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**Prózy americké „drsné školy“**  
Bakalářská práce

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně pod vedením vedoucího práce a uvedla jsem všechny použité prameny a literaturu.

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Práce podává obecnou charakteristiku žánru americké „drsné školy“ a soustředí se na vystižení jejích charakteristických rysů v dílech Dashiella Hammetta, Raymonda Chandlera a Mickeyho Spillane.

Klíčová slova: „drsná škola“, Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, Mickey Spillane

## **Annotation**

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The thesis characterizes the most distinctive features of the American hard-boiled school fiction, making use of the writing of three distinguished writers of the genre, Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler and Mickey Spillane.

Keywords: hard-boiled school fiction, Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, Mickey Spillane

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# INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to introduce the genre of hard-boiled detective fiction, including its pioneers: Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler and Mickey Spillane, as it stands for a significant American literary movement but is frequently left out of account.

The theoretical part is focused on the definition of the genre and on its development. The main goal is to show the contrast between the Golden Age and the hard-boiled detective stories; however, other subgenres of crime fiction are taken into consideration as well. The historical background is briefly introduced too as it had a considerable influence on the school. The second chapter explains the choice of the authors for this thesis and subsequently states basic facts regarding their lives.

The practical part analyses selected novels, concentrating on five elements of fiction writing: plot, main characters, setting, style, and theme. The authors' techniques are presented as well as compared amongst each other throughout the chapters, providing the reader with more details on the subject of hard-boiled fiction. There is a short chapter included, dealing with common errors made by the authors because these mistakes appear so frequently in the genre that they can stand for individual characteristic features. Undoubtedly, the practical part is the core of the whole paper as it demonstrates the uniqueness of both the school and the authors.

The object of this thesis is not to decide which writer is the most prominent one but to point out their contributions to the genre and their equal importance. Besides personal observations, the presented statements are based on secondary literature and numerous online sources.

# 1 HARD-BOILED FICTION IN THEORY

## 1.1 TO CALL THINGS BY THEIR PROPER NAMES

Before writing about hard-boiled fiction, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of the terms which are related to this genre: crime, detective, and mystery fiction.

Crime fiction is a literary genre of many subgenres including detective fiction.<sup>1</sup> It contains a certain crime (usually murder but not necessarily) which is to be solved. The presence of police or a detective is not required, and the case can be clarified by a complete amateur. Currently, a subgenre called the crime thriller is preferred by the modern society for its dynamic and suspenseful character.

In detective fiction, the presence of a detective or a private investigator is essential. The culprit's identity is in most cases unknown, and the reader is to gradually discover the truth alongside the detective. If the investigation is held by a police force, it is called a police procedural.<sup>2</sup>

A mystery novel can take form of a detective story, but it can also function as an independent genre. The only thing a mystery requires is a puzzle, which does not have to be unlawful. There can also appear some supernatural elements, and the explanations may not be revealed at all.

## 1.2 WHAT IS HARD-BOILED FICTION?

Hard-boiled fiction is a type of detective fiction combined with realism and naturalism reborn after the WWI. It developed from the "classical" detectives of the Golden Age and western stories in the late 1920s and persisted approximately until the end of 1950s. As Scaggs<sup>3</sup> and Škvorecký<sup>4</sup> note, the first hard-boiled detective

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<sup>1</sup> Crime fiction. In: *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia* [online]. St. Petersburg (Florida): Wikimedia Foundation, September 2002, revised 4 January 2016 [cit. 2015-01-07]. Available from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crime\\_fiction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crime_fiction)

<sup>2</sup> Police procedural. In: *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia* [online]. St. Petersburg (Florida): Wikimedia Foundation, February 2004, revised 15 December 2015 [cit. 2015-01-07]. Available from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Police\\_procedural](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Police_procedural)

<sup>3</sup> SCAGGS, John. *Crime Fiction*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Routledge, 2005. p. 55. ISBN 0203598539.

<sup>4</sup> ŠKVORECKÝ, Josef. *Nápady čtenáře detektivek*. 3. vyd. Praha: Interpress, 1990. edice Adéla, s. 148. ISBN 5902890.

appeared in a Carroll John Daly's short story, but the genre was officially established by Dashiell Hammett.

The main character is usually a private investigator, a young bachelor, representing masculinity and strength. Minter describes these detective-heroes as "*not only wily, tough, resourceful, and dependable; they are also lonely "separatists" at heart.*"<sup>5</sup> They are distancing from the society they are disgusted by. They are often gloomy and grumpy and find pleasure only in cigarettes, alcohol, coffee, women, and scrambled eggs – this is basically everything they need to recover from a "rough night".

Another important character is a femme fatale, a seductive or at least a very attractive woman who causes – on purpose or not – trouble to men involved with her. Usually, she becomes attached to the detective, who is not capable to refuse a woman in need and by helping her he puts himself in great danger.

One of the main differences between "classical" and hard-boiled detective fiction is the setting. While Sherlock was leaving London to solve countryside murders, private detectives go just around the corner of their block of flats and stumble over a dead body lying in the street of a big modern city e.g. New York or San Francisco.

Hard-boiled fiction is also closely connected with cinematography. As in action movies, there is a fast pace of events and particular descriptions might even evoke film scenes. Furthermore, many hard-boiled stories were picturized in the 1940s e.g. *The Big Sleep*, *Murder, My Sweet*, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, or *Double Indemnity*. The production of this kind of movies was so huge that it was given a specific name: film noir. Another connection with cinematography is noted by Scaggs who says that "*the image of the hard-boiled detective in hat and overcoat with a gun in his hand is largely inherited from cinema and television.*"<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> MINTER, David. A Cultural History of the American Novel: Residual Individualism and Hedged Commitments. In: BERCOVITCH, Sacvan, ed. *The Cambridge History of American Literature: Prose writing, 1910-1950*. vol. 6, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. p. 216. ISBN 0521497310.

<sup>6</sup> SCAGGS, John. *Crime Fiction*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Routledge, 2005. p. 3. ISBN 0203598539.

## 1.3 THE DEVELOPMENT OF DETECTIVE FICTION AND RELATED GENRES

Detective fiction is not the oldest literary genre, but most of its features have already appeared in early literature. Ancient Greeks were writing about death and homicide but only to create tragedies. There were mystery plays during the Middle Ages; however, they had nothing in common with mystery murder novels. It was not before the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the first detective story emerged.

In the English-speaking world, *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (pub.1841) written by Edgar Allan Poe is usually considered the establishing piece of detective fiction. The story features Auguste Dupin, an ingenious detective, who shortly became an archetype of “classical” detective novels. The first one to follow Poe’s example was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creating his renowned character of Sherlock Holmes. It was his enormous success what made Great Britain the headquarters of this genre.<sup>7</sup>

Though Doyle was British and his hero bore a striking resemblance to his successors, he does not belong to the Golden Age of detective story, which began in 1920 when Agatha Christie’s first novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, was published. This period is characterized by the “reign of four Queens of Crime”. Three of these women authors were British: Agatha Christie, Margery Allingham and Dorothy L. Sayers; the fourth one, Ngaio Marsh, was a New Zealand citizen.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, the murderous butlers and gardeners revealed by brilliant gentlemen detectives did not suit very well the American West, and therefore the genres of western and hard-boiled fiction came to existence.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, people rebelled against the “puritanism” of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; they opposed the past and celebrated the present with the avant-garde movements in all kinds of art.<sup>9</sup> The Great War shook the world and the literary development took a slightly different direction. There was a startling contrast between the terror of the war and the roaring parties held in the twenties.

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<sup>7</sup> Detective fiction. In: *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia* [online]. St. Petersburg (Florida): Wikimedia Foundation, February 2002, revised 17 December 2015 [cit. 2015-01-07]. Available from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Detective\\_fiction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Detective_fiction)

<sup>8</sup> SCAGGS, John. *Crime Fiction*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Routledge, 2005. p. 26. ISBN 0203598539.

<sup>9</sup> HOFFMAN, Frederick John. *The twenties: American writing in the postwar decade*. Rev. ed. New York: Free Press, ©1962. p. 146. ISBN 9780029147801.

Comparing *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald and *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot, both books written in the 1920s, the diversity in style and mood is obvious. The war robbed people of their illusions and naivety and made them tougher and more sceptical, and hard-boiled fiction developed more from these feelings and less from the “classical” detective stories.

Hard-boiled detective and western stories were widely appreciated as escapist fiction when the Great Depression hit in the 1930s. Both genres were written mainly by men and for men and both presented rotten society with only few good men left – this remaining group is usually formed by private detectives, cowboys and sheriffs, who are dissimilar in many ways to the “Sherlockian” brilliant detectives. These men are allowed to make mistakes; they often have to take a beating, and their fight does not bring them much; but they still go against the odds, and they do it willingly because it is the right thing to do. Regarded as pulp fiction, the stories appeared for the first time in magazines like *Black Mask*.<sup>10</sup>

The glorious time of “private eyes” came slowly to an end towards the 1950s. They were replaced by regular police officers; hence the police procedural was established. The ground was laid by Georges Simenon, who introduced chief-inspector Maigret to the world. The character, though he was a policeman, rather resembled private detectives because he worked more or less on his own. Thus a more appropriate pioneer of the police procedural is an American writer called Hillary Waugh. The genre was later refined by Ed McBain in the 1960s.<sup>11</sup>

Approximately at the same time, another legend came to life: James Bond. A British spy and ladies’ man that captured readers’ hearts as no one has ever done since Sherlock Holmes. Even though spy fiction had already existed, it was not before Ian Fleming (the creator of James Bond) that it gained its utmost popularity.

The influence of hard-boiled fiction is still visible in present-day crime novels and thrillers. Its naturalism is magnified: blood is running faster, modus operandi is more innovative and twisted, sex and violent parts are more vivid; but the private detectives are disappearing and the American domination is being replaced

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<sup>10</sup> MINTER, David. A Cultural History of the American Novel: Residual Individualism and Hedged Commitments. In: BERCOVITCH, Sacvan, ed. *The Cambridge History of American Literature: Prose writing, 1910-1950*. vol. 6, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. p. 211-217. ISBN 0521497310.

<sup>11</sup> SCAGGS, John. *Crime Fiction*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Routledge, 2005. p. 87-88. ISBN 0203598539.

by Scandinavian authors such as Stieg Larsson, Jo Nesbø, Arnaldur Indriðason or recently departed Henning Mankel. Nevertheless, if it was not for these writers, the hard-boiled classics like *Red Harvest* or *The Big Sleep* might have been already forgotten. The similarities between contemporary crime thrillers and hard-boiled novels make this genre attractive even for the present-day society.

