

Violence and Gender in Dashiell Hammett's Short Stories

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Abstract

This paper is interested in interrogating how Dashiell Hammett's (1894 – 1961) use of the short story is interconnected with the gender scheme in his work on the one hand, and the representation of violence, on the other. It argues that although Hammett is known as the author of *The Maltese Falcon* (1930) *The Glass Key* (1931), his short stories show best his themes of gangsterism, the urbanization of the American city, and more importantly his interest in female criminals who work on a par with the male detectives. The paper aims to demonstrate that Hammett consistently relied on the short story to create his hardboiled world where the gender dynamics, encapsulated in detectives threatened by the dangerous sexuality of female characters, is intrinsically tied to the violence that pervades his texts. This paper also argues that Hammett utilized the characteristics of the short story (for example, brevity, and economy of the description) to deconstruct the formula of the classical detective story to create a "hardboiled" formula which establishes an underworld of violence and lawlessness, and proffers a character study of the criminal himself or herself. Hammett's short fiction can thus be considered as a thread that leads to see his writing as a platform that portrays the complex intertwined discourses of criminality, power, and gender roles.

Keywords: Dashiell Hammett, short story, crime fiction, violence, gender

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Introduction

In 2011, The *Strand Magazine* published a previously unknown short story by Dashiell Hammett. The story, titled "So I Shot Him," is one of fifteen stories discovered by The *Strand* editor, Andrew Gulli at the Harry Ransom Centre at the University of Texas.ⁱ With this discovery, more attention is drawn to Hammett, not only to his achievements as a mystery writer, but specifically to his short stories as a medium convenient to the genre of hardboiled crime fiction that he created.

Hardboiled crime fiction is a term used to designate the crime writing that developed in the interwar period of the 1920s and 1930s, fully maturing in the 1940s in America. Hardboiled crime fiction can be said to emerge from the turmoil spawned by Prohibition, the Depression and two World Wars. Expressive of cultural concerns in American society and more broadly addressing (and often challenging) the structures and patterns of cultural realities as far as gender, race and class are concerned,ⁱⁱ hardboiled crime fiction renders a dark portrait of what Raymond Chandler (a contemporary to Hammett and another renowned writer in the genre) describes as "a world gone wrong [where] [t]he law was something to be manipulated for profit and power. The streets were dark with something more than night" (1964: 7). In contrast to British detective fiction, in which the detective is the main crime solver, hardboiled crime fiction changes the formula from ratiocination, the solution of the mystery and accomplishment of justice, to a grim depiction of the "mean streets" where a "hardboiled" detective strives (with varying degrees of success) to protect himself from the threats posed by attractive and dangerous women.ⁱⁱⁱ

Hammett began his writing career as a short story writer. His stories, which first appeared in the *Black Mask* magazine in the early 1920s,^{iv} mark the above-mentioned shift from the classical detective story in which the detective is the main crime solver and the events take place in middle-class suburban mansions and drawing rooms, like, for example, in Arthur Canon Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, to an urban space in America where crime and corruption are predominant. Hammett wrote a large number of short stories throughout his career and only five novels.^v Some of his novels (for example, *Red Harvest* and *The Dain Curse*) were serialized in *The Black Mask* before being published as novels. But even with the success of his novels, Hammett continued publishing short stories until he entirely stopped writing in 1934.^{vi} This paper is interested in interrogating how Hammett's use of the short story is interconnected with the gender scheme in his work on the one hand, and the representation of violence, on the other. It argues that although Hammett is known as the author of *The Maltese Falcon* (1930) *The Glass Key* (1931), his short stories show best his themes of gangsterism, the urbanization of the American city, and more importantly his interest in dangerous culpable women who work on a par with the male detectives as well as the criminals that populate his fiction. The paper aims to show that Hammett consistently relies on the short story to create the hardboiled world where his representation of gender, encapsulated in detectives threatened by dangerous sexuality of seductive women, is intrinsically tied to the violence that pervades his texts. Hammett utilizes the characteristics of the short story (for example, brevity, unity, intensity, as well as economy of the description, the limited number of characters and the single theme/plot), to deconstruct the formula of the classic detective story and replace it with a new one. In the puzzle formula in classic detective fiction, mostly British crime fiction like that of Agatha Christie and Arthur Canon Doyle, the "who" – whodunit – is the main question while the central focus of the

detective is centered on the ratiocination and the constant attempts to solve the crime and find the identity of the criminal. This puzzle formula is substituted in the American version with a "hardboiled" crime narratives that mainly shed light on the criminal and the underworld that he/she inhabits.

