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G. H. Coxe and W. R. Burnett: Two Genre Models of American Hard-Boiled
School of the 1930s and the 1940s
(Master Thesis)

G. H. Coxe a W. R. Burnett: dva žánrové modely americké drsné školy třicátých a
čtyřicátých let 20. století
(Diplomová práce)

Autor: Bc. Vladimír Stehlík
Anglická filologie

Vedoucí: Prof. PhDr. Michal Peprník, Dr.

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci vypracoval samostatně a uvedl v ní předepsaným způsobem všechnu použitou literaturu.

Ve Zlíně dne:

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis discusses two genre models of representatives of American hard-boiled school of the 1930s and the 1940s George Harmon Coxe and William Riley Burnett. The aim of the analysis is to prove an extension of traditional hard-boiled genre models which are represented by the works of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett. The main attention is paid to alternative representations and depictions of hard-boiled heroes in the 1930s and the 1940s hard-boiled works, as well to the process of diversification that marks both hard-boiled protagonists and the genre models.

There are only few studies which mention and compare different types of hard-boiled heroes and the diversification of their roles. My analysis is based on critical studies focusing on American hard-boiled fiction as well as on comparisons with godfathers of the genre Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler.

The opening part of the thesis outlines conventional features of American hard-boiled school: the urban setting, violence, masculinity and the specific hard-boiled language. The representation of these features is discussed in the works of analyzed authors as well as in the works of other related hard-boiled artists in order to provide at least a brief overview of an early hard-boiled style. The variety that can be found in analyzed works is a promising ground for digressions from conventions of the genre.

The central part of the thesis deals with the analysis of selected novels: *Little Caesar* (1929), *High Sierra* (1940) by W. R. Burnett and *Murder with Pictures* (1935), *Silent Are the Dead* (1942) by G. H. Coxe. The novels were not chosen randomly. All of them are significant for alternative portrayals of hard-boiled heroes. Some of them are important for the development of patterns and techniques that can be found in the genre. Alternative hard-boiled heroes represented by Burnett's gangsters and Coxe's photographers are discussed after introducing each of the novels. The analysis of the hard-boiled private eye is also concerned with diversification tendencies that characterize hard-boiled protagonists.

The closing part is devoted to features of incorporation into and resistance to the system of the hard-boiled fictional world which are displayed in both alternative hard-boiled heroes.

2 FORGOTTEN MASTERS OF PULP

George Harmon Coxe and William Riley Burnett are usually neither widely acknowledged as the founders nor prominent representatives of the hard-boiled genre. Burnett is usually mentioned in connection with his *Little Caesar* (1929), which is in a way a pioneering gangster novel, and also thanks to several Hollywood adaptations of his novels including *Little Caesar*, *High Sierra* and *The Asphalt Jungle*. Nevertheless, popularity of Burnett does not correspond to his influence upon the crime genre. He was termed, according to David Wingrove, as one of the founders of the hard-boiled school in the introductory essay to the *Black Box Thrillers* omnibus of four Burnett's novels.¹ It is truth that Burnett is mentioned in studies focusing on the crime fiction (Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*; Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery and Romance*; Rzepka, Horsley, eds. *Companion to Crime Fiction* and others). Yet, *Little Caesar* is conventionally the only work which is cited.

Coxe, on the other hand, seems to be almost ignored by critics who focus on hard-boiled genre. It is probably partly caused by the fact that he was overshadowed by other hard-boiled artists. A contemporary western writer James Reasoner mentions that Coxe, despite being one of the most prolific mystery writers of the 1960s, was almost completely out of the print.²

This is reflected in the absence of Coxe's titles on the book market, especially the works finished in the 1930s and the 1940s, which are the subject of this paper, are not available. Luckily, a traditional pulp publishing house Mysterious Press has recently released a series of e-books containing twenty novels by Coxe. Unfortunately, Burnett's works have not been revived yet. Therefore I am using the omnibus of his novels that was published in 1984.

Detailed biographies of both authors would exceed the capacity of the thesis. However, it is beneficial to mention briefly their profiles in order to situate them into the context of hard-boiled fiction.

¹ See David Wingrove, "Good Man Is Hard To Find," in *Black Box Thrillers. 4 Novels: Little Caesar; High Sierra Vanity Row; The Asphalt Jungle* (London: Zomba Books, 1984), V-IX.

² See James Reasoner, "The Legacy of George Harmon Coxe," *MysteriousPress.com Blog*, accessed January 15, 2014, <http://mysteriouspress.com/blog/the-legacy-of-george-harmon-coxe-by-james-reasoner.asp>.

2.1 William Riley Burnett

Burnett was born in Springfield, Ohio, 1899 and died in Santa Monica, Ohio, 1982. When he was 20 he started to study journalism at Ohio State University. However, he ended his studies after the first semester.

He worked then as a statistician from 1920 to 1927. He proved a great endurance in his literary beginnings, as he recalls in the introduction to *Little Caesar*'s 1958 edition: "It had been a long struggle. I'd written for over six years without selling a line, working meanwhile as a statistician for the State of Ohio, in Columbus. Fed up with office routine—and I still hate the sight of an office!"³

After publishing *Little Caesar* in 1929, Burnett established himself as one of the leading hard-boiled American authors and screenwriters. This paper focuses on his 1930s and 1940s works. Especially, his novel debut *Little Caesar* (1929), *High Sierra* (1940) and *The Asphalt Jungle* (1949) are discussed.

According to Michael Larsen, Burnett's main contribution to the genre was providing an unprecedented insight into the "urban jungle" of Chicago gangsters. Burnett also held the opinion that "crime is an inevitable part of society, given human frailties and desires, and that it must be seen in its own terms to be understood."⁴

Larsen also mentions an enormous contribution of the author to the field of crime fiction and gangster movie iconography, naming frequently imitated scenes, which were for the first time used by Burnett. These scenes include, e. g. "the would-be informant gunned down on church steps; funerals of dead mobsters who are 'sent off' with floral and verbal tributes from their killers; the ambitious mobster making an unrefusable offer to a 'business' rival."⁵

³ W. R. Burnett, "Introduction," in *Little Caesar* (New York: The Dial Press, 1958), 16.

⁴ See Michael J. Larsen, "W. R. Burnett," in *Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction*, ed. Carl E. Rollyson (Hackensack: Salem Press, 2008), 225.

⁵ See Larsen, "W. R. Burnett," 228.

2.2 George Harmon Coxe

George Harmon Coxe was born in Olean, New York, 1901 and died in Old Lyme, Connecticut, 1984. He studied at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana and Cornell University in Ithaca, New York between years 1919 and 1921. Nevertheless, he did not accomplish any of his university studies.

While working as a causal worker, Coxe wrote his first detective stories. He moved to Santa Monica in 1922 and started to work as a journalist for Santa Monica *Outlook* and later for Los Angeles *Express*. After moving back to the East, Coxe continued with newswriting. He also worked in advertising since 1927.

The revolutionary year for his artistic progress was 1932 when he ceased to work in advertising and launched his career of a full-time writer. Coxe became a regular contributor to *Black Mask* and other pulp magazines. Before publishing his first novel *Murder with Pictures* (1935), Coxe had already up to fifty detectives stories to his credit. This training is reflected in a refined language and writer's confidence in elaboration which characterizes his first novel. Coxe's debut novel differs profoundly in this aspect from Burnett's *Little Caesar* which is much terser.

The thesis focuses on Coxe's debut novel *Murder with Pictures* and representative works of the 1940s *Silent Are the Dead* (1942) and *The Jade Venus* (1947). These novels feature both of his famous photographers Jack "Flashgun" Casey and Kent Murdock.

Richard Keenan argues that the main contribution of the author is an introducing of a new style of hard-boiled fiction which differs from Chandler's and Hammett's works. According to Keenan, Coxe's stories are never "sensationally-violent." Coxe was also the first hard-boiled writer who presented a press photographer in a role of an amateur detective.⁶

Coxe's journalist experience is demonstrated in the authenticity of his protagonists as well as in his fascination with photography. James Reasoner mentions that Coxe's

⁶ See Richard Keenan, "George Harmon Coxe," in *Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction*, ed. Carl E. Rollyson (Hackensack: Salem Press, 2008), 404.

journalist work gave: “a real sense of authenticity to the newsrooms, darkrooms, and editorial offices of major metropolitan newspapers.”⁷

⁷ James Reasoner, “The Legacy of George Harmon Coxe,” *MysteriousPress.com Blog*, accessed January 15, 2014, <http://mysteriouspress.com/blog/the-legacy-of-george-harmon-coxe-by-james-reasoner.asp>.

3 BEING HARD-BOILED

Hard-boiled fiction, which is often, in a simplifying way, described in terms of its typical properties like the setting of a big gloomy city, predatory characters, criminal slang, violence, etc., has been since its emergence a complex literary phenomenon, embracing not only detective fiction, which is usually considered as one of its initial field.

John Scaggs underlines the close connection of hard-boiled fiction and “crime thrillers” in his work *Crime Fiction* (2005).⁸ Such crime thrillers, according to Scaggs, encompass many thematically distinguished subgenres.⁹ Nevertheless, especially the role and relation of gangster thrillers to hard-boiled detective fiction is emphasized by John Cawelti, who mentions the “formulaic importance” of Burnett’s *Little Caesar* (1929) in connection to Dashiell Hammett’s *Red Harvest* (1929).¹⁰

An approximation of these two styles is present not only in typical hard-boiled features that can be traced back to European influences in some cases. Critics usually also emphasize the fact that the most profound impact on the development of the genre was made by American authors and American cultural matrix. Therefore the setting of both gangster thrillers and detective fiction is crucial for the genre. Speaking of the setting of gangster thrillers and hard-boiled detective fiction, a big American city cannot be omitted.

3.1 The Urban Environment

The city as the setting of hard-boiled fiction has become distinctively recognized as a typical feature that is almost essential for hard-boiled works. Lewis D. Moore points to the use of an “urban environment” as one of the crucial elements of hard-boiled detective

⁸ See John Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2005), 105.

⁹ See Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 108.

¹⁰ See John G. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1976), 59, quoted in Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 105.

fiction. He mentions Edgar Allan Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841) which defines Paris as the "place of darkness."¹¹

Poe's influence in this aspect is unquestionable. Yet, the same darkness that evokes dismay and thrill of gothic fiction works in a new American environment as a hidden but powerful force that pervades a new homeland of crime and social corruption.

Raymond Chandler in his preface to "Fingerman" (1934) notes that: "The streets were dark with something more than night."¹² The moral and emotional darkness of the mean streets becomes a standard feature of the urban setting in hard-boiled novels. Coxe depicts this setting as a "man-made crevasse" in the following excerpt from his debut novel *Murder with Pictures* (1935).

Night hung pitch-black over the alley. The windows facing it and extending up the side of the four-story loft building opposite caught this blackness, exaggerating and reflecting it. Surrounded by a neighborhood that was sordid and decadent, this man-made crevasse was abandoned. Dust, refuse, old papers, staves and hoops from shattered barrel, littered the ancient cobblestone floor. And along this floor there swept a breeze which stirred the papers, giving them life and spread a chill at Murdock's ankles which seemed to mount until it infused his thoughts.¹³

The excerpt shows that Coxe is aware of the powerful imagery of darkness. He presents the typical hard-boiled streets, in which "sordid and decadent neighborhood" is nothing extraordinary. Such setting was about to become a trademark of the genre.

The big American city started to shape its own world with its own rules and system. Characters of hard-boiled novels are well designed for this system and they usually act according to their more or less stereotypical roles. Lee Horsley determines the general function of the city in hard-boiled fiction, arguing that: "it is the big city that most regularly threatens a protagonist's sense of a discrete self, his powers of understanding, and his physical safety."¹⁴

¹¹ See Lewis D. Moore, *Cracking the Hard-Boiled Detective: a Critical History from the 1920s to the Present* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006), 8.

¹² Raymond Chandler, Introduction to "Fingerman" (London: Ace Books, 1960), 5, quoted in Lee Horsley, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 70.

¹³ George Harmon Coxe, *Murder with Pictures* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 187-188.

¹⁴ Horsley, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*, 71.

The big hard-boiled city is a mysterious and hostile place and it is carefully portrayed by hard-boiled authors in this manner. The following passage from Burnett's *The Asphalt Jungle* (1949) documents author's perfectionism in the setting description:

The traffic lights changed with automatic precision, but there were no cars to heed or disobey them. Far down the boulevard, in the supper-club section of the city, elaborately glittering neon signs flashed off and on to emptiness. The night city, like a wound-up toy, went about its business with mechanical efficiency, regardless of man.¹⁵

Burnett portrays the night city as a “wound-up toy, which goes about its business with mechanical efficiency, regardless of man” in a way that points directly to an inability of characters to grasp the place of emptiness which surrounds them. The emptiness is conventionally accompanied by darkness. Moore mentions that “decay, darkness, and gloom suggest as well as provide an atmosphere for harmful acts.”¹⁶

Depictions of the urban environment traditionally contain mentioned elements and figurativeness often shapes a key strategy for an enrichment of the city landscape, e.g. Burnett used an inventive simile in presenting the city as a living entity in his *Vanity Row* (1952).

The city was silent till you listened more closely, then it seemed to breathe like some fabulous, gigantic, soulless animal.¹⁷

The figurativeness in descriptions of the setting is generally quite frequent in hard-boiled novels. Nevertheless, I suggest that these excerpts aptly demonstrate the effort of hard-boiled authors to enrich American city with a new symbolical and metaphorical dimensions which became formulaic for hard-boiled writing. Horsley even terms cityscape as “metaphorically heightened” in hard-boiled crime fiction.¹⁸

¹⁵ W. R. Burnett, *Black Box Thrillers. 4 Novels: Little Caesar; The Asphalt Jungle; High Sierra; Vanity Row* (London: Zomba Books, 1984), 127.

¹⁶ Moore, *Cracking the Hard-Boiled Detective*, 63.

¹⁷ Burnett, *Vanity Row*, 536.

¹⁸ See Horsley, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*, 70.

Horsley's idea of the lack of physical safety in the city setting, which pervades hard-boiled fiction, is usually affirmed. Yet, there can be found subtle details that show an opposite tendency. A passage in Burnett's *Vanity Row* (1952) shows this tendency by a recaptured sense of security of one character: "She was back in the big town now. Out in the open country things were different, terrifying."¹⁹

This approach can be regarded as exceptional. Nevertheless, it illustrates another dimension of the urban setting by providing a more complex understanding of it. I would like to suggest that the hard-boiled city is, on one hand a place of threat and insecurity, infested with crime and decay. On the other hand, it can transform and control its inhabitants as well as to attract them.

3.2 Violence & Masculinity

Violence and masculinity are conventional attributes of hard-boiled fiction. The purpose of the following sections is to identify these features in the works of Coxe and Burnett as well as to suggest possible links to the history and context of hard-boiled writing.

3.2.1 Violence

"Intellectual discourse is great, man, but in my business, violence and pain is where it's at."²⁰

The excerpt from the novel *The Last Good Kiss* (1978) by a contemporary representative of the hard-boiled writing James Crumley, expresses aptly, and in a typical terse, hard-boiled manner, the role of violence in this genre, despite almost half-century gap between his works and works analyzed in this thesis.

Hard-boiled fiction lacking violence probably would not be classified as hard-boiled. Vivid violent scenes became one of the trademarks of the genre. Yet, the generalization is

¹⁹ Burnett, *Vanity Row*, 448.

²⁰ James Crumley, *The Last Good Kiss* (New York: Vintage, 1988), 43, quoted in Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 1.

not a proper approach to the phenomenon. There can be found profound differences between hard-boiled detective fiction represented in this paper by Coxe's works and Burnett's crime thrillers.

I focused on Burnett's prominent works *Little Caesar*, *The Asphalt Jungle* and *High Sierra*. The comparison of these novels with the selected works of Coxe (*Murder with Pictures*, *Silent are the Dead*, *The Jade Venus*) proved an anticipated assumption of a higher degree of violence in Burnett's works. The increased violence can be seen as a general trait of crime thrillers which generally show less morality than detective fiction.

