

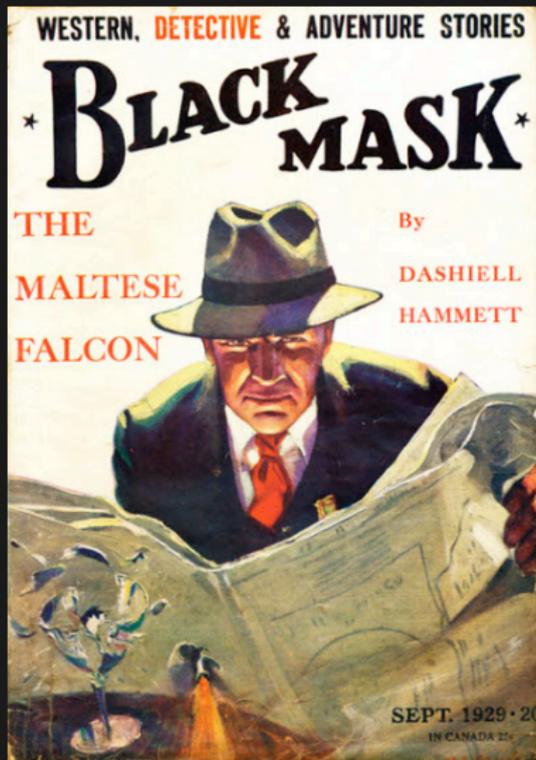
Early Twentieth-Century Fiction
e20fic19.blogs.rutgers.edu

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Office hours: Murray 019, Thursdays 11:30–1:30 or by appointment

October 24, 2019. Hammett (1).

review: Sayers: explaining Lord Peter's method

- ▶ genre-internal
- ▶ contextual (the Great War)
- ▶ ideological
 - ▶ faith vs. amoral materialism
 - ▶ authority and reaction
 - ▶ “we're all Jews nowadays” (not)



Black Mask 12, no. 7: cover. philsp.com. *The Maltese Falcon* ran in installments Sept. 1929–Jan. 1930 before being published as a book by Knopf later that year.

Samuel Dashiell Hammett

1894 b. Maryland

1909 leaves school to work for B&O Railroad

1915 works as Pinkerton detective, Baltimore

1918 enlists in army

1920 working for Pinkertons incl. as strikebreaker

1922 first stories in *Smart Set*, *Black Mask*

1929 *Red Harvest* (Knopf)

1929–30 *Maltese Falcon* (good reviews)

1930– Hollywood

1939 involvement with CPUSA

1941 *Maltese Falcon*, dir. John Huston (3rd adaptation)

1942 enlists in army

1951 jailed for contempt after refusing to betray comrades

1953 subpoenaed by McCarthy Committee

1961 d.

comparative discussion

- ▶ How do the opening chapters of Hammett's novel use the conventions of the detective story genre as you know them from Sayers? Find specific examples; consider formal and rhetorical as well as thematic elements.

murder most foul?

“Miles had his faults same as the rest of us, but I guess he must’ve had some good points too.”

“I guess so,” Spade agreed in a tone that was utterly meaningless. (16)

He grinned contentedly. “I think we’ve got a future. I always had an idea that if Miles would go off and die somewhere we’d stand a better chance of thriving. Will you take care of sending flowers for me?” (41)

Inspector Sugg vs. Sergeant Polhaus

“Be reasonable, Sam,” he pleaded. “Give us a chance. How can we turn up anything on Miles’s killing if you won’t give us what you’ve got?”

“You needn’t get a headache over that,” Spade told him. “I’ll bury my dead.” (19)

the method (I)

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“My way of learning is to heave a wild and unpredictable monkey-wrench into the machinery. It’s all right with me, if you’re sure none of the flying pieces will hurt you.” (86)

the method (2)

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)

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identities

He adjusted himself to beams falling, and then no more of them fell, and he adjusted himself to them not falling. (64)

- ▶ What is the meaning of Spade's Flitcraft story?

next

- ▶ finish the novel
- ▶ commonplacing: group A.
 - ▶ Find a passage that illuminates the moral code of the novel (not the characters).