By turning to Hammett's short fiction, this paper questions the critical over-emphasis on his novels and highlights a body of short stories that can be read against the grain of the scholarly opinion on Hammett.^{vii} This paper also visits the view that some critics advance about the apparent shift in Hammett's novels, as shown in the way that the narratives move from rather misogynistic representations of women (the addict childish Gabrielle of *The Dain Curse* (1929) for example) to more nuanced portrayals of women (the female detective, Nora, in *The Thin Man* (1934)),^{viii} and goes on to show that Hammett's short fiction is a thread that can be used to see his writing as a platform that portrays the complex intertwined discourses on criminality, power and violence. By looking at the short stories from his early 1920s to the mid 1930s, credit can be given to Hammett as a short story writer, and hence the short story in itself can be re-assessed as an important component and indeed a medium in the hardboiled crime genre that Hammett founded.

Hammett and the Realism of the Pulp

As one of the "finest mystery writers of all time" (Layman, 1981, p. 239), Hammett is an influential writer on many levels.^{ix} In addition to revolutionizing the genre of crime fiction, Hammett also redefined the conceptualization and the understanding of detection and law and order. Hammett's fiction destabilizes the formula of law and order as we find his detectives in one narrative after another implicated in the criminal underworld that these narratives clearly depict. Hammett's detectives are not an aloof genius like Sherlock Holmes of Arthur Canon Doyle's fiction. Instead Hammett presents tough detectives with questionable moral code and ones who do not hesitate to get involved in the violence that permeates the action.^x As such, the distinction between the criminal and the detective figure is sometimes hard to achieve as everybody seems to be immersed in the chaos and lawlessness that constitute his world. Furthermore, Hammett's narratives do not conclude with resolution or restoration of law and order. In fact, reading Hammett's narratives often reinforces the circular nature of his fiction according to which the reader feels that the story ends where it began. Hence the only things that one can take away after reading Hammett are the sense of uncertainty and a grim image of the world that he portrays

Therefore, Hammett's intervention with crime fiction and the way he shifted the expectations of the reader in terms of how to engage with and how to read crime fiction cannot be denied. Not only is he known for his works that are still the material of adaptations on the big screen, but he is credited for his technique that changed the face of detective fiction.^{xi} His "credible characters, and the wonderfully drawn action scenes, the canny air of authenticity with which they capture the mood and texture of the twenties underworld" (Dooly, 1984, p. xi) all sketch his reputation as a one of the most distinguished crime writers. Hammett, an ex-detective in the Pinkerton Detective Agency himself,^{xii} used authentic details drawn from his years in the detective business which he brought to life in the action of his stories.^{xiii}

Hammett's success, however, was born out of American pulp culture.^{xiv} He was first and foremost a writer of the pulps. Cheap magazines popular in the 1920s, pulp magazines were commonplace for a new platform of crime fiction. The pulps met the needs for stories about

adventures, mysteries and crime. *The Black Mask* was the vehicle that carried a lot of new characteristics of the new growing genre. In one of the seminal essays on crime fiction, Raymond Chandler (1973) states:

Hammett gave murder back to the kind of people that commit it for reasons, not just to provide a corpse; and with the means at hand, not with hand-wrought duelling pistols, curare, and tropical fish. He put these people down on paper as they are, and he made them talk and think in the language they customarily used for these purposes. He had style, but his audience didn't know it, because it was in a language not supposed to be capable of such refinements. They thought they were getting a good meaty melodrama written in the kind of lingo they imagined they spoke themselves. It was, in a sense, but it was much more (p. 12).^{xv}