Nevertheless, an important aspect is naturally the style of a particular author. Coxe compared to Chandler (or Hammett) would show even lesser amount of violence. This obviously depends on narratological aspects as depiction of the fictional world and society as well as on the portrayal of a main character. The characteristics of the main hero can therefore significantly determine the amount of violence.

Chandler's protagonist is a private detective. The fact predetermines him to the 'closer' contact with criminals. Moreover, he often works on his own without police intervention. This is partly true about Coxe's heroes too, but because they are photographers, they often stand aside as observers letting the police to do the dirty work.

That, of course, does not exclude Coxe's heroes from pervasive violence. They are quite often involved in physical conflicts. Coxe's novel from the late 1940s *Jade Venus* (1947) shows an interesting aspect in the portrayal of the main hero. The main protagonist Murdock does not work as a photographer and investigates in a style of the hard-boiled private eye in this novel. The amount of violence is seemingly higher in *Jade Venus*. In other words, if the main protagonist is a detective, the amount of violence can be increased.

Violence is therefore more or less present in works of both analyzed authors. There are many critical studies on violence in hard-boiled fiction. Moore mentions briefly premises of violence in hard-boiled style naming historical and literary influences which encompass the post-World War I big city corruption, Prohibition era as well as literary sources encompassing Western literature and its inspiration in Homeric epics.²¹ Similar

²¹ See Moore, *Cracking the Hard-Boiled Detective*, 50.

conceptions are also found in Gray and Scaggs.²² Yet, Moore also mentions that violence has ability to shape “the direction and form of the genre.”²³

Violence is partly a product of toughness that is expected from hard-boiled heroes. The mentioned studies usually focus mainly on hard-boiled detectives, yet almost identical tendencies are demonstrable in hard-boiled gangsters.

Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that majority of hard-boiled gangsters cannot be linked to Scaggs’s concept of archetypal duality of hard-boiled detectives which consists in their representation of a force of law or a certain vigilante as well as in their criminal aspect.²⁴ William Ruehlmann mentions that “private eye novels are vigilante literature, and their peculiar appeal lies in reader identification with a hero whose brutality avenges not only fictional transgression but American urban frustration as well.”²⁵

The majority of Burnett’s characters cannot be described as vigilantes. However, the archetypal relation of criminal and lawful aspect of the hard-boiled hero in the case of Burnett’s gangsters can possibly work in the protagonist of *High Sierra* Roy Earle. Earle already shows signs of the public hero,²⁶ unlike Rico from *Little Caesar*.

3.2.2 Masculinity

Masculinity is the feature that permeates analyzed works as well as the genre. Yet, there are naturally differences given by the type of protagonists. That is why the features which are discussed later correspond more closely to Coxe’s heroes. Nevertheless, Burnett’s heroes do not completely stand aside.

²² See Richard Gray, *A History of American Literature* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell: 2004), 537-544 and Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 57-83.

²³ See Moore, *Cracking the Hard-Boiled Detective*, 50.

²⁴ See Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 12.

²⁵ William Ruehlmann, *Saint with a Gun: the Unlawful American Private Eye* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 9, quoted in Moore, *Cracking the Hard-boiled Detective*, 48.

²⁶ The concept of gangsters as public heroes is further discussed in Jonathan Munby, *Public Enemies, Public Heroes: Screening the Gangster from Little Caesar to Touch of Evil* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

Reading of hard-boiled masculinity is often one of the most disputable issues of the genre because it seems to be more dependent on attitudes of the critics than other aspects. However, it is beneficial to briefly mention some of traits which accompany this feature.

Andrew Pepper mentions typical manifestations of masculinities in hard-boiled works: toughness, whiteness and racism.²⁷ Megan A. Abbot also describes a hard-boiled hero in terms of “his refusal to attach himself to a woman, a family, a social network, a community, a business, a country and its ideals.” She also mentions that, thanks to this refusal, the hard-boiled hero becomes “a potential transgressor, a social renegade.”²⁸

The mentioned features definitely cannot encompass such complex issue in depth. However, they are a sufficient source for the brief identification of masculinity in works of Coxe and Burnett.

Toughness and whiteness are easily identified, yet the representation of toughness differs in the different amount of violence. Racism, represented rather in a form of xenophobia is easily recognized in Burnett’s *Little Caesar*. Coxe’s novels, on the other hand, do not show much of racism. Nevertheless, the works of both Coxe and Burnett are still less racist than Chandler’s works.

The role of the social renegade is again attributed rather to Burnett’s gangsters than to photographers-detectives of Coxe. However, it is evident that both photographers and gangsters represent a certain kind of renegades. Such renegade is naturally more obvious when represented by a criminal.

A question can possibly arise: do analyzed heroes display the typical hard-boiled masculinity at all? Despite a diversified nature of both types of protagonists, an idea of Abbot can be supportive. Abbot argues that a “city boy” (who replaced “cowboy” in terms of archetypal lineage) often included “filmic types as the gangster, the boxer, or the city beat reporter.”²⁹ Abbott therefore directly points to the more diversified image of the hard-boiled hero who does not have to be necessarily a Chandler’s type of private detective.

²⁷ See Andrew Pepper, “The ‘Hard-boiled’ Genre” in *Companion to Crime Fiction*, ed. Charles J. Rzepka and Lee Horsley (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 148.

²⁸ See Megan E. Abbott, *The Street Was Mine: White Masculinity in Hardboiled Fiction and Film Noir* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 6.

²⁹ See Abbott, *The Street Was Mine*, 6.

The unwillingness of heroes to be attached to a woman is identified in works of both authors. Yet, the generalization is again incorrect. Rico from *Little Caesar* can be probably labeled as very sexist or even misogynistic. On the other hand, Roy from *High Sierra* shows even romantic affections to few female characters.

This feature can be found in some Coxe's heroes who partly comply with the chivalric depiction of hard-boiled detectives represented by Marlowe or Sam Spade. However, the situation of a hard-boiled character living happily with a woman seldom occurs. Some Coxe's novels include this motif. Nevertheless, these works would be probably labeled as a divergence from the convention.

Very specific female characters that permeate hard-boiled fiction are femme fatales. Their presence is probably more evident in Coxe's works because they do not digress so much from the hard-boiled detective fiction model in terms of structure as Burnett's works.

Abbott argues that relationship of the tough hard-boiled hero and the femme fatale has a profound role in the construction of the hard-boiled masculinity.³⁰ This idea is affirmed in analyzed works. Nevertheless, Coxe's and Burnett's female characters, who comply with the role of femme fatales, are not necessarily primary objects of the main hero's attention. Yet, they are present and their importance can be aptly characterized by the notion of movie critic Foster Hirsh. Hirsch speaking of rendering of femme fatale in noir movies, mentions that: "...noir's fatal women seem to move in a dreamlike landscape. They are projections of male fears and fantasies..."³¹

Femme fatales are therefore dangerous beauties who often represent an antagonist to the main hero. Their dangerousness is not based on their beauty and predatory nature only. They are indeed the projections of "male fears and fantasies" and this aspect is definitely disturbing and dangerous for the hard-boiled hero.

³⁰ See Abbott, *The Street Was Mine*, 9.

³¹ Foster Hirsch, *The Dark Side of the Screen: Film Noir* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2008), 157, quoted in Abbott. *The Street Was Mine*, 138.

Coxe's debut shows a femme fatale in the character of Hestor who is the main hero's ex-wife. This couple reflects the tension between a tough guy and femme fatale in the prototypical way. Hestor has the features of femme fatales, yet she does not show a grace of Chandler's femme fatales. On the other hand, there are even less graceful femme fatales in some of Coxe's works, e. g. Louise from *Silent Are the Dead*.

Tall, deep-breasted, she had a showy type of beauty that hit you between the eyes until you realized it was pretty shallow and depended largely upon make-up. She wore good clothes and when you took her out it had to be to the best places and at a table where she could see and be seen. She was, quite frankly, out to better herself and whatever she did for you—if she was especially nice—was going to cost you something, one way or another. Well, she'd got what she wanted and now, at 28, she still had her figure and her blond beauty. Her mouth was a bit more selfish, a little more set at the corners, but you couldn't have everything.³²

The described character would probably represent an atypical femme fatale type because she lacks the grace and a certain high class of characteristic femme fatales represented e. g. by Vivian from Chandler's *The Big Sleep* (1939). Nevertheless, it shows that the diversification in the portrayal of hard-boiled protagonists does not concern male characters only.

The aim of this section was to point to several prominent tendencies and iconic features that represent masculinity in hard-boiled novels. Yet, it provided only very brief overview of the issue.

The above cited Abbott's idea that masculinity is reflected also in the refusal of the hard-boiled hero to become a part of society and its ideals can be also translated as a refusal or resistance to the system. It would be beneficial to devote to this theme a separate chapter later in this paper.

³² George Harmon Coxe, *Silent Are the Dead* (New York: MysteriousPress.com, 2013), Chapter IV, Google Play eBook.

3.3 Language

An inseparable component of hard-boiled works is a specific language that strongly marks the genre. The style of hard-boiled works is usually relatively terse and economic. On the other hand, there can be identified a strong tendency to a figurative expressing in a number of hard-boiled works.

The most iconic examples of typical hard-boiled figurativeness can be found in works of Raymond Chandler. Chandler's short stories are much more economical in terms of the figurativeness than his debut novel *The Big Sleep* (1939). Nevertheless, his contribution is presumably unquestionable. He became a master of witty similes and wisecracks that characterize his hero. The figurativeness of Chandler's works as well as wisecracks became one of the standards of the genre.

“You may smoke sir. I like the smell of tobacco.” I lit the cigarette and blew a lungful at him and he sniffed at it like a terrier at a rathole. The faint smile pulled at the shadowed corners of his mouth.³³

“I understand you are a private detective?”

“Yes.”

“I think you are a very stupid person. You look stupid. You are in a stupid business. And you came here on a stupid mission.”

“I get it,” I said. “I’m stupid. It sank in after a while.”³⁴

Chandler indeed used refined wisecracks. However, Chandler's *The Big Sleep* was published ten years later than Burnett's debut and Hammett's *Red Harvest* (1929). Hammett therefore along with Coxe and other hard-boiled artist contributed to the inspiring stylistic matrix which is reflected in later hard-boiled works.

³³ Raymond Chandler, *Stories and Early Novels: Pulp Stories; The Big Sleep; Farewell, My Lovely; The High Window* (New York: The Library of America, 1995), 593.

³⁴ Chandler, *Farewell, My Lovely*, 877.

Coxe along with other early hard-boiled writers, including Chandler and Hammett, wrote short stories for *Black Mask* and other pulp magazines.

Richard Keenan mentions that “The world of *Black Mask* crime and detection was essentially nihilistic, a place where people could exert no real control over their existence.”³⁵ Keenan’s idea shows *Black Mask* as a groundbreaking medium that was suitable for experimenting with language as well as for the birth of the hard-boiled genre itself. The importance of pulp magazines is emphasized by a majority of critics. Lee Horsley argues that *Black Mask* magazine was the most significant publication for the development of the genre.³⁶ The style of *Black Mask* and other pulp magazines allowed the usage of pioneering expressions and street vernacular which helped to define the hard-boiled language.

Horsley also mentions an importance of Hammett’s heroes whose “cynical perceptions” helped create the image of the hard-boiled hero. The cynicism, according to Horsley, gave the main hero “a capacity to lay bare the ‘heart, soul, skin and guts’³⁷ of a corrupt town.”³⁸ The cynicism as a universal attitude of hard-boiled detectives can be found in Coxe’s heroes as well as in Chandler’s Phil Marlowe.

It partly works in a way that is suggested by Horsley. That is, in a form of a certain catalyst that helps the hero to reveal and struggle the corruption of his environment. Nevertheless, it also makes a good base for wisecracks which often represent one of the most appreciated features of the hard-boiled style.

Horsley argues that “verbal armoury of the private eye—slang and tough talk, the laconic wit of the wisecrack, the hard-boiled simile—affords him an aura of mastery.”³⁹ Hard-boiled detective’s tough talk is already present in Hammett’s *Red Harvest*. The main protagonist of *Red Harvest* Continental Op uses typical hard-boiled tough talk. Yet, he does not show the refined language of Chandler’s detective heroes.

³⁵ Richard Keenan, “George Harmon Coxe,” 406.

³⁶ See Horsley, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*, 76.

³⁷ Dashiell Hammett, *Complete Novels: Red Harvest; The Dain Curse; The Maltese Falcon; The Glass Key; The Thin Man* (New York: Library of America), 9.

³⁸ Horsley, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*, 77.

³⁹ Horsley, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*, 73.

The style of Coxe and Burnett seldom shows refined, witty similes and wisecracks which are typical for Chandler. Yet, there can be found passages in works of both authors that show the hard-boiled figurativeness.

“As a favor to me, Dietrich,” said Cobby, “let the poor guy alone. You’ll scare the pants off him.”

“Aw, come on,” said Dietrich. “He’s a beat-up old hood, and you know it. And he’s got about as much scare in him as a telephone pole.”⁴⁰

Burnett developed his style in terms of figurativeness in his later works. Coxe, on the other hand, shows a refined style already in his debut novel. Yet, it can be assumed that Coxe’s short stories are less figurative than his novels.

The significance of Chandler for the figurativeness of the genre is equal to the significance of Burnett for defining the economy of the style. Naturally, Burnett’s works do not represent the only starting point of this strategy. Yet, he introduced this approach in a shocking and unprecedentedly narrated story of a Chicago gangster who was later labeled as hard-boiled. Another aspect that made Burnett’s work pioneering was a usage of the street vernacular. Burnett’s early narrative strategies are further discussed in section “The Birth of the Hard-Boiled Gangster.”

Burnett published *Little Caesar* in the same year as Hammett his *Red Harvest*. Therefore, these two works provide a good comparison of two different styles. The language of Burnett’s characters is a street slang that lacks figurativeness. On the other hand, Hammett’s *Continental Op* already uses hard-boiled wisecracks that were later adopted by Hammett’s followers.

“She jealous?” I asked before he could go on with his shouting. “And if you don’t yell maybe I’ll be able to hear you anyway. My deafness is a lot better since I’ve been eating yeast.”⁴¹

⁴⁰ Burnett, *The Asphalt Jungle*, 218.

⁴¹ Hammett, *Red Harvest*, 15.

The excerpt shows a typical hard-boiled wisecrack. Similar wisecracks can be found in Chandler's works as well as in a lesser amount in Coxe's novels. Chandler's wisecracks are more figurative in some cases, because he frequently used similes.

"You mean something has happened to him." Her voice faded off into a sort of sad whisper, like a mortician asking for a down payment.⁴²

Wisecracks became indeed an inseparable feature of the hard-boiled hero. Language of Burnett's heroes is rather based on a criminal slang. In other words the usage of wisecracks seems to be more characteristics for a detective type of protagonist not for a gangster. On the other hand, there are few examples of hard-boiled wisecracks in Burnett's novels too.

In this country nobody's straight. There ain't one official out of a hundred that ain't got his hand out. Coppers are so crooked they can't lay straight in bed.⁴³

Burnett's employment of the criminal talk is probably more apparent than the usage of wisecracks which are rather rare in his works. Coxe, on the other hand, partly continues in the traditional hard-boiled talk established by Hammett. This is caused by the fact that Coxe's heroes are results of diversifications of the hard-boiled detective. Therefore their talk shares a number of features with Hammett's and Chandler's heroes, wisecracks included.

"What else?" Murdock said.

Bacon pointed to a spot between two worn scatter rugs.

"Somebody did a lot of rubbing to get a stain off there—and recently."

Murdock pretended to be unimpressed. "Could have been paint."

"Could have been chocolate ice cream," Bacon said. "But there might be some more on the rugs.