## 2 HARD-BOILED AUTHORS

### 2.1 THE FIRST ONE, THE FAMOUS ONE, THE SUCCESSFUL ONE

When speaking about American hard-boiled fiction, Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler are usually the first names to come to mind. They are the only hard-boiled authors to have gained some respect and to have been recognized, by a few critics, as serious writers worth studying. However, in the manner of Cawelti<sup>12</sup>, it is possible to add a third name: Mickey Spillane. Mickey Spillane has never been, and probably never will be, considered a great author of indescribable talent, and yet, according to The Guardian, “by 1980, seven of the top 15 all-time bestselling fiction titles in America were by Spillane.”<sup>13</sup> Even though Hammett is the founder of the school and Spillane used to be the most read author, it is Chandler who is still remembered and praised by readers (at least in the Czech Republic, where more than 15 of his books have been published since the year 2000<sup>14</sup>). For these and other reasons, the rest of this thesis is dedicated to them.

### 2.2 DASHIELL HAMMETT (1894 - 1961)

Samuel Dashiell Hammett was born on 27 May 1894 in St. Mary's County, Maryland. His parents were Richard Thomas Hammett and Anne Bond Dashiell (from the French *De Chiel*).<sup>15</sup> He left school at the age of thirteen and held several low-paying jobs such as clerk, messenger boy, or dock worker.<sup>16</sup> He enlisted in the Army in June 1918, but he did not get far away from home. He became ill with Spanish flu and spent most of the time in hospital, where he met his future wife,

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<sup>12</sup> CAWELTI, John G.. *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977. p 162. ISBN 9780226098678.

<sup>13</sup> SUTHERLAND, John. Mickey Spillane. In: *Theguardian* [online]. London: Guardian News and Media, 18 July 2006 [cit. 2015-01-07]. ISSN 0261-3077. Available from: <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2006/jul/18/culture.obituaries>

<sup>14</sup> Raymond Chandler. In: *Databazeknih* [online]. (c) 2008 – 2016. Dostupné z: <http://www.databazeknih.cz/vydane-knihy/raymond-chandler-2664>

<sup>15</sup> Dashiell Hammett. In: *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia* [online]. St. Petersburg (Florida): Wikimedia Foundation, November 2002, revised 8 October 2015 [cit. 2015-10-28]. Available from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dashiell\\_Hammett](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dashiell_Hammett)

<sup>16</sup> About Dashiell Hammett. In: *PBS.org* [online]. 30 December 2003, [cit. 2015-10-28]. Available from: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/episodes/dashiell-hammett/about-dashiell-hammett/625/>



Josephine Dolan. Later, he developed tuberculosis, which did not really prevent him from entering the World War II – he served as a sergeant and edited an army newspaper.<sup>15</sup>

Between the years 1915 and 1922, he worked as an operative for the Pinkerton Agency in San Francisco, which inspired him greatly in his writings. His first story was published in 1922 in the magazine named *The Smart Set* by Herbert L. Mencken, who later established *Black Mask*. Hammett went on writing about 50 other short stories whose protagonist was usually “the Continental Op” (operative), never being called by any name. This character also appeared in Hammett’s debuting novel *Red Harvest*, 1929. The Op later developed in Sam Spade, featuring the famous *Maltese Falcon* book released in 1930. Altogether, Hammett wrote 5 novels, the final one being *The Thin Man* (1934).<sup>15</sup>

Around the year 1930, Hammett separated from his wife and moved to Hollywood, financially still supporting his two daughters. There, he met a young ambitious playwright, Lillian Hellman, and fell in love with her. Their relationship must have been very strong to survive Hammett’s troublesome lifestyle; they never got married, though.<sup>17</sup> In 1943, they became co-workers. Lillian’s play, *Watch on the Rhine*, was turned into a movie, and the script was to be written by Hammett. A year later, the film was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay.<sup>18</sup>

After *The Thin Man*, Hammett suffered a writer’s block and did not publish a single book or story ever since. Being a strong anti-fascist, he devoted himself to left-wing activism. In 1946, he was elected President of the Civil Rights Congress (CRC), which was soon afterwards designated a communist front group. The membership and his political activities resulted in six months imprisonment, which had a negative impact on his health and mainly career – he was blacklisted and excluded from Hollywood.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Dashiell Hammett Biography. In: *The Biography.com website* [online]. © 2015 [cit. 2015-10-28]. Available from: <http://www.biography.com/people/dashiell-hammett-9326903>

<sup>18</sup> Watch on the Rhine. In: *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia* [online]. St. Petersburg (Florida): Wikimedia Foundation, August 2002, revised 5 September 2015 [cit. 2015-10-28]. Available from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Watch\\_on\\_the\\_Rhine&oldid=679578520](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Watch_on_the_Rhine&oldid=679578520)

He spent the last decade of his life in isolation in a small cottage in Katonah, New York. He drank and smoked heavily, which led inevitably to a heart attack. He died of lung cancer on January 10, 1961, at the age of 67.<sup>17</sup>

His work influenced many other writers, especially Raymond Chandler, who always spoke very highly of him, and he is regarded now as one of the best mystery writers of all time.

## 2.3 RAYMOND CHANDLER (1888 - 1959)

The Chandlers sailed for the New World – as many other Quakers did – in 1682. Maurice Chandler, born in 1859, Philadelphia, studied engineering and later became a civil engineer of railroads in Nebraska. There, he got acquainted with an Irish émigré named Florence Thornton. She and Maurice got married in 1887. A year after that, on July 23, she gave birth to her only child, Raymond Thornton Chandler.<sup>19</sup>

Chandler's father drank heavily, and the marriage ended quite soon. Florence moved with her son back to Ireland, but as a divorced woman, she was not very well accepted by the locals; hence she and Chandler left for London in 1900. They lived with Chandler's unmarried aunt, Ethel Thornton, whose brother Ernest financially supported the boy's studies at Dulwich College, a very solid public school.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, the family did not have enough money for him to continue to university, so he travelled to France and Germany to improve his language skills. In 1907, he passed the Civil Service examination, which enabled him to work at the Admiralty. During that time, he wrote his first poem and decided to change his living becoming a reporter for the *Daily Express* and the *Western Gazette* newspapers. He did not meet with success and went to California, followed by his mother few years later.<sup>20</sup>

By 1912, he was supplementing his education taking bookkeeping classes. He also befriended with Warren Lloyd, a member of an affluent family, and with his help he acquired a job in the Los Angeles Creamery. In the last year of the World

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<sup>19</sup> HINEY, Tom. Raymond Chandler: From Chicago to Bloomsbury. In: *The New York Times: Books* [online]. New York City: Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, Jr., © 1997 [cit. 2015-10-28]. Available from: <http://www.nytimes.com/books/first/h/hiney-chandler.html>

<sup>20</sup> POWELL, Steven. *100 American Crime Writers*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. p. 67-72. ISBN 9781137031679.

War I, he fought with the Canadian army, which provided his mother with financial benefits. He experienced trench warfare in France and was one of the few to survive it. In 1924, he married his army fellow's step-mother, Cissy Pascal, who was, to Chandler's surprise, 18 years his senior. His mother died from cancer few days before the wedding she had not approved of.<sup>20</sup>

Chandler finally found a stable job at the Dabney Oil Syndicate. Starting as an accountant, he worked his way up to become a vice-president. It was 1920s, the California oil boom and the prohibition era; and in the manner of his father, Chandler developed an alcohol addiction, which cost him his job.<sup>21</sup>

During the Great Depression, he turned to writing and got his first short story, *Blackmailers Don't Shoot*, published in *Black Mask* in 1933. Six years later, he introduced his most famous character, Phillip Marlowe, in his first novel called *The Big Sleep*. Over the years, there were other six fully written and one unfinished Phillip Marlowe novels. Chandler also wrote an essay about the hard-boiled school and the detective genre in general, which was released in 1944 and entitled *The Simple Art of Murder*.<sup>22</sup>

During the 1940s, Chandler was involved in Hollywood. All of his novels except *Playback* were adapted into films, and he himself became a screenwriter. He co-operated with Billy Wilder and even Alfred Hitchcock<sup>20</sup>, though he considered neither of these experiences to be a happy one. He remained working there only because of the high salary. Also, some of the people he had met with inspired him to write his fifth book, *The Little Sister*, 1949.<sup>23</sup>

Cissy died on 12 December 1954 and left Chandler utterly heartbroken. He drank excessively and attempted suicide. He died at La Jolla hospital on 26 March 1959 from pneumonia. His remains were buried at Mount Hope State Cemetery in San Diego.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> JOHNSON, Sarah. Literature Online biography: Chandler, Raymond, 1888-1959. *Literature Online – ProQuest* [online]. Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, © 2006 [cit. 2015-10-28]. Available from: [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res\\_ver=0.2&res\\_id=xri:lion&rft\\_id=xri:lion:ft:ref:BIO002996:0](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:ref:BIO002996:0)

<sup>22</sup> Raymond Chandler. In: *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia* [online]. St. Petersburg (Florida): Wikimedia Foundation, February 2002, revised 20 October 2015 [cit. 2015-10-28]. Available from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raymond\\_Chandler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raymond_Chandler)

<sup>23</sup> ČERNÝ, Oldřich. Raymond Chandler. V: CHANDLER, Raymond. *Playback*. 1. vyd. Praha: Svoboda, 1990. s. 145-158. ISBN 8020501436.

## 2.4 MICKEY SPILLANE (1918 - 2006)

Frank Morrison Spillane was born on 9 March 1918 as the only child of John Joseph and Catherine Anne Spillane.<sup>24</sup> The Spillanes were a pious family – Anne was a Scottish Presbyterian and John an Irish Catholic. Frank was baptized Michael but did not really except his name or church; he called himself Mickey and became one of the most sadistic and wicked authors of hard-boiled fiction.<sup>25</sup>

Spillane was growing up in rather poor conditions in New Jersey. His education was completed in 1935, when he graduated from Erasmus Hall High School in Brooklyn. He also attended Fort Hays State College in Kansas, but he quitted before finishing. On December 1941, he enlisted in the Army and became a fighter pilot. He did not participate much in the actual fight, though; he spent most of the war in Florida instructing other pilots.<sup>25</sup>

After the war, he moved to New York and worked as a comic book writer for Funnies, Inc.<sup>26</sup> In 1947, he created the first Mike Hammer novel entitled *I, the Jury*, which was vilified by critics but praised by readers. Within five years, millions of paperback copies were sold, and Mickey Spillane became the best-selling fiction author soon afterwards.<sup>27</sup>

Between the years 1950 and 1952 he wrote five other Mike Hammer stories: *My Gun Is Quick*, *Vengeance Is Mine*, *One Lonely Night*, *The Big Kill*, and *Kiss Me, Deadly*. In the 1950s Spillane converted to Jehovah's Witnesses and became a house-to-house missionary and a new book featuring his famous character was not released until 1962. The title read *The Girl Hunters*, and it was made into a same name movie a year later. There, Spillane himself stared as Mike Hammer.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Mickey Spillane. In: *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia* [online]. St. Petersburg (Florida): Wikimedia Foundation, November 2002, revised 22 October 2015 [cit. 2015-10-28]. Available from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mickey\\_Spillane](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mickey_Spillane)