Here Chandler describes the world that Hammett sketches in his work, and more importantly points to the realism that characterizes it. Indeed one of the distinguishing characteristics in Hammett's stories is how they portray the political and socio-economic concerns and issues that were part of the American scene at the time. The 1920s, when Hammett started writing his fiction, is a decade of upheavals. It was the era that started with woman suffrages, the Prohibition (a nationwide ban on the sale, dealing, importation, and transportation of alcoholic beverages that was effective in the 1920s) and ended with the collapse of the Wall Street and the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929. Crime rate was rising at the time and there was a shift towards a more rigid policing system in America.^{xvi} Hammett's fiction spoke to these upheavals portraying bootleggers, gangsters and criminals who were part of this lawless cosmos. The pressing question, however, is whether the "reality" in Hammett's fiction is a mere fictional portrayal or perhaps a harsh criticism of America in the 1920s, or is it an artistic device that Hammett utilized to create a new genre to break from the classical tradition? It is noteworthy to mention here that Hammett used the short story as a vehicle to negotiate all these different, if not contradictory, questions. But to answer these questions we can first examine the definition of Hammett's real world:

The realist in murder writes of a world in which gangsters can rule nations and almost rule cities, in which hotels and apartment houses and celebrated restaurants are owned by men who made their money out of brothels, in which a screen star can be the fingerman for a mob, and the nice man down the hall is a boss of the numbers racket; a world where a judge with a cellar full of boot- leg liquor can send a man to jail for having a pint in his pocket, where the mayor of your town may have condoned murder as an instrument of money-making, where no man can walk down a dark street in safety because law and order are things we talk about but refrain from practising (Chandler, 1973, p. 14).

Chandler's description highlights the brutality of crime and lawlessness of the city, and reinforces the dooming sense of disruption and disorder. Dennis Porter, on the other hand, argues that Hammett's realism is "a matter of style": "The reason why, however, is not that he [Hammett] represented life more accurately than did Agatha Christie but that he adapted to the genre a new more exciting set of literary conventions better suited to the taste of the time and place" (1981, p. 130). Hammett's fiction may be said to unite the two different aspects of artistry and reality. Although the "powerful vision of life" (Cawelti, 1976, p. 163) that Hammett's

narratives depict seems constructed and artistically utilized, Hammett also draws a dim picture of America during the 1920s, which witnessed a number of social and political changes.^{xvii} One can disagree with Carl Malmgren's (1999) view that ignores the socio-cultural and political milieu of the American context suggesting that Hammett fiction does not represent the real world, but rather "the beginning of the fall of language" (p. 382). Nonetheless, Malmgren's contention that Hammett's narratives "subvert the whole idea of valid models, insofar as a model is itself a sign vehicle presupposing a motivated relation between signifier and signified" (Malmgren, 1999, p. 382) is valuable in terms of hardboiled crime fiction being a genre that problematizes and challenges established norms and values. Hammett's reality loses grounding and total certainty since it also subverts the "cognitive, ethical, and linguistic unintelligibility" that formulate this world (Malmgren, 1999, p. 382).

Although he starts his essay with the statement "If they agree about nothing else, historians of the detective story at least concur in the view Hammett was a realist", Gary Day (1988, p. 39) goes on to deconstruct the "reality" in Hammett's work. The detectives in Hammett by no means have the privilege or the superiority of "knowing." Hammett's world is so chaotic and disorderly that "truth" is not only inaccessible but also meaningless. One of the devices that Hammett utilizes to achieve this is the blurring between appearance and reality – it is this blurring that makes Hammett's world lacking any coherence and makes the "distinction between appearance and reality is a false one" (Day, 1988 p. 41-2). Appearance both reveals reality and obscures it; and this very contradiction is the core of "divided nature" of the Hammett's narrative (Day, 1988, p.41).^{xviii} As will be illustrated below, the divide between appearance and reality is a significant theme and one of the characteristics that define gender roles in the short stories.