We'll take 'em down and let the chemist have a look."⁴⁴

⁴² Raymond Chandler. *Later Novels and Other Writings: The Lady in the Lake; The Little Sister; The Long Goodbye; Playback; Double Indemnity; Selected Essays and Letters* (New York: The Library of America, 1995), 233.

⁴³ Burnett, *High Sierra*, 414.

⁴⁴ George Harmon Coxe, *The Jade Venus* (New York: MysteriousPress.com, 2011), Chapter V, Google Play eBook.

Wisecracks are probably one of the most popular and distinctive features of the hard-boiled language. Yet, their amount is rather limited in some hard-boiled works. Wisecracks are more frequently used by detective heroes (in Coxe, Chandler and Hammett). On the other hand Burnett's economy of style as well as the criminal slang can be identified across the genre.

The aim of this section was to provide a brief overview of the style that characterizes hard-boiled fiction. Dashiell Hammett's role in the establishing of the tough talk of the hard-boiled detective is unquestionable. However, it was Raymond Chandler who further developed it in terms of wisecracks and figurativeness. Coxe followed Hammett's style and his own style was mainly formed in his *Black Mask* period. Burnett's debut introduced a criminal slang and influenced the genre with the terseness of his debut novel.

4 GANGSTERS & PHOTOGRAPHERS

One of the reasons, why it is worth to analyze works of William Riley Burnett and George Harmon Coxe, is that they employ characters that are not entirely specific for the genre. Hard-boiled fiction was broadly popularized by Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett. Both Chandler's and Hammett's main heroes are private eyes.

Coxe's main heroes are press photographers. They are often exposed to crime scenes and cooperate more or less with police in investigation. Their cooperation with police is similar to Chandler's model in which his main character Philip Marlowe works on his own or he informs police only selectively. This is also the case of Coxe's characters Jack "Flashgun" Casey and Kent Murdock, yet the difference is that they are primarily photographers.

Burnett provides a completely different narrative perspective in his debut novel *Little Caesar*. He presents hard-boiled Chicago of the late 1930s through the eyes of an ambitious Italian gangster. Burnett's portrayal of gangster life in hard-boiled fiction was revolutionary in many aspects. Later Burnett's works differ significantly in terms of style, themes and depth in comparison with *Little Caesar*. Especially, his *High Sierra* (1941) is outstanding.

The mentioned themes and particular novels can be regarded as too different to be compared. Yet, the proper understanding of hard-boiled genre requires a complex reading of works which are not only central to it. By the central works I understand especially the works of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett.

That is why I think that it is beneficial to focus also on the modified detective style in the case of G. H. Coxe and on the gangster thriller, or if you want, on the gangster mode⁴⁵ of hard-boiled fiction in the case of W. R. Burnett.

Scaggs argues that the distinction between the crime thriller (which encompasses gangster thrillers) and detective story is the focus of each of them. According to Scaggs,

⁴⁵ "mode" is defined by John Frow as "a thematic and tonal qualification or colouring of genre." See John Frow, *Genre* (London: Routledge, 2006), 67.

crime thriller's focus is basically the crime itself. Yet, detective fiction is primarily concerned with investigating the crime.⁴⁶

Scaggs also mentions several ideas suggested by Julian Symons who attempted to defy basic distinctions between crime thrillers and detective fiction. According to Symons the crime thriller is based on the psychology of characters and it usually lacks a detective as the main protagonist. Symons also attributes an important role to the setting of stories as well as he claims that the social perspective of crime thrillers is often radical.⁴⁷

These characteristics are mostly fulfilled in *Little Caesar*. Nevertheless, speaking of the psychology of the main character, *Little Caesar* offers only very simplistic view and it portrays the main hero as an extremely disciplined, predatory and ambitious man. The discipline is the main feature which distinguishes him from his peers. However, that is basically all. The psychology of him is rather uncomplicated and lacks depth or development of later gangsters featured in Burnett's novels.

An absence of detectives as the main characters was naturally proved in analyzed Burnett's works. Yet, an inferior character of a private detective is portrayed as exceptionally corrupted and dishonest in *The Asphalt Jungle*.

He was a big young man in his early thirties; broad-shouldered and bulky about the chest, but with long slim legs. His dark face was both swarthy and tanned, and his hazel eyes had a sad, tough look. He'd run the gamut of jobs through professional football, Provost Marshall's Corps in World War II, City Detective Force, D. A. office...to private dick - a sordid, melancholy calling unless you were in the top flight, which he was not and never would be. His reputation was far from good. He was considered not only very tough and dangerous but crooked.⁴⁸

The excerpt shows a characteristic of a private detective Brannom. He shows several links to hard-boiled detectives, who also used to be policemen like Chandler's Philip Marlowe or they never achieved any recognizable social status ("top flight, he was no and never would be").

⁴⁶ See Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 107.

⁴⁷ See Julian Symons, *Bloody Murder: from the Detective Story to the Crime Novel* (New York: Mysterious Press, 1993), 191-193, quoted in Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 107-108.

⁴⁸ Burnett, *The Asphalt Jungle*, 172.

What is surprising is the lack of morality of the character which is, in a way, shocking because of the stereotype of hard-boiled detectives who usually represent archetypal heroes with chivalric features. Brannom is incalculable and selfish. He resembles rather a gangster than a hard-boiled detective. Hard-boiled detectives are typically tough but they should not be crooked like Brannom. The crookedness of the character, who is supposed to be honest, shows an important aspect of crime thrillers and that is the minimizing of morality. Martin Priestman argues that crime thrillers are narrated from the perspective of the criminal “without the recourse to the moral safety-net of detection.”⁴⁹

Therefore the lack of morality marks a significant difference also between works of Burnett and Coxe. Coxe’s model complies with the hard-boiled investigative style which employs the main hero who should at least partly keep his own moral code.

The aspect of morality is closely connected to the depiction of American society of the 1930s and the 1940s in crime thrillers and generally in early hard-boiled works. Symons terms the social perspective of crime thrillers as radical. This idea is partly supported by Sean McCann’s remark that hard-boiled crime fiction served not to entertainment purpose only. McCann points also to the critical function of hard-boiled novels for American society.⁵⁰

Coxe followed the strategy of indirect criticism when he showed the cream of society as spoiled and corrupted in a prototypical way for hard-boiled fiction. The same strategy is also used by Chandler in his *The Big Sleep* (1939). The Sternwoods in *The Big Sleep*, as well as Elizabeth Murdock in *The High Window* (1942), represent a rotten society which was about to become one of the main targets of hard-boiled critique.

Nevertheless, Burnett’s attitude to the issue is slightly different in *Little Caesar*. He portrays the society through the eyes of gangster, but an important feature is a pattern of the fate of his hero. This pattern includes a rise and inevitable fall where the fall is not only a device aimed to create a dramatic climax but it is rather a part of the required scheme.

⁴⁹ Martin Priestman, *Detective Fiction and Literature: The Figure on the Carpet* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), 177.

⁵⁰ See Sean McCann, *Gumshoe America: Hard-Boiled Crime Fiction and the Rise and Fall of New Deal Liberalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2000), 4.

On the other hand, Burnett also followed the concept of the spoiled and corrupted high society which is usually present in hard-boiled detective stories. It is illustrated by Burnett's *The Asphalt Jungle*. A bankrupted lawyer Emmerich, who is presented as a formerly wealthy and respected man, who cheats on his wife, has no problem to participate in a heist with lower-class gangsters. The social critique, suggested by McCann, is therefore provable in works of both authors and it is indeed the feature that is identified across the genre.

4.1 The Birth of the Hard-Boiled Gangster

The aim of this section is to analyze William Burnett's debut novel *Little Caesar* in terms of its importance for the development and extension of the genre. The analysis also focuses on the comparison of stylistic and narratological aspects, which are contrasted with works of George Harmon Coxe and other representatives of the genre.

Burnett mentions sources and elements which inspired him in the introduction for 1958 edition of *Little Caesar*. He recalls his moving to Chicago in winter 1928 and he describes his fascination with the city in following words: "On me, an outsider, an alien from Ohio the impact of Chicago was terrific. It seemed overwhelmingly big, teeming, dirty, brawling, frantically alive."⁵¹

Burnett also mentions his research in criminal cases and especially gangsterism and criminal slang.⁵² The slang of the underworld shapes an extremely important aspect of the novel. Its purpose is not entertainment only but also the quest for the authenticity of the gangster world of the 1930s.

An iconic role of slang in *Little Caesar* is also emphasized by Gilbert Seldes in the "Foreword" to the same 1958 edition. He mentions that the slang of the novel was adopted by Burnett's followers and he also underlines that the novel was published in 1929.⁵³ That

⁵¹ W. R. Burnett, "Introduction," in *Little Caesar* (New York: The Dial Press, 1958), 16.

⁵² See Burnett, "Introduction," in *Little Caesar*, 18-20.

⁵³ See Gilbert Seldes, "Foreword," in *Little Caesar* (New York: The Dial Press, 1958), 10.

is why it should be acknowledged as one of the linchpins of the genre in this aspect. The following excerpt shows that Burnett indeed mastered the slang of mean streets.

You're goddam right it's hold-up! shouted Rico trying to intimidate them, "and it ain't gonna be no picnic. Get that, all of you birds. I got lead in this here rod and my finger's itching. One crack out of any of you and they'll pat you with a spade."⁵⁴

As it was mentioned above, *Little Caesar* deals basically with the rise and fall of a gangster. The narrative structure of this scheme is quite uncomplicated. But what matters is a way of narration. Burnett recounts the way of narration of *Little Caesar* in an apt way, saying that: "I declared war on adjectives. I jettisoned 'description.' I tried to tell the story entirely through narration and dialogue, letting the action speak for itself."⁵⁵

An outcome of this effort resulted in a very terse yet dynamic style used as a part of author's narrative strategy. Descriptions of the setting are very rare in *Little Caesar* or they are just limited to a few unelaborated sentences providing basic data showing almost no poetic license as in the following passage:

It was nearly two o'clock when Tony left his woman. A lake wind was blowing hard and the snow fell heavily past the street lights. Tony muffled himself in his overcoat and pulled his cap low. He felt tired and disgusted.⁵⁶

Portrayals of characters, despite the economy of the style, are still more colorful than setting descriptions and they reflect situational and specific aspects of protagonists.

The character that is worth discussing, in terms of the hard-boiled terse portrayal, is ageing boss of the gang Sam Vettori. The opening lines of the novel provide the characterization of Vettori in a typical hard-boiled manner.

⁵⁴ W. R. Burnett, *Little Caesar* (New York: The Dial Press, 1958), 54.

⁵⁵ Burnett, "Introduction," in *Little Caesar*, 16.

⁵⁶ Burnett, *Little Caesar*, 39.

Sam Vetorri sat staring down into Halstead Street. He was a big man, fat as a hog, with a dark oily complexion, kinky black hair and a fat aquiline face. In repose he had an air of lethargic good-nature, due entirely to his bulk; for in reality he was sullen, bad tempered and cunning.⁵⁷

Descriptions of Vettori are actually, except for descriptions of the main character Rico, almost the only detailed portrayals that can be found in the novel. I suggest that Vettori's descriptions partly represent the situational context that is given by the plot. A heist organized by Vettori went eventually wrong because Rico killed an important policeman. Vettori is portrayed after this failure in the following way:

Sam Vettori's heavy, dark face looked puffy and his eyes were swollen. He hadn't been sleeping well lately and he had been drinking whiskey. As wine was his usual drink, the whiskey indicated a state of mind the reverse of calm. He sat chewing a cold stogie and from time to time pouring himself a shot from the bottle at his elbow.⁵⁸

Vettori as Rico's boss is naturally replaced by Rico because Rico represents a very predatory and gutsy type of mobster in contrast to Vettori. Rico's rise and fall are central motives of *Little Caesar* and it is beneficial to study this character closely.

4.1.1 Rico

Rico Bandello, nicknamed just Rico, is not easily recognizable as the main character from the very beginning of the novel. The attention of a reader is divided between other protagonists and Rico's role is gradually revealed within the course of opening chapters.

Rico is not just another mobster. He is exceptional, not only thanks to his predatory nature, but mainly because of his self-discipline, which is a rare feature in comparison with other members of Vettori gang.

⁵⁷ Burnett, *Little Caesar*, 25.

⁵⁸ Burnett, *Little Caesar*, 79.

Rico, while he was small and pale, was capable of great endurance, but this endurance of his was nothing compared to Killer Pepi's inhuman vitality. Rico's great strength lay in his single-mindedness, his energy and his self-discipline. The Little Italians could not appreciate qualities so abstract.⁵⁹

The mentioned characteristic shows another striking fact. Rico is described as small and pale which is not really common in portrayals of hard-boiled heroes who are usually typical examples of physical masculinity. The physical masculinity is often attributed to hard-boiled detectives. Nevertheless, this feature does not have to be necessarily related to hard-boiled detectives only. Burnett's later gangster heroes like Dix from *The Asphalt Jungle* or Roy Earle⁶⁰ from *High Sierra* comply better with masculine stereotype of hard-boiled heroes than Rico.

The toughness of Rico is yet not reduced by his small stature. He is often portrayed as a fearless and cruel person. Burnett mentioned in the introduction to the novel that he thought that he was giving the birth to a monster, when he created Rico.⁶¹

The concentration of such features was perhaps important for the defining hard-boiled gangster type and its further development. Yet, there are considerable differences between Rico and later Burnett's gangsters.

The background of gangsters is one of the most profound differences. Rico is of Italian origin, whereas Roy Earl is by all means an American gangster. Speaking of Earl, there are more aspects of this protagonist that can be contrasted with Rico. These will be discussed later.

Rico's relation to women is another feature that is worth to discuss. His attitude to women is carnal only or purely negative as the following excerpt illustrates.

Rico had never been deeply involved with a woman. Incapable of tender sentiments, he had escaped the commoner kind of pitfalls. He was given to short bursts of lust, and, this lust once satisfied, he looked at women impersonally for a while, as one looks at inanimate objects.⁶²

⁵⁹ Burnett, *Little Caesar*, 146.

⁶⁰ Hollywood adaptation of *High Sierra* (1941) featured Humphrey Bogart in the role of Roy Earle. Bogart also played the role of Philip Marlowe in the adaptation of Chandler's *The Big Sleep* (1946)

⁶¹ See Burnett, "Introduction," in *Little Caesar*, 22.

⁶² Burnett, *Little Caesar*, 125.

Rico's attitude is exaggerated (as almost every trait of him) yet, the similar tendency is recognizable also in several other protagonists who occupy the status of typical representatives of hard-boiled heroes. Chandler's Philip Marlowe, despite his chivalric archetypal aspect, has also problematic relationship with women. Andrew Pepper mentions that Marlowe is often used as a typical "example of the hard-boiled's unreflective sexism and masculinist insecurities."⁶³

Nevertheless, *Little Caesar* was published in 1929 whereas *The Big Sleep* in 1939. Therefore Rico as the fictional character appeared ten years earlier than Chandler's Marlowe. It would be imprecise to focus on Marlowe and omit other protagonist of his era (moreover Marlowe himself had also predecessors in Chandler's *Black Mask* short stories which preceded his novels). Yet the objective of this comparison was to point to the tendency which considerably marks the genre from the very beginning of it.

Burnett along with Rico created a number of typical features which became iconic for the portrayal of gangsters. However, a protagonist of Rico's type does not appear in later Burnett's novels, namely in *The Asphalt Jungle* and *High Sierra*. Especially narcissism cannot be found in later Burnett's heroes.

Rico was standing in front of his mirror, combing his hair with a little ivory pocket comb. Rico was vain of his hair. It was black and lustrous, combed straight back from his low forehead and arranged in three symmetrical waves. Rico was a simple man. He loved but three things: himself, his hair and his gun. He took excellent care of all three.⁶⁴

On the other hand, narcissism is probably more connected to the concept of a gangster of Italian origin. Gangster heroes of *The Asphalt Jungle* and *High Sierra*, who both by their origin and their rural working class background comply with an American gangster type, do not show narcissism at all.

