

Andrew Green

Senior Lecturer

Brunel University London

Gaskell 051, Kingston lane

Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB8 3PH

+44 (0)1895 267157

[andrew.green@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:andrew.green@brunel.ac.uk)

## **Abstract**

This paper explores the nature of Golden Age crime narrative, which is taken to refer to the works of writers of detective fiction who produced their oeuvre largely – though not exclusively – in Britain and in the period between the two World Wars. It argues that the works of these authors are ‘enacted criticism’ – creative acts that are fundamentally critical responses to genre. It argues that these narratives can be read as mutually constitutive meaning-making ‘spaces’ – texts within which form is constantly renegotiated within a literary context.

**Keywords:** Golden Age detective fiction, enacted criticism, creativity, literary context

**Green, A. Death in a Literary Context: Detective Novels of the Golden Age as enacted criticism.**

**Introduction**

Both literary and philosophical traditions propose the personal, social and educational value of producing and reading literary texts. In *Ars Poetica* Horace, drawing on Aristotle, posits an educational function of poetry seeing it as a ‘projection’ of the poet – an act of outreach. Philip Sidney, in terms reminiscent of Chaucer in *The Parliament of Fowls* (383, l. 15), suggests what this act of outreach might comprise, highlighting the importance of balancing pleasure and moral instruction. Literary texts, this implies, are conceived as spaces both of entertainment and of education.

In relation to literature more generally, Heidegger proposes in ‘The Origin of Work of Art’ (44) that the ‘projective saying’ of literary works releases the creative possibilities of language to forge articulations and meanings which are ordinarily hidden. Following this tradition of thought, literary texts are seen to possess particular and distinctive properties or affordances for the debate and realization of meaning and the ‘selves’ that lie behind these; they represent creative and critical ‘spaces’ within which and through which the world and its potential meanings can be shaped.

Works of Golden Age detective fiction, here defined as the works of writers of detective fiction who produced their work largely – though not exclusively – in Britain and in the period between the two World Wars, represent a substantial endeavour to ‘shape the world’. They are interesting not only in that they create imaginative engagements with the world (and the fictional microcosms) they represent, but in that they inherently critically re-evaluate their own form. The authors of the Golden Age and their fictional detectives, through their interactions with the world around them and the crimes they investigate, not only interpret that world and its moral frameworks, but also shape it in two senses: firstly by adopting, undermining or challenging certain moral and ethical positions; and secondly by engaging in an internal ‘dialogue’ they seek to define the narrative terms by which such positions are to be ‘written’ and ‘read’. As such, these detection narratives must be seen not simply as morally instructive. Instead they are to be seen as ludic acts of (self-)criticism, written in self-consciously playful interaction with one another.

### **Death in a Literary Context**

An excellent example of this is to be found in Michael Innes’ 1936 novel *Death at the President’s Lodging*. Inspector Appleby, called upon to investigate the death of Professor Umpleby, the Master of St Anthony’s College, is at once struck by the extent to which the scene of the murder

appears as a literary construct. As Appleby views the ‘fantastic death-chamber’ (22) he reflects how ‘[m]ystery stories were popular in universities – and even among the police’ (22-3). Building on this foundation of ‘stories’, he then proceeds consciously to use his knowledge of such stories as the basis for his initial ‘reading’ of the crime scene. To such an extent does he accept ‘the extraordinary power of the Word’ (23) that he finds himself ‘half-prepared to accept the artificial, the strikingly *fictive*, as normal’ (23). Appleby’s view of the ‘text’ of Umpleby’s murder takes into account its literary constructedness, and he is prompted to consider: ‘*Why* had Umpleby met his death in a story-book manner? For that his death had been set in an elaborately contrived frame seemed now clear’ (23). Pressing his logic of ‘story’ – the murder scene as a text to be read – Appleby draws the striking inference that Umpleby has ‘died in a literary context; indeed he had in a manner of speaking died amid a confusion of literary contexts’ (23). Ultimately, Appleby goes so far as to say that in the crime scene he encounters ‘there was contrivance in a literary tradition deriving from all the progeny of Sherlock Holmes, while in the fantasy of the bones there was something of the incongruous tradition of the “shocker”. Somewhere in the case, it seemed, there was a mind thinking in terms both of inference and of the macabre.... A mind, one might say, thinking in terms of Edgar Allan Poe’ (23).