Hammett and Dangerous Women

Hammett's short stories are full of dangerous women, women who are as "beautiful as hell" ("The Girl with the Sliver Eye", p. 188)^{xix} and who use this beauty and sexual charm to commit criminal acts.^{xx} The danger the women in Hammett's narratives pose stems from the excessive sexuality that threatens the masculinity of the detectives in the stories.^{xxi} Though tough and enduring, Hammett's detectives feel vulnerable in the face of the women's attempts to seduce them. Sexual desire, as James Maxfield suggests, is the "greatest threat to the Hammett hero's invulnerability" (Maxfield, 1985, p. 111). For example, when the Continental Op, one of Hammett's detectives who appears in many of his early works, captures Princess Zhukovski in "The Gutting of Couffignal" (1925) and accuses her of robbery and murder whilst she offers him her body, his response shows rejection of any sentiment: "You think I'm a man and you're a woman. That's wrong. I'm a man-hunter and you're something that's been running in front of me. There's nothing human about it" ("The Gutting of Couffignal" p. 34).^{xxii} This is an example of the kind of dynamic that governs the relationship between the detective and female character – it is a dynamic that mainly depends on sexual tension and a performance of toughness on the part of the detective that hides his vulnerability to the woman's sexual wiles. What the Op is suggesting in the quote above from "The Gutting of Couffignal" is that he has abandoned his humanity and with it his vulnerability. This is because his instinct as a "manhunter", "overrides all other instincts – like sexual desire – that might interfere with it" (Maxfield, 1985, p. 112).

The woman thus serves as an obstacle to the detectives' quest for knowledge and his inquiry for the "truth" in Hammett's short fiction. In "Sex/Knowledge/Power in the Detective

Genre", Stephen Cooper (1989) provides valuable insights. He argues that the main theme of detective fiction in general is about the male inquisitive to solve a mystery.^{xxiii} His search for the facts (knowledge), which implies his wish for power, is interrupted and disrupted by the woman (through her sexual appeal). This suggests a continuum between sex and knowledge, on the one hand, and knowledge and power, on the other. This, however, does not imply, Cooper elaborates, any alignment of the detective to "the conventional forces of power, namely, the law and those arrayed against it" (Cooper, 1989, p.23). Instead, there is "friction" between the male protagonist and a female foil (Cooper, 1989, p.24). The women in Hammett's short stories question the Op's power and they eventually thwart his effort in solving the mystery, in addition to challenging his authority as far as his role as a detective is concerned.

Yet, there is a noticeable shift in Hammett's treatment of women. The women in a number of his short stories, for example "The Tenth Claw," "The Golden Horseshoe," "The House in Turk Street," and "The Girl with the Sliver Eye," which all appeared in *Black Mask* in 1924 (and re-printed later) and all feature the Continental Op as the detective, are not only seductive and beautiful but extremely capable of planning and accomplishing what they want. The Continental Op describes Elvira (her real name is Jean Delano), a memorable female character who appears in "The House of the Turk Street" and "The Girl with the Sliver Eyes", as "the red-haired she-devil" ("The House in Turk Street" p.132), she "was as beautiful as the devil, and twice as dangerous" (p.130). The two stories are tied together through the adventures of the detective to solve the crime on the Turk Street. The "Turk House" starts with the detective statement: "I have been told that the man for whom I was hunting lived in a certain Turk block" ("The Houser in Turk Street" p. 123). This line is a good example of the kind of prose that Hammett used in his stories. Hammett employs direct language; no digression is necessary in stories where the effect of the narrative is realized through role-playing (deception and fake identities), and at the same time play with words. In "The House of the Turk Street," the Op is deceived by an old couple who gave him faked names but they are shown to be the villains in the story. In this story we see the Op's weaknesses and his flaws as a detective. Describing the deception, the Op emphasizes the woman's abilities to act versus his inability to do anything and his paralysis physical and mental: "In this place, I might have believed her myself – all of us have fallen for that thing at one time or another – but sitting tied up on the side-lines, I knew that he'd have been better off playing off with a gallon of nitro than with this baby. She was dangerous!" ("The Houser in Turk Street", p. 131). Yet the story has a loose ending as it is followed by "The Girl with the Sliver Eyes," published two months after the "Turk House." Although it starts with a case of a missing person of Burke Panghburn's fiancée, "The Silver Girl" is soon revealed to be a story that revolves around the same themes of the "Turk House" – faked identities and deception. A woman is missing but she is not what her fiancé thinks she really is. We hear about her from letters, and through her fiancé, but it turns out that the detective as well as the reader both need to re-evaluate the truth and what it entails. Later in the story we discover along with the detective that this missing woman is the same woman from the "Turk House." The Op describes the process of "recognition" (which is analogous to the detective's knowledge) in terms outlining the danger and the threat that she represents: "Recognition must have shown in my eyes in spite of the effort that I made to keep them blank, for, swift as a snake, she had left the arm of the chair and was coming forward" ("The Girl with the Silver Eyes", 175). Also, the gap between appearance and reality is a dominant theme in both "The Turk House" and "The Girl with the Silver Eyes." The Op is deceived by appearances, which

