# "Follow the Evidence"?

## Methods of Detection in American TV Detective Drama

**Mareike Jenner**

PhD Thesis

Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies

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**<u>Thesis Summary</u>**

This thesis deals with methods of detection i.e. the mode of investigation employed to catch a criminal in American detective dramas on television. It divides methods of detection into the categories of 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective'. 'Rational-scientific' methods of detection are linked to the literary tradition of Golden Age fiction and suggest an analytical distance to the crime. 'Irrational-subjective' methods are linked to a hard-boiled tradition and suggest (often emotional) 'closeness' to the victim, suspects or witnesses. Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, John Fiske and Jason Mittell, this thesis views genre as discourse. As such, television genre is viewed as always changing and intersecting with a variety of other discourses, for example, representing social and political debates, shifts within the television industry and mirroring ideologies of 'truth-finding'. It analyses methods of detection as a discourse internal to the genre, as a genre convention, as well as external to the genre i.e. as relating to discourses regarding social, political and industrial developments. It also explores how methods of detection, as an expression of ideologies of 'truth-finding', reveal how a specific series may be positioned in relationship to modern post-Enlightenment and postmodern discourses. A number of texts from different historical moments (*Dragnet* [NBC, 1951-1959], *Quincy, M.E.* [NBC, 1976-1983], *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* [CBS, 2000- ], *Hill Street Blues* [NBC, 1981-1987], *Twin Peaks* [ABC, 1990-1991] and *The Shield* [fX, 2002-2008]) are analysed as examples of how individual genre texts represent these shifts in attitudes towards 'truth-finding'. In a final step, this thesis analyses *The Wire* (HBO, 2002-2008) and *Dexter* (Showtime, 2006- ) as dramas that represent a more recent shift in the representation of ideologies of 'truth-finding' that may formulate 'alternative' methods of detection and a possible epistemological shift in postmodern culture.

## Acknowledgements

# "Follow the Evidence"?
# Methods of Detection in American TV Detective Drama

## Contents

# 1.  <u>Introduction</u>

This thesis deals with the history of American detective drama on television since the early 1950s, but it was originally motivated by one observation regarding the American television landscape in the early 2000s, in particular, the first months and years after 9/11: two of the most prolific, successful and talked about programmes, *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (CBS, 2000- ) and *24* (Fox, 2001-2010) seemed to express almost opposite views on how to investigate crime while also seeming to be equally relevant to contemporary cultural and political discourses. Of course, both dramas are set in different institutions and both series deal with different kinds of crimes (murder and international terrorism, respectively), and have different stylistic emphases and narrative structures. Yet, in those years after 9/11 few popular heroes (or anti-heroes) featured as commonly in political discourse as Jack Bauer (Kiefer Sutherland) and few programmes were invoked as regularly as *CSI* and *24* in order to describe escapist phantasies of 'safety'.[1]

What I find particularly fascinating about this is not the fact that popular culture ties in with contemporary socio-political and cultural discourses or helps to work through national traumata (or is referred to and feeds into political discourse), but the fact that both series seem to express so completely opposite views on *how* 'order' and 'security' can be restored (if it ever existed). In the case of *CSI* 'security' is provided through science, which supposedly can offer access to an 'objective' and unambiguous 'truth'. Meanwhile, *24* emphasises 'heroism' through one person who is 'brave' enough to go beyond the limitations the law sets for government agents investigating a crime, who uses mostly physical violence to catch terrorists and seems motivated by his own emotions rather than a mandate set by the institution he is part of. The *CSI* franchise and *24* are by no means the only dramas that express such widely differing views on what methods need to be

employed to achieve any kind of 'truth' (if such a thing can be found). *NCIS* (CBS, 2003- ), *Bones* (Fox, 2005- ), *Numb3rs* (CBS, 2005-2010), or *Criminal Minds* (CBS, 2005- ) are just a few examples that seem to follow similar themes and thought patterns as *CSI* in their investigations. Meanwhile, *24* may have had few immediate 'followers' that displayed a similar attitude towards the 'spectacle' of violence and explosions (also due to its unique visual style and narrative structure), but *The Shield* (fX, 2002-2008) can be counted as one of the dramas that expressed similar ideologies, let alone *24*'s influence on more recent dramas, such as *Homeland* (Showtime, 2011- ), *NCIS: Los Angeles* (CBS, 2009- ) or the re-make of *Hawaii Five-0* (CBS, 2010- ). At its most basic level, the tension seems to lie in the use of intellect vs. violence and analytical 'distance' vs. emotional 'closeness'. Terms such as 'objectivity' and 'truth' seem to be relevant to the more *CSI*-like dramas while 'gut feeling' and 'getting your hands dirty' (metaphorically or literally) are relevant for *24*'s side of the binary (or what appears to be a binary, as will be explored throughout this thesis).

Seen in this context, what exactly is the broader ideology articulated through this tension between these two forms of detection? What is its generic history? And is this tension really something that can be associated with post-9/11 drama or is it something that has dominated the genre since its inception? Is the parallel existence of both methods of detection in the early 2000s related to 9/11 or should it be viewed as linked to shifts within the television industry that were occurring around that time? The starting point for this project has been the link between post-9/11 detective narratives and the War on Terror, but even a cursory look at genre history reveals that the two modes of detection have been common to fictional investigations of crime since the late 1920s (at the latest) and the development of hard-boiled literature. Thus, this thesis quickly developed into an examination of methods of detection throughout the genre's history on American

television. If post-9/11 dramas' methods of detection can be read as part of a political discourse surrounding the War on Terror, then earlier texts may also be best understood in relation to political, cultural, or industrial discourses. Thus, this analysis links methods of detection with contemporary political events in order to explore possible connections between what modes of investigation are used. By exploring these links, this thesis will also unravel ways in which the genre and individual texts function within American culture and society.

The guiding question of this thesis, then, is: how does the method of detection, in other words, the way a criminal is caught, in American detective drama, engage with socio-political, philosophical and genre discourses of its time? Television, as a popular medium, inevitably mediates social and political debates: a genre dedicated to finding 'truth' and serving 'justice' is bound to tie in with discourses surrounding ideas or ideologies of 'truth-finding' and echo social and political concerns, not only relating to the criminal justice system, but also to cultural anxieties as a whole. The focus on methods of detection as a central feature of the genre also allows for a contemplation of narrative structures: since detective narratives tend to be structured through the methods that are used (after all, the process of detecting is the narratives' central concern). The mode of investigation is also linked with philosophical discourses regarding 'truth-finding' and the possibility (or impossibility) of restoring any kind of social 'order'. As such, it is deeply intertwined with the audio-visual aesthetics used in television dramas that tend to support notions of 'order' or 'chaos'. Genre study offers a framework to not only define which texts are to be the object of study and which are not, it also provides a frame of reference, an understanding of how specific codes and conventions are used, changed and, occasionally, subverted. Methods of detection are treated here as a generic feature, a code or convention central to the narrative. Seemingly, much more elusive than other features, such as character, plot

structures, or iconography, methods of detection are no less recognisable. As this thesis will attempt to reveal, methods of detection are not only linked with narrative structure, but they often are related to the moral codes detective characters subscribe to, as well as specific ideological and philosophical ideas. In other words, methods of detection help to identify what *kind* of detective drama we are watching. As such, they are central to the ways we can make sense of individual texts, but also of the genre as a whole.

Methods of detection are divided into three different categories throughout this thesis: 'rational-scientific', 'irrational-subjective' and 'alternative' methods of detection. As the most common modes of investigation 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' are broadly linked with the Golden Age and hard-boiled literary traditions, respectively. To put it simply, 'rational-scientific' methods of detection tend to imply analytical distance from a case while 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection suggest some sort of 'closeness', often emotional, with the case, or characters involved in the case (over-identification with victims, romantic or sexual engagement with suspects or witnesses). The category of 'alternative' methods of detection is understood as a different mode to access and attain knowledge, a way that can deconstruct any boundaries between 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection. As such, it is a somewhat difficult category that needs to be understood in a broader philosophical context i.e. as ways to find 'truth' about a specific event, usually a serious crime, to access and attain knowledge. Methods of detection are, therefore, understood in this thesis as representations of broader ideologies of 'truth-finding'. It becomes, thus, less relevant who murdered whom and how (or committed another serious crime), but rather what principles, thought patterns or modes of investigation lead to this knowledge? Methods of detection are understood here as representing specific ideologies of 'truth-finding' that are placed within specific epochal contexts, namely Enlightenment, modernism and postmodernity.

Yet, methods of detection need to be understood as broad and unstable categories. 'Irrational-subjective' is a category that includes a range of different methods to investigate, ranging from torture to dreams. It needs to be acknowledged that the kind of antagonism implied in physical violence (whether the – mostly male – detective gets beaten or tortured or uses violence himself) is different from the empathy implied when detectives communicate with spirits, (over-)identify with murder victims or fall in love with suspects. Similarly, in the case of 'rational-scientific' methods of detection, the application of rational thought patterns and scientific methodologies may be read as significantly different from each other. While fully acknowledging this distinction, this thesis still summarises these varying methods under the terms 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective'. This is due to the ideologies of 'truth-finding' that frame the methods of detection. In other words, whether violence is used or detectives share dreams with the victim, what underlies these methods of detection is still a broadly postmodern world view that presumes a chaotic, pluralistic, fragmented society. Similarly, 'rational-scientific' methods of detection are associated with post-Enlightenment modern thought that views the world as 'orderable'. Yet, there remain problems in understanding these methods of detection as binary oppositions. Despite the fact that attempts to resolve the tension and develop 'alternative' methods of detection only happen (in the view of this thesis) in recent dramas, there is a long tradition of pitting different approaches against each other (see Chapter 8). While series like *Bones* often suggests a 'union' of both approaches, one usually 'wins', in other words, proves to be superior.

