

Chandler, *Farewell, My Lovely*: Lecture 1
The Hard-boiled Detective Defines Himself in Opposition to Others

1. Hardboiled Genre: Self Against Community

- a. Hard-boiled subgenre defines itself against its foreign predecessors:
 - i. Presentation of D's identity:
 - (1) So far the Brits (with the exception of Poe) have cornered the DF market.
 - (2) In American texts, such as Poe's, even characters like Dupin and Legrand are French or have French names.
 - ii. Presentation of violence:
 - (1) Sherlock Holmes and Poirot use intellect, not violence, to solve problems.
 - (2) Violence is now used unpredictably, unfairly, unchivalrously, against anyone (including the D) at any time.
 - iii. Presentation of resolution at closure:
 - (1) In predecessor texts, things tend to get resolved perfectly and without much violence.
 - (2) In Chandler, there is no real resolution; it's hard even to tell who's guilty.
- b. Hard-boiled authors defined selves against predecessor-authors:
 - i. Until 1980s, all-male cohort (Chandler, Hammett, Hines, Spillane) contrasts with the success of British DF writers.
 - ii. Authors identify selves as "low-life," unprivileged:
 - (1) working-class origins and identities
 - (2) hard-drinking and gambling lifestyles - embracing of "low-life."
 - (3) loner attitudes towards relationships (multiple divorces; permanent bachelorhood).
- c. Hard-boiled setting defines itself against its predecessors:
 - i. In presentation of community:
 - (1) instead of refined, genteel community (where people can be counted on to behave in predictable ways) community is presented as violent, unpredictable, and dangerous. (This is somewhat typical of the way many foreigners view the US, where they fear being murdered in a state where there is only limited gun control.)
 - (2) Urban setting makes community difficult; the small usually rural town where everyone knows everyone else has been transformed into the anonymous, densely populated Big City.
- d. Hard-boiled detective defines himself against Others:
 - i. individual (self-preservation) defines himself against versus community (self-sacrifice).
 - (1) Though when we think of "city" we think of "community," it's the opposite: what few communities exist in the "Big City" environment tend to be engulfing, treacherous, and corrupt.
 - (2) Hard-boiled D always a loner: any introduced relationships are betrayed, don't work out, are rejected because too threatening. (Echoes of earlier Ds.)

- ii. white man (the detective) defines himself against Others - women, people of color, homosexuals.
 - (1) D vulnerable - in world of violence, fears himself to be weak.
 - (2) Fascinated by his resemblance to weak Others: women, people of color, homosexuals, other marginalized or powerless people.
 - (3) D makes connection to weak Others, is drawn towards them, but in order to survive rejects them or finds them to be villainous (defining himself as superior).

2. Yet the act of defining self in opposition is designed to mask similarities. Hard-boiled DF actually has substantial heritage from earlier DFs; just takes their qualities to a more exaggerated level.

- a. Britishness: Chandler educated in Britain; British readers accepted him long before American readers did.
 - b. Violence: much violence in earlier novels was unpredictable, violent ("Rue Morgue") or unchivalrous (persecution of women in Conan Doyle) - it just occurred offstage and not necessarily to the D himself.
 - c. Irresolute closure: in earlier texts, criminals get away, are released by the D to commit suicide (Sheppard) or the punishment of the criminal isn't observed (Poe, Doyle, Christie) but implied.
 - d. Working-class identities of authors: all except Christie were of middle-class origin; all had to work to earn a living.
 - e. Community in others presented as prickly: the "genteel" manners are all surface; chaos lurks everywhere. The city's infinitude is the perfect atmosphere for crime - as is the "smiling countryside that hides a thousand sins," says Holmes in "The Copper Beeches."
 - f. D always finds emotional involvement difficult: detection contingent on emotional non-involvement; serial detectives never have relationships.
 - g. All Ds tend to define selves against Others - the uncool emotional ones who are typically either the victims or perpetrators of crimes.
3. Chandler's narrative techniques mirror his isolation of the detective: DEFAMILIARIZATION. A 3-step process: thick description, explication, then labeling/naming USING COMPARATIVES LIKE METONYMY AND METAPHOR. Corresponds to the detective's thought-process more closely than anything else we've read.
- a. THICK DESCRIPTION. Chandler gives a thick description when he introduces an event or a person. Paradoxically, this often has the effect of linking the singularities of a person's appearance into cliched universal traits. This is the beginning the transformation of the individual into the "type" he or she will later become in Marlowe's eyes. (Metonymy as the trope of oppression: Marlowe's racist comments about LM's cheap cigarette case and Asian stores 101.)
 - i. EX: description of Moose Malloy's physical appearance (4).

- ii. EX: description of M's first meeting with Lindsay Marriott (48) which ends "he had the general appearance of a lad who would wear a white flannel suit with a violet scarf around his neck and a cornflower in his lapel" (48). Like Marlowe, the reader has to gauge Marriott by his appearance and the nature and location of his house.
- iii. EX: description of Anne Riordan (87).
- iv. EX: description of Jules Amthor and his psychic business (103).

For Chandler, thick description is a vehicle for metonymy. A repeated example of this is the way Chandler repeatedly disembodies people's faces and then connects their features up to some larger pattern.