turn out to be false. He seems really incapable of the detective work he is supposed to do. This gap also dictates the gender dynamics in the stories. It turns out that the female character (Elvira) succeeds in tricking the detective, who is unable to distinguish her "real" identity as the villainess.

The events in the story prove that Elvira is a threat to the detective. In a scene when they are in a car together and after pulling to the side of the road on her request, she tries to manipulate the Op by using her charms, while he clearly falls under her spell:

The robe I had given her had fallen away from her white shoulders. Whether or not it was because she was so close against my shoulder, I shivered, too. And my fingers fumbling in my pocket for a cigarette, brought it out twisted and mashed ("The Girl with the Silver Eyes", pp. 186-7).

Here Hammett uses the formula that is going to dominate his later work: a detective who falls for a beautiful but dangerous woman. The final scene of "Sliver Girl" is reminiscent of *The Maltese Falcon*, one of Hammett's most known novels, when the detective hands in the criminal woman to the police. In the 1930 novel, the detective Sam Spade falls in love with the ultimate villainess in the story, Brigid O'Shaughnessy, but he hands her in to the police at the end when he discovers that she killed his friend. Reading the final scene in the short story next to that of the novel, we find similarities that are easy to detect. The confrontation between the Op and Elvira (in the short story) and Sam Spade and Brigid (in the novel) shows that Hammett once and again returns to earlier formulas that he used in the short stories. Indeed his short fiction seems the original source from which the novels are created having the main cues that dominate Hammett's writing.

However, in Hammett's later work,^{xxiv} what looks like a pattern of the beautiful dangerous woman also shifts; "the misogynistic reduction of women to a single female type...gives way in the later works to a broad spectrum of women characters" (Herman, 1994, p. 209). John Cawelti (1976) explains the shift in Hammett's work:

As he developed as a writer, Hammett lost some of the aroma of the *decadence*, not so much because his attention focused more directly on life, but because his literary models changed. Hammett's early stories grew directly out of pulp tradition and many of them, like *Red Harvest*, resemble westerns as much as they do detective stories. Even at this time Hammett occasionally experimented with the transformation of other traditional literary types into his own hard-boiled mode. This became a standard practice in his later novels (p.165).

This shift is significant not only in terms of understanding Hammett's stories and how this shift resonates in the boy of his works, but also it is relevant to the treatment of gender and the misogyny that is especially attributed to his early work.^{xxv} Even with the early work of Hammett, one can argue that he experimented or perhaps it is better to say retreated to something different from the hardboiled tradition. To be precise, Hammett's work is characterized by variation and this variation is significant in understanding the representation of gender in his work. Hammett's narratives display a range of women who slip in and out the femme fatale image that I argue Hammett destabilized through the wide-ranging representations of women. Hammett's

representation of female characters does not exactly match how feminists describe the way women are victimized by emphasizing their lack of agency in the face of a patriarchal society, but simultaneously it does not go far from it. That is, Hammett does not present an all-encompassing image of women in his works. Rather, Hammett often fuses within the same story opposing roles of women: victim versus culpable woman; weak versus powerful woman. A good example of this is the helpless Gabrielle in *The Dain Curse* – which was first serialized before being compiled into a novel, who is presented along with Alice Leggett, a criminal powerful woman. As such Hammett's fiction reveals the intersections between gender roles and his prominent themes of violence and chaos in the American city of the 1920s, which will be discussed below.