Appleby and Dodd, the local policeman, both display a deep-seated need to ‘read’ the scene of the crime and to place it as a ‘fictive’ event (Grauby;

Gill). Not only do they draw on Poe and Conan Doyle, they also place Umpleby's murder in defined moral literary frameworks from the Bible and John Bunyan. This is a death that occurs and is investigated in a self-confessedly literary context.

It is perhaps for this reason that the fictional space of Golden Age crime appears to reside in such a particular and 'cosy' literary milieu (Knight). This paper, however, argues that far from representing a form of literary 'comfort' and stasis, as responses such as W.H. Auden's 'The Guilty Vicarage' might suggest, Golden Age crime writers, the detective figures they created and their readers are in fact engaged in a far less secure and stable project. Symons suggests that works of Golden Age detective fiction are often 'no more than entertaining verbal or visual puzzles to which some kind of story was attached' (*Criminal Practices* 5). It is the contention of this paper, however, that the literary games of detection are in and of themselves one of the key functions of such narratives. The Golden Age authors offer their readers a shifting and self-critical literary landscape within which meanings and moral codes are less 'fixed' and 'safe' than may be expected and where narrative itself is both the site and the subject of critical interrogation. Their works represent a dialogic medium for the exploration of their genre and its possibilities.

### **The figure of the detective**

The recognisable figure of the detective began to emerge in the Victorian era. Some of these were police detectives – seminal literary creations such as Dickens’s Inspector Bucket (*Bleak House*) and Wilkie Collins’s Sergeant Cuff (*The Moonstone*) and a raft of comparable figures in the works of writers such as B.L. Farjeon (father of J.J. Farjeon), Headon Hill and M. McDonnell Bodkin. Others, like Robert Audley in Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* were amateur sleuths. The female detective also has her roots in the Victorian era through such creations as Collins’s Marian Halcombe (*The Woman in White*) and Magdalen Vanstone (*No Name*), and in the anachronistic female detectives of Andrew Forrester (*The Female Detective*) and William S. Hayward (*Revelations of a Lady Detective*). These early detective figures – a combination of professionals and amateurs, upper class and lower class, males and females – demonstrate that from its genesis detective fiction was founded upon experiment and intertextual dialogue. Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes and Chesterton’s Father Brown built on these earlier detectives and in their turn provided the bedrock for the writers who formed The Detection Club. In the works of Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, Ngaio Marsh, Margery Allingham, Gladys Mitchell, Anthony Berkeley, Freeman Wills Crofts, George Bellairs and others, the archetype of the Golden Age detective emerged in figures such as Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple, Lord Peter Wimsey, Inspector Roderick Alleyn, Albert Campion, Mrs Bradley, Roger Sherringham, Inspector French and Inspector Littlejohn respectively. The on-going power of such archetypes is evidenced

by the enduring figure of the series detective: Inspector Morse (and associated spin-offs), Adam Dalgleish, Dalziel and Pascoe, Rebus, Agatha Raisin, Hamish Macbeth and a plethora of others.

### **Subjunctivizing reality: the power of ‘what if?’**

Literary detectives are characterized by their persistent reiteration of the seminal question ‘what if?’ Whatever the situation or milieu they are investigating, it is their constant challenging of apparent circumstances that enables them to unearth the facts and solutions (or ‘truth’) that lie beneath the surface. The discovery of such solutions is the result of detectives’ often idiosyncratic methods – be it Holmes’s deduction, Poirot’s ‘little grey cells’, Thorndyke’s ‘invaluable green case’ of chemicals (Freeman) or Dr Manson’s ‘little box of tricks’ (Radford and Radford). However, it is detectives’ willingness to listen to the nagging ‘what if?’ – their determination to subjunctify contingent circumstances and to pursue potential explanations – that ultimately opens the way for discovery, allowing them to ‘read’, to ‘write’ and ‘re-write’ the narrative until a coherent ‘telling’ of the crime emerges. This process, of course, mirrors and provides an implicit commentary upon the work of author behind the narrative. This is narrative as ‘enacted criticism’.

Returning to the passage from Michael Innes, the moral ‘narratives’ offered by the Bible and Bunyan sit alongside the fiction of Doyle (‘all the progeny

of Sherlock Holmes' (23)) and Poe to enable Appleby to engage with the 'story-book manner' (23) of Umpleby's murder. So far from proving merely derivative as one might suspect, it is the very 'fictive' nature of Umpleby's death that provides Appleby with the inspiration to engage creatively with the 'confusion of literary contexts' (23) he encounters at the scene of the crime. Both the act of murder and the processes of detection are conceived in literary terms.