There seems to be surprisingly little consensus in definitions of the detective genre, despite the fact that it is so dominant within the popular imagination and in literature, film and television.[2] A major problem in defining the detective genre appears to be its relationship with the crime genre. For the purposes of this discussion crime genre is used as an

umbrella term which accommodates a number of sub-genres that feature crime as a central concern (such as the gangster genre, the serial killer genre, or the detective genre). The complexities and problems that arise in the definition and study of the genre will be discussed in Chapter 2. However, genre is not merely a matter of definition and theoretical analysis of any genre needs to be clear about its theoretical context: this framework will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3. This thesis' understanding of the detective genre and its analysis of methods of detection is guided by Jason Mittell's (2004: 1-28) understanding of television genre as discourse, drawing on Michel Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (2002: 23-78) and John Fiske's *Media Matters* (1994: 1-19), as will be described in detail in Chapter 3. In this context, TV dramas are considered to be 'speech acts' in a discourse of genre, industrial and political discourses and within a discourse surrounding ideologies of 'truth-finding'. The discourse analysis conducted here relies heavily on Foucault's work, where discourse tends to be understood as a framework where meaning is produced through culturally and historically specific contexts:

> The question posed by language analysis of some discursive fact or other is always: according to what rules has a particular statement been made, and consequently according to what rules could other similar statements be made? The description of the events of discourse poses quite a different question: how is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another. […In the analysis of a discursive field] we must grasp the statement in the exact specificity of its occurrence; determine its conditions of existence, fix at least its limits, establish its correlations with other statements that may be connected with it, and show what other forms of statement it excludes […]; we must show why it could not be other than it was, in what respect it is exclusive of any other, how it assumes, in the midst of others and in relation to them, a place that no other could occupy (Foucault 2002: 30-31).

Genre, then, allows a framework within which these 'rules' are established. The conceptualization of the detective genre as discourse helps illuminate how methods of detection are used here to understand how the individual texts function within a broader context of internal genre discourses, but also external to generic concerns as expressions of epochal, but also contemporary political ideologies or within an industrial landscape of

television production. Texts can draw and comment on specific aesthetic or narrative conventions while, at the same time, reacting to contemporary political events. For example, *Quincy M.E.* (NBC, 1976-1983) employs a relatively 'traditional' narrative structure (or the 'whodunit' structure as discussed in Chapter 2, 4 and 5). While offering a forensic scientist as central character and investigator was an innovation for the genre, the reliance on scientific analysis of evidence by a skilled and dedicated scientist is familiar to the genre since the days Sherlock Holmes investigated different kinds of cigar ash. While, thus, using relatively familiar tropes, the series also seems highly relevant to contemporary debates surrounding political conspiracy and transparency. The series frequently hints at the Watergate scandal, by featuring themes of conspiracy and crimes covered up by a 'political elite'. The main character is often accused of being paranoid and buying into 'conspiracy theories' that are dismissed as fiction by other characters (but prove to be accurate). These connections will be explored further in Chapter 5 in the case study on *Quincy M.E.*, but the series works well as an example of how an individual text is understood here as necessarily part of many different discourses, only a few of which are linked to genre. Yet, the genre discourses help establish a context in which texts can be historicized and evaluated in relation to the way they incorporate, innovate or react against established narrative and aesthetic conventions, possibly even conventions that frame political commentary. 'Realism', a concept that can merely be touched upon in this thesis, due to its limited relevance to methods of detection where it mostly functions as a signifier for a 'chaotic' world, may be such a concept (in particular as criticism often tends to refer to it as a judgement of 'quality').

A field that is excluded from this thesis – despite the fact that the methodology could easily accommodate it, even suggests it (see Chapter 3) – is the role of audiences in the conceptualisation of genre. This thesis focusses on the text and its generic and socio-

political themes. The exclusion of the role of audiences in the genre discourse pertaining to methods of detection is partly due to a necessary limitation of the discourses that can be analysed in this thesis. Furthermore, this thesis views a more text-based approach to the detective genre and, in particular, methods of detection, as more productive than an audience or reception studies approach. This is due to the fact that methods of detection are textual features that are largely under-researched and their role in the structure of the text and in relation to social context is viewed as more pertinent, here.

In order to analyse methods of detection, this thesis will be structured as follows: Chapters 2 and 3 will clarify some of the parameters of this discussion. The second chapter will outline some of the problems that arise in the genre definition within academic explorations of the detective genre. It will clarify some concepts and outline in detail what is meant by the terms 'rational-scientific', 'irrational-subjective' and 'alternative' methods of detection. It will then explore how methods of detection have been treated in literature, film and television studies. Chapter 3 will outline the theoretical underpinnings that frame this analysis. It will focus on genre theory and outline how genre needs to be understood as discourse. It will then move on to describe how methods of detection are best understood within a context of epochal movements that shape ideologies of 'truth-finding' and the development of methodologies through which 'truth' can be accessed. While the two concepts discussed in Chapter 3 may seem disparate ideas, what links both is how they serve to frame the discussion surrounding concepts of 'truth-finding'.

Chapter 4 and 5 are dedicated to the textual and contextual analysis of 'rational-scientific' methods of detection in fiction. Chapter 4 will discuss literary ancestry in literature and the way prevalent social discourses have shaped the idea of 'rational-scientific' methods of detection and aesthetic and narrative conventions associated with it. *Dragnet* (NBC, 1951-

1959), *Quincy M.E.* and *CSI* (CBS, 2000- ) will serve as case studies in order to trace the development of American television dramas that employ 'rational-scientific' methods of detection. Each case study will place the representation of methods of detection in relation to internal genre discourses (in particular in terms of narrative structure and visual aesthetics), the methods of detection's links to ideologies of 'truth-finding' and external discourses concerning socio-political debates as well as industry concerns. These two chapters will show that 'rational-scientific' methods of detection can be linked with Enlightenment discourses surrounding concepts of how to access knowledge that were dominant in modern discourses on technological progress and science. The chapters will then explore how these ideologies of 'truth-finding' are re-negotiated in discourses of postmodern art, society and culture.

Chapter 6 and 7 will then go on to develop the concept of 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection in more depth. Chapter 6 will investigate its literary roots in hard-boiled novels and their translation into film noir, while Chapter 7 will explore the different ways 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection have been represented on television by looking at the TV dramas *Hill Street Blues* (NBC, 1981-1987), *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990-1991) and *The Shield* (fX, 2002-2008) in detail. This chapter will also explore links between 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection and increasingly complex narrative structures.[3] This aspect may also be related to changes within the television industry (and a shift towards so-called 'Quality TV' in many respects led by cable channel HBO), thus, debates external to the genre discourse. However, shifts within the genre may also be viewed in the context of broader discourses surrounding 'truth' and 'truth-finding' in a postmodern society. Thus, 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection, experiments with narrative structures and postmodern attitudes towards 'truth' tend to be linked in many ways, a connection analysed in Chapter 6 and 7.

Chapter 4 and 6 serve to establish a context within the genre history in other media, literature and film, that helps contextualise the television dramas analysed in Chapters 5, 7 and 8. As such, they offer an understanding of how methods of detection are rooted in broader traditions of the detective genre that television drama still draws on. The works discussed here are re-positioned and viewed through the spectre of methods of detection, but the texts are explicitly understood in relation to the texts discussed in Chapters 5, 7 and 8.

Chapter 4 deals with two British texts, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes story 'A Case of Identity' and Agatha Christie's Miss Marple novel *The Body in the Library*. Considering that this thesis' focus is on American texts and an American socio-political context, these texts with their different national context do pose an exception. The reason these texts are considered here is due to their influence on the genre beyond British borders. While distinctively British texts, Conan Doyle's and Christie's fictional detectives have had an exceptional influence on how the genre and 'rational-scientific' methods of detection have developed internationally. First film adaptations of the Sherlock Holmes stories were produced as early as 1900 in America (*Sherlock Holmes Baffled*, Marvin, 1900). Agatha Christie, along with other British 'Golden Age' writers, has had a vast influence on the literary landscape, with 84 novels published in more than 300 million copies worldwide (Seesslen 2011: 37) and American writers like Dorothy L. Sayers copying the 'formula'. Thus, these texts can be argued to be transnational texts rather than exclusively British. As Kristina Busse and Louisa Ellen Stein argue in their introduction to the edited collection *Sherlock and Transmedia Fandom*:

> When the BBC premiered *Sherlock* [BBC, 2010- ], it re-envisioned a
> character who had been adapted and re-adapted in multiple media forms
> for over a century. One hundred and thirteen years earlier, Sir Arthur
> Conan Doyle introduced Sherlock Holmes in his first serial incarnation.
> The logical detective solving unsolvable crimes became a key archetypal

figure in the mystery and detective genres, spanning media and centuries. Innumerable adaptations have since crossed media and genre lines, from television to film, from professional novels to comics (Busse and Stein 2012: location 159).

Thus, the Holmes and Miss Marple texts are treated here as key texts in accessing and understanding 'rational-scientific' methods of detection. Despite being British texts, they have been influential in the way the genre has been developed in the US.

While 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection often seem to work as opposites, the most recent case studies in Chapter 5 and 7, *CSI* and *The Shield*, seem to express a similar wariness with postmodern concepts of 'truth-finding'. As opposed to each other as both dramas may appear – with *CSI*'s slick aesthetics and promise of 'truth' and *The Shield*'s grainy documentary-aesthetics and moral ambiguity – both seem to use as a starting point an almost desperate search for 'meaning' and moral 'guideline' or 'code'. As a response, *CSI* offers what could almost be construed as a 'return to modernity', or rather, modern ideals rooted in Enlightenment of an 'objective' truth that can be accessed if we have the 'right' methodology. *The Shield* completely dismisses such ideals by showing how easily the signs that are supposed to convey 'truth' – forensic evidence – can be planted or otherwise 'faked'. *The Shield* does not offer a solution, but depicts the consequences of a 'postmodern' world without – or with deconstructed – shared moral 'codes'. This thesis argues that there may be a possibility to develop an 'alternative' method of detection to resolve this tension. In order to explore this question, Chapter 8 analyses the two relatively recent dramas *The Wire* (HBO, 2002-2008) and *Dexter* (Showtime, 2006- ). Both draw on the contemporary notion of 'Quality TV' and take advantage of the possibilities the American television landscape offered in the first decade of the 2000s in a way that feeds into the representation of methods of detection. *The Wire* develops a narrative structure which includes many narrative strands with a

number of different themes, so that their connection to the 'whole' of the narrative may be one of the most complex structures to date. This complex narrative structure is intertwined with what concept of methods of detection is shown, in particular, since the drama tends to point towards the limitations of any investigation and any method of detection. The complex narrative seems to depict a world *too complex* to be grasped through either 'rational-scientific' or 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection. Meanwhile, in *Dexter*, they seem to *collapse* into one character who is criminal and investigator in one person and frequently has to investigate himself or other serial killers closely connected to him. Chapter 8 explores whether or not *The Wire* and *Dexter* manage to formulate an 'alternative' method of detection, a different way to access and attain 'truth' or if these dramas may 'just' be deconstructing a binary between 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection. Do they express similar anxieties as *CSI* or *The Shield* do and do they formulate 'new' concepts in an ever-changing political context?