<sup>25</sup> SEVERO, Richard. Mickey Spillane, 88, Critic-Proof Writer of Pulpy Mike Hammer Novels, Dies. In: *The New York Times* [online]. New York City: Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, Jr., 18 July 2006 [cit. 2015-10-28]. ISSN 0362-4331. Available from: [http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/18/arts/18spillane.html?\\_r=1&OperaStable\Shell\Open\Command](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/18/arts/18spillane.html?_r=1&OperaStable\Shell\Open\Command)

<sup>26</sup> Literature Online biography: Spillane, Mickey, 1918-. *Literature Online – ProQuest* [online]. Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, © 2006 [cit. 2015-10-28]. Available from: [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res\\_ver=0.2&res\\_id=xri:lion&rft\\_id=xri:lion:ft:ref:BIO006460:0](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:ref:BIO006460:0)

<sup>27</sup> WYNSBERGHE, Scott Van. Mickey Spillane, mystery martyr. In: *National Post* [online]. Toronto: Postmedia Network Inc., 23 February 2015 [cit. 2015-10-28]. ISSN 1486-8008. Available from: <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/scott-van-wynsberghe-mickey-spillane-mystery-martyr>

Except for violent crime fiction, Spillane also managed to write two very well received children's books: *The Day the Sea Rolled Back* (1979) and *The Ship That Never Was* (1982).<sup>25</sup>

He was long settled in Murrells Inlet, a seaside town in South Carolina. Unlike Chandler and Hammett, he neither drank nor smoked. He was married three times but had children only with his first wife, Mary Ann Pearce. The two other spouses, Sherri Malinou and Jane Rodgers Johnson, were both models.<sup>25</sup>

Spillane was a great admirer of Carroll John Daly and even admitted basing Mike Hammer on his protagonist, Race Williams; his relationship with Raymond Chandler was not so friendly, though.<sup>28</sup> According to Chandler's letter to Dale Warren, he barely regarded Spillane as a writer:

*"Pulp writing at its worst was never as bad as this stuff. It isn't so very long since no decent publisher would have touched it."*<sup>29</sup>

Mickey Spillane died at his home in Murrells Inlet on 17 July 2006. He was 88 years old and is survived by his wife, Jane Spillane.<sup>24</sup> In his honour, a stretch of U.S. Highway 17 Business, crossing Murrells Inlet, was named the Mickey Spillane Waterfront 17 Highway.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> CARLSON, Michael. Mickey Spillane. In: *Crime Time* [online]. Harpenden: Oldcastle Books, © 2015 [cit. 2016-01-18]. Available from: <http://www.crimetime.co.uk/interviews/mickeyspillane.php>

<sup>29</sup> KISZELY, Philip. *Hollywood Through Private Eyes: The Screen Adaptation of the Hard-Boiled Private Detective Novel in the Studio Era*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Bern: Peter Lang, 2006. p. 49. ISBN 3039105477.

<sup>30</sup> Mickey Spillane Waterfront Highway. In: *South Strand News* [online]. Charleston: Evening Post Industries, 15 July 2011 [cit. 2015-10-28]. Available from: <http://www.southstrandnews.com/article/20110715/GTT01/307159999/>

## 3 CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF HARD-BOILED NOVELS

### 3.1 PLOT AND STRUCTURE

Most of the hard-boiled fiction detective stories begin with a crime and end with a punishment of the culprit. In some cases, a chapter introducing the hero may precede the murder. Sometimes the apprehension of the criminal is followed by a calming epilogue. No matter what kind of structure the author chooses, however, the pace of the story is always fast, the killer always caught and the detective survives. These are the unspoken rules of hard-boiled fiction. And these are the concrete examples.

#### 3.1.1 DASHIELL HAMMETT'S FIVE NOVELS

It is difficult to characterize Hammett's work since all of his novels differ widely – they do not share the same protagonist, setting, theme or structure. The most particular novel would be his debuting one, *Red Harvest*, because in this book, the point is not to catch the murderer but to make the murderers kill each other. The bloodshed starts when Elihu Willsson, a self-proclaimed mayor of the town of Personville (nicknamed Poisonville), is no longer able to control the gangsters he himself invited to the town, and so he calls a Continental Operative to restore the order. The Op shortly discovers that the situation is even worse than he was told and proceeds with a radical, dangerous solution: he sets the three dominating gangs against each other and against the corrupted police force. As a result, the town loses more than 20 of its citizens and is put under martial law.<sup>31</sup>

*The Dain Curse*, which was published the same year as *Red Harvest*, is much more mysterious. The Op stays this time in San Francisco to solve a diamond theft but becomes embroiled in series of deaths, savage religious rituals, supernatural apparitions etc. The femme fatale is in this story Gabrielle Leggett, who is actually a

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<sup>31</sup> HAMMETT, Dashiell. *Red Harvest*. 1<sup>st</sup> Vintage Crime/Black Lizard ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1992. ISBN 0679722610.

Dain. She believes that she is haunted by the family curse but in fact is just a toy of an evil woman who despises her and an insane man who is in love with her.<sup>32</sup>

*The Maltese Falcon* features Sam Spade, a private investigator, who is on the track of his partner's killer. The story resembles much more a treasure hunt than a detective story, though. The object of interest is an elusive statuette of a bird encrusted with jewels, and those who seek it are ready to kill for it.<sup>33</sup>

*The Glass Key* and *The Thin Man* are pure detective stories and observe the most common motives for murder: rage and cupidity. Their structure is simpler and less chaotic, so the reader is slowly discovering the truth instead of falling deeper into the mystery. Apart from this, the books do not have much in common: *The Glass Key*'s investigator is actually a gambler trying to solve a senator's son murder<sup>34</sup>, and *The Thin Man* is a delightful story of a jovial married couple trying to clear their one-time friend's name.<sup>35</sup>

All of Hammett's novels are full of action, lacking detailed descriptions but overflowing with dialogues, which add some speed to the story's pace. The climax is usually followed by a short chapter restating all the facts and conclusions and explaining what is going to happen with the villain and other characters. It is a very common procedure in detective genre, but in Hammett's case it is also necessary; with so many deaths and compulsive liars as Hammett places in one story, it is quite difficult to follow the real plot.

### 3.1.2 PHILIP MARLOWE SERIES

Even though Raymond Chandler was Hammett's disciple, the differences between them are countless. Chandler manages his novels with only one private investigator, Phillip Marlowe; he could not write a book in less than three months<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> HAMMETT, Dashiell. *The Dain Curse*. Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1989. ISBN 0679722602.

<sup>33</sup> HAMMETT, Dashiell. *The Maltese Falcon*. Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1989. ISBN 0679722645.

<sup>34</sup> HAMMETT, Dashiell. *The Glass Key*. Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1989. ISBN 0679722629.

<sup>35</sup> HAMMETT, Dashiell. *The Thin Man*. Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1989. ISBN 0679722637.

<sup>36</sup> Raymond Chandler and Ian Fleming. The Lost Interview. *Five Dials*. [online]. London: Hamish Hamilton, © 2015, number 7, p. 30-33 [cit. 2015-01-17]. Available from: <http://fivedials.com/portfolio/issue-7-sethi-farley-athill/>

while it took Hammett only thirty hours once<sup>37</sup>; his novels are “book-like” more than “movie-like”; and all Chandler’s stories observe the same structure, theme and usually background, too. Another interesting fact is that Chandler based his major work on the short stories he had written and published before.<sup>23</sup>

The “toughest” of Chandler’s novels would be the first one, *The Big Sleep*. The book can be divided into two parts. In the first one, Phillip Marlowe is hired by an old wealthy man to get hold of some scandalous pictures of his spoiled drug addicted daughter Carmen. In the second one, he is looking for missing Rusty Regan, Carmen sister’s husband. The two plots are very hard to follow because there are numerous murders, murderers and motives.<sup>38</sup>

A very common feature in Chandler’s work is an identity change. It is usually performed by women who are escaping their past (*Farewell, My Lovely*, *Playback*) or stealing someone else’s life (*The Lady in the Lake*). It also played a minor part in *The Long Goodbye* in which a man named Lennox faked his death and then had a plastic surgery in order to start a new life as someone new.<sup>39</sup>

In contrast to Hammett’s novels, there can appear some action even after the climax, although it does not possess the dramatic character of previous events; for example *The Little Sister* ends with a bloody murder. Nonetheless, more often, the resolution is followed by a soothing chapter. Mr. Chandler himself described his writing formula like this:

*“There has to be an element of mystery, in fact there has to be a mysterious situation. The detective doesn’t know what it’s all about, he knows that there’s something strange about it, but he doesn’t know just what it’s all about. It seems to me that the real mystery is not who killed Sir John in his study, but what the situation really was, what the people were after, what sort of people they were.”*<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> ŽANTOVSKÝ, Michael. Záhada jménem Hammett. V: HAMMETT, Dashiell. *Tři krvavé historie*. 2. vyd. Praha: Odeon, 1987. s. 535-540. ISBN 0103887.

<sup>38</sup> CHANDLER, Raymond. *The Big Sleep*. 1<sup>st</sup> Vintage Crime/Black Lizard ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1992. ISBN 0394758285.

<sup>39</sup> CHANDLER, Raymond. *The Long Goodbye*. 1<sup>st</sup> Vintage Crime/Black Lizard ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1992. ISBN 0394757688.



This is indeed the way Chandler creates his stories; however, sometimes he lets himself get carried away and while explaining all the circumstances, he forgets to deal with the main plot. Probably for these reasons, Škvorecký criticized his novels' structure and the comprehensibility of his plots.<sup>40</sup>

### 3.1.3 MIKE HAMMER SERIES

Mickey Spillane was the most copious writer of the three of them. His novels are pure pulps with emphatic “trashy” titles, which have sold millions of copies worldwide. The reason why the books were so attractive for readers is that they are very simple; there tends to be only one culprit, one motive; but there can be several beautiful women and immense number of brutal murders. This was Spillane's formula for making money.

The whodunit structure is spoiled by the fact that the villain is always the least suspicious character. It starts with *I, the Jury*: Mike Hammer, the protagonist of the first six Spillane's novels and some others, is searching for his friend's killer and becomes acquainted with a lovely psychiatrist named Charlotte Manning. She and Mike get engaged, which implies that she is either the killer or she is going to die because the hero would find his true love too easily. As the story continues, Mike discovers that Charlotte is indeed a murderer, and since he does not have faith in fair trials, he shoots her dead.<sup>41</sup> In fact, all of Spillane's stories end with the culprit's execution, usually performed by Mike himself, but sometimes it seems that Spillane is trying his limits and readers' tolerance, creating implausible, even ridiculous twists. A shining example is *The Big Kill*, in which the villain is killed by a toddler.<sup>42</sup> It is also unlikely that Lily from *Kiss Me, Deadly* could be set on fire after taking an alcohol bath since the alcohol is not dripping from her and there is approximately a ten-minute gap between the bath and Lily's ignition.<sup>43</sup>

The plot is developing very fast, omitting descriptions of places or deeper thoughts, which is a typical feature of the hard-boiled style. However, the crucial

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<sup>40</sup> ŠKVORECKÝ, Josef. *Nápady čtenáře detektivek*. 3. vyd. Praha: Interpress, 1990. edice Adéla, s. 80. ISBN 5902890.