In exploring 'fictivity' and its role in Golden Age detective narrative, the ideas of Jerome Bruner prove enlightening. Bruner (11) distinguishes between two interwoven 'modes of thought' that he argues function simultaneously within literary texts: the 'narrative' (the functional elements of tale-telling in and on their own terms, as story) and the 'paradigmatic' (the grander dimension of meaning-making and extrapolation of a tale). By virtue of their respective positions relative to the literary text, readers, writers and detectives are all differently positioned to fulfil both functions.

For Bruner, these two modes of thought or 'cognitive functioning' – related yet discreet methods of textual intervention – provide 'distinctive ways of ordering experience, of constructing reality' with significant differences in their 'procedures for verification' (11). Importantly he does not conceive of 'narrative' and 'paradigmatic' modes of thought hierarchically, but insists that they function symbiotically to liberate the potential of the 'paradigmatic imagination' (13). This, it can be argued, is what opens the broader meaning-making possibilities of the 'what if?'

Crime narrative, in these terms, ceases to be either a determinant or a determining account and becomes instead a provisional or exploratory space within which potential meanings ('what ifs?') are differently proposed and interrogated by the author (writer-teller), the reader (reader-teller) and the detective (reader-writer-participant-teller).

Particularly interesting is the way in which the literary narrative encourages these differently-placed readers to perform 'virtual re-tellings' of the crime situations they encounter. These re-tellings constitute acts of transformative creativity, representing personalized and often shifting 'ownings' of story which serve at once to fix (albeit a provisional fixing) and to pluralize meaning. The very act of (re-)telling tales is a creative and iterative process of literary projection. The subjunctification (the persistent 'what if?') required of the narrative-building act, leads the author/reader/detective to work with the emerging 'facts' of the crime and to reshape these into potential solutions. As such the tale and its many potential re-tellings (reiterations?) represent what Bruner calls a 'trafficking in human possibilities rather than in settled certainties' (26).

This constantly shifting set of interactions around a plethora of potential 'writings' and 'readings' is the stuff of Golden Age detective fiction. Authors, readers and detectives work creatively with co-existent plural possibility and interconnection in both narrative and meta-narrative dimensions. The iterative construction of narrative (and its embedded reconstruction of the central crime), is a quintessentially experimental (or

subjunctive) activity. Detectives, for example, draw upon a variety of narrative, psychological, spiritual and inductive/deductive processes to craft summative (though not necessarily ‘true’) accounts of crime based on information (of varying reliability) received from witnesses called upon to recount their version of elements of the tale. These accounts authors and readers are at liberty either to own or to reject according to their own schemas and so the emerging narrative becomes a dialogic literary space.

Dialogic interaction and narrative experimentalism between writers and readers is encoded in some of the manifestations of mystery writing of the Golden Age: competitions where readers would write in with solutions to incomplete mysteries, and collaborations and ‘round-robin’ tales by members of The Detection Club such as *The Floating Admiral*, *The Anatomy of Murder*, *Six Against the Yard* and *Ask a Policeman* are examples. The coherence and neatness or otherwise of these works is not the point – it is the process of story-reading and story-making that is the salient concern. A more recent example is Skvorecky’s *Sins for Father Knox*.

Readers well-versed in the ‘rules’ of detective writing as established by Knox, Van Dine and others were and are well-prepared to play the game of reading (and writers well-prepared – with tongues firmly in cheek on occasions – for the game of producing) works of detective fiction. This is crime literature as ‘play’, or what Bayard (20) refers to as ‘the game-playing dimension’.

## **The Golden Age ‘game’**

It is in the Golden Age novelists’ playful engagement with the telling of story that part of the appeal of their work lies. Readers are complicit in more-or-less honest ‘play’ with the author. In these carefully constructed, humorous (Shaw) and self-reflexively creative literary games, detectives function as the fulcrum upon which the tales balance. Detectives’ playful reconstructive narratives provide a counterpoint to the crime stories with which their own narratives intersect (Todorov; Cawelti) and which they are charged in genre terms to solve. This interaction functions by means of multiple ‘internal’ and sometimes contradictory narratives offered by participant-witnesses (sub-narrators) involved in the tale. The narrative interactions thus established become a sophisticated literary game, as the passage from Innes suggests. The ‘literary context’ within which Golden Age detective novels operate is not merely a genre device but an embedded site of creatively enacted criticism.