This thesis, thus, aims to offer insight into the detective genre as constantly changing in correspondence with internal genre discourses as well as external, namely socio-political debates. Necessarily, many discourses that come to bear on individual texts as well as the genre as a whole (for example issues of 'realism' or 'quality') need to be marginalized in this discussion. Yet, I will argue that accessing the genre through methods of detection allows for a focussed analysis that, at the same time, offers insights into the socio-political and philosophical outlook of the genre as a whole at a specific historical moment as well as the individual text's function within the genre and in popular culture in general. Furthermore, by looking at methods of detection, this thesis aims to explore a central, overarching issue for the detective genre, the concept of 'truth-finding'. If we view the genre as a response to a cultural fascination with the solving of 'puzzles', an intellectual challenge, rather than a fascination with gore and violence (which often is not shown in a

way that evokes terror at the brutal act of murder), then concepts of how to access 'truth'

may also be key to the genre's popularity.

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[1] In fact, *CSI*'s spin-off *CSI: NY* (CBS, 2004-2013), makes the franchise's links to 9/11 abundantly clear, frequently making explicit references to the event (McCabe 2007: 168-171): team leader Mac (Gary Sinise) lost his wife in the 9/11 attacks.

[2] Of course, other media (such as radio and video gaming) also include the crime and detective genre. Yet, both are excluded from this discussion due to different uses of narrative structures and different aesthetic requirements of the media, but also a lack of literature on the function of genre within these media.

[3] Kathrin Rothemund defines narrative complexity by drawing attention to the following factors: a large number of storylines, variety in these storylines (both can be summarised under the term diversity), an emerging sense of connection between the different storylines (to a 'whole'), non-linearity, open-ness (polysemic meanings of the narration as intertextual and multi-platform storytelling) and contingency (Rothemund 2013: 55-78):

> Zunächst einmal ist ganz grundlegend die *Vielzahl* der zentralen Teile von Bedeutung. Diese Pluralität der Faktoren wird darüber hinaus durch die *Vielfalt* der jeweiligen Faktoren als polymorph und unterscheidbar ausgewisen. Diese beiden ersten Punkte stehen in engem Zusammenhang zueinander und sollen daher im Folgenden unter dem Überbegriff *Diversität* zusammengefasst werden. Weiterhin stellen die zwischen den Faktoren bestehenden oder sich entwickelnden *Verbindungen* einen zentralen Aspekt dar, der vor allem durch emergente Interaktionen vorangebracht wird. Mit Blick auf die Makrostruktur der seriellen Narration lassen sich dann die drei letzten Merkmale von Nichtlinearität, Offenheit und Kontingenzt ausweisen. *Nichlinearität* negiert klassische Kausalitätsverhältnisse ebenso wie lineare Raum- Zeitkonstruktionen. *Offenheit* der Narration verweist einerseits auf die Mehrdeutigkeit der Narration und andererseits auf intertextuelle und intermediale Wechselbeziehungen, wodurch Zuschauer zentral in die Erzählstrukturen eingebunden werden können. Durch *Kontingenz* werden schließlich Möglichkeitsräume thematisiert und die Potenzialität der Narration auch im Hinblick auf die Fiktionalität verhandelt (Rothemund 2013: 78, italics in the original).

My translation:

> First of all, it is the *plurality* of central parts that is of importance. This plurality of factors, due to its *variety*, is furthermore described as polymorph and distinct. These first two points are closely related and shall be summarised under the point *diversity*. Furthermore, the existing or developing connections between individual factors constitute a central aspect, which is driven predominantly by emerging interactions. In view of the macro-structure of serial narration the last three characteristics of non-linearity, openness and contingency can be designated. *Non-linearity* negates classic relationships of causality as well as constructions of time and space. *Openness* of the narration refers, on the one hand, to the ambiguity of narration and, on the other hand, to intertextual and inter-medial interrelations, through which audiences are centrally included into

the narrative structure. Through *contingency*, spaces of possibility are dealt with and the potential of narration also negotiated in view of its fictionality.

# 2. <u>Questions of Definitions</u>

Initially, the genre examined in this thesis was termed the crime genre. However, it quickly became apparent that, as a term that broadly encompasses all texts that focus on crime, this term is far too broad and ambiguous to be of help. Indeed, most approaches to the crime genre (whether in literature, film or television) appear to work with vague definitions. For literary critics like Stephen Knight (1980 and 2004), John Scaggs (2005) and Martin Priestman (1990 and 1998) or film critics like Kirsten Moana Thompson (2007), Thomas Leitch (2002) or Nicole Rafter (2000), a common denominator of the crime genre is the idea that a serious crime (or the appearance of one) lies at the centre of the narrative. This inclusive approach to genre has its advantages: it acknowledges the fluidity of any genre definition and can easily deal with generic hybrids like *Analyze This* (Ramis, 1999), which is arguably a gangster film and a comedy film. Yet, this very broad definition is complicated: for example, though both can easily be considered a 'crime film', at the centre of the narrative of *The Godfather* (Coppola, 1972) or *L.A. Confidential* (Hanson, 1997) there is not 'a crime', but the workings of a criminal organisation and conspiracy. Similarly, at the centre of the narrative of *Milk* (Van Sant, 2008) lies a murder and the film tries to reconstruct how it happened, but still, few people would describe it as belonging to the crime genre. In terms of plot structure, point-of-view, main characters, themes or iconography, these films also differ greatly from a film like *Lethal Weapon* (Donner, 1987), let alone a TV series like *Starsky and Hutch* (ABC, 1975-1979) or a novel like *Cop Hater* (Ed McBain, 1956), though all are arguably part of the crime genre. As such, the term crime genre often appears to be used either as an umbrella term or in order to describe one of its many sub-genres. For example, in an article on *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (CBS, 2000- ), Nichola Dobson summarises the crime genre as follows:

> I would suggest that dominant features of crime television include the following: i) the commission of a crime  and action surrounding it, often of a violent and dangerous nature; ii) a crime solving process entailing arrests, the questioning of witnesses and suspects, examining, chasing, prosecuting; iii) a narrative space – police station, detective's office, court, city; iv) the characterization of heroic cop/detective, clever sidekick, officious superior; and v) a resolution/outcome of the justice system (Dobson 2009: 77).

Dobson's definition, however, seems to fall victim to the confusion surrounding the term crime genre: her definition feels more like a definition of the police procedural, relying on institutional context (thus excluding private detectives like Sam Spade or Hercule Poirot) and depicting those investigating crime rather than criminals.

The most comprehensive works on the crime genre have arguably been produced in literature studies. The most inclusive, recent and up-to-date works are Stephen Knight's *Crime Fiction 1800-2000: Detection, Death, Diversity* (2004) and John Scaggs' *Crime Fiction* (2005). Both authors approach the genre by looking at it historically and ordering it into sub-genres. In this way, they offer an interesting account of social contexts that accompanied certain developments while also doing justice to the various forms the genre can take. The term 'crime fiction' serves as an umbrella term to unite different sub-genres like mystery and detective fiction, the hard-boiled mode, the police procedural, the crime thriller and postmodern crime fiction or historical crime fiction, at least partly linked to the heritage of Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* (1980).

Film criticism approaches the genre in a similar way. Only a few books on the 'crime film' are available, and for the purposes of this discussion, Nicole Rafter's *Shots in the Mirror: Crime Films and Society* (2000), Thomas Leitch's *Crime Films* (2002) and Kirsten Moana Thompson's *Crime Films: Investigating the Scene* (2007) are considered here as examples.[4] All divide the genre into a variety of sub-genres like the gangster film, film

noir, the private-eye film, the police film, the victim film, the unofficial detective film, the lawyer film, and so on. The problem is that in such a broad definition of the term genre, the 'crime film' becomes an almost meaningless category. *The Maltese Falcon* (Huston, 1941), for example, is both a film noir and a private eye film, but is it really in the same generic category as a lawyer film (in Leitch's terms) like *A Few Good Men* (Reiner, 1992) or even *Philadelphia* (Demme, 1993)? The German film theorist Georg Seesslen focusses on the detective genre as a sub-genre. He defines detective films as stories in which an enigma is solved by someone, not for financial or other gain, but because that person is fascinated by the problem (Seesslen 2011: 7).[5] While his definition may not be too precise (film noir private detectives tend to be very outspoken about their financial incentive), Seesslen's study shows that the detective genre works well as a sub-genre that is broad enough to include a large number of texts, but due to its reliance on the investigation and a detective character as dominant features excludes a number of films that may feature crime, but, for example, from the point of view of the criminal.