<sup>41</sup> SPILLANE, Mickey. *I, the Jury*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: New American Library, 1948. ISBN 0451006992.

<sup>42</sup> SPILLANE, Mickey. *The Big Kill*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: New American Library, 1951. ISBN 0451093836.

<sup>43</sup> SPILLANE, Mickey. *Kiss Me, Deadly*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: New American Library, 1953. ISBN 0451165934.

explanations should not be disregarded, as it happens once again in *Kiss Me, Deadly*: Lily Carver's identity is proven to be false, but it is not said who she really is or why she pretends to be someone else.<sup>43</sup>

Spillane's novels possess always a delusive climax, which uncovers the truth only partially, and then a real one revealing the culprit's name. There are no restating or soothing chapters towards the ending; the books begin and end with action.

## **3.2 MAIN CHARACTERS**

Everything concerning hard-boiled fiction resembles critical realism except for its private investigators. In real life, their job is mainly to search for the evidence of adultery or insurance fraud. However, none of the fictional detectives would accept such a case. Their task is to fight the crime, to improve the society, to help a fragile woman in need and generally to be the hero who saves the day against all the odds. They are not perfect, though. They can get caught in a trap; they can be misled; they might not know the boiling point of phenol – in other words, they can be ordinary men but hardly private investigators.<sup>44</sup>

### **3.2.1 DASHIELL HAMMETT'S DETECTIVES**

The Continental Operative is the first protagonist presented by Dashiell Hammett. Not much can be said about this character, indeed. Deducing from his actions, he is a man with considerable powers of intellect and sense of justice. He probably is not repelling to women since they often seek comfort in his arms. Nonetheless, there is no physical description of him whatsoever and neither his name is ever mentioned. He is more like a ghost moving objects and influencing the story's development but not revealing his thoughts. It is a masterpiece of detachment and the matter-of-fact style.

Sam Spade is possibly the best known of Hammett's characters. He is a man in his thirties, of average height, well-built, with fair hair. His face description is quite detailed and slightly extraordinary; Spade is to have yellowish eyes and very

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<sup>44</sup> CHANDLER, Raymond. Letter to D. J. Ibberson, an English fan, 19 April 1951. In: HINEY, Tom and MACSHANE, Frank, ed. *The Raymond Chandler Papers: Selected Letters and Nonfiction 1909-1959*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: Grove Press, 2002. p. 157-162. ISBN 0802139469.

sharp features making his face look mischievous and not very likeable. But he is not a very likeable character, after all. In *The Maltese Falcon*, he is depicted as “blond Satan” and is in fact more of an antihero than a hero. He is having an affair with his colleague’s wife, of whom he is not even fond; he speaks of the colleague ill and disrespectfully, though he acted as his friend when he was alive and so on. To give him some credit, he did intend to honour his partner’s memory by catching the killer, and despite the fact it was a woman he might have loved, he gave her up to the police.<sup>33</sup>

Ned Beaumont is the only non-detective character solving a crime in Hammett’s books. He appeared in the writer’s favourite novel, *The Glass Key*, and was partially based on him. He is a slim tall gambler with dark eyes and a moustache. It is necessary to add that he is a better friend and detective than a gambler. He has been on a losing streak for a while and when he finds a senator son’s body, he tells his best friend, Paul Madvig, before he announces it to the police. He probably would not be interested in the case at all if it was not for Madvig, who becomes the main suspect soon afterwards. Though his emotions and thoughts are mainly hidden because of the author’s writing style, it is safe to say that he is one of the “good guys”.<sup>34</sup>

Nick Charles is another character close to Hammett’s heart. He is neither a hero nor an antihero. He is just a man, a former detective, who has no desire to solve crimes anymore and only wants to enjoy a life of comfort and leisure with his wealthy wife, who always keeps him company but also prevents him from escaping any excitement they might experience. Thus he becomes a detective once more, this time against his own will. In *The Thin Man*, Nick is depicted as a young man of Greek origin with a kind, handsome face. As an investigator, he is trying to be thorough and firm and is not fooled easily. He is “boozing” constantly, true, but his mind stays clear. He also possesses a well-developed sense of humour and wit.<sup>35</sup> All in all, Nick Charles is Hammett’s most appealing character.

### **3.2.2 CHANDLER’S PHILIP MARLOWE**

Philip Marlowe is a knight without armour, a lone wolf, a sarcastic cynic; but most importantly, he is the best-known hard-boiled private investigator. He owns a small flat in Los Angeles and even a smaller office in the same city. Both of his

lodgings are dusty, half-empty and generally cheap-looking. They somehow reflect Marlowe's character; he is not inviting or well-kept either.

In Chandler's first novel, Marlowe paints about himself this picture:

*"I was wearing my powder-blue suit, with dark blue shirt, tie and display handkerchief, 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."*<sup>45</sup>

The last sentence gives away that Marlowe's appearance is usually quite different. There are bags under his brown eyes and there might be some bruises and bumps on his body. His dark hair is ruffled and the shave is rarely fresh. He wears shirts but without ties; he might have a suit on, but he would definitely feel better in a coat and a hat. Women refer to him as tall and strong and are attracted by his rugged handsomeness. He also enjoys smoking, especially Camels and pipe. He is getting older with each book, although his age is not mentioned in every one of them. To be more precise, in *The Big Sleep*, he is thirty-three, in *The Little Sister*, he is already thirty-eight.

None of the hard-boiled investigators is interested in money, but Marlowe has a true distaste for them. He never accepts bribes and sometimes not even salary. For example in *The Little Sister*, he tells his lady client he is charging 40 dollars a day for his services, but because she is poor, he accepts her twenty dollars and eventually gives them back to her.<sup>46</sup> To conclude, he values the truth more than anything, which is why he is willing to work for no money.

Besides money, he despises guns as well. He owns one or two and knows how to use them, but he was hit by them so many times, and he saw so many damages they have done it is hard for him to be even near them. He explains the purpose of guns poetically in *Playback*: *"Guns never settle anything. They are just a fast curtain to a bad second act."*<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> CHANDLER, Raymond. *The Big Sleep*. 1<sup>st</sup> Vintage Crime/Black Lizard ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1992. p. 3. ISBN 0394758285.

<sup>46</sup> CHANDLER, Raymond. *The Little Sister*. 1<sup>st</sup> Vintage Crime/Black Lizard ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1988. ISBN 039475767X.

<sup>47</sup> CHANDLER, Raymond. *Playback*. 1<sup>st</sup> Vintage Crime/Black Lizard ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1988. p. 27. ISBN 0394757661.

Marlowe has his own ways with the ladies. On one hand, he acts like a perfect gentleman, pulling out chairs, holding doors, helping with coats etc. On the other one, he is not afraid to be a little rough and occasionally gives a slap or two. In addition, he is not very careful with words and may appear harsh; however, that is usually the only way he can get the information he needs. Sometimes he allows himself to have an affair with one of his lovely clients, to whom he never promises anything he is not going to fulfil. He is a loner but still a human being; thus he naturally seeks some company. Broadly speaking, he is a good person and has only the best intentions.

Mr Marlowe is loyal as both a friend and an employee and can be sensitive and emotional sometimes, too. This delicate part of him is most visible in *The Long Goodbye*. In this story, he truly bonds with Lennox despite the fact they have known each other for a very short period of time and honours their friendship enough to get beaten by the police, sit for him in prison and be quiet about the strange circumstances Lennox left under. He also orders the drink Lennox used to like, though he is not fond of it.<sup>39</sup> One might say he is even sentimental. But the ultimate point is that Marlowe is the softest hard-boiled detective of them all.

### **3.2.3 SPILLANE'S MIKE HAMMER**

On the other hand, there is nothing soft about Mickey Spillane's protagonist, Mike Hammer, who could be characterized by a single word: extreme. Driven by rage and vindictiveness, Hammer has mercy with no one and always performs justice himself and in his own way. He, too, does not stop until he discovers the truth, but that is approximately where his similarity with other detectives ends. It may still be surprising that such a killing machine was in favour of millions of readers.

There is not much to be said about his appearance. He is probably tall and strong; he is not bald and not more than forty years old. He is always wearing a coat, a hat and a .45. Unlike Marlowe, he is very fond of guns and treats his colt almost as a friend. Pipes might be a little too old fashioned for him, but he does smoke cigarettes and occasionally cigars. He neither plays chess nor enjoys reading as some hard-boiled detectives do.

The two most important people for Hammer are his secretary, Velda, and Pat Chambers, Captain of Homicide NYPD. Hammer might not believe in fair trials,

but he has respect for the police force, which is not very common amongst hard-boiled detectives. Pat is in fact his only friend, and they are unofficially working on cases together, though Hammer tends to keep some evidence and facts to himself. They disagree and fight with each other quite a lot, but at the end of the day, their friendship is honest. Velda with her “million-dollar legs” presents more than just a competent secretary. Her relationship with Hammer starts developing in the third book and they get engaged eventually. It does not prevent him from getting intimate with other women, though. Nevertheless, he is very protective of her and truly loves her.

In general, Hammer sees himself as a misanthrope. He is neither friendly nor kind but can make people cooperate. With women he uses his looks, with men his fists. He is convinced that he is handling the situation the best he can, although in reality his actions are not adequate. He lets the rage get hold of him and acts very unreasonably and brutally. Sometimes he is on the edge of losing his mind, laughing madly before shooting somebody. He might be a misanthrope, but he definitely is a psychopath.

He gets the most sentimental (and vicious) in *One Lonely Night*. He is reflecting on his behaviour, deeds and purpose in life. He cannot tell the difference between the killers he hunts and himself anymore. Towards the end of the book, he comes to this conclusion:

*“I lived only to kill the scum and the lice that wanted to kill themselves. I lived to kill so that others could live. I lived to kill because my soul was a hardened thing that reveled in the thought of taking the blood of the bastards who made murder their business. I lived because I could laugh it off and others couldn’t. I was the evil, leaving the good and the meek in the middle to live and inherit the earth!”<sup>48</sup>*

Thus, he admits being a judge and an executioner at the same time. He does what he believes is right. He enjoys the kill. He murders several people with his bare hands and finds it amusing; then he carries his beloved Velda, who was tortured, and cries for her. He is evidently not completely sane.

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<sup>48</sup> SPILLANE, Mickey. *One Lonely Night*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: New American Library, 1951. p. 165. ISBN 045100888X.

Mike Hammer surely is a controversial character, who has been mocked and imitated several times. Despite the general opinion, he made a considerable contribution to the cinematography and pulp fiction. Several TV and radio series have been based on his character; he starred in a few films noirs, and the public loved him. It was also him who made pulp fiction literature as popular as it is. Thus he deserves to stand alongside Sam Spade and Phil Marlowe.