The Short Stories and the Duality of Gender and Violence

Hammett's first short story appeared in 1923. He published a total of forty six short stories. Thirty four of them have The Op as the detective figure.^{xxvi} Most of these stories were reprinted in paperback or hardcover form. Later revised, Hammett turned the stories into novels. The two main collections for Hammett short stories are *The Big Knockover* (Vintage Books 1972) and *The Continental OP* (Vintage Books 1974). Although these two collections are not "books" as Hammett's novels are, the early short stories in these collections "already reveal most of the themes and values, as well as many of the literary devices, to be found in the mature work" (Dooly, 1984, p.19-20). Moreover the distinctive features of Hammett's style are highlighted in the short stories.

The most distinctive feature is the characterization of his detectives. For example, The "Tenth Claw" is one of Hammett's early stories in which he demonstrates one of his main themes; that things are not what they appear. The Op investigates the death of a wealthy businessman called Leopold Gantvoort who was murdered and left with clues in the murder scene. Yet when the detective analyzes these clues he concludes that some of them are faked in order to mislead him. Throughout the course of the investigation, The Op grows suspicious of Creda Dexter, Gantvoort's fiancée, and with the tension between the OP and the dangerous woman, violence and gender come full circle. With eyes "large and deep and the color of amber", Creda is described in a language that refers to her seductive and cunning nature: "she was pronouncedly feline throughout. Her every movement was the slow, smooth, sure one of a cat, her small nose, see of her eyes, the swelling of her brows, were all cat-like" ("The Tenth Claw" pp. 63-4). The reference to animals is significant here. It can be seen as a misogynistic device which apparently can give the detective the upper hand. The animalization is used here to pathologize Creda by making her sexuality even more dangerous. It suggests a reference to the woman as a "succubus" from medieval lore that is marked by limited mentality and a clear source of danger to those around her. Yet, Hammett makes the Op fallible and vulnerable too. He is not in control and he is often implicated in the chaotic world that the narratives present. This juxtaposition of vulnerability (the male detective) and danger (the criminal woman) is the recipe that characterizes Hammett's early fiction and governs his presentation of gender roles.

The vulnerability of the detective is key to the interaction between gender and violence in Hammett's short stories. In "The Big Knockover" and "\$106,000 Blood Money," two connected stories both first published in 1927 and reprinted as a collection in 1943, the same female character appears. Ann Newhall, an alias for Nancy Regan, is a beautiful woman who is involved with criminals. The Op admits that he is attracted to her, yet he is annoyed with his

feelings for her. He says "It annoyed me to find I was staring into the girl's eyes as fixedly as she into mine, and that when I wanted to take my gaze away it wasn't easily done. I jerked my eyes away from her, took my hands away" ("\$106,000 Blood Money" p. 624). The fact that he feels threatened by the presence of this woman ultimately makes him decide to hand her in to the police at the end. His vulnerability and his fear of showing any weakness, as far as Ann is concerned, makes it inevitable to remove the temptation by turning her in to the police.

A comparison with another story clarifies the point about the detective's vulnerability and its relation to gender representation and violence. In "The Scorched Face," (1925), the Op faces a similar situation to that in "The Big Knockover" and "\$106,000 Blood Money." A woman, Myra Banbrock also commits murder, but the Op wants to save her the trial, so he does not turn her in to the police. As Mexfield suggests, the Op can afford to be merciful to Myra because he is not attracted to her, while mercy to Ann seems out of the question as his vulnerability is at stake. Showing mercy to Ann would only prove his flaws which he tries hard to evade.