Todorov (45-6) argues that the whodunnit requires ‘two stories of which one [the story of the crime] is absent but real, the other [the story of the investigation of the crime] present but insignificant.’ He creates an ontological-epistemological distinction between the story of the crime which tells “‘what really happened’” and the story of detection which explains “‘how the reader (or the narrator) has come to know about it’”.

This is in one sense an acceptable proposition. If the primary interest of the whodunnit is the tale of the murder and the events that precede and follow it, then the second story is indeed, whilst a surface presence, ultimately subservient. However, this is to suppose that it is indeed the crime story that holds the primary interest for the reader – a supposition that many readers of Golden Age crime might challenge. After the (often forgettable) crime narrative has passed away it is the figure of the detective who frequently remains to the fore. As much is suggested by Delamater and Prigozy, who observe that Golden Age detectives are often ‘known more for themselves than for the actual crimes they solve’ (2). Hühn also deflects importance from the ‘story’ of Golden Age detective narratives when he observes that ‘classic detective fiction is constituted by the process and problem of story-telling’ (39) rather than the problem of the story itself.

If, therefore, the pleasure of the detective story lies not only (perhaps not even mainly) in the solution of the crime and lies equally (if not more) in the process of its solving, then the tale dubbed as subservient by Todorov takes on a much greater significance. If it is, indeed, the solving rather than the solution – the detective narrative rather than the murder narrative – that most interests the author and/or the reader, then the burden of interest shifts from the ontological ‘what’ on to the epistemic ‘what if?’.

**But ‘what if?’...**

It is important to ask here whether, in so elevating the detective, authors and readers are at some level conniving in the assumption that the detective's solution must be correct?

Not necessarily. Readers may not choose to accord the detective such absolute rights of interpretation and solution. Crime narratives function around questions – of motive, of investigation, of interpretation, of narrative coherence, and so on. It is only right, therefore, that readers should question detectives' solutions. For this reason, the most effective Golden Age detective novels are not simply 'whodunnits'. Rather they are sites of subjunctivity: 'who-might-have-dunnits', 'who-can-I-prove-is-most-likely-to-have-dunnits' or 'who-can-I-convince-you-dunnits'. It is 'what if?' rather than 'here's what' that becomes the primary interest of the tale. Golden Age detective fiction, in this analysis, may be read as a dialogic experiment in what Bruner terms 'subjunctification'.

In an attempt to illustrate the process of 'subjunctification' at work, Bruner drew on another of Todorov's ideas – the concept of 'transformations'. Transformations, in Bruner's interpretation, are the ways in which readers convert the potentials of story by taking 'simple, expository and non-subjunctive' statements and elaborating them to introduce a range of 'psychological' possibilities. Story can thus be complexified and in the process become 'contingent and subjunctive' (29). Appropriately enough, Bruner used the sentence '*x commits a crime*' as his starting point and demonstrated how through twelve potential verb phrase modifications (six

simple and six complex) the said ‘crime’ can be variously ‘placed’ and understood within ‘a landscape of consciousness’ (30). The insertion of a modal auxiliary verb (‘*x might commit a crime*’), provides an implicit context for the action. A more complex transformation, however, might be employed in order to suggest a more complex psychological reality (e.g. ‘*x foresees he will commit a crime*’). This process of transformation in the reading and (re-)telling of events is a process that permits ‘discourse to acquire a meaning without this meaning becoming pure information’ (32). Such transformations and the narrative possibilities they usher in, Todorov asserts, ‘thicken the connective web that holds a narrative together in its depiction of both action and consciousness’ (233). For readers of Golden Age crime, such formulations connect closely to the ways in which investigation and emergent narrative function. Such formations litter the deliberations of any number of detectives. As Bruner suggests, there is only so much readerly interest and investigative mileage to be obtained from the statement that ‘*x commits a crime*’.