⁶³ Andrew Pepper, "The 'Hard-boiled' Genre," 147.

⁶⁴ Burnett, *Little Caesar*, 46.

Yet, there is still a feature that is shared both by Rico and Roy Earl from *High Sierra*. It is a pleasure resulting from the popularity in media and underworld. Rico is so obsessed with his gangster image that he collects newspaper clippings that recount his criminal acts.

Rico bought all the papers he could find and went up to his room to read them. He sat at his table, his hat tilted over his eyes, with a pair of scissors in his hand, cutting from the papers all the articles dealing with the hold-up and the killing of Police Captain Courtney. He arranged the clippings in a neat pile, then read them over and over.

One said:

. . . the thug who shot Police Captain Courtney was a small, pale foreigner, probably an Italian. He was dressed in a natty overcoat and a light felt hat.

Another:

. . . Courtney's murderer was described by one eyewitness as a small, unhealthy-looking foreigner."

Rico tore up this clipping.

"Where do they get that unhealthy stuff!" he said. "I never been sick a day in my life."⁶⁵

The excerpt is definitely rather amusing, yet it illustrates the importance of public popularity for hard-boiled gangsters.

Roy Earle is not so fond of reading about himself, because he is after the heist constantly on the run, yet it is evident that he at least partly enjoys his status of a legendary bank robber. He boasts about cooperating with a real gangster John Dillinger, who was a criminal celebrity in early 1930s.^{66 67}

⁶⁵ Burnett, *Little Caesar*, 75.

⁶⁶ Encyclopedia Britannica, "John Dillinger," accessed January 8, 2014, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/163575/John-Dillinger>.

⁶⁷ Dillinger's life was adapted for several Hollywood movies including *Dillinger* (1945), *Dillinger* (1973) and a recent adaptation *Public Enemies* (2009).

4.2 High Sierra

Burnett's novel *High Sierra*, published in 1940, is markedly different from author's debut novel in many aspects. Burnett does not strictly use simple and terse style of his first novel in *High Sierra*. There can be found a distinctive difference in an elaboration as well as in a portrayal of characters, who are much more detailed in comparison with *Little Caesar*. The elaborative style of *High Sierra* suggests that the author completely abandoned the terse and economic style of his debut novel.

The little dog whimpered in his sleep while the stars marched in a slow procession over his head and meteors blundered into the earth's atmosphere and burst into white-hot flames, leaving short-lived silvery trails in the velvet darkness.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, Burnett resurrected the style of *Little Caesar* nine years later after *High Sierra* in *The Asphalt Jungle*. An important characteristic which singles *High Sierra* out of the traditional scheme of hard-boiled gangster fiction is an unusual setting. Jack Shadoian mentions that the setting of *Little Caesar* is hundred per cent urban, whereas *High Sierra* offers views of enchanting landscape and the hero finds pleasure in observing it.⁶⁹ With regard to the premises of hard-boiled world mentioned in the chapter "Being Hard-Boiled," it is definitely non-standard for the genre which thrives on the city setting.

It is true that several important moments of the plot take place in cities. On the other hand, these cities are small and cannot be compared to Chandler's Los Angeles, Coxe's Boston, or Chicago of *Little Caesar*.

The setting of the Sierra Nevada, which marks the novels, therefore plays a prime role. It also points to archetypal precursors of the hard-boiled hero because Roy Earle is heading west and a western hero represents one of the acknowledged archetypes of the hard-boiled hero.

⁶⁸ Burnett, *High Sierra*, 406.

⁶⁹ See Jack Shadoian, *Dreams and Dead Ends: the American Gangster Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2003), 65-66.

High Sierra was adapted for the movie of the same title in 1941. Jack Shadoian mentions in his commentary on the movie an interesting idea which applies to the novel as well. He argues that *High Sierra* shows a conventional pattern of “the rise and fall of a big shot” in an inverted way. Shadoian describes this pattern in the following way: “Here it is no rise and all fall, but by falling the hero rises. He does not die squalidly, in a gutter, but nobly, at the foot of a mountain, and his death is equated with freedom.”⁷⁰

Roy’s death is outstanding as well as other aspects of the novel, therefore it would be beneficial to focus on him, alternatively contrast him with other hard-boiled characters.

4.2.1 Roy

Roy Earle represents a different type of gangster in comparison with Rico. Firstly, his background is not Italian. He is a prototype of a new type of criminal who can be labeled as an American gangster. Secondly, he is not so predatory and ambitious. That is caused by the fact that he is introduced as an experienced and almost legendary criminal in his forties, whose specializations used to be bank robberies.

The portrayal of Roy Earle is much more detailed in comparison with Rico. Burnett pays more attention to the depiction of Earl’s emotions and fears. David Wingrove mentions that Rico is a plot of *Little Caesar*. On the other hand, Roy’s portrayal, according to Wingrove, overshadows the plot of *High Sierra*.⁷¹ Wingrove observes that Roy’s character is “constantly unfolding from the very first page and balanced always between the desired illusion and the necessary reality.”⁷² The following excerpt shows Roy as a man deprived of illusions despite being released on a bail.

⁷⁰ Shadoian, *Dreams and Dead Ends*, 79.

⁷¹ See Wingrove, “Good Man Is Hard To Find,” VII.

⁷² Wingrove, “Good Man Is Hard To Find,” VII.

Roy came blinking out into the sunlight. He had on a neat blue serge suit Big Mac had sent him. He didn't look so bad except for his prison-bleached complexion. But his coarse dark hair had silvery streaks in it, and his dark eyes were weary and sad.⁷³

The bail is paid by a gangster Big Mac who decided to engage Roy for a heist which he planned. The reluctance of Roy to cooperate with him surprisingly presents the hard-boiled gangster in a new light. It is truth that he still complies with a tough image of the hard-boiled hero.

Nevertheless, one thing that is not really common is surprisingly found in his portrayal. He is broken when he is released from prison. He also seems to be paralyzed by the freedom he had regained.

“I want you to leave for California in a week or so,” said Mac. “Big job. Three punks on it. It needs a real guy. You're it.”

“Yeah?” Roy did not feel “it” at all. He had an allgone sensation in the pit of his stomach and he put his hands into his coat pockets so Mac wouldn't see how they shook⁷⁴

Such weakness does not correspond with the model of the monster-like gangster represented by Rico. Rico does not show emotions and fears nothing and nobody. Roy's weakness is however represented as his inner struggle of the fear of the world and toughness that is required from him. In other words, he attempts not to show any apparent weakness. The sense of being broken and alienated is also found in hard-boiled detectives, Coxe's photographers included.

The physical appearance of Roy corresponds to the portrayal of hard-boiled heroes. He is tall and muscular. Therefore he resembles classical hard-boiled PIs (Marlowe, Continental Op, Sam Spade). This is not the case of Rico who is rather small and pale.

⁷³ Burnett, *High Sierra*, 289.

⁷⁴ Burnett, *High Sierra*, 289.

As young man Roy was tall, heavy-shouldered, hard, and muscular. His face was swarthy and his hair was coarse, dark, and wavy; he had heavy brow-ridge, a thick nose, and a firm wide mouth which, at times, was compressed into a thin cruel line; his eyes were dark, but unlike most dark eyes, they weren't soft; he gave an impression of virile ugliness.⁷⁵

Yet, the excerpt shows a description of Roy before he spent seven years in prison. His toughness remained. However, he had lost the predatory nature of gangsters of Rico's type.

Shadoian's idea of Roy's fall, which makes him paradoxically rise, is also one of the main differences between him and Rico. Roy does not really aspire to rise within the course of the storyline. He is just another released criminal who used to be famous. Even his new 'employer' with an evident satisfaction shows Roy a newspaper "stating that Roy Earle, the Indiana bank robber and last of the old Dillinger mob, had been pardoned. No headlines. No fuss."⁷⁶

This newspaper headline illustrates that Roy had already experienced the rise and fall in the style of *Little Caesar*. Nevertheless, it seems that his fall continues whatever he does. He is manipulated into the heist he does not like very much. He is forced to work with beginners in the business. He tries to start a relationship with a girl who refuses him and finally the heist is just partly successful, because police is after him and Big Mac dies, before the booty could be delivered to him.

Roy is therefore on the run with Marie, a girl who participated in the heist, and precious stones that cannot be sold without proper connections. Moreover, he is shot when he unsuccessfully attempted to sell them.

Nevertheless, Roy Earle's greatest hamartia is his last hold-up of a small shop in the town. Roy broke his own principle not to rob smaller businesses. The police squads are immediately after him and he is encircled on a peak in the mountains and shot dead by a sniper. His death is really epic in a comparison with his predecessor Rico. Roy dies high in the mountains, high above ordinary mortals.

⁷⁵ Burnett, *High Sierra*, 288.

⁷⁶ Burnett, *High Sierra*, 289.

Roy stood up, threw the machine-gun away from him, mumbled inarticulately, then fall forward on his face...It was all over. He was falling down that black abyss. Suddenly a huge green and white ball of fire swept across in front of him and a hand reached out and took his...It was lean and firm. Marie! The hand checked his fall.⁷⁷

This aspect points to the privileged social role of Roy which is not present in the case of Rico. Roy still had a chance to give up. Nevertheless, he rejected this option as completely unacceptable.

In a sudden flash Roy saw the tiny death cells at Michigan City; remembered the way the lights used to flicker when they burned some guy. "No, thanks," he told himself. "I'm done right here. I know when my goose is cooked."⁷⁸

Shadoian's observation that Roy's death is noble and full of freedom is definitely apt. Yet, I suggest that there is even symbolism in Roy's death which is represented by the eagle that rises from the peak of the mountain. Eagle, representing the freedom and unbound power of the human spirit, shows the hard-boiled gangster as a new symbol of mentioned qualities.

He heard a strange flapping sound and looked up. A huge bird was flying over him, headed towards the abyss-an eagle!

"Brother," said Roy, watching the eagle's lazy effortless flight over the terrible chasm, "I wish I had wings."⁷⁹

This type of symbolism is not found in Rico's death. He dies in a gutter and he is not willing to accept his defeat uttering in the very end of the novel: "is this the end of Rico?"⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Burnett, *High Sierra*, 437.

⁷⁸ Burnett, *High Sierra*, 437.

⁷⁹ Burnett, *High Sierra*, 436.

⁸⁰ Burnett, *Little Caesar*, 255.

Roy's death resembles a number of similarly epic gangster ends. Possibly one, which I find similar at several levels, can be found in an adaptation of a contemporary graphic novel *Road to Perdition* (1998) by Max Allan Collins. The main protagonist of the story Michael Sullivan is mortally wounded and he kills his murderer before his son Michael could revenge him. Sullivan wants for his son the freedom from violence. The atmosphere of freedom and relief permeates the final scene in the similar way as in *High Sierra*.

Freedom is a possible link between these two situations. It would be probably difficult to determine to what degree was the climax presented in Burnett's story formulaic for the genre. Nevertheless, it shows another established and repeated pattern that occurred already in Burnett's work.

The death of the main protagonist seems to be exclusively a matter of gangster thrillers. This motif usually does not appear in the hard-boiled detective fiction. Hard-boiled detectives are in this aspect less realistic, because they seem to be predestined to survive anything. A remark of Raymond Chandler that detective "must be the best man in his world and a good enough man for any world"⁸¹ might be helpful. It is the social perspective that decides whether the hero can live or not. Hard-boiled detectives (in Coxe's case photographers) are probably less liable to betray their own principles and the morality of these characters is higher by nature.

Therefore the original reason for sacrificing gangster protagonists is based on a social satisfaction necessitating a punishment of the 'villain'. Nevertheless, ends of gangsters are interpreted in various ways, depending on the character. Roy's death therefore bears signs of heroism that is completely absent in the case of Rico. Morality of these two gangsters also differs, that is why Roy shares more features with hard-boiled detectives.

Shadoian mentions that Roy is imprisoned in his life and in his dreams. He explains his idea in the following way: "the gangster as dreamer, and his fate, makes us understand that life is a prison, that surviving and adapting means imprisonment."⁸²

⁸¹ Raymond Chandler, "A Simple Art of Murder" in *Later Novels and Other Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1995), 992.

⁸² Shadoian, *Dreams and Dead Ends*, 65.

Shadoian's idea is surely apt. However, a similar tendency is also recognized in the case of hard-boiled detectives. These men are usually dreamers struggling with overwhelming corruption. Their prisons are represented not only by their lives, but also by the urban setting and other features which define them.

In any case, Roy as the dreamer again digresses from the model of the urban gangster that is represented by Rico. He has indeed a special role among Burnett's protagonists. Dix from *The Asphalt Jungle* shares several characteristics with Roy. It is beneficial to mention a few facts about this gangster in order to reveal more about Roy and his privileged status in Burnett's works.

Dix has a similar background as Roy. He comes from a rural place which he later idealizes and dreams about his youth there. This feature is also found in the opening chapters of *High Sierra* which are flashbacks of Roy's youth. These flashbacks represent idealized and elaborated depictions of gangster's memories.

On Sundays, after church, there was always a big freezer of home-made ice cream in the summer house, and every day there was lemonade and chocolate cookies. Roy even enjoyed doing chores at Aunt's Minnie's. He'd water the stock, and feed the pigs and chickens, and milk Sarah, the big red cow. Aunt Minnie's was a haven of refuge for all the kids of the community; when they were hurt or put upon they ran to her. It was the nearest thing to heaven any of them knew.⁸³

The excerpt probably would not be recognized as a part of a hard-boiled novel. It even contradicts the basic definition of hard-boiled fiction which is conventionally termed as "tough, unsentimental style."⁸⁴ Sentimentality is defined by Abrams as: "an excess of emotion to an occasion, and especially to an over indulgence in the 'tender' emotions of pathos and sympathy."⁸⁵ Nevertheless, Abrams also mentions the cliché nature of such passages.⁸⁶ My view is that this criterion is at least partly fulfilled, because an idealized

⁸³ Burnett, *High Sierra*, 286.

⁸⁴ Encyclopedia Britannica, "Hard-boiled fiction" accessed February 2, 2014, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/254914/hard-boiled-fiction>

⁸⁵ M. H. Abrams, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, (Fort Worth: Wadsworth, 1999), 248.

⁸⁶ See Abrams, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, 248.

youth sounds like cliché by its own. The final picture is even completed with a peaceful countryside setting, which also represents a kind of cliché. Dix idealizes his youth and country life in the same way as Roy. Both heroes therefore digress from the majority of unsentimental hard-boiled heroes in this aspect.

However, there is another angle that the discussed issue provides. It is the sense of their own past that again differentiates Dix and Roy from conventional hard-boiled heroes. It would be probably imprecise to claim that hard-boiled heroes have no explicitly expressed past. Yet, the past of hard-boiled heroes is usually very limited or blurred. This is not case of Dix and Roy, whose memories are too vivid and elaborated in context of other hard-boiled heroes.

Both heroes embody a shift from the hero of the west to the hard-boiled hero. Abbot argues that it is a shift from a cowboy to a city boy. Naturally, the concept does not absolutely comply with mentioned characters. Neither of characters really comes from the west. David Wingrove terms Dix and Roy as ‘hicks’ who gone wrong⁸⁷ which is probably more apt. The rural background of both of them shapes a possible clue. Wingrove also mentions that Dix is a man “hankering after the illusion of safety and comfort that exists in his childhood experience.”⁸⁸ This again shows links between Dix and Roy. The background of both characters suggests a transformation of the hard-boiled hero that also starts in an open landscape and ends in the mean streets of big cities.

Dix, according to mentioned ideas, indeed shares several features with Roy. Yet, there are also several substantial differences between these characters. Firstly, Dix is not very likeable character.

He was dreaming, and in his dreams he was not the big, lanky, harsh-faced man with the sunken cheeks and the coldly blank dark eyes.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ See Wingrove, “Good Man Is Hard To Find,” VII.

