create a literary atmosphere that is earthy, moody, and above all else "gritty." As mass-market productions, then, hardboiled narratives draw on the tenets of popular fiction. Accessible, purporting to provide a take on reality-- which they represent in a "window on the world" fashion-- these works construct the mean streets down which the detective walks, as much as they are constructed by them.

127

Source 8b

White, Nicola R. Man's Ruin: Pulp Edition. Strange Roads, 2016.

Crime fiction was a man's world, and romance was the sphere of women. Mickey Spillane and Donald E. Westlake (both now deceased) wrote about hardboiled dames and detectives while the Golden Age of Mills & Boon and Harlequin stretched on from the 1930s to the 80s.

Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett, arguably the two biggest names in pulp fiction, ushered in a new era in crime fiction when they introduced the world to their cynical, sarcastic antiheroes. More of ten than not

270

down-at-heel, and always hard drinking, the 'private dicks' they created were men who had seen enough of the world to know they couldn't change it. Unlike Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, the detectives who populated Chandler and Hammett's worlds were possessed of no particular genius or skill. When they were able to solve cases, it was because they were persistent, or pissed off, or sometimes they just needed the money.

These male characters, for better or worse, indulged in wholesale violence, prone to casual sex and strong language. They were insightful, sardonic narrators, not shy about voicing their observations to crime bosses, crooked cops, and dizzy dames. And just in case we doubt their toughness-- their 'hardboiled essence-- there's almost always a femme fatale waiting in the wings to be tangled with. Too often, women in crime fiction are reduced to plot points or stereotypes. They aren't fully realized individuals acting independently so much as they are set pieces reacting to the actions of men. They are fainting ingénues or hookers with hearts of gold, poor little rich girls and cheating wives. Or perhaps, in the best case scenario, they are sarcastic, street-smart sidekicks and secretaries.

271

Source 9b

Marling, William. "Characteristics of the Genre: The Femme Fatale."
detnovel.com. June 2007, <http://www.detnovel.com/FemmeFatale.html/>.

The femme fatale, defined simply, is an irresistibly attractive woman, especially one who leads men into danger. In hard-boiled fiction, she is usually the protagonist's romantic interest. There have not yet been any hommes fatales (though they abound in gothic and romance fiction). The protagonist's involvement with her may range from mild flirtation to passionate sex, but in the denouement he must reject or leave her, for the revealed plot shows her to be one of the causes of the crime.

Like the hard-boiled hero, the femme fatale dates to classic myth. An example is Circe, who turned Odysseus' men into swine in Book X of *The Odyssey* and the Sirens, whose beauty and alluring song attracted his sailors in Book XII. Odysseus vanquishes the first with a magic root from Hermes and the second by sealing his men's ears with wax. The necessity of extra-human help in resisting the femme fatale's sexual temptation is an ancient feature of the archetype; adherence to the "code" fills this role in the hard-boiled novel. Mary Ann Doane's feminist study explains how "erotic barter" figures in this fiction as well as in film noir.¹

In the Middle Ages, Christianity refashioned this archetype as a devil, called the succubus. The hard-boiled novel, as William Marling has shown, draws on this concept of a female sexual spirit who visits men in their sleep and has sexual intercourse with them. Succubae were thought to disguise themselves in women and to be identifiable by such features as small, pointed teeth, pointed ears, and sharp noses.² To contrast with the succubus, medieval Grail Romances developed several more noble types: the compassionate Queen, La belle dame sans Merci (to modernize, a "heartbreaker"), and the true love. An important attribute of the hero became his ability to distinguish between types of women and to respond accordingly, to discern "good women" from bad. The femme fatale has been roundly condemned as misogynist by feminist literary criticism, though in most (and especially contemporary) hard-boiled narrative the reader is more apt to find modern female characters with some archetypal traits, and female characters unrelated to the archetype at all, rather than the pure archetype. Hammett's Dinah Brand (*Red Harvest*) and Janet Henry (*The Glass Key*) are early examples of femmes fatales who defy the misogynist label. More recently, scholarship on film noir has seen the role of femme fatale as empowering, pointing to Bette Davis and Kathleen Turner, among others.

One of the purest archetypal representations, however, also comes from Hammett. Gabrielle Dain in *The Dain Curse* is sexually attractive, belongs to a cult, uses drugs, and has small, pointed ears and teeth. The detective has to imprison her in a cottage to see her through delirium tremens and exorcise her lust. Raymond Chandler gave the same physical features to murderous, sex-obsessed Carmen Sternwood in *The Big Sleep*. Had he succumbed to her, Marlowe would have been shot at the novel's end. Other classic femme fatale characters (not pure archetypes) are Brigid O'Shaughnessy in *The Maltese Falcon*, Velma Valento/Helen Grayle in *Farewell, My Lovely*, Cora in *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and Phyllis in *Double Indemnity*. These characters are more individuated and less archetypal in appearance and personality. Authors tend to deploy the femme fatale in signature fashion. Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer novels are filled with buxom blonde killers. Ross Macdonald treats his female characters much more sympathetically and psychologically; few qualify as archetypal. James M. Cain lessened his use after *Double Indemnity*; his widowed heroine in *Mildred Pierce* (1941, not covered in this study) makes her way alone through the Depression. Use of the archetype has not been restricted to male writers. Honey West, the detective created by Gloria and Forest Fickling, embodied many archetypal conventions in her "blonde bombshell" appearance. The femme fatale appears in many contemporary works. Even those writers who avoid the archetype or "unmask" it, such as Sara Paretsky and Sue Grafton, sometimes use it negatively.

