

Crime Fiction

Crime Fiction, detective story, murder mystery, mystery novel and police novels- These terms all describe narratives that Centre on criminal acts and especially on the investigation, either by an amateur or a professional detective, of a serious crime, generally a murder. Typically, the crime is committed in a closed environment that limits the number of possible suspects. The Commission and detection of crime, with the movies, actions, arraignment, judgement and punishment of a criminal, is one of the great paradigms of narrative. Texturized theft, assault, rape and murder begin with the earlbest epics and are central to classical and much subsequent tragedy.

For example, The most important classical detective is Oedipus, whose dual roles of investigator, and subsequently, as revealed criminal, exemplified the blurring of the boundary between morality and immorality. A similar trajectory may be ascribed to Hamlet, since Hamlet begins by investigating the murder of a king and ends by killing one, having been directly or indirectly responsible for at least four other deaths in the process.

Crime Fiction and History.

Historical things in late Elizabethan and Jacobean plays are notably obsessed both with horrific crime and with aspects of criminal psychology, and the same period produced some of the earliest 'true crime' in ballads of murder, robbery, kidnap and piracy. In 18th-century prose fiction was dominated rather by financial shenanigans, child theft, rape and prostitution. The obsession with sexual violence, highly sensationalized and often coupled with the supernatural, was central to the Gothic novel (g.v.), as well as to some of the greatest Romantic poetry. Particularly in the early Victorian period, 19th c. novels tended to be less explicit, but were no less concerned with financial crime, and also began to explore the criminal underworld of the new industrial cities in a manner reminiscent of Jacobean drama.

Contemporary Time and Crime Fiction

Since 1945 crime fiction has become one of the principal forms of prose in the UK and the US, as well as many other European countries and Japan, bolstered by a symbiotic relationship with the mass media of entertainment and information. Notable developments include the police procedural (q.v.), a kind of novel giving extensive details of the official investigative methodology, and most recently of the advanced forensic technologies and profiling techniques necessary to apprehend serial killers; the persistent investigation of sexuality, both in the presentation of sexual crime and in the creation of gay and lesbian victims and protagonists; the continuing success and importance to crime fiction of female authors; the prevalence of themes of corruption and conspiracy in high places; and the very popular (though not always distinguished) group of historical and particularly medieval detectives.