

Early Twentieth-Century Fiction

e20fic17.blogs.rutgers.edu

Prof. Andrew Goldstone (andrew.goldstone@rutgers.edu)

Mondays: Scott 119; Wednesdays: Scott 106

Office hours: Murray 019, Mondays 1:00–2:30 or by appointment

November 1, 2017. Hammett (2).

review: transforming the genre

- ▶ whodunit? or who cares?
 - ▶ “No one concerns himself with who killed Spade’s partner”
(Chandler, 58)
- ▶ from cognition to action
- ▶ from class society to the criminal underworld
 - ▶ “Hammett gave murder back to the kind of people who commit it for reasons, not just to provide a corpse.” (58)
 - ▶ but: the criminal underworld is also class society
- ▶ “He [Hammett] had a literary style, but his audience didn’t know it, because it was in a language not supposed to be capable of such refinements.” (58)

reality effects (or clues)

Besides the wallet and its contents there were three gaily colored silk handkerchiefs fragrant of *chypre*; a platinum Longines watch on a platinum and red gold chain, attached at the other end to a small pear-shaped pendant of some white metal; a handful of United States, British, French, and Chinese coins; a ring holding half a dozen keys; a silver and onyx fountain-pen; a metal comb in a leatherett case; a nail-file in a leatherett case; a small street-guid eto San Francisco; a Southern Pacific baggage-check; a half-filled package of violet pastilles; a Shanghai insurance-broker's business-card; and four sheets of Hotel Belvedere writing paper, one on of which was written in small precise letters Samuel Spade's name and the addresses of his office and his apartment. (47)

“your Sam’s a detective”

The detective in the case is an insouciant amateur named Anthony Gillingham, a nice lad with a cheery eye, a nice little flat in town, and that airy manner. (55)

“your Sam’s a detective”

The detective in the case is an insouciant amateur named Anthony Gillingham, a nice lad with a cheery eye, a nice little flat in town, and that airy manner. (55)

His eyes and thick fingers moved without apparent haste, and without ever lingering or fumbling or going back, from one inch of their fields to the next, probing, scrutinizing, testing with expert certainty. Every drawer, cupboard, cubbyhole, box, bag, trunk—locked or unlocked—was opened and its contents subjected to examination by eyes and fingers. Every piece of clothing was tested by hands that felt for telltale bulges and ears that listened for the crinkle of paper between pressing fingers. (90–91)

“your Sam’s a detective”

The detective in the case is an insouciant amateur named Anthony Gillingham, a nice lad with a cheery eye, a nice little flat in town, and that airy manner. (55)

His eyes and thick fingers moved without apparent haste, and without ever lingering or fumbling or going back, from one inch of their fields to the next, probing, scrutinizing, testing with expert certainty. Every drawer, cupboard, cubbyhole, box, bag, trunk—locked or unlocked—was opened and its contents subjected to examination by eyes and fingers. Every piece of clothing was tested by hands that felt for telltale bulges and ears that listened for the crinkle of paper between pressing fingers. (90–91)

routines

“You aren’t,” he asked as he sat down, “exactly the sort of person you pretend to be, are you?”....

“That’s what I mean,” he said. You told me that this afternoon in the same words, same tone. It’s a speech you’ve practiced.” (55)

routines

“You aren’t,” he asked as he sat down, “exactly the sort of person you pretend to be, are you?”....

“That’s what I mean,” he said. You told me that this afternoon in the same words, same tone. It’s a speech you’ve practiced.” (55)

“Now what can I do for you, Mr. Cairo?” The amiable negligence of his tone, his motion in the chair, were precisely as they had been when he had addressed the same question to Brigid O’Shaughnessy on the previous day. (43)

routines

“You aren’t,” he asked as he sat down, “exactly the sort of person you pretend to be, are you?”....

“That’s what I mean,” he said. You told me that this afternoon in the same words, same tone. It’s a speech you’ve practiced.” (55)

“Now what can I do for you, Mr. Cairo?” The amiable negligence of his tone, his motion in the chair, were precisely as they had been when he had addressed the same question to Brigid O’Shaughnessy on the previous day. (43)

He adjusted himself to beams falling, and then no more of them fell, and he adjusted himself to them not falling. (64; qtd. by “JC”)

not talking

Surely detective writers could afford to speak to policemen now and then.
("Suggestions for Detective-Story Writers," 914)

"Mrs. Spade didn't raise any children dippy enough to make guesses in front of a district attorney, an assistant district attorney, and a stenographer." (145)

heroism?

But all this (and Hammett too) is for me not quite enough....

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. He must be a complete man and a common man and yet an unusual man. He must be, to use a rather weathered phrase, a man of honor, by instinct, by inevitability, without thought of it, and certainly without saying it. (59)

- ▶ In what ways does Sam Spade fail to come up to the Chandler standard? Is this a good thing or a bad thing?

[Gutman:] You could say, then, that the question is which one of them you'll represent?"

"You could put it that way."

"It will be one or the other?"

"I didn't say that."

The fat man's eyes glistened. His voice sank to a throaty whisper. "Who else is there?"

Spade pointed his cigar at his own chest. "There's me," he said. (106)

the bird

When he had finished the girl shut her notebook and raised a flushed smiling face to him. “Oh, isn’t this thrilling?” she said. “It’s—”

“Yes, or ridiculous....Is it possible—even barely possible? Or is it the bunk?” (134)

the bird

When he had finished the girl shut her notebook and raised a flushed smiling face to him. “Oh, isn’t this thrilling?” she said. “It’s—”

“Yes, or ridiculous....Is it possible—even barely possible? Or is it the bunk?” (134)

- ▶ Why is there a Maltese falcon at all?

romance

“You didn’t—care at all? You didn’t—don’t—I-love me?”

“I think I do,” Spade said. “What of it?” The muscles holding his smile in place stood out like wales. “I’m not Thursby. I’m not Jacobi. I won’t play the sap for you.” (212)

“I won’t play the sap for you.”

She put her mouth to his, slowly, her arms around him, and came into his arms. (212)

parallel histories

1892 Conan Doyle, *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*

1893 James, "The Middle Years"

1916 Joyce, *Portrait*

1921 Woolf, *Monday or Tuesday*

1923 Sayers, *Whose Body?*

1929 Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

1929 Hammett, *Maltese Falcon*

1930 Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*

next

- ▶ Toomer, *Cane*, through “Bona and Paul.”
- ▶ commonplace