Subjunctivity imports contingency into narrative, eschewing settled conclusions or certainties. This carries particular significance for crime narratives, which are predicated simultaneously upon certainty (Murder is morally wrong. The detective will solve the crime.) and uncertainty (Is this a case of murder or suicide? Will the detective successfully solve the crime?) Within the crime narrative, subjunctivity (whether a reader’s, a witness’s or a detective’s) permits and even depends upon the creative impetus of

uncertainty. Through the internalized and the actual dialogues of the text, readers, authors and detectives engage with ‘the varying perspectives that can be constructed to make experience comprehensible’ (Bruner 37). So, faced with multiple overlapping accounts of a focal event that together need to be composed into one overall ‘explanatory’ narrative, the author, detective and reader together navigate a plurality of narrative possibilities. It is through the constant forming, re-forming and transforming of possible meanings – a constant reiteration of ‘what if?’ – that the narrative progresses, and in these constantly shifting sands we can identify the interplay of the ‘psychologising’ and ‘thickening’ narrative substitutional processes that Bruner and Todorov envisage. These processes are necessary first to identify or create and then hypothetically to fill troubling ‘gaps’ – the creative ‘space’ of the crime narrative.

### **Partners in Crime**

As the preceding discussion suggests, Golden Age crime texts explicitly highlight their own ‘fictionality’ and place considerable emphasis on the ways in which story (often comprising multiple and interconnected stories) is constructed. Indeed, the detection storyline is explicitly and formally directed at the construction of an overarching narrative that makes sense of the disparate stories of its participants – it is intrinsically metanarrative. Self-reflexive references to other detective fiction and the processes of its

creation are core to Golden Age writers' compositional processes: classic examples such as Carr's *The Hollow Man*, Christie's *The Body in the Library* and Milne's *The Red House Mystery* come to mind. Bayard sees this as one of the ways in which detective writers' practice *detournement*.

Consider Agatha Christie's *Partners in Crime* in which Tommy and Tuppence Beresford recursively reference and parody the methods of a variety of classic detectives from Father Brown and Sherlock Holmes via John Thorndyke and Richard Sheringham to Hercule Poirot. These detectives' fictional methods are a means by which Tommy and Tuppence – by a fictional sleight of hand thus cast as 'real' in opposition to other detectives whose work is simply the stuff of fiction – explore not only the fictional crimes they encounter, but also the fictional representation of crime. Christie shapes a narrative that is self-referential, self-perpetuating and self-verifying, spinning its meaning by a simultaneous cleaving to and distancing itself from its own genre. Tommy and Tuppence, Christie and the reader collude in narrative (self-)deception. Christie alerts us from the outset to what she is doing: Tommy and Tuppence look at the contents of a library shelf containing 'detective stories by the leading masters of the art' (23) and determine to undertake a series of experimental games in literary detection – 'to try different styles, and compare results'. The title *Partners in Crime* is thus in itself self-reflexive. The partners in crime alluded to are on one level Tommy and Tuppence Beresford – a detective partnership. They also work in partnership with Christie and with Conan Doyle, Chesterton, Freeman,

Berkeley as authors of the various detection ‘models’ whose methods they apply. Their final partners in crime are the readers, whose collusion is equally essential if the game is to function.

This is a particularly rich example, but such allusions to other figures from the literary detective canon are to be found almost ubiquitously in Golden Age crime fiction (Rowland). Sherlock Holmes is frequently referenced, as are Auguste Dupin and M. Lecoq. In E.C. Bentley’s *Trent’s Last Case*, for example, the eponymous detective reflects on his practices and recalls how in his first case he ‘did very much what Poe had done in the case of the murder of Mary Rogers’ (38). This not merely literary nepotism, however. In typically humorous style in *Four Days’ Wonder* (155-6) one of A.A. Milne’s characters apostrophizes the greats of the detective writing world: ‘O Robert Louis Stevenson, O Arthur Conan Doyle, O Freeman Hardy and Willis, I mean Freeman Wills Croft, I thank thee.’

One reason for such obsessive literary contextualization is as a means of purporting realism. Any given tale is presented as real by insisting on the ‘fictionality’ of what happens in other books. Thus, Poirot claims his reality on the basis that he is not Thorndyke; Thorndyke his on the basis that he is not Peter Wimsey; Wimsey his on the grounds that he is not Trent, and so on. The Golden Age detective novel enshrines this circularity of logic and self-definition and in so doing it comically subverts itself, playing with the readers’ own sense of the artificiality of what they are reading (Watson).

Detective stories and their methods of representation are also frequently presented as the means by which to 'read' each other. So, for example, Inspector Wilson in Alan Melville's *Quick Curtain* (102) imagines an overheard conversation:

Suppose, for the sake of argument, that Foster had been heard by some third party to say, 'I'd like to kill you for so-and-so, Baker' – the way people are always saying things like that in detective novels.