Therefore, Hammett ties the way he treats violence in his stories with women who transgress the traditional gender roles. He brings the tension around gender roles to the surface and crystallizes the anxiety around women in his stories. This is done through the dichotomization of the masculinity of the detective versus the femininity, perhaps one can say the hyper-femininity of the dangerous women in narratives that usually end with no resolution of the crimes. His detective hero is not quite the "hero" with the powers of superior detectives.

What Hammett uses to establish this dynamics in regards to gender and violence is also related to the nature and technique of the short stories. Hammett in fact masters economy in his stories in ways that made it possible for greater impact. He "writes like the Op thinks, cutting through the irrelevant and moving swiftly to the business at hand" (Dooley, 1984, p.24). The rhythm of the short stores, versus the lengthy novels, is fast-paced like the rhythm of Hammett's world. The straightforward punchy prose of the short stories parallels the action that happens there. Hammett's writing reflects how his characters think, especially the detective. This economy and fast pace of the stories ultimately serve to draw the chaotic rhythm and violence of Hammett's underworld.

Conclusion

Hammett's short fiction can be seen as a flashlight to look his oeuvre and even beyond. Hammett's short stories establish the essential parameters of the "new" tradition of crime writing. This is done on multiple levels. On the one hand, Hammett contributed to the market of the pulps in which serialization was the main method for publishing. As such, the short story was a more appropriate form for publication in pulp magazines in the first place. The brevity and intensity that the short stories allow created the memorable narratives that readers are familiar with and still read. Hammett's novels, as we know them today, were not initially presented as full texts with progression and development that novels usually require. Rather they were given in dozens as short stories. For example, *The Dain Curse* was serialized in four issues of *Black Mask* between November 1928 and February 1929. Then the book in its entirety was published in July 1929. But even with the few novels were also serialized in *The Black Mask*, keeping the suspense of readers, Hammett's short stories still succeeded in drawing together the essential

elements of a new genre, with violence as main component and an interesting take on women's roles as discussed above.

As such the discovery of the short stories in 2011 takes another turn and can be taken as an indicator to reread the way hardboiled fiction is read. Through focusing on the characteristics and components of the short story, Hammett's short fiction becomes a new lens through which the genre of hardboiled crime fiction is reconsidered within American popular literature and even more broadly in the array of literature of the 1920s and 1930s.

Notes

ⁱ These stories are now included in a new volume entitled *The Hunter and Other Stories* (2013), which is edited by Julia Rivett, Hammett's granddaughter and Richard Layman, one of Hammett's main biographers.

ⁱⁱ For readings of class in crime fiction see, for example, Smith (2000); for race, see Reddy (2003); for gender see Plain (2001), Forter (2000), and Breu (2005).

ⁱⁱⁱ The term "hardboiled crime fiction" is used as a broad term that encompasses the detective narratives that this paper addresses. Hardboiled crime fiction is described as a "genre," here despite critical disagreement on using "genre" or "subgenre" to refer to the hardboiled tradition. For more details on genres and formulas, see for example Cawelti (1976). Also, there are different views on the classification of crime fiction. Knight in Crime Fiction 1800-2000: Detection, Death, Diversity (2004), contends that terms like "hardboiled" and "golden age" are emotive and suggests "private eye" and "clue-puzzle" respectively.

^{iv} For more on the *Black Mask* see Nolan (1985).

^v The five novels that Hammett wrote novels between 1929 and 1934 are *Red Harvest* (1929), *The Dain Curse* (1929), *The Maltese Falcon* (1930), *The Glass Key* (1931), and *The Thin Man* (1934).

^{vi} After his last novel, Hammett stopped writing as a political statement of his leftist activism. He was involved with the Communist party, which caused his arrest and interrogation in 1951. For more details, see Layman (1981).

^{vii} Among the many critical studies on Hammett's novels are Gregory (1985), and Marling (1983).

^{viii} See Herman (1994) for an account on the development in Hammett's work.