A good example of how the femme fatale is used creatively is Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*. There Sam Spade is attracted to three women, a motif that echoes the ancient Greek Fates, who tell men the future. He is involved in an adulterous affair with his partner's wife, Iva Archer. His secretary, Effie Perrine, is a tom-boyish, competent girl-next-door who would make the perfect spouse. Brigid O'Shaughnessy, the femme fatale, seems to promise sensuality and wealth, but Spade sees through her-- and uses her when she thinks she is using him. The novel's end leaves Spade alienated from Effie, who is, ironically, mad that he rejected the "romance" of Brigid, while Iva knocks at the door. It is a grim morality play about making your bed and lying in it.

The femme fatale in movies predates the advent of film noir. Theda Bara and Marlene Dietrich already played the role in the silent era. The type appears in the 1930s crime movies and then in film noir. Bette Davis was an early example and later used the conventions to portray strong characters (*Beyond the Forest, The Letter*). Barbara Stanwyck and Joan Crawford (right), who had played strong-willed, working women in the 1930s, enhanced their fading careers in the 1940s by playing some of the most dramatic femmes fatales: Stanwyck in *Double Indemnity, Clash by Night* and *Witness to Murder*; Crawford in *The Damned Don't Cry, Possessed* and *Sudden Fear*. Ida Lupino was one of the most convincingly human of the movie femmes fatale (*The Asphalt Jungle*), contrasting with the icy eroticism of Stanwyck (*High Sierra; Beware, My Lovely; While the City Sleeps*). Other notable performances include Lana Turner's in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, Joan Bennett's in *Scarlet Street* and Rita Hayworth's in *Gilda* and *The Lady from Shanghai*.

End Notes

1 Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales* London: Routledge, 1991.

2 William Marling, "The Hammett Succubus," *Clues* (Spring, 1982), 66-75.

Source 10b

Cawelti, John G. Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture. University of Chicago Press, 1976.

The hard-boiled formula resembles the main outlines of the classical detective story's pattern of action. It, too, moves from the introduction of the detective and the presentation of the crime, through the investigation, to a solution and apprehension of the criminal. Significant differences appear in the way this pattern is worked out in the hard-boiled story. Two are particularly important: the subordination of the drama of solution to the detective's quest for the discovery and accomplishment of justice; and the substitution of a pattern of intimidation and temptation of the hero for the elaborate development in the classical story of what Northrop Frye calls "the wavering finger of suspicion" passing across a series of potential suspects.

The hard-boiled detective sets out to investigate a crime but invariably finds that he must go beyond the solution to some kind of personal choice or action. While the classical writer typically treats the actual apprehension of the criminal as a less significant matter than the explanation of the crime, the

hard-boiled story usually ends with a confrontation between detective and criminal. Sometimes this is a violent encounter similar to the climatic shutdown of many westerns. This difference in ending results from a greater personal involvement on the part of the hard-boiled detective. Since he becomes emotionally and morally committed to some of the persons involved, or because the crime poses some basic crisis in his image of himself, the hard-boiled detective remains unfulfilled until he has taken a personal moral stance toward the criminal. In simpler hard-boiled stories like those of Spillane, the detective, having solved the crime, acts out the role of judge and executioner. In the more complex stories of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett, the confrontation between detective and criminal is less violent and more psychological. In both cases we find the detective forced to define his own concept of morality and justice, frequently in conflict with the social authority of the police. Where the classical detective's role was to use his superior intellect and psychological insight to reveal the hidden guilt that the police seemed unable to discover, the hard-boiled detective metes out the just punishment that the law is too mechanical, unwieldy, or corrupt to achieve. [...]

Because the hard-boiled detective embodies the threat of judgment and execution as well as exposure, the pressure against his investigation is invariably more violent than in the classical story. Phillip Marlowe, Sam Spade, Mike Hammer, and the rest are threatened by physical violence to a degree unknown to the classical detective whose activities are largely confined to the examination of clues, the taking of testimony, and the reconstruction of the crime. The hard-boiled detective faces assault, capture, drugging, blackjacking, and attempted assassination as a regular feature of his investigations. Moreover, he is frequently threatened with loss of his license or tempted with bribes of various kinds to halt his investigations [...]

143

Despite his involvement in the contemporary urban metropolis, the hard-boiled detective's ethical attitudes and modes of judgment usually evoke some earlier era, most commonly the chivalric code of the feudal past, though sometimes, as in the case of Mickey Spillane, a more primitive tribal ethos of vendetta. In this respect, the hard-boiled detective greatly resembles the western hero whose moral code transcends the existing social order. Like the western hero, the tough-guy detective's action-oriented code of honor enables him to act in a violent world without losing his moral purity and force. Though the hard-boiled detective remains a marginal man, a loner, who must end his cases by returning to his dusty office in the broken-down office building-- an act analogous to the cowboy hero's departure back into the desert-- his unsullied isolation and failure and failure maintain the purity of his stance as a man of honor in a false society [...] The intensely moral stance that lies behind the façade of toughness and cynicism accounts for many of the characteristic differences in method between hard-boiled and classical detectives. For the hard-boiled detective, a case is not merely a problem; it can become a crusade to root out and destroy the evils that have corrupted the urban world

151