In *The Fourth Wall* (57), A.A. Milne employs similar devices. Jimmy uses the tropes of detective fiction to critique his investigation:

JIMMY: Oh, I don't know. It seems to leave a lot to chance. All right in a story book, but would Uncle Arthur do all the things he was expected to do? And if he didn't, what then?

A few pages later Susan, Jimmy's investigative companion, uses detective fiction as a distancing device – a counterfoil to her own 'real' scenario:

SUSAN: It's silly, but I suppose my nerve's gone suddenly. It was just like working at something in a book before, but now it's - it's getting so close to us. (64)

In *Murder in Piccadilly* (175), Charles Kingston explicitly addresses the authorial method of detective writers:

Wise and dapper Superintendent Melville had taught him... that in a real life mystery the key had to be made to fit the lock, whereas in fiction it was the key that was first manufactured.

Later a police officer out tailing a suspect provides an explicitly 'literary' context for his actions:

His first decision in a moment when more than one decision had to be made, was to dive into the nearest doorway, but mingled with the same thought was a glimmering of the danger of imitating the police sleuth of fiction. (275)

Another excellent example comes once more from *Four Days' Wonder* (39). Here Milne deliberately subverts the methods of the detective novel:

Jenny realized that the thing to avoid was taxis, because taxi-drivers always remembered when they had driven a fair girl in a biscuit-coloured hat and green georgette to Waterloo Station, and they nearly always heard her say to the porter: 'Bittlesham Regis, it's the three-ten isn't it?' and then they always went to Scotland Yard and,

after waiting a little while, were shown into the Inspector's room, and told him all about it. So she went to Bloomsbury by omnibus, and was very glad that omnibus drivers didn't remember so well, or want so much money.

And in the *Case of the Gilded Fly* (Crispin 64-5), Gervase Fenn even conflates detection and literary criticism:

Detection and literary criticism really come to the same thing: intuition...Once the idea has occurred to you, you can work on substantiating it from the text – or from the remainder of the clues...I'm the only literary critic turned detective in the whole of fiction.

Fenn's work as a literary critic and his work as a detective are alike subjunctifying: acts of enacted genre criticism.

Golden Age detective fiction is in constant formalized, stylized dialogue with itself. Having explored these other examples, let us return to Michael Innes, our starting point. Like so many other authors of the Golden Age, it is perhaps not surprising that Symons describes Innes' work as 'a literary conversation with detection taking place on the side' (*Bloody Murder*, 115).

## Conclusion

As this paper has set out to demonstrate, detection is simultaneously epistemology and ontology. A way of knowing and a thing to be known. Rowland approaches this when she identifies how ‘the detectives’ evolving selves draw the reading consciousness into the imaginary world of the novel’ (23). The act of reading detective fiction of the Golden Age, however, seems to go further than this. The reader complicitly engages (like the writer, the detective and other characters) with the game of denying the fictionality of the novel because of the reality it claims for itself. And so we return to the key issue of literary context.

As Clifford Kitchin tantalizingly suggests in *Crime at Christmas*, the corpse and the means of murder are intended to be seen in self-confessedly and self-reflexively ‘literary’ terms. As has been argued, Golden Age crime writing is a determined ‘what if?’, and that ‘what if’ is the reality at which these texts aim: the reality of a writership and a readership together ‘talking around’ the nature of a form, the nature of humanity, the nature of story-telling, the nature of discovery, the nature of coincidence, the nature of connection. Golden Age writers are constantly and self-reflexively aware of their own artifice and playfully write this self-awareness (and their readers’ awareness of the games they were playing) into the fabric of their work. As

such, they provide us with an endlessly fictionally ‘aware’ set of characters, and as readers we constantly collude in this process by simultaneously holding off and embracing the blurring of fiction and reality. The constant references to the fictionality of the detective form are simultaneously creative engagement and critical distancing – a form of what might be termed ‘enacted criticism’.

### **Works cited**

Auden, Wystan H. “The Guilty Vicarage”. *Harper’s Magazine*, 1948 (5). 406-12.

Bayard, Pierre. *Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?* Fourth Estate: London, 2001.

Bentley, Edmund C. *Trent’s Last Case*. University of California Press: San Diego CA, University of California Press, 1913, 1977.