The major problem of this 'umbrella term' approach (common in literature and film studies), is that aspects that tie the various sub-genres together become marginalized: there is no real outline of what kind of crime needs to be the focus of a narrative to constitute a commonality. Is serial killing, political conspiracy, armed robbery or participation in Mafia crime really 'the same', in a sense that places them in the same generic category? Also, what kind of crime has to be committed and how does it need to be depicted to be a major uniting feature of a whole genre? In television studies, it appears to be more common to focus on one sub-genre or one specific aspect of representation.[6] A comprehensive account of the crime genre on television is given in an article by Steven D. Stark entitled 'Perry Mason meets Sonny Crockett: The History of Lawyers and the Police as Television Heroes', published in 1988 in the *University of Miami Law Review*. He specifically focuses

on the depiction of the American criminal justice system in the crime series; thus, offering an approach that already limits the scope of his analysis to television programmes that feature law enforcement or the legal system. Yet, he does not attempt a comprehensive genre definition. The focus on the legal system also excludes texts that feature 'unofficial' detectives, like *Charlie's Angels* (ABC, 1976-1981), *Hart to Hart* (ABC, 1979-1984), *Magnum, P.I.* (CBS, 1980-1988) or *Murder, She Wrote* (CBS, 1984-1996). In her book *Defining Women: Television and the Case of Cagney & Lacey*, Julie D'Acci also offers an overview of the genre on American TV, focussing on power struggles within the texts and racial as well as gendered issues represented by the dominance of white male leads (1994: 108-120). Jonathan Nichols-Pethick's *TV Cops: The Contemporary American Television Police Drama* (2012) examines the sub-genre in detail and offers a comprehensive account of the genre's function within industry developments, but only covers dramas from 1981 onwards and does little to define his own object of study explicitly.

It emerges, then, that the term crime genre proves too complex and inclusive to be considered as a whole, which may be the reason why some critics choose to focus on sub-genres of the crime genre (for example, Dove 1982, Seesslen 2011, Nichols-Pethick 2012) or individual texts (for example Feise 2005, Cohan 2008, Brunsdon 2010, Jermyn 2010, Lyons 2010, Kompare 2010, Sanders 2010) rather than explore how the genre can be defined or accessed in ways that are inclusive enough to conceptualize a number of different texts, but exclusive enough not to render the category too broad to be distinctive. This section will, therefore, lay out why it may be more productive to focus an analysis on the detective genre, as a sub-genre of the crime genre, offering a definition inclusive enough to include agents working outside government institutions, but exclusive enough not to include *all* texts that centre their narrative on a crime.

## 2.1. <u>Detective Fiction</u>

In order, then, to avoid dealing with a genre category as broad as the crime genre, this thesis will narrow the scope of its analysis to the detective genre. Thus, instead of a serious crime being at the centre of the narrative, it becomes more relevant that an official or unofficial agent of detection *investigates* the crime. An investigative process implies that a serious crime has been committed, but only texts that foreground the investigation (by making one or several detectives the main characters), are considered part of the detective genre. These texts usually also employ similar narrative strategies and themes. Secondly, the investigative process will be put at the centre of this analysis, the question of *how* a criminal is caught. This approach to the genre offers a different perspective on narrative structures, generic genealogy and socio-political contexts. This thesis argues that such an approach can be inclusive enough not to leave out major texts of the genre, but also exclusive enough not to become a meaninglessly broad category. In order to specify two major shapes the detective genre can take (that carry different meanings in terms of ideology, narrative and aesthetic structures or investigative processes), this chapter will move on to outline two sub-genres or 'branches' of the detective genre.

While methods of detection function as a productive way to order and access the detective genre (see below), it still needs to be further clarified what this genre actually is. One way to do this is to discuss two sub-genres of the detective genre, the *'genius' detective genre* and the *police procedural*. The reason why these two particular sub-genres are included here is not only because they include the majority of texts in the detective genre on television, but also because they signify two different traditions in narrative structure, thematic emphasis and ideological scope. One way to distinguish these two groupings could be to argue that one concerns official agents of detection (like policemen or women, FBI agents or other characters employed by the legal system and explicitly charged with

criminal investigations), while the other focuses on amateur, or at least private detectives. Yet, this thesis argues that this distinction may also be too simplistic: some policemen or women work more or less by themselves like *Columbo* (NBC, 1971-2003) or step out of the responsibilities required by their job like *Quincy M.E.* (NBC, 1976.1983), or – more common in film – even take a holiday in order to solve a crime as in *Beverly Hills Cop* (Brest, 1984). Thus, the 'genius' detective genre features one official or unofficial agent of detection who works alone or in a small team. The other version is the police procedural, featuring a large team of detectives, which still has an often paternal leader, but ultimately relies on a division of labour within the team. Thus, the detective genre here is to be considered as any kind of fiction where the narrative is predominantly concerned with the solution of an enigma by an official or unofficial agent. Police procedurals are part of this definition, but the emphasis on teamwork, institution and official procedure with the (implicit) goal of a conviction in court also means that the sub-genre is distinctively different from the 'genius' detective genre.

### 2.1.1. The 'Genius' Detective Genre

The 'genius' detective has far-reaching literary roots which influence the entire genre, especially in regards to methods of detection. Edgar Allan Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, first published in 1841, has traditionally been viewed as the first detective novel and his Auguste Dupin as the first 'genius' detective. The view of this thesis is admittedly Anglo-centric, but it can be argued that the detective genre is largely influenced by the way it was developed by other English-speaking authors after Poe, most notably Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie, whose best-known work centres around amateur detectives such as Sherlock Holmes and Miss Marple or retired professional detectives like Hercule Poirot or Tommy Beresford (accompanied by his wife Tuppence, whose deductive powers often seem superior to her husband's). While the 'genius' detective genre can be

set within the legal system, this is not necessary, whereas the police procedural is invariably set within some branch of the legal system charged with investigating crime (not necessarily the police force, it could also be the FBI, CIA, forensics lab, etc.). While often set within the legal system, 'genius' detectives can also be private agents like the literary heroes Sherlock Holmes, Miss Marple, Poirot or Lord Peter Wimsey and, later, Rick and A.J. Simon (Gerald McRaney and Jameson Parker) in *Simon & Simon* (CBS, 1981-1989), Magnum (Tom Selleck), Maddie Hayes (Cybill Shepherd) and David Addison (Bruce Willis) in *Moonlighting* (ABC, 1985-1989) or Jessica Fletcher (Angela Landsbury) in *Murder, She Wrote* (CBS, 1984-1996). When detectives operate as official agents, they mostly work alone or in teams of two and rarely seek contact with or help from other police officers. The solution of the crime is depicted as an individual effort by detectives like Columbo (Peter Falk), Quincy (Jack Klugman) or Detective Lt. Mike Stone (Karl Malden) and Inspector Steve Keller (Michael Douglas) in *The Streets of San Francisco* (ABC, 1972-1977), rather than the result of well-organized team work. They often go against rules set by the institution, which is celebrated as heroic (whereas such behaviour can be judged as selfish and putting the team in jeopardy in the police procedural). In the 'genius' detective series, the detective is only responsible for himself or herself and risks are often not even assessed in terms of whether legal punishment for the criminal can be achieved, but more in terms of physical harm the detective may come to (for example, if suspects threaten their lives), as in many hard-boiled detective novels like Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* (1929).

Despite the fact that a detective like Sherlock Holmes has a procedure in place to guarantee logical deduction, there is no 'official' guideline private detectives follow. Even though criminals are often handed over to the police for legal punishment, those detectives acting outside the legal system as private actors do not have to follow stringent police procedures.

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Especially in the case of private detectives, this is why they are hired in the first place, since the police have no (legal) means to accumulate enough evidence or enough resources to solve a seemingly 'minor' crime. Private detectives may not be able to get judges to sign a search warrant, but they can break into a suspect's house, since legal procedure is not their primary concern and they do not tend to be bothered if evidence collected that way is admissible in court (in its first season, *Castle* [ABC, 2009- ], which features a writer who works with the police as a consultant explicitly takes advantage of this with the police consultant breaking and entering while police detectives wait outside). In fact, 'genius' detectives often seem to express a distrust in the police procedure required by the legal system in a variety of ways (sometimes through explicit disdain, sometimes simply by accomplishing what the police cannot), even if they work inside the legal system (often through utter disregard of legal procedure, but also by working alone, more or less refusing to acknowledge the existence of other branches of the system).

The 'genius' detective works alone or with a few allies or friends, who support him or her, but due to their 'limited' intelligence can 'only' help solve a case. Examples of these friends or 'sidekicks' are Dr Watson (Sherlock Holmes), Captain Hastings (Poirot), Sam Fujiyama (Robert Ito, *Quincy M.E.*) or Sherona Fleming (Bitty Schram) and later Natalie Teeger (Traylor Howard, *Monk* [USA, 2002-2009]). Usually, 'genius' detectives also tend to have allies within the police force who can offer access to confidential information like former Commissioner of Scotland Yard, Henry Clithering (Miss Marple), Inspector Lestrade (Sherlock Holmes), Tom Polhaus (Sam Spade), and so on.

In terms of narrative, 'genius' detective series usually employ a three-act structure, reminiscent of the narrative structure of 'Golden-Age' fiction (as will also be discussed in Chapter 4):[7] in act one, a crime is committed and discovered, act two – usually the longest

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– deals with the investigation, and in act three, the murderer and how he or she 'done it' is revealed. Additionally, the narrative structure offers closure; especially when applied to TV series', in most episodes, the murderer is caught in the third act, thus 'order' is restored and the threat is removed from society (whether through legal persecution, suicide or because criminals are shot resisting arrest). This narrative structure does not allow for much character development or change in the lifestyle of the detectives: Miss Marple could not get married, or she would not be able to move as freely as she is in her un-changing state as 'spinster' and Monk could not be healed from his OCD, or he'd lose his perceptiveness (as explored in episode 03/09, "Mr Monk takes his Medicine"). Thus, these 'genius' detective narratives tend to be suitable for serialization in literature and television, since each instalment or episode offers one self-contained story. Readers or viewers may miss several episodes or instalments, but can still follow the narrative of each one. As Todorov puts it: "the whodunit par excellence is not the one which transgresses the rules of the genre, but the one which conforms to it" (Todorov 1977: 43).