### 3.3 SETTING

Setting is one of the most substantial things which make the difference between classical detective stories and hard-boiled fiction. Instead of small villages where neighbours know each other and homicide is something unheard-of, the detective finds himself in a large multicultural city and the case he is working on might be so common that it does not even appear in newspapers. The crime scene is not an old Victorian mansion but a street corner or a cheap apartment. In both cases, the plot is set in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (mainly in the 1930s), but somehow it feels like there is a hundred years difference between them. Also, the society and its structure vary widely. Nonetheless, the setting is not completely the same for all hard-boiled authors, and it is possible to observe some specific features.

#### 3.3.1 THE WORLD OF DASHIELL HAMMETT

Not only did Dashiell Hammett create several heroes for his books but also several settings, out of which the most significant is San Francisco, where he used to live. There, he placed his two novels, *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Dain Curse*, and a certain amount of his short stories. When it came to geography, he was very thorough and precise. He was describing real streets and places, and so it is possible today to visit them all on a special tour organized by Don Herron.<sup>49</sup>

Hammett's final novel, *The Thin Man*, takes place in another famous city: New York. There, Hammett also lived for many years, but reading *The Thin Man* does not feel like walking the streets in person anymore. It is more abstract, and the places are not described with such a precision as they were in *The Maltese Falcon*.

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<sup>49</sup> SALTZSTEIN, Dan. San Francisco Noir. In: *The New York Times* [online]. New York City: Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, Jr., 27 June 2014 [cit. 2016-02-20]. Available from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/29/travel/san-francisco-noir.html?r=0>

Apart from these two locations, Hammett also created two fictional towns. The first one is called Personville and lies somewhere near San Francisco. It is a small corrupted mining town inhabited by gangsters, drinkers, drug dealers and addicts and a few rich people who are pulling the strings. It is a warning example of the path the society is choosing and eventually, the whole district has to be re-established. The second town remains unnamed and is situated probably not far from New York. In this case, the atmosphere is not as tense as in Personville. There are some gamblers like Ned Beaumont, some untrustworthy politicians and a few dangerous men, but it only suggests that it is an ordinary place to live.

All of Hammett's novels are set in the late 1920s or early 1930s. The Great Depression does not reflect in them yet; they rather depict the carless joy of wild parties and the development of the black market. As the storyline progresses very fast, it is spread over only few days. Specific dates are mentioned rarely, and so the reader has to pay attention to the details which can help him identify the year or the day the story occurs in (e.g. which movie is screened in the cinema, to which politician or artist characters refer etc.).

The social background Hammett created corresponds only partially with the then society. It is true that his characters come from various social classes. Sometimes he focuses on the rich, sometimes on the poor; he does not have a preference. However, he includes only White Americans. He gives few characters European roots, but they are not that visible or relevant. There is not one African, Hispanic or Latino American in any of his novels, though there was – and still is – a large number of them in the United States. To put it simply, there is neither racial nor ethnic infrastructure but only a social one, which does not correspond with the reality.

### **3.3.2 LOS ANGELES AND ITS ENVIRONS BY RAYMOND CHANDLER**

Raymond Chandler was born in Chicago, studied in London but spent most of his life in Los Angeles, where he also set his Philip Marlowe series and many short stories. L.A. was at that time – in the 1930s – a city of immigrants and unlawful activities, which gave Chandler a great deal of inspiration. When it came to



geography, he was not as thorough as Hammett, but the places he was describing were based on reality. He just gave them slightly different names from time to time.

The foremost location is probably Hollywood Boulevard, where Marlowe's office is, and so all his cases are connected to this place. It is a busy street with many stores and some office buildings. In one of the buildings, on the seventh floor, there is a sign on a door reading "Philip Marlowe". The door leads to a reception room without receptionist and a simple room with a window and a desk.<sup>45</sup> And why Hollywood? Because "*in Hollywood anything can happen, anything at all.*"<sup>50</sup>

Another highly significant location is a town of Bay City, which is situated in the environs of Los Angeles. Bay City is in fact a pseudonym for Santa Monica. This city was in the 1930s stricken by the Great Depression and to get back on its feet, it started to cooperate with gambling ships, which served as casinos and anchored three miles off shore so that the U.S. law would not apply to them. Chandler used this topic in *Farewell, My Lovely*, presenting a ship named Montecito, which is another pseudonym, this time for a vessel called Monte Carlo.<sup>51</sup>

The furthest Marlowe gets from L.A. are the environs of San Diego and San Bernardino. Chandler spent his final years in La Jolla, a suburb of San Diego, and chose this location for his last finished novel, *Playback*, as well. Esmeralda, the fictional name of La Jolla<sup>52</sup>, is a seaside community which could be best characterized by these two quotes from the book:

*"This is a rich town, friend, [...]. I've talked to guys about it. They tell me it's one of the few spots left in our fair green country where the dough ain't quite enough. In Esmeralda you got to belong, or you're nothing. If you want to belong and get asked around and get friendly with the right people you got to have class."*<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> CHANDLER, Raymond. *The Long Goodbye*. 1<sup>st</sup> Vintage Crime/Black Lizard ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1992. p. 168. ISBN 0394757688.

<sup>51</sup> PHILLIPS, D. Gene. *Creatures of Darkness: Raymond Chandler, Detective Fiction and Film Noir*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2003. p. 20-21. ISBN 0813190428.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219

<sup>53</sup> CHANDLER, Raymond. *Playback*. 1<sup>st</sup> Vintage Crime/Black Lizard ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1988. p. 102. ISBN 0394757661.

“One of the choice things about this town is that the people who work here can’t afford to live here.”<sup>54</sup>

The only time Marlowe escapes dirty streets and shining neon signs is in *The Lady in the Lake*. The story is set in the beautiful landscape of the San Bernardino Mountains at Little Fawn Lake, which could be a fictional version of either Big Bear Lake or Lake Arrowhead. It is a secluded place far away from civilization, but it is not completely deserted. The mood of this book is unusually placid, which highlights the importance of the setting.

Chandler’s society is slightly different from the one created by Hammett. He too distinguishes social classes, but he adds different cultures and races. For example in *Farewell, My Lovely*, Marlowe steps into an Afro-American nightclub, or in *The Little Sister*, he gets acquainted with Dolores Gonzales, who does not have only a foreign name but also uses Spanish phrases and words<sup>46</sup>. This is what makes Chandler more believable. He is aware of the fact that the upper class holds the power in the U.S. and can buy its freedom or whatever it wants, and he probably points it out more than Hammett. He also incorporates the police more than Hammett, which gives his novels more of a “detective spirit”.

### **3.3.3 MICKEY SPILLANE AND NEW YORK CITY**

As his predecessors did, Spillane also used his residential city, New York, for the setting of his novels. On the basis of his first six novels, the plot occurs mainly in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Long Island, scarcely in Bronx and Queens. Although he was giving real names of streets and avenues, it is not possible to define the exact position of the places he writes about. For instance, the address of Mike Hammer’s office or home is untraceable.

Spillane also preferred writing about White Americans, but he included few minor characters of different races from time to time, too, and he was quite successful at describing multicultural quarters. For example, this is his representation of Harlem, one of the most dangerous parts of Manhattan, which demonstrates his realistic view on the milieu of New York City:

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105

*“Here was the edge of Harlem, that strange no-man’s-land where the white mixed with the black and the languages overflowed into each other like that of the horde around the Tower of Babel. There were strange, foreign smells of cooking and too many people in too few rooms. There were the hostile eyes of children who became suddenly silent as you passed.”*<sup>55</sup>

The social background of Spillane’s novels is fairly diverse. Similarly to Chandler, he does not sympathize with the rich and often makes them villains while depicting a prostitute as a righteous, almost noble human being. Apart from luxurious villas and filthy brothels, Hammer steps into run-down neighbourhoods and illegal nightclubs as well. There, he comes across gangsters and Communist spies, who are even more brutal and twisted than he is. He is not facing them alone, though. Through Pat Chambers, the police are presented as a decent organization trying to restore and maintain order, but in Hammer’s eyes, their work is tied up and slowed down by regulations and law, which is also why he takes justice in his own hands.

The important thing to bear in mind is that Spillane’s era was quite different from Chandler’s and Hammett’s. At the beginning of the 1950s, Prohibition and the Great Depression were long forgotten; both World Wars were over, but they left deep marks. They resulted in anxious, shaken society searching for a remedy, for something new. In many cases, it was something radical and exciting. The most demanding were the young, and so the production focused on them. The culture gave them rock 'n' roll, film noir full of violence and sex, and literature of the same content. In consequence, the juvenile delinquency had risen greatly – this phenomenon was very well recorded in Evan Hunter’s *Blackboard Jungle* (pub. 1954) – and the overall crime rates did too. Also, after the failure of Communism and Fascism, the society tended to oppose strongly both of these political ideologies.<sup>56</sup> Spillane was influenced by the era but also participated in it. He too was writing

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<sup>55</sup> SPILLANE, Mickey. *One Lonely Night*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: New American Library, 1951. p. 134. ISBN 045100888X.

<sup>56</sup> DICKSTEIN, Morris. Fiction and Society, 1940-1970: On and Off the Road. In: BERCOVITCH, Sacvan, ed. *The Cambridge History of American Literature: Prose writing, 1940-1990*. vol. 7, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. p. 166-167. ISBN 0521497337.

fiction bursting with violence and bloodshed to make as much money as possible. Nonetheless, Mike Hammer and the criminals he is fighting seem to be more like society's invention than the author's intention. To put it briefly, in some ways, Hammett and Chandler lived in a calmer and more peaceful society than Spillane did; hence Hammer's world had to be more brutal and vicious than Spade's or Marlowe's in order to correspond with the reality.

## **3.4 STYLE**

Being the most remarkable feature of every writing, the style is what makes the author one of a kind. It is the form of contents; it gives the plot the mood, the speed and everything it needs to make the desired impression. It contains many components, but the most significant ones are: point of view, diction, and composition.

### **3.4.1 DASHIELL HAMMETT**

As it was stated before, Hammett was a very innovative and creative man. He did not use the same characters, setting or themes, but he more or less maintained one style. It was a style of a manual worker, former detective and army newspaper editor – it was tough, brisk, casual yet professional; just like his life was. Little did he know that it would later establish a wholly new school of considerable importance.

#### **3.4.1.1 POINT OF VIEW**

Though Hammett was writing both in first and third person, his choice did not make much of a difference. First-person perspective is very often used in detective fiction and thrillers to emphasize the suspense and to draw the reader closer to the mystery. Through this method, the reader can feel, see, taste and smell everything the protagonist does. However, Hammett manages to be very objective and detached. All his Continental Op stories are written in the first person but from a cinematic point of view. It means that the hero's main task is not to comment on the plot or characters but to give unbiased information and to credibly depict the scene in a similar way a cameraman does. As a result, there are no inner monologues, and the text is written in a matter-of-fact manner.