⁸⁸ Wingrove, “Good Man Is Hard To Find,” VII.

⁸⁹ Burnett, *The Asphalt Jungle*, 159.

Cobby put his hand on Dix's arm and looked up at him pleadingly. This was serious. To have a hooligan like Dix for an enemy was about the worst thing that could happen to a guy.⁹⁰

He is termed as a hooligan and his business are mainly violent solutions to possible problems that occur during the heist. Therefore he automatically loses an aura of the public hero which can be attributed to Roy.

Secondly, he is not the main hero of *The Asphalt Jungle* (despite the fact that according to Wingrove, Dix's role is increased in final chapters⁹¹). Moreover, Dix's violent nature makes him similar to the early hard-boiled gangster type that is represented by Rico. Regardless of the chronology of Burnett's works, Dix can represent a transitional stage between Rico and Roy. In other words, he shares several key features including being a dreamer and possibly some archetypal links with Roy. However, he still profoundly inclines to the model of the urban gangster. This phenomenon is naturally caused by the urban setting of *The Asphalt Jungle*. Moreover, Dix's death does not show an epic climax that is displayed in *High Sierra*. He does not die in a gutter as Rico but his death is perhaps even worse. He arrives wounded to his hometown and dies disillusioned.

Exhausted, Dix lay back and drifted away from them into another world . . . the pleasant world of the past. He could plainly see the old walnut gate-leg table, but it wasn't in Lou Sally's living-room now. It was by the big north window that looked out over the dooryard toward the stable and the white-fenced paddock, where a couple of weanlings were kicking up their heels, as weanlings always did when the weather was fine.⁹²

The excerpt illustrates that Dix's death cannot be compared to the heroic and rebellious death of Roy, yet it also does not resemble the end of Rico.

The aim of this chapter was to analyze Burnett's novel *High Sierra*. The analysis attempted to demonstrate the exceptionality and importance of the setting of the novel as well as to underline the importance of Roy Earle for the genre. The comparison of Roy

⁹⁰ Burnett, *The Asphalt Jungle*, 163.

⁹¹ See Wingrove, "Good Man Is Hard To Find," VII.

⁹² Burnett, *The Asphalt Jungle*, 279.

with other Burnett's gangsters and hard-boiled detectives showed links to both groups. The concept of a gangster as a dreamer proved allusions to the character of *The Asphalt Jungle* Dix and partly to hard-boiled detectives. Last but not least, the treatment of death of gangster characters and its possible interpretations was discussed.

4.3 Hard-boiled Detective Diversified

Previous chapters demonstrated a number of similarities between hard-boiled detective fiction and gangster thrillers. The most salient features are mentioned in the chapter "Being Hard-Boiled" and they contain urban setting, violence and masculinity. There are also important links between main characters of both analyzed authors. Nevertheless, the aim of this chapter is to focus on Coxe's heroes in detail, as well as to discuss his debut novel *Murder with Pictures*.

It was mentioned above that Coxe's heroes partly comply with a conventional type of hard-boiled detectives who are represented by Hammett's Continental Op or Chandler's Philip Marlowe. However, why did Coxe decide to modify the established type of private eye hero? Stephen Knight offers a possible clue arguing that: "descendants of the private-eye tradition are more diverse in both technique and attitude."⁹³

Moore surprisingly presents a different point of view claiming that: "the remarkable sameness in diversity appears across the range of characters over time." He also mentions that for Chandler's Marlowe "an intensification of certain behavioral traits manifests itself."⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the diversification took place in the case of Coxe's heroes. A broader view would most probably reveal that diversification was necessary already in the phase of the hard-boiled archetype that shaped the basis for the hard-boiled detective and hard-boiled gangster.

⁹³ Stephen Knight, *Crime Fiction, 1800-2000: Detection, Death, Diversity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 139.

⁹⁴ See Moore, *Cracking the Hard-Boiled Detective*, 38.

Abbott's idea, that a city boy of hard-boiled fiction often encompassed filmic types as gangsters, boxers or city reporters (see chapter 'Violence & Masculinity'), can be also helpful for the identification of Coxe's heroes.

Coxe's heroes are photographers who specialize mainly on murders; therefore they possibly fit Abbott's reading of the issue. Nevertheless, the diversification of the private-eye into the press photographer still does not constitute as complex change as in the case of gangster. A hierarchy probably starts at the basic hard-boiled archetype in the case of gangster. On the other hand, Coxe's heroes are strongly dependent on the type of hard-boiled detective. Therefore, they are rather outcome of the diversification of this type.

A brief revision of differences between gangster and detective reveals that they share very basic features like masculinity or violent nature. The 'higher' qualities, expressed in the aspect of morality or representation of law, differentiate these two types. Despite developmental links between the hard-boiled detective type and Coxe's heroes, there are specific features which clearly distinguish photographers from private eyes.

Firstly, Coxe's heroes do not have to bother with loyalty to client which partly forms the process of detection in the case of Philip Marlowe. That does not mean that Coxe's heroes completely abandoned their own principles, however their cooperation with police does not take place in such explosive atmosphere as in the case of some Chandler's novels. It is simply caused by the fact that they do not have to protect their 'clients' from police. Moore even terms the investigation of private eyes as a struggle "against both police and criminals."⁹⁵

Secondly, the amount of violence is indeed decreased in comparison with other early hard-boiled novels. Violence is naturally present in Coxe's works, yet it does not shape necessity or strategy as in gangster thrillers or in some private-eye stories.

Two major Coxe's characters Jack Flashgun Casey and Kent Murdock differ in several aspects, violence included. Reasoner mention that "Murdock was a slicker version of Flash

⁹⁵ See Moore, *Cracking the Hard-Boiled Detective*, 60.

Casey, not quite as quick to use his fists and slightly more urbane, but he could still be plenty tough when he needed to be.”⁹⁶ Coxe used Casey already in his short stories. Murdock was introduced as late as in Coxe’s debut novel. Therefore it suggests some development in the portrayal of his heroes. Nevertheless, the difference between these two protagonists is not so great. Moreover, Casey reappeared in later Coxe’s novels e.g. in *Silent Are the Dead*.

A greater difference is revealed in comparison of Coxe’s heroes with Chandler’s Marlowe. They share several aspects including basic hard-boiled traits which are mentioned in the chapter “Being Hard-Boiled.” Nevertheless, they are also educated and show chivalric features. Such features usually cannot be found in gangster heroes.

Not considering different professions of the protagonists, one of the greatest differences between Murdock (alternatively Casey) and Chandler’s Philip Marlowe is the usage of witty similes which characterize Marlowe. These similes, often termed as wisecracks, are typical for Chandler’s style and they constitute one of the most recognizable features of his works. Coxe’s heroes are not so figuratively marked.

Changes in figurativeness and wisecracks are not the only differences between original and diversified hard-boiled detectives. The process of diversification of the hard-boiled hero that is expressed by the change of the role of a private eye into the role of a press photographer is unprecedented.

Coxe’s heroes lack several features that characterize private eyes including certain freedom because they are employees of the press. Moore probably did not find the diversification of a hard-boiled detective as too radical, possibly because of unified hard-boiled features that characterize hard-boiled characters across the genre. My view is that these slight changes can be termed as modifications of the established type, yet Knight’s concept of diversification of hard-boiled heroes is probably the most accurate depiction of Coxe’s strategy.

⁹⁶ James Reasoner, “The Legacy of George Harmon Coxe,” *MysteriousPress.com Blog*, accessed February 6, 2014, <http://mysteriouspress.com/blog/the-legacy-of-george-harmon-coxe-by-james-reasoner.asp>.

Coxe's portrayal of the society shares also some features with Chandler's fiction and also partly with gangster thrillers. The photographer-detective again faces the corruption and rottenness, which is mainly found in the higher circles. Such depiction of the society forms a contrast to Burnett's gangster novels that show corruption at all levels of society. A prime example of the omnipresent corruption is displayed in Burnett's *The Asphalt Jungle*.

Coxe's specific hero due to his profession demonstrates also the fascination with photography. Photographs of crime scenes often play a key role in plots of his novels. Coxe's photographers Murdock and Casey (like Chandler's Marlowe) have an access to high society thanks to their profession. Therefore they are closely exposed to its corruption.

Nevertheless, Coxe's corrupted society does not transform his heroes into the roles of vigilantes. Their role of vigilante detectives seems to be reduced. Coxe's heroes do not embody the type of vigilante that can be fully identified with Hammett's Continental Op or Chandler's Marlowe.

The decreased amount of violence as well as a closer cooperation with police reduces their role of vigilantes. However, they still partly keep this role. According to Ruehlmann, the vigilante character provides a desired identification of a reader with such hero who is an avenger of "American urban frustration."⁹⁷ Therefore, the role of vigilante is an important aspect of hard-boiled characters. Burnett's gangster Roy displays features of this role and therefore he also represents a kind of the public hero or even vigilante.

Murdock's way of investigation is also not as aggressive as in the case of Casey. Yet, it still keeps the typical hard-boiled pace. Coxe used Casey in his short stories which were published in *Black Mask* magazine between 1934 and 1943 as well as in several of his novels. Yet, the focus of this paper are mainly novels, therefore Coxe's debut novel should be briefly introduced at this place.

⁹⁷ See William Ruehlmann, *Saint with a Gun: the Unlawful American Private Eye* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 9, quoted in Moore, *Cracking the Hard-boiled Detective*, 48.

4.4 Murder with Pictures

Coxe's first novel was published in 1935. The novel is indeed refined and documents author's training acquired in writing short stories for *Black Mask* magazine. The comparison with Burnett's debut novel *Little Caesar* shows a great difference in the approach of both authors to the depiction of the setting in their debut novels.

It has been mentioned that Burnett intentionally portrayed the setting of his first novel in extremely economical and terse style. Nevertheless, his later novels also show the elaboration that is comparable with the style of Coxe's debut novel. The elaboration of *Murder with Pictures* is represented in the figurativeness of the style. Coxe's vivid depictions of crime scenes contrast with Burnett's early style.

Mark Redfield lay on his side, one arm doubled under him and the other outstretched above him, pillowing his head. There was something horribly unfamiliar about the limp and boneless set of the limbs that spoke of death as surely as coroner's verdict.⁹⁸

The simile "set of limbs spoke of death as surely as coroner's verdict" clearly refers to Hammett's style and short stories published in *Black Mask*. Coxe did not use the full potential of hard-boiled similes as Chandler, yet some of his rare similes are good.

A setting of *Murder with Pictures* is conventionally urban. The story begins at the big party of Nate Girard a crime boss who is acquitted of a murder accusation. The depiction of the scenes of the party shows author's sense of detail.

The present entertainer, a tired-looking girl with nice legs and fair voice, was just finishing her song. Because most hands were otherwise occupied, there was little applause; apparently none was expected. The blond youth at the piano transposed in a series of soft, full chords and continued idly on another chorus when the girl sat down beside him on the bench.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Coxe, *Murder with Pictures*, 46.

⁹⁹ Coxe, *Murder with Pictures*, 10.

Girard's lawyer Mark Redfield is murdered after the party and Murdock starts to unofficially investigate the case. The construction of the plot of the story is quite traditional. However, author's approach digresses from the conventional model. Richard Keenan mentions that Coxe attempted to avoid "scientific, logical approach" and "concentrated on the development of characterization, personality, and human fallibility."¹⁰⁰

The elaborated style of *Murder with Pictures* is evident in the portrayal of characters. Coxe paid careful attention to emphasizing of the characteristic features of his heroes.

Mark Redfield spread his hands, let them flop on the bar, palms down. With his florid, big nosed face and pompous, well-fed figure he looked more like a successful politician than a criminal lawyer. His voice, carefully nurtured for courtroom use, had a booming, confident timbre, regardless of pitch. Shrewd, spectacular, an artist at innuendo and repartee, he was a showman whose color, personality, and reputation were such that many a case was half won the moment he stepped into a courtroom.¹⁰¹

The passage again shows a profound contrast with the depiction of characters in Burnett's *Little Caesar* and it also documents Coxe's perfectionism in this field. Keenan mentions that Coxe, along with other starting hard-boiled writers, was asked by the editor of *Black Mask* Joseph Thompson Shaw to study Hammett's works in order to absorb the style of this hard-boiled authority.¹⁰²

Keenan suggests that Coxe style was developed mainly by the imitation. He argues that Coxe imitated "better aspects of the prevailing pulp standard."¹⁰³ Coxe was asked to observe the economy of Hammett's style. Nevertheless Coxe's novels do not show much of this tendency. It would be essential to focus on Coxe's *Black Mask* short stories in order to determine whether they differ in this aspect from his novels. Such analysis would probably reveal some development in author's style. However, it would exceed the purpose of this paper. Moreover, Coxe's short stories are almost unavailable.

¹⁰⁰ Keenan, "George Harmon Coxe," 405.

¹⁰¹ Coxe, *Murder with Pictures*, 14.

¹⁰² See Keenan, "George Harmon Coxe," 406.

¹⁰³ Keenan, "George Harmon Coxe," 406.

Coxe's strategy of imitation is in a stark contrast to the pioneering style of Burnett's *Little Caesar*. Coxe developed his own modified style which introduced a diversification of the hard-boiled detective. Nevertheless, Burnett had to absorb gangsterism in its original environment and in the studying of criminal cases as well as to struggle for publishing of his debut which represented a prime example of nonconformity.

This aspect can seemingly suggest that Coxe's debut was less formulaic for the establishing of the genre than Burnett's work. It is indeed partly truth. However, it must be emphasized that diversification of Coxe's hero also constitutes a groundbreaking issue. The diversification of the hard-boiled detective is not the only contribution of *Murder with pictures*. Jack Casey of Coxe's *Black Mask* stories was the first photographer-detective. Yet, the protagonist that confirmed the process of diversification was Kent Murdock.

Keenan argues that *Black Mask*'s heroes who followed Hammett's model "not only accepted but exulted in violence."¹⁰⁴ It would be probably exaggerated to claim that Coxe's *Black Mask* hero Casey exults in violence. Yet, Keenan's idea partly explains the difference between Casey and Murdock. Keenan also mentions that Coxe's heroes "seemed to subscribe to a code of unwritten but civilized behavior and values—the code of a gentleman."¹⁰⁵ This idea corresponds to characteristics of Coxe's heroes to a certain extent. On the other hand, there are indeed differences between them. Therefore, it is beneficial to focus on the main protagonist of *Murder with Pictures*.

4.4.1 Kent Murdock

Murdock was nearly as tall as Girard, with a lean flat-muscled body that was loose, yet well knit. His brows were straight above brown eyes that were sometimes like copper—only harder, sometimes dark enough to be called black...the intangible thing common to both, and as apparent as a physical characteristic, was that each had about him a certain hardness, that varied only in type; apparent because there was no shifting of eyes, no fumbling with hands or nervous reactions as the tension grew.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Keenan, "George Harmon Coxe," 406.

¹⁰⁵ Keenan, "George Harmon Coxe," 406.

¹⁰⁶ Coxe, *Murder with Pictures*, 12.

The excerpt contrasts Murdock with crime boss Girard. It is striking that Murdock surprisingly shares a number of features with the criminal. These features include similarities in physical appearance as well as “a certain hardness” that characterizes both protagonists. It does not evidence author’s intention to point to the similarities between hard-boiled detectives and gangsters. Yet, it can be possibly helpful for identification of links between both types. Especially the physical appearance of depicted heroes shows similarities between the portrayal of the gangster, represented in this excerpt by Girard, and the detective represented by Murdock. There are also similarities between Burnett’s Roy Earle and hard-boiled detectives in terms of portrayal. Movie adaptations of both of these literary types were even sometimes played by the same actor (e.g. Humphrey Bogart in roles of Chandler’s Philip Marlowe, Hammett’s Sam Spade and Burnett’s Roy Earle).