### 2.1.2. <u>The Police Procedural</u>

The police traditionally have not had the most positive image in its literary incarnations. Amateur detectives like Miss Marple or Sherlock Holmes, but also American private detectives like Sam Spade or Philip Marlowe, usually prove to be, overall, better equipped to solve complicated crimes than the professional policemen and women they encounter. To a certain extent, it is the procedure employed by the police that renders official agents too inflexible to catch criminals who commit complex, 'out-of-the-ordinary' crimes. It is, thus, interesting to see that in television versions of the detective drama, the police procedural became the predominant sub-genre (in fact, in America the police procedural existed on radio and television before it was developed in literature). As George N. Dove points out, the hard-boiled novel offered a variety of characters of policemen, thus

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broadening the range from the respectful and honest, but not-quite-smart-enough officers Lestrade and Sir Henry Clithering, to authoritative bullies, friendly allies and corrupt policemen (Dove 1982: 26-46).

This change in the depiction also coincides with a generic shift in which American fiction becomes more dominant than its British incarnations: even though the police generally did not appear in a good light in most detective novels or the films based on the American hard-boiled novels, American detective television series still appear to be largely set within legal institutions.[8] As this suggests, the police procedural appears to be predominantly American in its roots, where it developed mainly within the media of radio and television. After the Second World War, hard-boiled literature lost its appeal in the US and the new sub-genre of the police procedural became popular on radio, TV and eventually in literature.[9] However, this move of the genre into government institutions also possibly reveals much about the ideological roots of the sub-genre as tied to Cold War anxieties.[10]

Formally, early police procedurals rely heavily on the 'whodunit' form of Golden Age fiction, which will be explored in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5 (Scaggs 2005: 91). The narrative structure is quite similar, consisting of three acts – discovery, investigation, revelation – and the detectives keep a rational distance. Yet, the sub-genre's emphasis on team work often also involves large ensemble casts and complex forms of narrative structure that seem to draw on the soap structure. As will become clearer in later analysis, there is a distinction to be made between narrative structures employed by 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' police procedurals. In fact, several police procedurals employing 'irrational-subjective' methods have proven to be ideal formats to experiment with narrative structure in television drama, like *Hill Street Blues* (NBC, 1981-1987),

*NYPD Blue* (ABC, 1993-2005), *The Shield* (fX, 2002-2008) or *The Wire* (HBO, 2002-2008).

John Scaggs defines the police procedural as "a type of fiction in which the actual methods and procedures of police work are central to the structure, themes and action" (Scaggs 2005: 91). The narrative is thus driven by the method of detection, which is clearly framed by and within legal institutions. The main characters are policemen and women who follow a strict protocol when investigating a crime. Depending on the historical point in time, emphasis on the various aspects of procedure shifts. For example, in *Dragnet* (NBC, 1951-1959), the questioning of witnesses is heavily emphasised by the text, while the crime scenes are sometimes not even shown. *CSI* focuses on the analysis of objects and substances found at the crime scene or the victim, often because of technology that makes it possible to show minute details, the inside of a human body or the high tech equipment that makes it easy to analyse mysterious substances. However, while advances in science and technology may shift emphasis or change some procedures to make them more elaborate, the questioning of witnesses, the analysis of the crime scene and the analysis of the victim (mostly in an autopsy, but if they are still alive possibly also in other ways i.e. did they look a certain way, behave in a certain way, etc.) could be seen as the three central elements of police procedure. Team work is emphasised; characters are trusted to do their job, often without immediate supervision. This can facilitate multiple storylines where, in each narrative, one small team of police officers solve a crime in every episode; thus, in some TV series, two or three cases are solved in each episode. However, this is not necessary for the police procedural. In plenty of police procedurals, the team only focuses on one crime per episode. The increasingly large casts also allow for the representation of a collective police force, which consists of individuals, but represents an institution. There may be dissent between the characters, but ultimately the police procedural reinforces the

legal system by focussing on the labour of those who work within the institution and promotes agency with the police.

Police procedures, team work and setting can be viewed as the central characteristics of this sub-genre. Police procedure as a way to guide the investigation becomes central to the narrative, due to these clearly defined methods, team work and division of labour is emphasised and all is set inside the legal system, usually in American cities (like Los Angeles, New York, Las Vegas, Miami, etc.) well-known for their status as somehow 'dangerous'.[11] Ideologically, the emphasis on the team often means a variety of characters from different social and economic backgrounds: Different opinions and world views are present within the team; often at least one character expresses quite anti-authoritarian views, though these views are rarely extreme. Examples of this could be the often conservative, even racist, views expressed by *Hill Street Blues* characters like officer Andy Renko (Charles Haid), countered by his African American liberal partner and friend, officer Bobby Hill (Michael Warren). Another example would be *Bones* (Fox, 2005- ) where left-wing character Dr Hodgins (T.J. Thyne) often voices common conspiracy theories, countered by FBI agent Sealey Booth (David Boreanaz) who used to work as a sniper for the US army; while not expressing conservative views, he opposes any ideas of conspiracy on the part of the US government.

According to Scaggs, "it is the inherent realism of the sub-genre of which this is a part that makes it the ideal vehicle for interrogating both the social order and the structures that support it" (Scaggs 2005: 97). The police procedural is often seen as more 'realistic' than other versions of the detective genre. This may be due to the fact that, for one thing, policemen and women are usually the first ones to be called in when a crime is committed and, financed through taxes, are charged with solving the crime by the state. Also, the

police tend to have vast resources at their disposal (at least compared to the resources most private actors can offer), in manpower as well as in state-run laboratories, coroners and scientists employed by the state to perform autopsies and DNA tests and analyse crime scenes. Amateur detectives, on the other hand, have to be hired by interested parties and, the more sophisticated and expensive technology and scientific tests get, are less likely to have (legal) access to resources, like the funds to perform tests privately, or even evidence found at the scene, let alone a body. The police procedural is also very much associated with documentary realism, because of its connection with 'real life' police procedures. Regarding the novel *Cop Hater* (1956), the first in Ed McBain's *87th Precinct*-series, Knight points to the detail reproduced in the sub-genre:

> In *Cop Hater* a pistol licence, a ballistic report, a prisoner's record card are reprinted in typescript facsimile and, with only a little less marked effect, McBain sets out in documentary form an autopsy report, a technical formula, a hair growth chart, a legal definition, a blood group analysis. This feature of presentation, in the context of weightily objective accounts of police work, strongly implies value in such technical, procedural approaches to crime (Knight 1980: 174-175).[12]

The sub-genre can provide reassurance in the institution. It usually suggests that police authority and the legal system are ultimately right and moral:

> Through a project of realism that presents the police as 'credible operatives against crime', the police procedural becomes a powerful weapon of reassurance in the arsenal of the dominant social order. The discipline and cooperation of the police force, it is implied, is just one part of a more general social discipline and cooperation whose aim is to identify and eradicate the threat of social disruption that crime represents (Scaggs 2005: 98).

This becomes especially obvious in the 1960s and 1970s versions of the genre, where the system's ability to change and respect constitutional rights is often emphasised. While the police procedural has been widely reproduced in all media forms, it is now possibly most prominent on television.

### 2.2.     <u>**Methods of Detection**</u>

While the division of the detective genre into the 'genius' detective genre and the police procedural offers a terminology in order to describe the different *kinds* of texts, they cannot offer a way (or far too many ways) to access and examine the genre critically. However, considering that the major uniting factor of the detective genre (and all its sub-genres) is the process of investigation, of detecting, it seems prudent to use this process of detection as an access point to analyse the genre. This is done here by looking at what is termed the methods of detection (rather than character construction or a perceived 'realism'). This thesis separates methods of detection into two major categories: 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' and then moves on to explore how viable a notion of 'alternative' methods of detection is. To provide a brief definition of both terms, 'rational-scientific' detection implies distance from the crime that is to be investigated, while irrational-subjective implies a 'closeness' to the crime.

In many detective narratives, the suggestion of such a distance is interpreted as a 'coldness' (emotional and aesthetically), sometimes even to the extent of mental illness (most obviously in *Monk*, but also in Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes texts). The narratives rarely contextualise crimes in a larger social context, be that the effects of crime on others or the question of how somebody becomes a criminal, but almost treats them as a 'mathematical' or otherwise quasi-scientific problem, seemingly 'closed off' from society. Stories usually provide narrative closure with the solution of a crime. While a strong link exists with the 'genius' detective sub-genre, mostly through literary traditions (as will be discussed in Chapter 4), 'rational-scientific' detection is just as common to the police procedural, due to the adaptation of scientific methods by the legal system. This method relies more on scientific proof or rational-analytic distance than on 'intuition' or emotions. The solution may still be brought about by 'luck' or 'coincidence', but the process of

detection is led by a rational distance from the crime and the characters involved. This rationality is not necessarily intertwined with science – though this is usual in the contemporary crime series. Yet, it may be based on exceptional perceptive powers and a 'scientific attitude' that does not jump to conclusions without positive proof.

Where 'rational-scientific' detection is mostly defined through distance between detective and case, 'irrational-subjective' detection is defined through 'closeness'. This can imply personal relationships between victim or suspects and detective, even the detective becoming a suspect. John Caughie, in his book on the British mini-series *Edge of Darkness* (BBC, 1985) conceptualizes the hero's methods through the emotional pain Ronald Craven (Bob Peck) feels in light of his daughter's murder, as follows:

> Emotional pain and the search for a logic which will make sense of it are held in suspension; not only is the personal political, but the political, driven by grief, is intensely and obsessively personal (Caughie 2007: 110).