^{ix} For a detailed account on the position of Hammett in relation to modernism and modern litterateur, see McGurl (1997) and Gray (2008).

^x For more on the general characterization of Hammett's detective, see Edenbaum (1968).

^{xi} A number of Hammett's stories were adapted by Hollywood during the 1930s and 1940s. Some of these films are *The Maltese Falcon* (1931), *The Thin Man* (1934), *Woman in the Dark* (1934), *The Glass Key* (1935), *Satan Met a Lady* (1936), *After the Thin Man* (1936), *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), *Shadow of the Thin Man* (1941), *The Glass Key* (1942), *The Thin Man Goes Home* (1945), *Secret Agent X-9* (1945), and *Song of the Thin Man* (1947). For more on the adaptation of Hammett's fiction in Hollywood, see Irwin (2006), chapters seven and eight.

^{xii} Marc Seals (2002) notes the fact that Hammett worked as a detective for the Pinkerton Detective Agency, and suggests that this job influenced his writing insofar as Hammett learned that the detective occupies "more than just a space between the federal authorities and local law enforcement; he also lives in a gray area between the law and the criminal" (p. 68). For more information on Hammett and the Pinkerton Agency, see Raczkowski (2003).

^{xiii} For Hammett's biography see Layman (1981), Johnson (1983), Nolan (1969), and Marling (1983).

^{xiv} See Haut (1995) for the conceptualization of American pulp culture in relation to crime fiction.

^{xv} Chandler's "The Simple Art of Murder," a seminal essay about hardboiled crime fiction, was first published in 1944 in *The Atlantic Monthly*. Unless otherwise stated, I will use throughout this study the reprint of Chandler's essay in *The Second Chandler Omnibus* (1973).

^{xvi} See Heise (2005) for a detailed account of the discourses of policing and crime in the US in the 1920s.

^{xvii} Sindra Gregory (1984) maintains that although the exposure of corruption is more revealing than any other novel of the time, including *The Great Gatsby*, she still thinks that *Red Harvest* is “more than a political or social tract” (p. 29).

^{xviii} Steve Marcus provides an insight Hammett's underworld “what happens in Hammett is that what is revealed as “reality” is still further fiction making activity” (1975 xxii). That is, Hammett is creating fiction in the real world and the fiction he creates, like the real world, is “coherent, but not necessarily rational” (1975 xxii).

^{xix} Unless otherwise stated, quotations from “The Girl with the Sliver Eye,” “The House in Turk Street,” “The Whosis Kid,” “The Tenth Claw” “The Big Knockover” and “\$106,000 Blood Money” are from *Dashiell Hammett: Crime Stories and Other Writings* (2001). A page number will follow the title of the short story after each quote.

^{xx} For more information about Hammett's short stories see Marling (1983), chapter two; Wolf (1980). See also Herman (1994) for the treatment of female characters in the short stories.

^{xxi} For the treatment of masculinity in Hammett's work see Breu (2004) and (2005).

^{xxii} Unless otherwise stated, quotations from “The Gutting of Couffignal” are from Hammett's *The Big Knockover* (1972), which is one of the main collections of short stories. A page number will follow the title of the short story after each quote.

^{xxiii} Cooper (1989) discusses four films *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), *The Big Heat* (1953), *Chinatown* (1974) and *Angel Heart* (1974).

^{xxiv} I consider *The Maltese Falcon* the defining line between Hammett's early and later work. In this novel, Hammett achieved a remarkable hardboiled novel, and the two novels that he wrote after it *The Glass Key* and *The Thin Man* employ different dynamics especially in relation to gender.

^{xxv} David Herman (1994) argues that androgyny lessens in Hammett's later work: “Hammett's characterization of women does in fact undergo development, and that the absence of androgyny in the later works represent not an increased conservatism about gender, but rather an interpretive code according to which gender itself becomes multiple and complex” (p. 210).

^{xxvi} For more on the characterization of Hammett's detective, the Continental Op, see Day (1988), Wheat (1995) Whitley (1980).

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