Murdock is usually described as more urban and less aggressive in investigation than Casey. Therefore he represents an upgraded version of the hard-boiled detective—photographer, who was for the first time introduced in the character of Jack “Flashgun” Casey. Casey appeared already in *Black Mask*. So it would be logical to discuss firstly the character of Casey. However, this paper discusses primarily novels. Therefore the chronology of novels is now a decisive factor. I will return to Casey in the analysis of *Silent Are the Dead*, the novel that was published seven years after *Murder with Pictures* in 1942.

It was mentioned that Kent Murdock confirmed the diversification of the hard-boiled detective. Yet, the diversification of the hard-boiled detective started very early in the beginnings of the genre.

Therefore Casey displays hard-boiled stereotypes in a better way in contrast to Murdock. Firstly, Casey is evidently more violent character. Secondly, the degree of hard-boiled masculinity of this character is higher in terms of his relations to women as well as in terms of his freedom of expression.

Murdock, on the other hand, is a protagonist who is married in the very beginning of *Murder with Pictures*. He seeks divorce with his wife Hestor, who represents a typical femme fatale character.

Hestor Murdock, née Schultz, came from a coal-mining town in Pennsylvania. By virtue of a figure which would have done for a torso by Gaudier, by practice in dancing, plus a fair voice, she had worked herself up through burlesque to the front row of the chorus...Hestor's hair was yellow-bond, real yellow; and it had been waved so that it seemed to stick sleekly to her head...the rouge, the lipstick could not hide the sullen, sensuous character of her face, the droop of her lips. And she was smart, with the smartness of a woman who had been around in the world and had suffered somewhat from the contact.¹⁰⁷

Hestor as the representation of femme fatale is an important element of the novel. She has iconic physical features of femme fatales, including predatory sensual beauty, blond hair and a certain craftiness. Abbot mentions that the construction of hard-boiled masculinity is mainly established in the relation between tough guy and femme fatale.¹⁰⁸ Femme fatale, represented by Hestor, therefore should form a female counterpart for the hard-boiled hero and she indeed partly does form his counterpart. She is attractive for him as well as he is for her, despite their quarrels and Murdock's effort to get divorced.

On the other hand, a married hard-boiled hero is rather exceptional. Murdock's married state is one of the most important distinctions between him and another Coxe's protagonist Casey. After divorcing his first wife, Murdock marries again.

Several Coxe's novels feature Murdock's wife (who is however not femme fatale type) as a prominent character, who even helps with investigation. Such digression from the established pattern of the hard-boiled world and its system is nonstandard. Coxe's novels, analyzed in this thesis, generally follow the rules of hard-boiled works. Nevertheless, there are found examples of a completely shifted portrayal of masculinity in some Coxe's works. Murdock therefore partly ceases to be renegade who walks through the urban space as an uncontrollable violent vigilante. Such vigilante can be identified already in *Red Harvest's* Continental Op, who really works as a force that restores the order.

¹⁰⁷ Coxe, *Murder with Pictures*, 21.

¹⁰⁸ See Abbott, *The Street Was Mine*, 8.

He's had two tries at my scalp in two days. That's plenty. Now it's my turn to run him ragged, and that's exactly what I'm going to do. Poisonville is ripe for the harvest. It's a job I like, and I'm going to it¹⁰⁹

This aggressive approach cannot be found in the character of Murdock. His role of vigilante is rather moderated.

Yet it is essential to mention that Murdock shows still a profound number of affiliations to original hard-boiled characters. Firstly, his physical appearance of the well-built tough photographer-detective clearly points to the typical hard-boiled protagonist. Secondly, despite the presence of his wife in several novels, Murdock still reflects the tension between the hard-boiled detective and femme fatale. Murdock's wife Joyce does not resemble femme fatale types. Nevertheless, these types are still present in Coxe novels. This shows the importance of femme fatale for the portrayal of Coxe's heroes.

There is also another aspect that differentiates Murdock from other hard-boiled heroes. He is educated at college and he can appreciate art and literature. Murdock shares this feature with Chandler's Phil Marlowe who even sometimes quotes poets like Robert Browning, however, not without an ironic shade of one his wisecracks.

"Never the time and place and the loved one all together," I said.

"What's that?" She tried to throw me out with the point of her chin, but even she wasn't that good.

"Browning. The poet, not the automatic. I feel sure you'd prefer the automatic."¹¹⁰

Murdock shows similar intellectual attributes especially in his novel *Jade Venus* from the late 1940s. The plot of *Jade Venus* presents the deception and murders in illegal business with smuggled paintings of European old masters.

Murdock is described as a man who can both recognize precious paintings and detect the originals by using ultraviolet photographing techniques. Nevertheless, Murdock of *Murder with Pictures* is rather embittered by his profession and education.

¹⁰⁹ Hammett, *Red Harvest*, 60.

¹¹⁰ Chandler, *The Little Sister*, 263.

A newspaper photographer, huh? A button-pusher. Even some high-hat reporters disdained the craft. The college training. What good was it? Taught him how to be dissatisfied, taught him to like good clothes, to appreciate good books and pictures; taught him very little about how to get these things.¹¹¹

Intellectuality is a feature that can be almost excluded in the case of three prominent Burnett's gangster characters (Rico, Dix and Roy). However, speaking of an intellectual level, a comparison of Coxe's Murdock and his predecessor Casey reveals more affinities of Casey to gangsters.

Seven years after *Murder with Pictures*, Coxe published a novel that is very special in the context of his works. This novel is *Silent Are the Dead* and it resurrects Jack "Flashgun" Casey, the hero of Coxe's short stories.

4.5 Silent Are the Dead

Silent Are the Dead is Coxe's ninth novel and it apart from reintroducing of Jack Casey has several specific features. The atmosphere of the novel is different in a way and it resembles hard-boiled gangster stories. This is partly caused by a comeback of Coxe's tough short story hero Jack Casey.

My view is that the atmosphere of *Silent Are the Dead* shows much more moral darkness, doubts and alienation of the main hero in comparison with other representative Coxe's works. I base this view on several motifs which occur in the story. One of them especially affects the main hero. Casey discovers after a violent death of his friend and colleague Austin that Austin used photos to blackmail people.

It seems that this realization disturbs the main hero who is not willing to accept it. Casey loses illusions and becomes more alienated. His alienation is further discussed in the section "Jack 'Flashgun' Casey."

Another motif is an increased bitterness of the main hero whose struggle seems to be tiring for him. The same problem is found in Chandler's Marlowe who seems tired and

¹¹¹ Coxe, *Murder with Pictures*, 142.

disillusioned in later novels. It contrasts with Murdock's enthusiasm for the fight with corruption and gangsterism.

There was a desperate loneliness moving with him that he could not cast aside. But it was too late for that now, and so, because he did not want to fight the torment any more, he knew he might as well go home and get a little drunk, and go to bed.¹¹²

The similarity with Marlowe can be explained by an unfinished diversification of Casey who is less urbanized and tougher than Murdock.

Speaking of stylistic aspects of the novel, it is evident that Coxe continued in the refined style of his debut novel. There can be even found several hard-boiled similes in *Silent Are the Dead*. They show author's inspiration in Hammett's and Chandler's works. Yet, their number is not very high.

Casey got a quick impression of feminine attractiveness before he had a chance to notice all the details which contributed to the picture.

"Oh, hello," he said for the want of something better, good-looking young women being as scarce in the studio as pearls in restaurant oysters.¹¹³

It is essential to realize that Coxe published this novel in 1942. Chandler published his third novel *High Window* in the same year and he had *The Big Sleep* and *Farewell, My Lovely* already to his credit. The mentioned Chandler's novels indeed represent a top of the hard-boiled writing of late 1930s and early 1940s. In other words, Coxe's novels of the same period were definitely rather overshadowed by Chandler's works.

Even though, Coxe never reached a quality and figurativeness of Chandler's novel, his contribution for the diversification of the hard-boiled detective is unquestionable. I used in previous examples Chandler's Marlowe as a main source for diversification of the hard-boiled protagonist. It is more precise to determine Hammett's Continental Op of *Red*

¹¹² George Harmon Coxe, *Silent Are the Dead* (New York: MysteriousPress.com, 2013), Chapter XXIII, Google Play eBook.

¹¹³ Coxe, *Silent Are the Dead*, Chapter I.

Harvest as an original hard-boiled detective. Coxe's heroes (especially Casey) were designed approximately in the same period as Chandler's that is in the second half the 1930s, when both Coxe and Chandler wrote short-stories for *Black Mask*.

It is possible that first three Chandler's novels influenced Coxe in writing *Silent Are the Dead* in terms of choice of the main hero as well as in the emphasized corruption and rottenness of the urban setting. This can be seen as a mere speculation, yet it is a fact that Chandler became very quickly a superstar of the genre and it is improbable that Coxe remained uninfluenced by his works.

The novel complies with hard-boiled stereotypes. In other words there is generally no problem to identify urban setting, hard-boiled language as well as masculinity and violence in it. The dark tone of the novel along with alienation of Casey singles this novel out. Therefore it is not only a change of the main hero that modifies the atmosphere of the novel.

My view is that the novel shows an increased amount of existentialist features in comparison with other Coxe's works I focused on. Even though, hard-boiled novels generally display features of existentialism, *Silent Are the Dead* is probably the best example of this tendency in terms of novels analyzed in this paper.

Stephan Faison in his study *Existentialism, Film Noir, and Hard-Boiled Fiction* (2008) determines beginnings of existentialism of the hard-boiled hero in "psychological and moral disorientation." He also emphasizes that a profound role in defining the existential hard-boiled reality plays a crisis of values, moral rules and meaninglessness of such world.¹¹⁴

It is clear that such moral disorientation takes place in Casey's realization that his murdered colleague was a blackmailer.

Perry Austin was a blackmailer. That was enough for now. The pictures could wait. He put the envelope in an inside pocket. He opened the drawer of his desk and found his quart of bourbon more than half full. He put it into his topcoat pocket and reached for the telephone.

¹¹⁴ See Stephen E. Faison, *Existentialism, Film Noir, and Hard-Boiled Fiction* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2008), 11.

“If anybody wants me,” he told the operator, “I’ll be home. And I don’t want to be bothered.... That’s right. I don’t feel good. I’m sick.”

And as he hung up he thought, You ain’t kiddin’ either, brother. You’re sick.¹¹⁵

Despite being used to crime, Casey does not want to admit the fact that his colleague was blackmailer and he is determined to keep this realization in secrecy.

Faison argues that American noir is not much concerned with positive elements of existentialism that include, e.g. freedom or authenticity. According to Faison, creators of the genre emphasized rather negative elements represented by death, alienation, anxiety and a loss of a meaning of the existence.¹¹⁶

The theme of death indeed permeates the novel from the title to the last chapter. This is not so exceptional in terms of the genre (e. g. Hammett’s *Red Harvest* is obsessed with death and killing¹¹⁷). Nevertheless, Coxe’s works are generally less violent. Therefore, the novel is exceptional in this aspect.

The increased alienation and anxiety of the main hero is partly explained by intensified violence and omnipresent theme of death. Yet, my view is that the key role has also the revelation of Austin’s blackmail business.

The dark tone of the novel is not expressed by existential features only. The novel also shows a number of parallels to hard-boiled gangster works. Parallels to hard-boiled gangster fiction are found in several passages of the novel. Coxe does not incorporate his investigator directly into the criminal underworld. A good example of this strategy is found in Hammett’s *Red Harvest* where the main hero almost becomes a criminal in order to clean the city. This is not the case of Coxe’s *Silent Are the Dead*. However, there are passages that point to Hammett as well as to Burnett, in terms of the gangster iconography, in this novel.

Chapter VIII of *Silent Are the Dead* even could be a part of gangster thriller. The title of the chapter is “An Old-fashioned Ride.” Casey is kidnapped by a group of gangsters who are about to murder him.

¹¹⁵ Coxe, *Silent Are the Dead*, Chapter XV.

¹¹⁶ See Faison, *Existentialism, Film Noir, and Hard-Boiled Fiction*, 11.

¹¹⁷ Hammett even uses for the first time a collocation “to go blood-simple” See Hammett, *Red Harvest*, 135-138.

This was a good old-fashioned ride. He had photographed such victims many times in the old prohibition days. These men had a similar job to do and their orders had been to put him away where he would not be found. A couple of slugs in the head and 50 or 60 pounds of iron on his ankles. What better way than that? By the time the ropes—or his ankles—rotted away nobody would ever identify him.¹¹⁸

Casey's reminiscence of "the old prohibition days" shows the gangsterism of Burnett's *Little Caesar* and Hammett's *Red Harvest*. Nevertheless, later Burnett's gangsters, especially *High Sierra*'s Roy Early developed into a new type of the gangster hero.

The aim of this brief introduction to the novel was to underline its exceptionality which is not based on the resurrection of the original Coxe's protagonist only. I also attempted to prove an increased amount of existential features in the novel, as well as to point to the old school gangsterism that occurs in the novel.

4.5.1 Jack "Flashgun" Casey

The comeback of the tough hard-boiled photographer Jack Casey influenced Coxe's *Silent Are the Dead* in several aspects. Firstly, he is a better of example of hard-boiled masculinities than Kent Murdock. Secondly, the novel shows more violence than the author's debut. Speaking of masculinity, it is clear that Casey shares a number of features with traditional hard-boiled detectives represented by Hammett's Continental Op and Chandler's Marlowe. The increased masculinity of Casey also partly determines a higher amount of violence that is displayed in the novel.

It should be emphasized that Casey is still a result of diversification of the hard-boiled detective as Murdock. Nevertheless, Casey's process of diversification is not as completed as in the case of Murdock. It was mentioned that Murdock is more urbanized and refined

¹¹⁸ Coxe, *Silent Are the Dead*, Chapter VIII.

version of Casey. Therefore, Casey represents a protagonist that indeed had to resemble the original hard-boiled detective.

He also shows much less intellectual features than his successor Murdock who refers quite often to visual art and literature. This aspect along with a more violent nature of his role links Casey to hard-boiled gangsters.

A trio of angular females drifted around him before he realized it.

“Do you paint, Mr. Casey?” one of them asked.

Casey said he didn’t and for a moment that killed further conversation.

“Or sculpt?” an efficient-looking person with horn-rimmed glasses ventured hopefully.

“I’m a photographer,” Casey said.

“Oh.” The three exchanged glances and one of them tried again. “Portraits?”

“Newspaper.”

That fixed everything up. “How interesting,” they said and drifted off.¹¹⁹

Despite or maybe thanks to the unfinished Casey’s diversification, he became one of the most popular hard-boiled heroes in the 1930s and the 1940s. Kevin Smith mentions that Casey unlike Murdock became “multimedia superstar.” Several adaptations of Coxe’s novels with Casey in the main role were shot.¹²⁰ Smith also mentions that Casey’s stories were broadcasted in a popular CBS radio show *Casey, The Crime Photographer*¹²¹ and a TV show *Crime Photographer* ran for two seasons.¹²²

As suggested above, Casey became a well-established hard-boiled character. He did not appear in so many Coxe’s novels as Murdock. However, he represents the character that perhaps complies better with hard-boiled stereotypes than any other Coxe’s or Burnett’s hero analyzed in this paper. Speaking of violence, he is not as brutal as Burnett’s early gangster character Rico. Despite being more violent than Murdock, Casey does not

¹¹⁹ Coxe, *Silent Are the Dead*, Chapter XIV.

¹²⁰ See Kevin Burton Smith, “Flashgun Casey,” *The Thrilling Detective Website*, accessed March 8, 2014, <http://www.thrillingdetective.com/flashgun.html>

¹²¹ A great number of episodes of CBS radio show *Casey, The Crime Photographer* is available for free at https://archive.org/details/Casey_Crime_Photographer

¹²² See Kevin Burton Smith, “Flashgun Casey,” *The Thrilling Detective Website*, accessed March 8, 2014, <http://www.thrillingdetective.com/flashgun.html>

even resemble his PI predecessor Hammett's Continental Op who initiates a wave of violence in *Red Harvest*.