Personal, emotional pain, as 'irrational-subjective' method of detection often serves as a way to access knowledge (in *Edge of Darkness* even some kind of metaphysical knowledge), but 'irrational-subjective' methods can also include physical pain that is inflicted on the detective, or sometimes by the detective (accessing knowledge through torture, for example). However, 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection also often involve 'spiritual' means like dreams, spirit possession, alien abduction or interaction with ghosts. Another aspect that can strongly influence 'irrational-subjective' detection is the reliance on 'hunches', or, to use another word, 'gut feeling', which is often followed by a search for proof that will be eligible in a court of law, but ultimately suggests that the detective instinctually 'knows' who the criminal is. While this also includes the religious approaches in crime stories before the detective story originated, a moment defined here with the publication of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* in 1841, the 'irrational-subjective' methods discussed in this thesis can often be understood as a

counter-reaction to an Enlightenment or modern discourse that privileges analytical distance over physical or metaphysical closeness to the object of study (see below). The 'irrational-subjective' methods are employed mainly in the hard-boiled mode which features violence performed and experienced by the detective. As Kirsten Moana Thompson summarises in relation to film noir detectives:

> …the private eye is always intimately (and physically) involved in the action. First, the detective is often suspected of murder by the police and is subject to their repeated interrogations, as well as to beatings from the criminals he meets along the way. […] Second, the detective may become sexually involved with women, but these alliances are temporary, for he must always resist the lure of the femme fatale who would otherwise prove deadly. […] In addition to physical trials and sexual temptation, the detective must also face and resist moral temptation (Thompson 2007: 53-54).

It is argued here that a method of detection, and the way it is contextualised and dealt with in the discourse of a particular programme, represents a specific view of the legal system, and with this, Western democracy and larger philosophical ideas or cultural attitudes towards 'truth', 'meaning' and ways to access it. For example, Michael Allen, in his introduction to *Reading CSI: Crime TV Under the Microscope*, points to a connection between the trust put in science on *CSI* and post-9/11 fears:

> Ultimately, in a vulnerable, permanently threatened (if you believe the scaremongerers headed by President George W. Bush) post-9/11 America, *CSI* offers certainty and unrelenting professionalism in the search for truth and justice. […] America currently needs reassuring, and the über-professional teams that head the three *CSI* shows are unrelenting in their investigation of the minutiae of criminal evidence (Allen 2007b: 8-9).

Thus, the method of detection is linked to discourses surrounding terrorism and how it can be dealt with. By viewing genre as discourse (see Chapter 3), a connection can be established between, *CSI* and *Quincy M.E.* (NBC, 1976-1983) and how the earlier series uses science to deal with post-Watergate-anxieties. Similarly, when looking at 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection, it could be asked what dramas like *The Mod Squad* (ABC, 1968-1973), *Miami Vice* (NBC, 1984-1989) and *The X-Files* (Fox, 1993-2002) have

in common with a drama like *24* (Fox, 2001-2010). As an approach to analyse texts, methods of detection can be productive in the way that they do not focus on character construction, but the way a 'truth' about the world can be accessed and attained: thus, a detective character like Kojak (Telly Salavas) can embody visual signifiers or the language of the hard-boiled detective, but employ clearly 'rational-scientific' methods. Of course, this means that a number of important aspects, like the genre's relationship with gender, race, class, heteronormativity, etc., become marginalized. However, the objective of this analysis is to reveal the genre's attitude towards 'truth', if and how it exists and 'found' through specific techniques, something represented through the way investigative processes are central to the genre in a way not possible in other genres.[13]

Considering that this thesis deals with binary structures, in particular the rational/emotional binary, the marginalisation of gender discourses may seem surprising. Yet, the genre poses an interesting conundrum when it comes to gender: largely due to Agatha Christie's influence (with heroines like Miss Marple or Tuppence Beresford) female detectives, in opposition to more 'traditional' constructions of femininity, are often 'rational-scientific' detectives. In fact, a major strength of these female detectives tends to be that they subvert expectations by revealing themselves as employing 'rational-scientific' methods. Meanwhile, it is hard-boiled literature where themes of masculinity are so prominent, where 'instinct' and 'hunches' are frequently employed to solve crimes. As Deborah Jermyn points out:

> …a number of the finer attributes we might admire or expect to find in a good detective are generally thought of in wider cultural terms as 'female'. An attention to detail; the capacity to listen and 'read' people; the ability to multitask as clues and leads amount; all of these characteristics are typically (though not unproblematically) culturally designated 'feminine'. (Jermyn 2010: 29)

In fact, in the US television tradition, few efforts have been made to construct 'irrational-subjective' heroines, with *Cagney & Lacey* (CBS, 1981-1988) and the American re-make of *The Killing* (AMC, 2011- ) being notable exceptions. Julie D'Acci fails to acknowledge this when she points out how *Cagney & Lacey* works as potentially 'disruptive' to what she terms the police show:

> It appears that the series undermined the gender-specific meanings of the Law produced in the conventional police genre. Two feminist women as police protagonists, as subjects of aggressive physical action, neither objectified nor aligned with a father/protector male cop, were seen as structurally transgressive. The bonding between them was seen as a harbinger of 'deviance' and disruption rather than as a sign of professional dedication to the Law (as it was with the male teams) (D'Acci 1994: 120).

Yet, while D'Acci acknowledges the series' subversion of the genre by introducing a 'buddy' movie dynamic between two women, she ignores the tension created by the two heroines' approach to detection: while subverting the history of the female detective who employs a 'rational-scientific' approach (see Chapter 4), both detectives' use of empathy and 'hunches' or 'instinct' is also in line with the way women are usually constructed as 'emotional'. As such, the detective genre is exceptional in the way gender binaries are frequently subverted by positioning female detectives on the 'rational' side of the binary and male detectives as 'emotional'. Of course, partly, this is related to a 'spectacle' or 'surprise effect' of showing that women who are presumed 'irrational' (in particular elderly middle-class women from villages rather than cities, as Christie's heroines) are actually capable of rational thought, even more so than policemen. Thus, debates surrounding how gender, 'rational-scientific', 'irrational-subjective' and 'alternative' methods of detection interlink prove to be too complex to be considered in detail, here.

In order to avoid the creation of 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection as binary opposites (with certain ideological implications attached), no matter how broad or loosely defined they may be, this thesis will also explore 'alternative'

methods of detection. These 'alternative' methods use the deconstruction of the binary

between methods of detection (and literary traditions attached to them) as a starting point

to possibly develop a somehow different way to access and attain 'truth'.

Fig. 1: How different television dramas can be categorized into 'rational-scientific', 'alternative' and 'irrational- subjective' methods of detection.

| 'Rational-Scientific' | 'Alternative' | 'Irrational-Subjective' |
|---|---|---|
| *Dragnet* (NBC, 1951-1959) | | *Peter Gunn* (NBC, 1958-1960, ABC 1960-1961) |
| *Ironside* (NBC, 1967-1975) | | |
| *McLoud* (NBC, 1970-1977) | | |
| | | *The Mod Squad* (ABC, 1968-1973) |
| *Kojak* (CBS, 1973-1978) | | *Hawaii Five-0* (CBS, 1968-1980) |
| *Quincy M.E.* (NBC, 1976-1983) | | *McMillan & Wife* (NBC, 1971-1977) |
| | | *Columbo* (NBC, 1971-1990) |
| | | *The Streets of San Francisco* (ABC, 1972-1977) |
| | | *Starsky and Hutch* (ABC, 1975-1979) |
| | | *Charlie's Angels* (ABC, 1976-1981) |
| | | *Hart to Hart* (ABC, 1979-1984) |
| | | *Magnum, P.I.* (CBS, 1980-1988) |
| | | *Hill Street Blues* (NBC, 1981-1987) |
| | | *Cagney & Lacey* (CBS, 1981-1988) |
| *Murder, She Wrote* (CBS, 1984-1996) | | *Knight Rider* (NBC, 1982-1986) |
| *Diagnosis Murder* (CBS, 1993-2001) | | *Remington Steele* (NBC, 1982-1987) |
| *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (CBS, 2000- ) | | *Scarecrow and Mrs. King* (CBS, 1983-1987) |
| *Crossing Jordan* (NBC, 2001-2007) | | *Miami Vice* (NBC, 1984-1989) |
| *Monk* (ABC, 2002-2009) | | *Moonlighting* (ABC, 1985-1989) |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Without a Trace* (CBS, 2002-2009) | | *21, Jump Street* (Fox, 1987-1991) |
| *CSI: Miami* (CBS, 2002-2012) | | *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990-1991) |
| *NCIS* (CBS, 2003- ) | | *Homicide: Life on the Street* (NBC, 1993-1999) |
| *CSI: NY* (CBS, 2004-2013) | *The Wire* (HBO, 2002-2008) | *NYPD Blue* (ABC, 1993-2005) |
| *Bones* (Fox, 2005- ) | | *The X-Files* (Fox, 1993-2002) |
| *The Closer* (TNT, 2005- ) | *Dexter* (Showtime, 2006- ) | *24* (Fox, 2001- 2010) |
| *Criminal Minds* (CBS, 2005- ) | | *The Shield* (fX, 2002-2008) |
| *Numb3rs* (CBS, 2005-2010) | *NCIS: Los Angeles* (CBS, 2009- ) | *Life* (NBC, 2007-2009) |
| *Psych* (NBC, 2006- ) | | *Hawaii Five-0* (CBS, 2010- ) |
| *A Town Called Eureka* (NBC, 2006- ) | | *The Killing* (AMC, 2011-2012) |
| *The Mentalist* (CBS, 2008- ) | | *Homeland* (Showtime, 2011- ) |
| *Lie to Me* (Fox, 2009-2011) | | |

### 2.2.1. <u>**'Rational-Scientific' Methods of Detection**</u>

The method of detection is rarely the focus of critical analysis of the genre in any media form. However, several analyses of the genre in academic work dealing with specific texts implicitly deal with the topic. This is particularly relevant in the analyses of texts that push a method of detection and thought processes to the forefront, for example, in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories where the title character explains them repeatedly or in *CSI*, where the methods becomes a major feature of the narrative and the aesthetic nature of the text (see Fig.1 for a list of television texts employing 'rational-scientific' methods of detection). Sherlock Holmes is generally an important reference point when considering 'rational-scientific' methods. Rational thought as a guiding principle in approaching crime is also increasingly mentioned in academic work focussing on the proliferation of texts dealing with forensic detection in the first decade of the 2000s or the more recent popularity of Sherlock Holmes adaptations, such as *Sherlock* (BBC, 2010 - ),

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*Sherlock Holmes* (Ritchie, 2009) or *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (Ritchie, 2011).