* EX: (Marlowe looking at "Pierrot" photo of Velma): "The face was in profile but the visible eye seemed to have gaiety in it. I wouldn't say the face was lovely and unspoiled, I'm not that good at faces. But it was pretty. People had been nice to that face, or nice enough for their circle. Yet it was a very ordinary face and its prettiness was strictly assembly line. You would see a dozen faces like it on a city block in the noon hour" (34). [What attributes does he assign to the face? What does disembodiment do to the person who owns it? How is the face related to a larger pattern of behavior?]

Chandler's thick-description-without-naming defamiliarizes the person or event - making us see and scrutinize it very closely because the narrator doesn't provide labels that would allow us to pigeonhole and dismiss it. (This keeps the reader reading carefully; you'd better not miss anything, because it might not be explained later.)

- 2. EXPLICATION. After each initially confusing or incomprehensible scene, Marlowe explicates it by reframing it, usually to another person such as Nulty, Riordan or Randall.

EX: he tells Nulty about getting Mrs. Florian drunk and pumping her for information (38B); his own voice reprises what must have happened when he awakes after being sapped (63); he gives Anne Riordan a summary of the bungled payoff (75)

- 3. LABELING: Marlowe ultimately produces a series of labels that gauge the person (often much later in the novel). Marlowe at various times tags Marriott as a "gigolo," "blackmailer," "ladies' man" "finger man," "jewel thief," etc. as Marlowe, Anne Riordan, and Randall try to sort out his role in the fiasco. But notice that Marlowe doesn't necessarily get the label right on the first try. (Compare to Sherlock Holmes.)

4. Slang and Elision

"The whole point of this racket is that things aren't talked about" (197).
 "It's a long story and too full of guessing" (274).

- a. WHY LEAVE THINGS OUT? Because Marlowe is hampered by trying to discover what is unspoken and unspeakable in his world, Chandler uses elision - unfamiliar words or concepts and key materials left out of a conversation or description - to give the reader the feeling of being "out of a secret."
 - i. All DF involves some process of elision, but usually the detective, like Dupin, Holmes, or Lord Peter, is simply silent about the solution he already understands.

- ii. In Chandler, however, Marlowe himself often doesn't know what's going on, or has only an inkling.

Chandler forces us to figure out what's going on by periodically hitting us with information we don't understand. This occurs on the micro level, with slang, and on the macro level, with wholesale omissions called elisions.

- b. SLANG brings us into Marlowe's world and forces us to share its values. Examples: "shine," "shine killing," "shine box" and "smokes" in the first chapter. What does Moose Malloy mean when he says to Marlowe "Smokes in here, huh? Tie that for me, pal" (5).
 - i. Slang tells us what's current in a world and what the world values. "Jujus," "gat," "prowl boys" - what do these mean?
 - ii. The meanings of the slang words are almost always revealed indirectly, sometimes much later, from context; Chandler carefully gives us just enough information to tell us what's going on. Thus, a few chapters after the "jujus" are discovered on Lindsay Marriott's body, we get a little disquisition about marijuana in the U.S. (99).
- c. ELISION. People find it unsafe to say what they mean in this world; they move indirectly. It's Marlowe's job to crack their secrets without asking them directly.
 - i. EX: death of Sam Montgomery, the bar manager. Compare the paragraph in which Marlowe hears "a dull flat sound at the back of the place," (13) MM emerges, and, after preventing the bartender from pulling a gun on him, goes into the bar manager's office (15-16).
 - ii. EX: hotel clerk enforces Marlowe's process of deduction (24) and gets Marlowe to bribe him precisely right by rejecting offers until Marlowe makes him one he likes.
 - iii. EX: "Jujus" discovered by Anne and Marlowe 72, 73; the embroidered case emerges, empty, at the end of Marlowe's interrogation by Randall (84-5) (and elided information implied here is that AR removed them). The two discuss the jujus at the end of their conversation (98-99) and the next chapter begins finally with a disquisition on marijuana by Marlowe (99).
 - iv. EX: Lindsay Marriott holds the trust deed on Mrs. Florian's house (106-7). Why is this significant?

Slang Words in *Farewell, My Lovely*: A Partial List

bottled - caught
box - night club
C-note - \$100 bill
caboose - prison
check - yes
dick - detective
dine-and-dice emporium - gambling restaurant
dinge - black person
fancy pants - a challenge
fixer - reporter
gander - a glance or look at something
hack - car
Harlem sunset - cut throat
heel - a person who's a jerk
high pillow - death penalty
hooch - liquor
hooper - dancer
jake - okay
jibed - matched
joy house - brothel
joint - bar, restaurant, nightclub; also, marijuana cigarette
jujus - marijuana cigarettes
keep it under your hat - keep it secret
lam - escape
lay - assignment
leg work - scut work, details
no soap - can't do it; it won't work
okey - alternate spelling of "okay," pronounced the same
pinched - captured
pork pie - lightweight cloth hat
prowl car, prowl car boys, prowlies - police car; police
rap, rappers - criminal conviction; people convicted of committing a crime
ride me - let me know what you're thinking
rod - gun
sawed-off - sawed-off shotgun
scram, the scram - leave, get lost, escape
shamus - private detective
shine - black person
shyster - racketeer; criminal broker or middle-man
smoke - black person; also, cigarette
under glass - undercover