Casey is also an important protagonist because he can be possibly situated between the hard-boiled gangster and the hard-boiled detective. He has both features of hard-boiled PIs and predatory, violent traits of gangsters. Coxe possibly paid a tribute to Hammett by creating Casey. Casey goes in several aspects back to the original hard-boiled detective who is represented by Hammett's Continental Op. Continental Op is really on the edge between gangster and hard-boiled PI. Op cooperates with gangsters and adapts to everyday violence of the spoiled city. Nevertheless, he keeps his own moral code and loyalty to his client (more or less) which defines his role of the hard-boiled PI.

Casey detests the corruption of the hard-boiled world. This feature is found in the case of Murdock as well as in Chandler's detectives. The sickness of corruption, that characterizes typical hard-boiled PI, is one of the most apparent motifs in *Silent Are the Dead*. Especially, Casey's realization regarding his crooked colleague Austin emphasizes existential anxieties of Casey. Casey shares with hard-boiled detectives the loyalty to his job and to keeping of his own moral code.

He checked the shutter speed and aperture, walking around the body as he did so, his photographer's eye searching for the best angle....For this part was still a job, and pictures had to be taken when the opportunity presented itself, regardless of what went on inside you.¹²³

It is evident from the excerpt that Casey, despite being a result of diversification of the hard-boiled detective, is loyal to his job of photographer. However, there is one issue (which would also apply for Murdock) that is missing in Coxe's photographers. It is the loyalty to client that is absent in the case of diversified hard-boiled heroes. They are not obliged to protect anyone.

¹²³ Coxe, *Silent Are the Dead*, Chapter X.

Chandler's and Hammett's heroes usually get into problems because they do not want to fully cooperate with police. That does not mean that Coxe's photographers are willing informants of police investigators. Yet, their motives to conceal their findings are not based on the relation between detective and client. Therefore Casey and Murdock have a certain freedom and they also prevent themselves from being too involved in crime.

Horsley mentions a typical and often quoted example of a trap of corruption that affects the hero of Chandler's *The Big Sleep*.¹²⁴ Marlowe after resolving the murder faces the meaningless of his job.

Oil and water were the same as wind and air to you. You just slept the big sleep, not caring about the nastiness of how you died or where you fell. Me, I was part of the nastiness now.¹²⁵

The similar aspect can be found in *Red Harvest* where the main hero becomes so possessed by a violent atmosphere of the city that he goes blood-simple. In other words he cannot suppress the thoughts of killing.

This does not occur in Casey's case. Nevertheless, he also becomes in a way a part of the corruption because of Austin's issue which he keeps in secret. This illustrates that, even though Casey as a photographer is not bound by a discreteness of hard-boiled PIs, he cannot escape his incorporation into the corrupted system.

Existential features are evident in *Silent Are the Dead* as well as in the works of hard-boiled classics Hammett and Chandler. The novel is not as violent as Hammett's *Red Harvest*, yet it is rather exceptional in terms of Coxe's novels analyzed in this paper. It is essential to mention that theme of death does not shape the only indicator of existentiality that permeates the novel. This aspect is mainly indicated by the main hero. Murdock as a more urbanized and cleaned hard-boiled protagonist shows less existential features than Casey.

Existential features of hard-boiled characters partly shape a legacy of the hard-boiled archetype. Therefore they probably vanish in the process of the diversification of this

¹²⁴ See Horsley, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*, 268-269.

¹²⁵ Chandler, *The Big Sleep*, 764.

archetype. It is evident that both Coxe's heroes are diversified because they are not professional detectives. Nevertheless, it is also evident that the process of diversification is not completed in Casey's case compared to Murdock.

In terms of masculinity (and other hard-boiled traits) he complies with typical hard-boiled characters represented by Marlowe or Continental Op. Moreover, he experiences anxiety and meaninglessness that can be scarcely found in Murdock.

A nerve jumped in his jaw as he waited. There was no longer any sleep in the corners of his eyes but only darkness and worry.¹²⁶

The meaninglessness is probably along with death one of the most prominent existential features that permeate the novel. The main protagonist loses the meaning of his struggle with crime because he realizes that almost everyone is corrupted. Moral "darkness and worry" that are displayed in the excerpt characterize his state. A theme of death is evidenced also in the profession of the main protagonist who often takes photos of dead people.

More examples of diversification of hard-boiled protagonists who are similar to Coxe's Casey are found across the genre. Coxe's Casey can be for example reflected in filmic character Harlen Maguire¹²⁷ who is a main antagonist in the movie adaptation of *Road to Perdition*. Maguire has not much in common with hard-boiled detectives. He is a gangster – a hitman. He even does not meet features of hard-boiled gangsters introduced by Burnett. Possibly the persistence and self-discipline of Rico is a feature that Maguire can share with hard-boiled gangsters. Yet, Maguire is not primarily gangster. He works as a photographer and hitman at the same time. He shows a new type of the hard-boiled photographer who is not the detective at all.

Casey is the photographer-detective. Maguire as the photographer-hitman introduces a perfect antihero that was probably inspired by Coxe's Casey. Casey as the photographer with features of hard-boiled PIs can be read as the starting point for the character of the

¹²⁶ Coxe, *Silent Are the Dead*, Chapter IX.

¹²⁷ The character cannot be found in original graphic novel *Road to Perdition* by Max Allan Collins as the adapted version of the novel underwent several principal changes in the storyline as well as in protagonists.

photographer-hitman. However, it is essential to mention that Maguire is a sadistic maniac obsessed with finishing his job, even in the case it was aborted. The obsession of Maguire possibly points to “a stubborn resistance to being pushed-off” that Moore determines in hard-boiled detectives.¹²⁸ A similar motif is found in Hammett’s *Red Harvest*. Continental Op continues in the subverting of Poisonville underworld despite being dismissed.

There are several shared features which suggest that Casey serves as an inspiration for a gangster type of the photographer-hitman that is represented by Harlen Maguire. Nevertheless, Maguire is by all means too degenerated to be a classical hard-boiled hero. Yet, he could be read as a variation of Coxe’s photographers.

The aim of this section was to situate the character of Jack “Flashgun” Casey into the context of hard-boiled works of 1930s and 1940s. I attempted to determine several examples of links and differences to the prominent characters of the genre. The exceptionality of the hero can be found in the increased amount of existential features. Last but not least, I demonstrated the further diversification and reflection of the hard-boiled photographer in other works that draw inspiration from the classic period of the hard-boiled style.

This thesis deals with a relatively wide range of hard-boiled protagonists including gangsters of various types and diversified detectives. Classical bearers of hard-boiled features represented by Chandler’s and Hammett’s heroes are used as the models and norms for comparison purposes. Nevertheless, despite several differences which were confirmed in the analysis of these alternative heroes, there is one shared feature. It is the relation of incorporation into and resistance to the system of the hard-boiled world.

¹²⁸ See Moore, *Cracking the Hard-boiled Detective*, 41.

5 INCORPORATION & RESISTANCE

Me, I was part of the nastiness now.¹²⁹

The hard-boiled hero can be partly adapted to the reality of the hard-boiled world. Nevertheless, there are still many features of his resistance to the system. Several patterns of this process were mentioned in the section “Masculinity.” Yet, the relation of the resistance and becoming a part of the system is an interesting and complex feature that is definitely worth discussing.

The relation between incorporation and resistance is even more complicated because of a relatively wide variety of protagonists analyzed in this paper. On one hand, they are gangsters-criminals who can be automatically recognized as good representatives of both the resistance and incorporation (in the case of gangsters we can speak about incorporation into the system of crime). On the other hand, detectives (diversified or not) who reflect the tension between resisting to the system and becoming part of it. Their attitudes naturally differ and depend on an individual protagonist. Some hard-boiled detectives can be even labeled as semi-criminals. Yet, they are usually unwilling to become a part of the system, a part of the “nastiness.”

Several types of hard-boiled protagonists were mentioned in this paper, e.g. a pure hard-boiled criminal, public hero criminals, vigilantes of both gangster and detective type, and of course classical and diversified hard-boiled PIs.

This selection, though not being a complete or utterly indisputable overview of the variety of characters in hard-boiled fiction, should be a sufficient sample for a brief analysis of the resistance to and incorporation into the system. The resistance of protagonists usually precedes the incorporation (especially in the case of hard-boiled PIs). Therefore I would like to open the analysis with this process. Nevertheless, it is clear that resisting often blends with becoming a part of the system in hard-boiled works.

¹²⁹ Chandler, *The Big Sleep*, 764.

5.1 Resistance

The very first and relatively uncomplicated gangster form of resistance can be found in *Little Caesar's* Rico. It is evident that being a criminal of Rico's type is being a transgressor. He resists the system of the society as well as the hierarchy of his gang. Rico's individualism is reflected also in his successor Roy (yet, in a different way). Individualism as the answer to the system is naturally found also in hard-boiled detectives. McCann even labels the hard-boiled individualism as radical.¹³⁰

Hard-boiled PIs share many features with gangsters yet they constitute a specific category. The huge popularity of hard-boiled gangsters has its origins in the historical background of their emergence. Jonathan Munby argues that "gangsters are relics of an American idealism oriented around individualism and freedom of expression."¹³¹

Rico is not the type of likeable hero. He is indeed a violent hard-boiled monster that shows enormous signs of individualism which prepares the ground for his successor Roy. Speaking of literary tradition of American individualism, the social background is equally important for the defining of the hard-boiled identity. Wall Street Crash boosted the popularity of gangsters and detectives. Both Burnett and Hammett published their debut novels in 1929. Cawelti emphasizes the importance of both the gangster and the detective of these novels. He claims that they "both reflected a new vision of the social significance of the criminal."¹³² Therefore since 1929, the hard-boiled detective and the hard-boiled gangster represented popularized avengers of American frustration.

So Rico is a significant representative of individualism employing a rebellious attitude in breaking social norms, speaking his own language and simply being resistant to the system. Hammett's private eye Continental Op is partly a reflection of the gangster in terms of individualism and resistance to the norms. Nevertheless, his resistance can be divided into two main spheres. The hard-boiled detective resists the system of social norms. Despite his methods, he also refuses to become a criminal.

¹³⁰ See McCann, *Gumshoe America*, 90.

¹³¹ Jonathan Munby, *Public Enemies, Public Heroes: Screening the Gangster from Little Caesar to Touch of Evil* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

¹³² John G. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1976), 59.

He does not want to become a part of the corruption. This applies for the majority of successors of hard-boiled PI tradition as well as for diversified hard-boiled detectives. It is obvious that Coxe's heroes show this aspect in a rather moderate way (e. g. Austin's case in *Silent Are the Dead*).

Nevertheless, Hammett's early nameless hero Continental Op has serious problems to restore his own morality when he uses gangster methods in the cleaning of Poisonville. Especially, the morning, when he wakes up with blood-stained ice pick in his hand and there is a murdered girl in the same room, shows a crisis of his own morality.¹³³ A similar disorientation can be seen in his obsession with violence which he describes as going blood-simple.

This crisis is naturally present in Coxe and Chandler too. Yet, it is not pushed to such extremes as in Hammett's *Red Harvest*. The main hero of Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* (1930) is already not portrayed as a semi-gangster. That is the reason why critics usually describe *Red Harvest* as much darker than other early hard-boiled novels.¹³⁴

Burnett's Roy Earle represents a modified form of the gangster resistance to the system in *High Sierra*. John T. Irwin underlines Roy's "rebellious individualism and ultimate fatalism."¹³⁵ Yet, it is not only the predatory, rebellious individualism of Rico that shaped Roy. Roy's vigilante resistance is socially acceptable. He is a public hero – an avenger of the frustration which was boosted by the crisis. Shadoian argues that Roy represents the completing of gangster's metamorphosis. Shadoian admits that the gangster remained unassimilated individual yet he emphasizes that Roy worked as "a royal figure with whom we went through a difficult period of national crisis."¹³⁶

My view is that Shadoian's idea definitely counts, but it is also the portrayal of the character that determines the form of resistance. Roy's portrayal is much more detailed than Rico's and he also shows likeable features that Rico lacks.

¹³³ See Hammett, *Red Harvest*, 143.

¹³⁴ See Horsley, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*, 77.

¹³⁵ John T. Irwin, *Unless the Threat of Death Is Behind Them: Hard-Boiled Fiction and Film Noir* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 210.

¹³⁶ Shadoian, *Dreams and Dead Ends*, 24.

Roy's resistance is also not limited to crime only. He questions the role of justice in the system of the hard-boiled society.

“You take me. I never pretended I was trying to help nobody but Roy. I steal and I admit it. But if I was a judge that the people elected I'm goddamned if I'd be crooked and gyp them. I'm not kidding. I mean it. That's what these guys can't understand. They talk about criminals. They ought to stick some of them in clink and they'd find out.”¹³⁷

This attitude along with Roy's epic and almost heroic death contributes to his vigilante image. A vigilante hard-boiled protagonist can be found across the genre in both gangster¹³⁸ and detective role. Coxe's photographers are not as radical and violent as Hammett's Continental Op. Yet, their moral ambivalence clearly predetermines them for this role too.

A vigilante as a transgressor must inevitably resist the system in some way. He cannot avoid close contact with injustice and corruption. Nevertheless, his resistance usually does not find its climax in a noble atmosphere of freedom that characterizes the last moments of Roy Earle. Vigilantes can be slowly but surely consumed by their environment. A predominance of their criminal aspect can partly incorporate them into the rotten system of the hard-boiled world.

¹³⁷ Burnett, *High Sierra*, 415-416.

¹³⁸ This should be however limited to gangsters who can be labeled as public heroes. Rico does not comply with role of vigilante.

5.2 Incorporation

The hard-boiled hero inherently shows the criminal aspect. The predominance of this aspect determines the degree of his incorporation. It is evident that hard-boiled heroes show features of both incorporation and resistance, which can be read from different angles.

Nevertheless, it can be possibly concluded that the hard-boiled gangster as an outlaw is resistant to the system of society and more or less incorporated into the system of crime. The position of the hard-boiled detective (diversified or not) seems to be far more complicated. It is essential to realize that if a hard-boiled gangster can take a role of a vigilante, a hard-boiled detective almost inherently is the vigilante. The tendencies of incorporation and resistance therefore blend more in the character of the hard-boiled detective.

Continental Op as a typical example of incorporation of the hard-boiled PI into the underworld of crime was discussed in the previous section. He is probably the most extreme example of slipping to gangster methods in terms of protagonists mentioned in this paper. Nevertheless, despite using criminal methods, acting like criminal and speaking like criminal, hard-boiled PIs usually do not abandon their principles. They do not become unlikeable early hard-boiled gangsters of Rico's type. In other words hard-boiled PIs are willing to become criminals, yet they usually refuse to become a part of larger corruption.

Hard-boiled PIs should not slip in such way. Therefore their incorporation is not complete. Burnett's *Asphalt Jungle* shows a really crooked private detective in the character of Brannom. Yet, *Asphalt Jungle* is a specific work which displays the corruption at all levels of society.

Coxe's heroes digress from the individualistic resistance of traditional hard-boiled PIs. Their job of press photographers has signs of individualism. Nevertheless, they are still relatively incorporated into the system of the society. Their similarities with detectives of Chandler's and Hammett's type can be even sometimes overshadowed by losing freedom. The lack of freedom is one of the main motifs that point to their incorporation into the society.

Coxe's heroes show that becoming a criminal is not the only form of incorporation that can be attributed to hard-boiled heroes. They are devoured by the system in the different way. Losing freedom is a feature that partly characterizes diversified hard-boiled characters.

Diversified hard-boiled heroes maybe have more freedom in investigation, because they are not bothered by the loyalty to clients. Nevertheless, they also lose their inherent, archetypal hard-boiled freedom. This freedom partly defines hard-boiled hero (it applies for gangsters as well). There can be found several examples of the shift of the hard-boiled hero towards individualism. Chandler's Marlowe works before launching his career of the private eye as an investigator for Los Angeles's district attorney office. He is fired for insubordination. Hammett's Continental Op is an employee of a detective agency, but he does what he wants, regardless of orders from his boss.