The first-person perspective is used in *The Thin Man*, too. In this case, the style seems to be more personal, though. Nick Charles, the narrator, knows most of the characters, which could explain why the descriptions he gives about them are less detailed, but it does not – he depicts strangers with the same carelessness. The following extracts should demonstrate the point:

*“He was a dark-skinned erect man in his middle forties, muscularly slender and of medium height. He would have been handsome if his brown face hadn’t been so deeply marked with sharp, hard lines across the forehead and from nostrils down across mouth-corners. Dark hair, worn rather long, curled above and around broad, grooved forehead. Red-brown eyes were abnormally bright behind horn-rimmed spectacles. His nose was long, thin and high-bridged. His lips were thin, sharp, nimble, over a small bony chin.”*<sup>57</sup>

*“Eight years had done no damage to Mimi’s looks. She was a little riper, showier, that was all. She was larger than her daughter, and her blandness was more vivid.”*<sup>58</sup>

*“He was probably five years younger than his wife, a tall thin erect dark man, carefully dressed and sleek, with smooth hair and waxed mustache.”*<sup>59</sup>

The first description is made by the Op in *The Dain Curse*. It is done in a police manner; it is very specific and detailed. In the second extract, Nick Charles portrays his one-time client’s wife and in the third one her husband, whom he had never seen before. As it shows, there is only little, if any, difference between the second and the third paragraph.

Hammett applies the third-person perspective when writing about Sam Spade or Ned Beaumont. There, the detachment is even stronger. Hammett does not use the third-person narration to be “omniscient”, as some authors do, and so

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<sup>57</sup> HAMMETT, Dashiell. *The Dain Curse*. Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1989. p. 4. ISBN 0679722602.

<sup>58</sup> HAMMETT, Dashiell. *The Thin Man*. Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1989. p. 18. ISBN 0679722637.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19

everything revolves around the detective only; the actions and thoughts of other characters are hidden. Nonetheless, the only possible way to read the protagonist's mind is to observe carefully his facial expressions, deeds and speech.

### 3.4.1.2 DICTION

Another fundamental feature that Hammett gave to the hard-boiled school is the usage of slang. Not only did he pick some of it up right from the streets, but he invented a few words himself – for instance “shamus”, which refers to a private investigator. The word had actually existed before, but it was not commonly used and had a different meaning. Second noteworthy “Hammettism” is “gunsel”, meaning “gunman”. Originally, the word was a vulgarism (it referred to a catamite); however, since it contained the morpheme “gun”, it was taken for granted that it meant gunman, and many other writers used it in this sense later on.<sup>60</sup> Other slang words and phrases Hammett adopts are: *booby-hatch* (mental hospital), *croaker* (doctor), *darb* (remarkable person), *everything is eggs in the coffee* (everything is alright), *pineapple* (grenade), *sap* (foolish person), *spook* (spy).

In Hammett's work, the slang is accompanied, not only in the direct speech, by colloquial expressions. Mainly, Hammett employs contracted verb forms and chiefly North American informal words. For illustration, here are some examples: *durned*, *goofy*, *pudgy*, *sleuth*, *to gang up on*.

To present the nature of individual speech in the most realistic way possible, Hammett also tries to capture particular accents of his characters. As it has been mentioned, he does not involve Chinese or Afro-Americans or any other culturally different groups in his novels, but he does not let everyone talk the same way either. For instance, Ned Beaumont pronounces the word “hello” like “lo” and the Op pronounces it “hullo”. Also, in *The Glass Key*, there is a man who stutters. These individualities are not numerous, but they set an example for later authors to follow.

Using non-standard English, Hammett only proves that his characters are based on real people. The proof that he was a quality writer lies in the numerous literary devices used throughout his work. Mainly, it is personification, which gives his books a poetic undertone:

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<sup>60</sup> GARDNER, Stanley Erle. Getting Away With Murder. In: BENNET, James ed. *The Atlantic*. Washington, D. C.: Hayley Romer, January 1965. vol. 215, no. 1, p. 72-75. ISSN 10727825.

*“Air from the broken window, cold, pure, bitter, came over my shoulder to sting my nostrils, to tell me – by its difference from the air I had been breathing – that not the thing’s weight, but the poisonous flower-smelling stuff, had been bearing me down.”*<sup>61</sup>

*“He stood in the middle of the room, his round eyes looking quite proud of their owner.”*<sup>62</sup>

Apart from personification, Hammett also uses, to a small degree, bathos in the first sample. Bathos is a literary device that indicates a sudden change of style, usually for humorous purposes. In this case, it is the shift from “talking air” to “flower-smelling stuff” which reminds the reader that the Op is no poet but an ordinary detective.

### **3.4.1.3 COMPOSITION**

Hammett prefers longer complex sentences, using a lot of adjectives in descriptions of people and omitting relative pronouns and conjunctions if it is possible. Even in dramatic scenes, he follows this pattern. For illustration, this is how he depicts a hot pursuit in *Red Harvest*:

*“The chief’s car got away first, off with a jump that hammered our teeth together. We missed the garage door by half an inch, chased a couple of pedestrians diagonally across the sidewalk, bounced off the curb into the roadway, missed a truck as narrowly as we had missed the door, and dashed out King Street with our siren wide open.”*<sup>63</sup>

The sample is actually a whole paragraph, which proves that Hammett tends to make them short. Also, his novels are divided into brief chapters (there are

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<sup>61</sup> HAMMETT, Dashiell. *The Dain Curse*. Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1989. p. 95. ISBN 0679722602.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150

<sup>63</sup> HAMMETT, Dashiell. *Red Harvest*. 1<sup>st</sup> Vintage Crime/Black Lizard ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1992. p. 120. ISBN 0679722610.

approximately twenty-five chapters per book of less than two hundred pages), which sometimes form larger parts. Furthermore, both the chapters and the parts have different names.

In general, dialogues are essential in detective fiction because they illustrate the investigation and numerous interrogations. Regarding Hammett, he favours simple short sentences and tends to omit reporting clauses. As a result, some of the dialogues look like this:

*“Ten forty last night, or thereabout,” I said. “Why?”*

*“Where?”*

*“Her house.”*

*“How long were you there?”*

*“Ten minutes, maybe fifteen.”*

*“Why?”*

*“Why what?”*

*“Why didn’t you stay any longer than that?”<sup>64</sup>*

Both Chandler and Spillane use the same word-saving technique. It helps to avoid unnecessary repetitions (such as “he said”) and, once again, to speed up the story’s development. It also makes the dialogues more life-like, which is one of the main goals of hard-boiled fiction. Nonetheless, since no names or pronouns are mentioned, readers are more liable to get lost in the text, so it might be better if authors added characters’ names before the direct speech as it is done in drama.

### **3.4.2 RAYMOND CHANDLER**

Raymond Chandler might not be the founder of hard-boiled fiction; still he brought something new to the genre: humorous, yet poetic style. Chandler considered the form to be much more important than the plot, which was quite a revolutionary thought in detective fiction. For some people, it was unacceptable because up until then, the suspense was generally acknowledged as the main feature of a detective

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 169



story.<sup>65</sup> Chandler's work may sometimes lack this element, but it never lacks unusual metaphors and similes, which can be only pleasantly surprising.

### 3.4.2.1 POINT OF VIEW

All Chandler's stories are written in the first person, bearing only little resemblance to Hammett's technique. For instance, Chandler does not describe the characters' appearances in such a detailed way; however, he gives very thorough and precise descriptions of places. It is true that his comments and almost philosophical thoughts are mostly represented through direct speech, but, unlike Hammett, he uses inner monologues as well. One of the longest appears in *The Little Sister*:

*"Is that my business? Do I know? Did I ever know? Let's not go into that. You're not human tonight, Marlowe. Maybe I never was or ever will be. Maybe I'm an ectoplasm with a private license. Maybe we all get like this in the cold half-lit world where always the wrong thing happens and never the right."*<sup>66</sup>

To distinguish these monologues from the rest of the text, Chandler writes them in the present tense; the rest of the narration is in the past tense, as it is done in the work of Hammett and Spillane. This is of course just a sample of the monologue, but it is long enough to show the scepticism so typical for both Chandler and Marlowe. It expresses feelings of desperation and worthlessness, which are not common in hard-boiled fiction (practically no feelings are), but they are very much common in Chandler's novels.

### 3.4.2.2 DICTION

Chandler's language is extremely colourful and playful not only compared to other works of detective fiction. He is most innovative primarily in descriptions and dialogues, creating remarkable scenes, which could not be accomplished otherwise. However, only five simple words are really needed to characterize this language: slang, "wisecrack", comparison, accent, and onomatopoeia.

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<sup>65</sup> ŠKVORECKÝ, Josef. Proč je Chandler něco víc než... In: CHANDLER, Raymond. *Vysoké okno*. 1. vyd. Praha: Odeon, 1969. s. 191-198. ISBN 13/340102169.

<sup>66</sup> CHANDLER, Raymond. *The Little Sister*. 1<sup>st</sup> Vintage Crime/Black Lizard ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1988. p. 81. ISBN 039475767X.

In one of his letters, Chandler states that “*the literary use of slang is study itself. [...] there are only two kinds that are any good: slang that has established itself in the language and slang that you make up yourself. Everything else is apt to be passé before it gets into print.*”<sup>67</sup> Unfortunately, it is very difficult to tell now which words had already existed and which ones Chandler invented himself. It is known that the title of his first novel, *The Big Sleep*, is actually a slang word for death. Other than that, he picked most of the words from streets and pubs. Just for illustration, here is a list of some examples: *beef* (problem), *buzzer* (badge), *caboose/cooler* (prison), *dinge/shine* (Afro-American), *gat* (gun), *guff* (nonsense), *gum-shoe* (detective).

Once again, it is Dashiell Hammett who is usually recognized as the inventor of so called “wisecracks”, funny, sarcastic and commonly clever remarks. Nevertheless, he was not using them too much and when so, they were not very prominent. Thus, Chandler’s name is more likely to be associated with them. For him, they are the essence of his protagonist. They made him who he was and penetrated into the film industry as well. To set a concrete example, here are two quotes from *The Big Sleep*:

“*Are you attempting to tell me my duties, sir?*”

“*No. But I’m having a lot of fun trying to guess what they are.*”<sup>68</sup>

“*Neither of the two people in the room paid any attention to the way I came in, although only one of them was dead.*”<sup>69</sup>

In the first quote, Marlowe is talking to a butler in his client’s mansion, so it is a direct speech. But as the second sample proves, “wisecracks” can appear in indirect speech, too.

There is a very thin line between Chandlers’ pithy remarks and unique comparisons. He uses them in the same way Hammett uses adjectives – they paint a

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<sup>67</sup> HINEY, Tom and MACSHANE, Frank, ed. *The Raymond Chandler Papers: Selected Letters and Nonfiction 1909-1959*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: Grove Press, 2002. p. 105. ISBN 0802139469.