Braddon, Mary E. *Lady Audley’s Secret*. Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1862, 2012.

Bruner, Jerome. *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986.

Carr, John D. *The Hollow Man*. London: Orion Books, 1935, 2002.

Cawelti, John G. "Colonization, Modern Literature, and the Detective Story." Delamater and Prigozy, 1997. 5-16.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. "The Parliament of Fowls", in *Chaucer*, edited by The Riverside, 383–394. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1379, 1987.

Christie, Agatha. *Partners in Crime*. London: Harper Collins, 1929, 2007.

----- . *The Body in the Library*. London: Harper Collins, 1942, 2002.

Collins, William W. *No Name*. Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1862, 2009.

----- . *The Moonstone*. London: Penguin, 1868, 1998.

----- . *The Woman in White*. London: Penguin, 1860, 1987.

Crispin, Edmund. *The Case of the Gilded Fly*. London: Vintage, 1944, 2009.

Delamater, Jerome & Prigozy, Ruth. *Theory and Practice of Classic Detective Fiction*. London: Greenwood Press, 1997.

Dickens, Charles. *Bleak House*. London: Vintage, 1853, 2008.

Forrester, Andrew. *The Female Detective*. London: British Library Press, 1864, 2016.

Freeman, Richard A. "The Case of Oscar Brodski", in *The Singing Bone*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1912.

Gill, Gillian. *Agatha Christie: The Woman and Her Mysteries*. New York: Macmillan, 1990.

Grauby, Françoise. "'This Isn't a Detective Story, Mrs. Oliver': The Case of the Fictitious Author". *Clues: A Journal of Detection* 34.1 (2016): 116-125.

Hayward, William S. *Revelations of a Lady Detective*. London: The British Library Press, 1864, 2013.

Heidegger, Martin. "The Origin of Work of Art" in *Off the Beaten Track*, edited by Julian Young and translated by Kenneth Haynes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Horace. *Horace on the Art of Poetry*. Translated by C. Smart & E.H. Blakeney. London: Scholartis Press, 1928.

Hühn, Peter. "The Politics of Secrecy and Publicity: The Functions of Hidden Stories in Some Recent British Mystery Fiction." *Delamater and Prigozy*, 1997. 39-50.

Innes, Michael. *Death at the President's Lodgings*. London: Penguin, 1936.

Kingston, Charles. *Murder in Piccadilly*. London: The British Library Press, 1936, 2015.

Kitchin, Clifford H.B. *Crime at Christmas*. London: Faber & Faber, 1934, 2015.

Knight, Steven. *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction*. London: Macmillan, 1980.

Knox, Ronald A. *Best Detective Stories of 1928-29*. London: Faber and Faber, 1929.

Melville, Alan. *Quick Curtain*. London: The British Library Press, 1934, 2015.

Milne, Alan A. *The Fourth Wall*. London: Samuel French Ltd., 1928.

-----, *Four Days Wonder*. London: Methuen, 1933.

-----, *The Red House Mystery*. London: Macmillan Bello, 1922, 2017.

Radford, Edward & Mona Augusta Radford. (1946, 2019) *Murder Isn't Cricket*. London: Dean Street Press, 1946, 2019.

Rowland, Susan. *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell*. London: Palgrave, 2001.

Shaw, Bruce. *Jolly Good Detecting: Humor in English Crime Fiction of the Golden Age*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co. Inc., 2014.

Sidney, Philip. "The Defense of Poesy" in *Sidney's 'The Defense of Poesy' and Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism*, edited by G. Alexander, 1–54. London: Penguin, 2004

Skvorecky, Josef. *Sins for Father Knox* (tr. K. Polackova). London: Faber & Faber, 1973, 1988.

Symons, Julian. *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*. London: Warner Books, 1985.

----- . *Criminal Practices*. London: Macmillan, 1994.

The Detection Club. *Ask a Policemen*. London: Harper Collins, 1933, 2019.

----- . *Six Against the Yard*. London: Harper Collins, 1936, 2019.

----- . *The Anatomy of Murder*. London: Harper Collins, 1936, 2019.

----- . *The Floating Admiral*. London: Harper Collins, 1931, 2011.

Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Poetics of Prose*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977.

Van Dine, S.S. "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories". *The American Magazine*, September 1928.

Watson, Colin. *Snobbery with Violence*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1971.