However, methods of detection are often discussed implicitly rather than being explored in

detail (as will be discussed in this section). This is surprising since the texts themselves

seem to put methods to the forefront through the visual emphasis on the science lab or

montages showing characters investigating crime scenes in *CSI*, a visualisation of the use

of technology and social networking in *Sherlock* or slowed down sequences that visualise

and narrate the detective's thought processes in *Sherlock Holmes*. In Kristina Busse's and

Louisa Ellen Stein's edited collection on *Sherlock* in 2012, several authors discuss the

aesthetics of the depiction of Sherlock's (Benedict Cumberbatch) thought processes:

Balaka Basu focusses on the series' struggle with apparently postmodern aesthetics and

hints at a connection with methods of detection:

> Sherlock's thought processes, as illustrated on our screens, purport to be
> unordered, but are still subject to the anti-pluralistic idea that only one
> interpretation fits the facts. The presentation of information flow is
> deceptively overwhelming, but only seemingly disunified; in reality, it is
> so streamlined that it includes almost no cultural 'white noise' that might
> work against the reactionary hierarchies that its cautiously selected
> elements subscribe to, whether unconsciously or not (Basu 2012: location
> 2817-2820).

She, thus, links the methods employed with the ideological scope and the kind of London

represented in the series. Others in the volume link the method of detection (and

particularly the aspect of archiving as part of the method of detection, as briefly described

in Chapter 4 and 5) with technological progress (Busse and Stein: location 171-177;

Kustritz and Kohnen: location 1216-1439; Pearson: location 2090-2301).


One significant example in the analysis of detective literature that focuses on methods of

detection more than other aspects of the genre is Ronald R. Thomas' *Detective Fiction and*

*the Rise of Forensic Science* (1999). However, he develops a discourse analysis in which

he relates legal-scientific achievements to crime fiction, thus not focussing on how the

detectives catch a criminal, but rather which scientific breakthroughs enable detectives to find a criminal. In *Victorian Detective Fiction and the Nature of Evidence* (2003), Lawrence Frank looks for specific instances where scientific hypotheses are explicitly mentioned in Victorian fiction and thus expose a specific philosophical attitude. One exceptional example when considering methods of detection is an edited collection by Umberto Eco and Thomas A. Seboek entitled *Dupin, Holmes, Peirce: The Sign of the Three.* (1988). What is exceptional about this book is that it is a collection of essays, often published in journals beforehand, focussing on Sherlock Holmes' and Auguste Dupin's methods of detection, most essays relating them to Charles S. Peirce's theory of abduction (a theory that will be explained further later on in this chapter). This collection is the only one with such a clear focus on detection. However, its theoretical scope, which mainly focuses on Peircean semiotics, is somewhat limited in the sense that few other approaches to the method of detection are considered. One exception is Carlo Ginzburg's article 'Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: clues and the Scientific Method' (1988 [1980]), in which he proposes a connection between the methods of art historian Giovanni Morelli, psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's fictional detective Sherlock Holmes through the concept of 'medical semiotics'. Another work that explicitly considers detection is Ellen Burton Harrington's article 'Nation, identity and the fascination with forensic science in Sherlock Holmes and *CSI*', published in 2007 in the *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, which draws a comparison between the texts via methods of detection, though focussing, in particular, on the role of 'rational-scientific' methods and national identity. Most genre overviews look at methods of detection in relation to Holmes, since these seem to be linked with considerations of narrative structure.

Possibly because Sir Arthur Conan Doyle highlights methods of detection in the Sherlock Holmes stories more than other texts (or because his detective character seeks to

distinguish himself through them, more so than most of Agatha Christie's characters do),

methods of detection tend to be mostly considered in relation to these texts. Stephen

Knight argues in *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction* (1980) as well as in *Crime Fiction,*

*1800-2000* (2004) that Sherlock Holmes' method is ultimately nothing more than

'common sense'. He argues that the solution of Holmes' cases rarely lies in his deductive

skills, but rather in his knowledge of the human condition:

> The contexts of medical science, the chemistry and the exhaustive knowledge of crime are only gestured at, and we are actually shown no more than a special rational process. […] Yet there is an illusion present, because the resolution of the mysteries often does not depend on the deduction itself, or not very much of it (Knight 1980:86).

Dennis Porter (1981: 225) seems more impressed with Holmes' method, likening it to the

work of academic researchers:

> Whether the task in hand is the decipherment of Linear B, the search for a cure of cancer, the interpretation of a sonnet, or the construction of a model representing the structure of the genetic code, it involves that well-known process of observation, inference, and the construction and testing of hypotheses which has been associated with the advancement of knowledge since Bacon (Porter 1981:225).

Knight points out that Conan Doyle frequently mis-identifies his detective's reasoning as

deduction:

> Doyle gives [the process of detection] the elevated name of 'deduction' and claims it is both highly scientific and also a means of ordering the confusing data of experience. Both of these claims are illusory. Firstly, if Holmes really were to find patterns in facts, he would be practicing 'induction': in reality he has knowledge of what certain phenomena *will* mean, and is practicing deduction, that is drawing from a set of existent theories to explain new events. Doyle's wish to protect old values, ideas and their social setting is innate to his hero's methodology. The dress of modern materialist science is used for conservative thinking, for a failure to face the real, disorderly experience of data (Knight 1980: 86, italics in the original).

Yet, Knight seems at a loss as how to name Holmes' method, basically asserting that the

detective *is* practicing deduction, but a less sophisticated or scientific version of it than

readers are led to believe.[14]

Jerold J. Abrams published two articles on abduction as method of detection in popular culture, one in the edited collection *James Bond and Philosophy* (2006: 157-171) and one in the collection *House and Philosophy: Everybody Lies* (2007) on how the famous spy and the title character from the TV series *House, M.D.* (Fox, 2004-2012) solve mysteries.[15] In his article on James Bond, he summarises the concepts of deduction, induction and abduction as follows:

> In the first form, deduction, we begin by assuming a rule, that all spies have aliases, *and* we also know (as a given) that this particular person is a spy. So, of course, it's just automatic that we know he has multiple aliases – for *that* is part of the very definition of a spy.
> With induction, by contrast, we begin with a sample, maybe one spy (or perhaps three or four… it doesn't really matter as long as it's not *all* of them), *and* a result of that sample, namely, that he has (or they have) multiple aliases. From here, we make a generalization: that is, we reason *beyond* our given sample to the idea that *all* spies have multiple aliases.
> Now, with *abduction*, in even further contrast, we reason from a rule and a result (although typically the result comes first) to a case – that is to say, we reason to whodunit. […] So, for example, let's say I know someone (but only vaguely) – and maybe I discover that he has multiple aliases. Naturally, I'm going to find this a little surprising. Immediately, my abductive gears are turning; it's not long before I guess that this guy might be a spy (Abrams 2006: 158-159, italics in the original).

Thus, abduction is a guess, conjecture, based on little data, easily wrong (though, of course, James Bond and other 'irrational-subjective' detectives who use this approach are rarely wrong). Peirce himself positions abduction as highly 'irrational':

> … retroduction [or abduction] goes upon the hope that there is sufficient affinity between the reasoner's mind and nature to render guessing not all together hopeless, provided each guess is checked by comparison with observation (Peirce 1929: 121, quoted in: Seboek and Umiker-Seboek 1983: 17).

While most 'rational-scientific' detectives (and scientists) will need to venture a guess to complete a hypothesis, this 'guess' is usually a highly educated one, based on a large amount of data (and often seemingly inane objects and traces that are turned into 'meaningful' data) and preceded by other hypotheses that have been falsified. Thus, where James Bond certainly uses abduction as an 'irrational-subjective' method, Dr House (Hugh

Laurie), a contemporary re-imagining of the Sherlock Holmes character, formulates hypotheses (in the beginning often based on an abductive process, but immediately falsified) based on data collected from various tests, and gained from the falsification of previous hypotheses. In D.E. Wittkower's edited collection *Mr Monk and Philosophy* (2010) on the TV series *Monk* (USA, 2002-2009), Nils Ch. Rauhut argues that Monk (Tony Shalhoub) follows the logic of falsification of hypotheses and elimination of witnesses, which eventually lead to an 'epiphany'. This 'epiphany' can easily be viewed as some sort of 'final guess' at the end of a deductive process, it describes a moment in which the detective suddenly manages to connect two (or more) pieces of information, which lead him to the discovery of the murderer. Yet, this epiphany is not 'irrational-subjective' abduction since the connection established is based on the gathering of data and deduction. While some aspects behind what Knight calls (in relation to Holmes) "scientific mumbo-jumbo" (2004: 57) may not withstand rigorous examination, the processes of detection are here understood as *representations of how 'truth' should be accessed*, through conjecture, science, or other means. This also strongly corresponds with narrative structure and the representation of the world viewed from a particular vantage point, which will be explored further in this thesis.

Other than this, methods of detection rarely get discussed in their own right. Scaggs remarks on Agatha Christie's Golden Age detectives Miss Marple and Hercule Poirot, "Their methods involve careful observation and common sense, and, in Miss Marple's case, a general abstraction of human nature from the particulars of the inhabitants of [her home village] St. Mary Mead" (Scaggs 2005: 42-43). Knight describes Poirot's method as deriving from a "domesticated epistemology" (1980:119), situating Christie's detectives in a realm in which 'female' knowledge of the private space is privileged over the public sphere.

A key text for 'rational-scientific' detection on television (and a highly influential text for police procedurals) is the radio and later television series *Dragnet*, which employs 'rational-scientific' detection (as will be explored in Chapter 5). As Jason Mittell (2004: 121-152) remarks, surprisingly little has been written on it. It is even more surprising that, despite an aesthetic style that emphasises the 'rational-scientific', supposedly 'objective' and matter-of-fact method of detection (so far that the parody *Dragnet* [Mankiewicz, 1987] starring Dan Aykroyd mostly focuses on it and its conservative implications), there appears to be no analysis of it.[16] While many critics remark on the main character Joe Friday's (Jack Webb) matter-of-fact tone and attitude towards detection, it does not tend to be explored in detail.