But it's easier to have them killed off, easier and surer, and, now that I'm feeling this way, more satisfying. I don't know how I'm going to come out with the Agency. The Old Man will boil me in oil if he ever finds out what I've been doing. It's this damned town. Poisonville is right. It's poisoned me.¹³⁹

Chandler's, Hammett's and Burnett's protagonists clearly show individualism expressed by freedom of their action and expression. They comply with Abbott's idea of the refusal of the hard-boiled hero to be attached to the social network and community.

Coxe's heroes show opposite tendency concerning their attachment to a community. They are a part of the community of press photographers. The loss of sense of being the part of some social group is one of sources of Casey's alienation. Anyway, Coxe's heroes are good examples of a different type of incorporation into the system.

¹³⁹ Hammett, *Red Harvest*, 137.

The aim of the last two sections was to point to possible readings of incorporation into and resistance of hard-boiled heroes to the system. The mentioned ideas are neither utterly complete nor indisputable. Yet, they can introduce a new perspective in the reading of hard-boiled characters in terms of their place in the system of the hard-boiled fictional world.

CONCLUSION

The aim of my master thesis was to analyze genre models of G. H. Coxe and W. R. Burnett in order to prove the extension of the traditional model of American hard-boiled fiction which is represented by works of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett. I attempted to identify nonstandard features in setting, masculinity, violence and language of protagonists as well as alternative representations of the hard-boiled hero.

It can be concluded that a majority of analyzed works more or less comply with hard-boiled stereotypes. Nevertheless, there were identified several particularities that are worth mentioning. Firstly, some of Coxe's heroes are less violent and do not show the typical hard-boiled masculinity in the extent that is common for the genre. Secondly, Burnett's *Little Caesar* shows the importance of criminal slang for the genre. Thirdly, Burnett's *High Sierra* offers an alternative to the urban setting. And finally, the style of both authors is generally less figurative than the style of Chandler or Hammett. Burnett's and Coxe's heroes also seldom use typical hard-boiled wisecracks.

The analysis of main protagonists confirmed that a proper reading of the hard-boiled hero should not be restricted to the protagonists of traditional hard-boiled private eyes who are represented by Chandler's Philip Marlowe or Hammett's Continental Op.

The analysis of Burnett's *High Sierra* and its main hero Roy showed a development in the typology of the hard-boiled gangster, who became the type of the public hero or even vigilante.

Coxe's protagonists are the result of the diversification of the hard-boiled detective into the character of photographer-detective. The process of diversification influenced several features: the decreasing of the role of vigilante, urbanization of the hero, existentialism of the main hero and changes in his freedom of expression (both in terms of violence and masculinity). These changes were observed in the comparison of Coxe's characters Jack "Flashgun" Casey and Kent Murdock as well as in the comparison of these two protagonists with other hard-boiled heroes. Murdock, as the successor of Casey in terms of development, reflects these changes more markedly.

Alternative hard-boiled protagonists of gangsters and photographer-detectives showed different degree of incorporation into and resistance to the system. Burnett's gangsters are resistant to both the system of the society and gang. Coxe's photographers-detectives proved anticipated incorporation into the system of society which contrasts with early semi-gangster type of hard-boiled detective represented by Hammett's Continental Op.

My analysis also proved strong links in the typology of hard-boiled gangsters and hard-boiled detectives. These links include the role of vigilante and diversification tendencies that are found mainly in Coxe's protagonists. Nevertheless, the process of diversification affected both genre models and contributed to the extension of established patterns.

SHRNUTÍ

G. H. Coxe a W. R. Burnett: dva žánrové modely americké drsné školy třicátých a čtyřicátých let 20. století

Tato práce analyzuje žánrové modely G. H. Coxe a W. R. Burnetta s cílem prokázat rozšiřování tradičního žánrového modelu americké drsné školy, který je reprezentován tvorbou Raymonda Chandlera a Dashiella Hammetta. Ústředním bodem analýzy je postava hrdiny americké drsné školy a alternativní možnosti jeho ztvárnění postavou gangstera a fotografa-detektiva. Práce se opírá o kritické studie zabývající se americkou drsnou školou a také o srovnání vybraných rysů s dílem Dashiella Hammetta a Raymonda Chandlera.

Úvodní část práce stručně představuje oba analyzované autory a zasazuje je do kontextu americké drsné školy. W. R. Burnett je známý především díky svým románům *Little Caesar* (1929), *High Sierra* (1940) a *Asphalt Jungle* (1949). Tyto díla byla také v třicátých a čtyřicátých letech zfilmována. Často imitované gangsterské scény se poprvé objevují právě v Burnettově tvorbě.

George Harmon Coxe se proslavil díky svým postavám drsných fotografů-detektivů, které poprvé představil ve svých povídkách psaných pro magazín *Black Mask*. Práce se zabývá především jeho romány *Murder with Pictures* (1935), *Silent are the Dead* (1942), ale také okrajově zmiňuje jeho *Jade Venus* (1947).

Následující kapitola se věnuje nastínění základních rysů americké drsné školy: zasazením do prostředí velkého města, násilím, maskulinitou hlavního hrdiny a specifickým jazykovým stylem americké drsné školy.

Význam zasazení děje do městského prostředí je doložen úryvky z analyzovaných románů. Opakujícím se motivem je především temnota drsných ulic, která čerpá inspiraci už v díle Edgara Allana Poea. Nejistota městského prostředí a figurativnost zobrazování města v dílech americké drsné školy jsou dalšími ze zmíněných prvků.

Sekce zabývající se prvky násilí a maskulinity poukazuje na několik charakteristických rysů, např. vyšší míru násilí v Burnettově gangsterské literatuře ve srovnání s Coxovou modifikovanou detektivní literaturou. V Coxově díle *Jade Venus*, kde hlavní hrdina není

primárně fotografem, ale vyšetřuje případ, jako detektiv americké drsné školy se překvapivě objevuje více násilí. To může svědčit o vyšší míře násilí v dílech americké drsné školy, které mají jako hlavní postavu detektiva a ne jeho diversifikovanou verzi fotografa.

Maskulinita alternativního hrdiny americké školy (gangster, fotograf-detektiv) je doložena příklady drsnosti, rasismu a vztahu k ženám. Sekce se také zabývá vztahem hrdiny americké drsné školy a femme fatale. Tento vztah je více zřejmý v dílech Coxe. Nicméně v některých Coxových románech je hlavní hrdina dokonce ženatý, čímž tyto díla vybočují ze stereotypu americké drsné školy.

Sekce věnovaná specifickému stylu americké drsné školy se zabývá mírou figurativnosti v dílech analyzovaných autorů a srovnává je především se stylem Raymonda Chandlera. Především však rozebírá projev hrdiny americké drsné školy tzv. “wisecracks” (hlášky) a jeho cynismus. V neposlední řadě se tato část zabývá významem periodika *Black Mask* a důležitostí kriminálního slangu pro formování stylu americké drsné školy. Velký podíl na uvedení kriminálního slangu do žánru má Burnett se svým dílem *Little Caesar*.

Hlavní část práce věnovaná analýze vybraných děl Coxe a Burnetta se nejprve věnuje Burnettovu ranému románu *Little Caesar* (1929). Sekce „Zrod gangstera americké drsné školy“ se v první části zabývá vlivy kriminálního slangu na tento román, také si všímá extrémně nízké figurativnosti románu. Druhá část se věnuje hlavní postavě románu gangsterovi jménem Rico, především jeho dravé, násilnické a výrazně maskulinní roli. Za povšimnutí stojí rovněž jeho italský původ, který kontrastuje s pozdějšími Burnettovými hrdiny, kteří jsou ryze americkými gangstery. S americkými gangstery však postava Rica sdílí zálibu v popularitě, která u pozdějších Burnettových gangsterů značně přispívá k jejich image veřejných hrdinů a vigilántů.

Sekce *High Sierra* analyzuje stejnojmenný román a především jeho hlavní postavu Roye Earla. Úvodní část sekce se stručně věnuje nestandardnímu zasazení děje mimo město a to do oblasti pohoří Sierra Nevada. Stylově se román rovněž diametrálně odlišuje od autorova debutu. Lze v něm nalézt propracované pasáže zejména popisů krajiny a pocitů hlavního hrdiny. Těmito prvky a vytvořením postavy gangstera-vigilanta se dílo blíží stylu detektivní fikce americké drsné školy.

Ve druhé části je analyzována postava Roye Earla. Burnettův Roy vykazuje řadu rysů, které jeho předchůdce Rico postrádá, např. umírněnou maskulinitu i dravost, roli veřejného hrdiny, ale především také vznešenou symbolicky svobodnou smrt vysoko v horách. Roy se rovněž podobá v několika vlastnostech detektivům americké drsné školy. Především fyzickým vzezřením (Humphrey Bogart, který Roye ztvárnil ve filmové verzi příběhu, hrál rovněž detektivy v noirových adaptacích děl Chandlera a Hammetta) a rolí veřejného hrdiny až vigilanta. Charakteristika Roye je doplněna srovnáním s postavou Burnettova románu *Asphalt Jungle* Dixem, který by se dal popsat, jako mezistupeň mezi Royem a Ricem.

Analýza Coxových děl je otevřena úvodní úvahou nad trendem diversifikace, který je pro žánr charakteristický a který se projevil v Coxeově díle především vytvořením postavy fotografa-detektiva. Diversifikace hrdiny americké drsné školy se ovšem nemusí týkat nutně jen detektivů, kteří jsou v Coxově pojetí představeni v roli fotografů.

Názory kritiků na tento trend se neshodují. Lewis Moore se domnívá, že žánr se vyznačuje jednotvárností postav hlavních hrdinů.¹⁴⁰ Na druhou stranu Stephen Knight tvrdí, že následovníci soukromých detektivů americké drsné školy jsou diversifikováni.¹⁴¹ Hrdinové Coxe potvrzují spíše Knightovu teorii. Sekce se také stručně zamýšlí nad možným vystopováním trendu diversifikace až k archetypu hrdiny americké drsné školy, který se diversifikoval na postavu detektiva a gangstera. Důsledky diversifikace pro charakteristiku Coxových hrdinů zahrnující absenci vztahu klienta a detektiva, umírněnou dravost, násilí a roli vigilanta jsou zde rovněž nastíněny.

Coxův první román *Murder with Pictures* (1935) se vyznačuje svou figurativností, ale také prvním románovým uvedením hrdiny fotografa-detektiva. Fotograf-detektiv byl však Coxem představen už v jeho povídkách psaných pro *Black Mask*.

¹⁴⁰ See Lewis D. Moore, *Cracking the Hard-Boiled Detective: a Critical History from the 1920s to the Present* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006), 38.

¹⁴¹ See Stephen Knight, *Crime Fiction, 1800-2000: Detection, Death, Diversity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 139.

Black Mask byl brakovým periodikem, ve kterém své první povídky publikovali také Raymond Chandler a Dashiell Hammett. Coxe byl přímo ovlivněn povídkami Dashiella Hammetta z tohoto období.

Postava románu *Murder with Pictures* Kent Murdock se vyznačuje umírněností, menší mírou násilí, užším spojením s městem a intelektuálstvím. Zároveň si ale zachovává relativně velké množství původních rysů hrdiny americké drsné školy.

Kontrast k postavě Kenta Murdocka je demonstrován v postavě jeho předchůdce a hlavního hrdiny *Silent Are the Dead* (1942) Jacka Caseyho. Casey byl hrdinou Coxových povídek psaných pro *Black Mask*, ale v románové tvorbě se objevuje až po postavě Murdocka právě v *Silent Are the Dead*.

Casey, ačkoliv je už výsledkem diversifikace detektiva americké drsné školy, je relativně násilnický, drsnější a reflektuje existencialismus původních hrdinů americké drsné školy reprezentovaných postavami románů Hammetta a Chandlera. Prvky existencialismu se projevují v Caseyho ztrátě iluzí a nesmyslnosti jeho boje se korupcí, která ho obklopuje. Caseyho odcizení je prohloubeno hlavně zjištěním, že jeden z jeho kolegů fotografů Perry Austin používal fotografie k vydírání.

Závěrečná část práce se věnuje prvkům začlenění postav do systému a resistance vůči systému, a to jak do systému společnosti, tak do systému zločinu. Rico jako raný prototyp gangstera americké drsné školy se odmítá začlenit do společenského systému, tak do systému gangu a je silně individualistický. Naopak Roy je tomto ohledu komplikovanější a lze u něj zpozorovat vzrůstající role veřejného hrdiny a vigilanta.

Hrdinové Coxe na druhou stranu vykazují relativně velké začlenění do systému společnosti, které je způsobeno diversifikovanou rolí fotografů-detektivů (s přihlédnutím k faktu, že klasická postava detektiva americké drsné školy je vůči systému mnohem více resistantní a individualističtější.) Je ale rovněž evidentní, že Coxovy postavy spíše odporují začlenění do zkaženosti a korupce. Coxův Casey se však zatajením vyděračství svého kolegy rovněž stává částí oné zkaženosti, kterou s hořkostí přiznává i Chandlerův hrdina Marlowe v závěru *Hlubokého spánku* (1939).

Práce provedla analýzu dvou netypických žánrových modelů americké drsné školy. Prokázalo se úzké napojení gangsterské literatury třicátých a čtyřicátých let 20. století na detektivní fikci ze stejného období. Analýza postav potvrdila řadu podobností mezi postavou gangstera a detektivem americké drsné školy. Zejména pak vývoj ve vnímání

těchto hrdinů a trend diversifikace, který charakterizuje především postavy Coxových fotografů, ale lze zpozorovat v různé míře v obou žánrových modelech.

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ANOTACE

Jméno a příjmení autora:	Vladimír Stehlík
Fakulta:	Filozofická fakulta
Katedra:	Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky
Název diplomové práce:	G. H. Coxe a W. R. Burnett: dva žánrové modely americké drsné školy třicátých a čtyřicátých let 20. století
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Americká drsná škola, hrdina americké drsné školy, vigilant, George Harmon Coxe, William Riley Burnett, Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, srovnávací analýza, americký gangster, soukromý detektiv, fotograf-detektiv, diversifikace, Americká literatura třicátých a čtyřicátých let, Little Caesar, High Sierra, Asphalt Jungle, Murder with Pictures, Silent Are the Dead.

Resumé:

Práce se zabývá možným rozšířením tradičního žánrového modelu Americké drsné školy dvěma netypickými modely G. H. Coxe a W. R. Burnetta třicátých a čtyřicátých let 20. století. Práce nastiňuje základní rysy americké drsné školy a jejich výskyt v dílech analyzovaných autorů. Dále se zabývá postavou hrdiny americké drsné školy a jeho alternativními podobami. Především postavou gangstera a procesem diversifikace, který ovlivnil, jak postavu soukromého detektiva, tak samotný žánr. Analýza se opírá o kritické studie zabývající se americké drsnou školou a o srovnání s hlavními představiteli tohoto směru Raymondem Chandlerem a Dashielle Hammettem.

Souhlasím s půjčováním diplomové práce v rámci knihovních služeb.

SYNOPSIS

Author's first name and surname:	Vladimír Stehlík
Faculty:	Philosophical Faculty
Department:	Department of English and American Studies
Title of the master thesis:	G. H. Coxe and W. R. Burnett: Two Genre Models of American Hard-Boiled School of the 1930s and the 1940s
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Abstract:

The thesis discusses a possible extension of the traditional hard-boiled genre model with two untypical genre models of G. H. Coxe and W. R. Burnett of the 1930s and the 1940s. The thesis outlines basic features of American hard-boiled school. Alternative versions of hard-boiled heroes represented by Burnett's gangsters and Coxe's photographers are also discussed. The analysis focuses on the development of the gangster character as well as on the process of diversification that marks both the hard-boiled detective and the genre itself. The analysis is based on relevant critical studies and comparisons with classics of the genre Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett.

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