<sup>68</sup> CHANDLER, Raymond. *The Big Sleep*. 1<sup>st</sup> Vintage Crime/Black Lizard ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1992. p. 16. ISBN 0394758285.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34

very specific picture – but on top of that, they are also amusing. These comparisons can take form of either similes or metaphors; however, similes are much more common in Chandler’s writing:

*“She looked at me as if I had just come up from the floor of the ocean with a drowned mermaid under my arm.”*<sup>70</sup>

*“It was a blonde. A blonde to make a bishop kick a hole in a stained-glass window.”*<sup>71</sup>

Chandler distinguishes his characters by the grammar and the vocabulary they use as well as by different accents. There is a man who stutters, a woman with a Spanish accent, a man with a Chinese accent, but most importantly, in *Farewell, My Lovely*, Chandler captures the manner of speech of Afro-Americans:

*“Velma, you says? No Velma heah, brother. No hooch, no gals, no nothing. Jes’ the scam, white boy, jes’ the scam.”*<sup>72</sup>

It was unusual to write about Afro-Americans and even less usual to represent their dialect and accent in fiction, which makes Chandler even more prominent. In addition, his representation is very realistic.

It is possible to say that he was fascinated by sounds in general; not only does he describe the way someone talks as precisely as possible, but he also employs a lot of interjections and onomatopoeic words in his writing. Here are some examples from *The Little Sister*:

*“And out she went, tap, tap, tap down the hall.”*<sup>73</sup>

*“Buzz, buzz. Buzz, buzz.”*<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> CHANDLER, Raymond. *The Little Sister*. 1<sup>st</sup> Vintage Crime/Black Lizard ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1988. p. 139. ISBN 039475767X.

<sup>71</sup> CHANDLER, Raymond. *Farewell, My Lovely*. 1<sup>st</sup> Vintage Crime/Black Lizard ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1992. p. 93. ISBN 0394758277.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8

<sup>73</sup> CHANDLER, Raymond. *The Little Sister*. 1<sup>st</sup> Vintage Crime/Black Lizard ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1988. p. 41. ISBN 039475767X.

*“The far door made the same buzz and click.”*<sup>75</sup>

As it shows, the purpose of their usage is not always the same. The first sample resembles almost a verse line, whereas the second one is only doing as much noise as words can; and in the third quote, the onomatopoeia seems to be rather coincidental. Nevertheless, Chandler definitely wanted his words to make a certain sound.

### **3.4.2.3 COMPOSITION**

The length of Chandler’s paragraphs is quite diverse, but they usually consist of short simple sentences if their purpose is to describe a crime scene or Marlowe’s thoughts. However, in descriptions of places or subsidiary events, the sentences may elongate:

*“On the window sill a bee with tattered wings was crawling along the woodwork, buzzing in a tired remote sort of way, as if she knew it wasn’t any use, she was finished, she had flown too many missions and would never get back to the hive again.”*<sup>76</sup>

Such irrelevant passages are typical mainly for *The Long Goodbye*. In this book, Marlowe gets the most sentimental and similar paragraphs are used to express his emotiveness. Taking this extract, the bee is actually Marlowe himself, feeling exhausted by all the cases he has solved and not knowing where exactly his life is going. As it was stated at the beginning of the “Raymond Chandler” chapter, Chandler did not care much about the action; he attached the biggest importance to dialogues and descriptions, and so there is a great deal of them throughout his work.

Each of his novels consists roughly of two hundred pages (except for *The Long Goodbye*, which is one hundred pages longer). There are rather short chapters, which are not further subdivided, and they do not bear any names. Thanks to this

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122

<sup>76</sup> CHANDLER, Raymond. *The Long Goodbye*. 1<sup>st</sup> Vintage Crime/Black Lizard ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1992. p. 150. ISBN 0394757688.

composition, it takes very little time to get from the beginning to the end of each book.

### **3.4.3 MICKEY SPILLANE**

As it has been noted, Mickey Spillane became a writer only to make money. He did not care about the quality, the plot or the style as long as he was receiving “fat cheques”. Thus his writing is very different from Chandler’s and Hammett’s. It can be described as raw and easy reading with rather poor vocabulary and numerous worn out expressions. At any rate, regardless of the fact that each and every book he wrote was almost the same as the preceding one, people were buying them all. Spillane’s work is somewhat more vigorous, self-confident and fuller of action, which was probably one of the main reasons the readers liked it so much.

#### **3.4.3.1 POINT OF VIEW**

All of Spillane’s novels are written in the first person as Chandler’s are. There are actually very few differences between Hammer’s and Marlowe’s method. The first one is that Hammer does not describe places much, and when so, he tries to depict the character of his whereabouts rather than their visual appearance. On the subject of people, he does not pay much attention to their looks unless they are women.

The second small difference is that Hammer talks and thinks more about himself than Marlowe does. Such reflections are not exactly interior monologues, though. They are more like short comments and thoughts not addressing anyone in particular. Nonetheless, Hammer reaches the reader more than Marlowe or Hammett’s protagonists do. It is most visible in *My Gun Is Quick*, where Hammer speaks directly to the readers:

*“When you sit at home comfortably folded up in a chair beside a fire, have you ever thought what goes on outside there? Probably not. You pick up a book and read about things and stuff, getting a vicarious kick from people and events that*

*never happened. You're doing it now, getting ready to fill in a normal life with the details of someone else's experiences. Fun, isn't it?"*<sup>77</sup>

The monologue goes on to compare readers to Roman civilization, whose pleasure was to watch slaves die in Colosseum, just like contemporary readers cannot get enough of murders (the bloodier the better) in fiction.<sup>78</sup> It is a nice analogy which only proves how well Spillane knew his audience.

### 3.4.3.2 DICTION

There are not any slang expressions in Spillane's work really, but he was in favour of informal language. Once again, he uses contracted verb forms and mainly North American colloquialisms. For instance, Hammer addresses Pat as "pal" and technically all women as "kitten". For people he is not fond of, he has many other names; however, Spillane avoids profanity as other authors did at that time.

In fact, most of Spillane's characters speak in a similar manner except for Kathy, an Afro-American maid featuring *I, the Jury*:

*"Mistah Hammah?" she asked me.*

*"Yeah, how didja know?"*

*"De police gennimuns in de front room was 'specting you. Come in, please."*<sup>79</sup>

Surely, African American Vernacular English is a non-rhotic language, so the transcription of "mister Hammer" is apt. As for the word "gennimuns", it is probably an unusual form of "gentleman", which did not catch on. It is also worth mentioning that it was the first and last time Hammer said "didja", so he was probably only making fun of the woman's accent.

Repetitive words present another feature of Spillane's style. When writing a love or death scene, he uses the same collocations and idioms, which have already

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<sup>77</sup> SPILLANE, Mickey. *My Gun Is Quick*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: New American Library, 1950. p. 7. ISBN 0451057619.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> SPILLANE, Mickey. *I, the Jury*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: New American Library, 1948. p. 29. ISBN 0451006992.

been considered clichés. To be more precise, he always describes women's mouths as wet, warm, and soft. Sometimes he adds "full" or "sweet", but it does not make much difference. His favourite phrases are: *to have a nasty taste in one's mouth, to laugh one's head off, searching mouth, fighting tongues.*

As a matter of fact, Spillane describes death scenes in an almost poetic manner, even though he employs rather hackneyed metaphors:

*"Her eyes were a symphony of incredulity, an unbelieving witness to truth. Slowly, she looked down at the ugly swelling in her naked belly where the bullet went in."*<sup>80</sup>

*"The flames were teeth that ate, ripping and tearing into scars of other flames and her voice the shrill sound of death on the loose."*<sup>81</sup>

The purpose of these metaphors is to soften the atrociousness of the scenes. On the other hand, it somehow even highlights their wickedness since the common association with poetry is beauty.

### **3.4.3.3 COMPOSITION**

Spillane's books are approximately as long as Chandler's, but they consist of longer chapters. The sentences and paragraphs are usually shorter. Also, most of the words Spillane employs are not long. The chapters are not named and there are not any prologues or epilogues.

Another point is that dialogues outnumber descriptions, which is quite common in detective fiction in general. However, these descriptions do not consider the background but rather the action. The action is in fact the cornerstone of Spillane's writing. If it were not for the action, there would not be much left to read about.

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<sup>80</sup> SPILLANE, Mickey. *I, the Jury*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: New American Library, 1948. p. 160. ISBN 0451006992.

<sup>81</sup> SPILLANE, Mickey. *Kiss Me, Deadly*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: New American Library, 1953. p. 176. ISBN 0451165934.

## 3.5 THEME

It is typical for neither detective nor pulp fiction to have some deeper meaning or to bring any kind of moral. They might not have any theme at all or just a very shallow one. Nevertheless, there are certain messages hidden in the works of Hammett, Chandler, and even Spillane. In fact, there are usually quite a lot of them; hence, for the purpose of simplification, the following chapters are going to concentrate mainly on the most substantial ones.

### 3.5.1 HAMMETT: GREED IS BEHIND EVERYTHING

Most of the crimes committed in Hammett's novels are money-motivated. Alongside love and hate, it is the most common reason to kill somebody. The greed does not influence only the way people act, though; it changes their entire nature.

The motive appears for the first time in *Red Harvest*, presenting more than just one money-loathing character. Let us start with Dinah Brand, so called "gold-digger". She could be classified as a femme fatale, but her character is rather sad, really. Money is the only value she knows; she has no feelings, no conscience; she is willing to sell both her body and soul if she likes the price. Yet, she is neither a killer nor a bad person. In fact, she is barely a person at all. She is the embodiment of greed.

When there is "big money", there is also corruption, which brings us to Noonan, the chief of police in Personville. Unlike Dinah, he has other interests than just fortune. For example, he is trying to eliminate Whisper, a local gangster, with any tools he can, driven only by hatred. However, he obeys the orders of Elihu Willsson, who is paying him to do so.

The greed presents the main theme of *The Maltese Falcon*. Almost everyone is obsessed with the bird's statuette, the symbol of both wealth and avarice. Once again, there is a femme fatale character, Brigid O'Shaughnessy, who is more animated than Dinah, mainly because it is not just money she wants from men. She is a skilful liar and manipulator ready to sacrifice anything and anyone to gain whatever she wishes for. Unfortunately, she is up against Gutman and his men, who are driven by the same longing she is but do not bother with lies and tricks; they just kill the ones standing in their way.<sup>31</sup> Resulting from the clash of these characters, there are



ridiculous and absurd features in this book, and Hammett put them there justly, because nothing else could have emerged from such greediness.

Hammett also depicts cupidity as a cause of dysfunctional families. For instance, Chris Jorgensen marries Mimi Wynant for money in *The Thin Man*, similarly to Lily and Alice Dain, who both respectively marry Edgar Leggett in *The Dain Curse*. The greed is not the only source of these families' problems, but if it was not for the greed, there would be no family in the first place.

Since *The Dain Curse* and *The Thin Man* have been already mentioned, it is possible to add three other significant themes Hammett applies: sex, drugs and hatred. Those are the remaining causes of "sick" relationships, which are chiefly characteristic for *The Dain Curse*. Their horrible impact is most visible on Gabriel Leggett, who was trained by her aunt to kill her mother, is drug addicted and presents the object of sexual interest of her doctor.<sup>32</sup> As a result, she is mentally unstable, balancing on the edge of madness.

There are two ways how to read Hammett. Firstly, his writing can be perceived as detective fiction; hence the reader may overlook the theme, which has very little to do with the genre. And secondly, one can read it as a social study, ignoring a sizeable part of the plot. We can only guess now which part Hammett considered to be more important.

### **3.5.2 CHANDLER: EVERYBODY FEARS THE TRUTH**

Corruption and power of money are common themes in Chandler's novels as well. The most frequent reason for murder is different, though. As it was mentioned before, identity change is one of the typical features in Chandler's stories. It usually means a lot of trouble since the characters' real identity is always revealed, and desperately trying to cover up the truth, they are forced to kill. It should not be surprising by now that these characters are mainly women.

The first femme fatale appears in *Farewell, My Lovely*. Velma is a bar dancer wishing for success and wealth. In the end, she settles for money and marries Mr. Grayle under an assumed name. Unfortunately, her ex-boyfriend from the past confronts her, willing to forgive her everything, and she, dreading the consequences

his presence might have, shoots him.<sup>82</sup> Similar character features *The Lady in The Lake*. Muriel Chess alias Mildred Haviland is also ruthless and selfish but even more vicious. She does not kill just to silence people, but also because she enjoys it. She is not interested in money that much; however, when the opportunity to take the place of the rich Mrs. Kingsley presents itself, she uses it.<sup>83</sup> Both women are cornered at last, and both end up dead.

Chandler proves that the truth is something you cannot hide from, no matter how many lies you tell. He depicts it as something more horrifying than the death itself – it can make you a murderer and a suicide, too.

Marlowe himself has secrets he does not want people to know:

*“I’m sure I didn’t know you were scared that easy. I thought you were tough.”*

*“That’s just an act.”<sup>84</sup>*

Yes, the reader can see that Marlowe is in fact quite sensitive and soft, but the characters usually know only his “hard-boiled mask”. Most of all, Marlowe does not wish to admit this kind of truth to himself. He considers it a weakness, which should not appertain to a man of his position. As the others, he too tries to hide it and pretends to be tough and inconsiderate, but in the end, it is all just an act.

Another quite important theme is justice, which should be guaranteed by the law but rarely is. It is also why Marlowe is willing to break the rules and to hold the evidence if it should help to catch the real culprit. The way Marlowe sees it, the moral standards always prevail over the legal ones.

Chandler was a little bit of a philosopher, and so it would be strange if his work consisted of plain detective stories. It is very likely that he would not even bother with the genre if he were more self-confident. Anyway, he may have focused

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<sup>82</sup> CHANDLER, Raymond. *Farewell, My Lovely*. 1<sup>st</sup> Vintage Crime/Black Lizard ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1992. ISBN 0394758277.

<sup>83</sup> CHANDLER, Raymond. *The Lady In the Lake*. 1<sup>st</sup> Vintage Crime/Black Lizard ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1988. ISBN 0394758250.

<sup>84</sup> CHANDLER, Raymond. *The Little Sister*. 1<sup>st</sup> Vintage Crime/Black Lizard ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1988. p. 95. ISBN 039475767X.

more on the form than on the plot, but he definitely attached big importance to the theme of his novels as well.

### 3.5.3 SPILLANE: HATE THEM ALL, KILL THEM ALL

Marlowe is a sceptic, not believing that the society may change or that he might help it. He elongates from the community and withdraws into himself. Hammer does practically the opposite. He is convinced that he was chosen to purify the streets from the filth and to execute justice by any means. He takes every murder personally and lets his heart fill with hatred. In fact, he is not much different from the villains he chases.

Hate and love are not the main motives of Spillane's antagonists – usually, they kill for more pragmatic reasons. However, when they face Hammer, there is a strong mutual enmity between them. The way Spillane describes it, such a strong emotion clouds people's mind, making them act irrationally and dangerously. To put it differently, for Spillane, hatred is much more compelling than greed or fear.

The detestation is often accompanied by intolerance, which Škvorecký considers alarming. In *Nápady čtenáře detektivek*, he accuses Spillane's fiction of being fascist for it is weighted against homosexuals and communists.<sup>85</sup> That is true only in certain cases. For example, in the first book, the villain is a young wealthy woman. In the second one, it is a rich old man, and the sixth book features a heroin mafia. There is no doubt that Spillane was a right-wing writer; on the other hand, Communism was not very popular in America at that time. Moreover, his books are offensive to women, too. In his novels, women are depicted as very submissive, non-independent, always waiting for Hammer to show up, throwing themselves at him even though he treats them horribly. The point is, the Mike Hammer series are weighted against everybody. If Spillane was a fascist, then he must have been a sexist, too.

Spillane wanted to be remembered for his work, and in order to make it happen, he tried to be shocking and scandalous. That is the main reason why his novels are full of sex, violence and hatred. These themes form a powerful, irresistible

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<sup>85</sup> ŠKVORECKÝ, Josef. *Nápady čtenáře detektivek*. 3. vyd. Praha: Interpress, 1990. edice Adéla, s. 94. ISBN 5902890.

combination, which, however, do not send the public any message. The novels only reflect the society's secret desires.

### 3.6 ERRORS

In hard-boiled fiction, private investigators are allowed to make mistakes and, apparently, so are the writers. It is not always easy to decide what should be considered a mistake and what was done on purpose, though. For instance, in *The Maltese Falcon*, there is a scene where Spade catches an armed man searching his office. With significant difficulties, he manages to take his weapon away, but eventually gives it back to him with all bullets in it. Not surprisingly, the man points the gun at the detective once again and finishes his search.<sup>86</sup> Obviously, Hammett meant the scene to be that way, but since Spade is not described as a naive fool, it is hard to understand Hammett's intention. Nevertheless, there are some ill-conceived ideas, which should be regarded as errors.

All three of them, Hammett, Chandler, Spillane, describe their detectives as very poor people earning just enough to have a place to rest their heads, yet they are never pressed for money. They always have some cash to bribe a reception clerk, to buy lady a drink, to pay for their cigarettes and liquor etc. Chandler copes with this issue quite well: his detective always works for a client and gets paid; he might do some extra work for free, but he receives a certain amount of money eventually. Hammett is not as definite as Chandler, but there usually is some salary mentioned. Spillane is the one who does not pay attention to this matter at all; his character works on his own most of the time, and the source of money is usually not stated.

It is nearly impossible to imagine a private detective without a cigarette and a glass of whiskey. Nonetheless, the authors should allow their heroes to drink some water too from time to time if they want their characters to be believable. For instance, Mike Hammer washes his face with water; he occasionally offers it to other people; his mouth even waters when he sees a beautiful woman, but he drinks nothing but liquor and coffee. With this kind of fluid intake, he would be dead by the fifth chapter of the first book. Hammett's characters would probably meet the same fate. Only Ned Beaumont gets to drink a couple of glasses of water, but it eventually

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<sup>86</sup> HAMMETT, Dashiell. *The Maltese Falcon*. Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1989. p. 45-51. ISBN 0679722645.

makes him sick.<sup>87</sup> Chandler deals with this problem acceptably well. Marlowe's eating habits are questionable, but at least he consumes non-alcoholic beverages as well as alcoholic.

These are only details which could be noted by any perceptive reader, but that is exactly what makes them so important. Errors which can be recognized only by experts are substantial solely in academic literature. In fiction, the worst mistakes are always those which can be noted by laics, because laics stand for the majority of the readers of fiction.

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<sup>87</sup> HAMMETT, Dashiell. *The Glass Key*. Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1989. p. 92. ISBN 0679722629.

## CONCLUSION

Judged as a low quality genre or not, American hard-boiled school fiction changed the nature of detective stories once and for all. Firstly, it introduced a completely different setting, which was adopted by a majority of later authors. The crime scene is no longer only within the environs of a local manor, but it is usually spread over a whole city. Also, the modus operandi gets simpler, meaning that in hard-boiled fiction, the culprit rarely tries to disguise a murder to look like a natural death – the culprit uses the most available tools rather than poisons. The social milieu had to be changed too, of course. Lords and counts are replaced by politicians and wealthy businessmen, and instead of butlers, they employ gangsters. Such formula resembles much more the contemporary detective stories than the works of the Golden Age.

Secondly, under the influence of westerns, a brand new protagonist was created: “a tough guy”. He does not act like a gentleman, does not mind to break the law or to get into a fight. However, the main difference between him and the “Sherlockian” detectives is that he is much more humble and less self-confident. Private investigators make mistakes and are aware of them. Golden Age detectives are never mistaken, and they are full of praise for themselves.

Then there is a difference between the “tough” detective and the antagonist, meaning that private investigators are not heartless. Marlowe has been already described as nearly sentimental. The Continental Op is rather a mysterious character, but he does help Gabriel Legget to overcome her morphine addiction just because he has pity on her. Hammer has no mercy with the murderers, but he risks his life to protect those he cares about. In the end, their toughness is more or less a mere act.

Femmes fatales are the very opposite of the detectives. They appear innocent and fragile at first, but in reality, they are selfish and atrocious. These characters were known from much earlier literature, though. Hard-boiled fiction only increased their popularity.

Thirdly, the genre influenced the language of detective fiction. It started to use slang impressions to characterize the manner of speech of the underground and of everyone who gets involved in it. “Wisecracks” became one of the characteristic features of “tough guys”, so chiefly of the detectives but not exclusively. And finally

the dialogues were made snappier and more natural, which suits detective fiction perfectly.

The last merit of the school is that it reflects and comments on the society. It does not provide many facts, but it does capture the atmosphere and the emotions of the era. For instance, Spillane's novels are evidently influenced by the Cold War as it is not possible to overlook the hatred towards communists and the strong patriotism in his books. Moreover, the majority of Hammett's and Chandler's novels can be perceived as sociological studies and not only of one particular class but of the whole community. For these reasons, hard-boiled fiction should not be forgotten.

Let us focus on the uniqueness of the authors now. Their techniques correspond precisely with the genre despite the fact that every one of them brings something new to it. Hammett basically established the school and provided his followers with both humour and constant action. Furthermore, he contributed to both the contents and the form. His work was very diverse; nonetheless, it never reached the extreme. Chandler was the one who truly refined the language. Not only did he bring new slang expressions and "wisecracks", but he also nearly assimilated the genre with belles-lettres style, using extraordinary similes and metaphors. Spillane, on the other hand, did the complete opposite. He simplified both the form and the contents and left out only the extreme interpretation of the genre. It may seem like a degradation of the school, but if anything, he made it even more popular with the general public; hence, it could be regarded as an asset.

Given these points, it is necessary to know all the three authors to understand hard-boiled fiction completely. Their contributions were different but not differently important. They may not be equally proficient as regular authors, but they are equally proficient as hard-boiled ones. They embody the genre.

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