In literature, the police procedural also starts off as employing 'rational-scientific' methods of detection. Much like *Dragnet*, it is influenced by the 'whodunit' tradition and the hard-boiled detective novel. While the narrative structure is reminiscent of the 'whodunit', the detectives and the urban environment draw on the American tradition. Yet, the methods of detection are clearly 'rational-scientific'; the third person narrative mode suggests a distance between crime and detective: "The characteristic use of third-person narration in the procedural demonstrates this commitment at a narrative level, with the appearance of objectivity that the third-person narration creates" (Scaggs 2005: 93). Long passages, for example in Ed McBain's *Cop Hater* (1956), describe the work of the forensic specialists. George N. Dove, in *The Police Procedural* (1982) possibly dedicates more time and space to a discussion of methods used in the sub-genre than any other critic. However, Dove merely names different elements of police work rather than offering any in-depth analysis or using them to access the genre. He breaks down this protocol or procedure into a list of 17 individual methods, procedures and routines used in literary versions of the genre: Communication (among police officers), Crime-Prevention, Evidence, Files and

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Information (archiving), Forensic Medicine, Identifying Criminals (for example, through line-ups where witnesses identify them), Informants, Interrogation-Interview, Investigation (the accumulation of data on a crime), Laboratory and other Technologies, News Media, Security and Confidentiality (policemen and women are not supposed to discuss open cases with outsiders), Stakeouts, Tailing, Training (in the police academy), Vehicles, and Witnesses (Dove 1982: 56-67). While this list is certainly accurate, the procedures could also be broken down into broader categories: team work (communication, but also division of labour), science (analysis of the crime scene, the dead body in murder cases, possibly even the behaviour of suspects, witnesses and victims, use of archives to identify and compare DNA results, fingerprints, murder weapons, etc.) and witnesses (questioning and interrogation).

The 1960s saw a drop in the number of detective TV shows in the US, especially those depicting police work (Stark 1988: 249-259). This may be due to the fact that spy series like *Mission: Impossible* (CBS, 1966-1973), where a main objective is the prevention of a crime, not the investigation, were more prominent during the Cold War. On the other hand, Stark also links this to the social changes in America at the time, like the Civil Rights movement or the protests against the Vietnam War, which led to a more suspicious attitude towards state institutions. The lack of detective dramas might explain the lack of academic criticism on this particular era. However, it does not account for the lack of criticism on crime TV, especially police procedurals, of the 1970s, which saw the first airing of such iconic TV detectives as *Columbo*, *Quincy M.E.*, *Kojak* or *Starsky and Hutch*. Virtually no critical literature at all has been produced on the detective series of the 1960s and 1970s, apart from short mentions in general overviews of the genre. One exception is an essay on *Kojak* in *Action TV: Tough Guys, Smooth Operators and Foxy Chicks* (2001) by Paul Cobley, in which he looks at social-political issues surrounding the series, but methods of

detection are excluded from this discussion. Especially the lack of criticism on *Quincy M.E.* poses a particular problem for this thesis, since it is a very important example of rational-scientific modes of detection: the DVDs are even marketed with the slogan 'the original forensic detective' and in relation to *CSI*, *Quincy* is often considered as an important predecessor (see, for example, Turnbull 2007: 26). Yet, while the series is often mentioned in genre overviews or, in one rare case, as an example of the representation of forensic science in popular culture in Jeffrey M. Jentzen's *Death Investigation in America: Coroners, Medical Examiners and the Pursuit of Medical Certainty* (2009), television studies has largely ignored it.[17]

In film, the detective genre itself seems to be divided into sub-categories quite different from literature or television. An obvious example of this is film noir, which will be discussed in more detail in relation to 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection. Thomas Leitch discusses films that follow the 'whodunit' structure and focuses on what he calls 'Unofficial-Detective Films'. These films make up the majority of American films that employ the 'whodunit' structure and feature non-official agents of detection who wittingly or unwittingly enter into an investigation that often affects their personal lives to some extent:

> Because the hero is often forced to investigate the case by his or her own connection to it, the investigation is marked by intimate emotional involvement rather than aloof intellectual detachment. The mystery is not a puzzle to be solved or a game to be played but a menace to the detective or his or her own loved ones, and the casting of suspicion on one suspect after another calls into question the detective's previous, often long-standing relationships with them all. Suspicion thus functions not as an intellectual tease for a detective who has no personal stake […], but as an expression of paranoia (Leitch 2002: 182).

Thus, even though films like *Klute* (Pakula, 1971), *Kiss the Girls* (Fleder, 1997), its sequel *Along Came a Spider* (Tamahori, 2001), *Copycat* (Amiel, 1995), *The Bone Collector* (Noyce, 1999) or *Murder by Numbers* (Schroeder, 2002) can be considered examples of

'rational-scientific' detection, all the detectives face some sort of physical danger and heightened emotional involvement in the course of the film. Sometimes this is an 'obstacle' to overcome so that they can 'return' to their 'rational-scientific' status quo. Often, friends or colleagues turn out to be the ruthless killers, implying that the detectives need to view their friends or lovers from a distance to see the 'truth' about them and establish their 'genius'.

The emphasis on 'rational-scientific' means of detection, whether through the lens of psychology, behavioural science or forensic science, seems to refer back to developments of the detective genre in literature in the late 1980s and, particularly, the 1990s. These decades brought about a new version of 'rational-scientific' detection, emphasizing a particular aspect of modern science. Patricia Cornwell and Kathy Reichs are possibly the best-known authors producing literature featuring 'forensic detectives'. Patricia Cornwell's heroine, Kay Scarpetta, is chief medical examiner of Virginia and Kathy Reich's heroine Temperance Brennan is a forensic anthropologist, meaning that she examines human bones. Both authors' works are mainly discussed in relation to gender politics of forensic examination of a dead, often female, body.[18] This 'scientific gaze', which is traditionally male, suggests a distance to the crime and the dead body that allows for rational, 'objective' analysis, which eventually leads to the arrest of the murderer (see Palmer 2001: 54-56 and Priestman 1998: 32). On American television, science as a mode of investigation has become increasingly popular over the past decade, but the model of the female investigator with a 'scientific gaze' was previously adapted to British television with *Prime Suspect*. The series is known for featuring a strong, female heroine, but, as Deborah Jermyn points out, the series incorporates discoveries in the field of DNA research made in the 1980s and 1990s:

> [Writer/creator Lynda] La Plante was one of the first crime dramatists to respond to the new prominence of forensic science in crime investigation and to tap into popular curiosity about it. In the first series she dared to counterbalance the tension and conflict of the incident and interview rooms with occasional, unexpected and quietly observed diversions into the police labs, or sequences of forensic teams collecting evidence (Jermyn 2010: 81).

The series also shows unusually explicit images of the dead body on an autopsy table and detective Jane Tennison (Helen Mirren) exercising her 'scientific gaze' onto the female victims, signalling 'rational-scientific' distance to their murders as male colleagues have to turn away in the face of the pain inflicted on the bodies (Creeber 2004: 86-90; Jermyn 2010: 82-87).[19]

In 2000, the American network series *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* went further by making forensic scientists the main characters, thus foregrounding 'rational-scientific' methods of detection through both aesthetics and narrative. The series has become a huge ratings success and inspired a number of similar programmes, that have proven to be popular (according to viewing figures) in the first decade of the 2000s. Some of the more successful examples, apart from the *CSI* spin-offs *CSI: Miami* (CBS, 2002-2012) and *CSI: NY* (CBS, 2004-2013) are *Crossing Jordan* (NBC, 2001-2007), featuring a team of pathologists, *Bones* (Fox, 2005- ), featuring a forensic anthropologist as title character and her team of forensic specialists who work in close collaboration with the FBI and *NCIS* (CBS, 2003- ), set in the context of US Navy investigations. Other detective series' that promote a similar scientific attitude to crime are *Numb3rs* (CBS, 2005-2010), which features a mathematician who helps the FBI solve crimes, *Criminal Minds* (CBS, 2005- ), *The Mentalist* (CBS, 2008- ) and *Lie to Me* (Fox, 2009-2011), which all feature behavioural science as a mode of detection. Yet, academic criticism tends to be focussed on *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*. The academic criticism on the *CSI* franchise is vast and shows diverse approaches (as discussed below): apart from articles published in journals,

the main works written on the series are Steven Cohan's *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (2008), published in the BFI TV classics series and *Reading CSI: Crime TV Under the Microscope* (2007), edited by Michael Allen, Michele Byers and Val Marie Johnson's edited collection *The CSI Effect: Television, Crime and Governance* (2009) and *CSI* (2010) by Derek Kompare.

Both Cohan and Kompare discuss how science as an investigative mode is visually privileged in the series and how the narrative is heavily influenced by the series' belief in science as being able to reveal an objective 'truth'. By doing this, both discuss, even if only marginally, methods of detection, and Kompare, in particular, goes into much detail discussing how clues are visualised on-screen (2010: 15-22). Several critics analyse the representation of the dead body in *CSI*, often from a gendered perspective (see Weissmann 2009, Weissmann and Boyle 2007, Jermyn 2007, Tait 2006). What becomes particularly important in these discussions is the idea of a scientific, distancing gaze and the abject, which plays into notions of 'rational-scientific' detection, though this is not discussed explicitly (Weissmann 2007, Pierson 2010, Lury 2005: 44-56). While this scientific gaze suggests distance from the object that is being looked at, an element of objectification of the dead body and fetishization akin to pornography may remain. Another aspect of analysis of the visual, which is considered in most of these accounts, is the so-called '*CSI*-shot', computer-generated images that appear to show the inside of the human body (Panske 2007). Patrick West, in two articles, offers interesting analyses of the political implications of the gaze in *CSI: Miami* (2007 and 2008). Emphasizing the role of the dead body in the narrative and the imagery of the series and its position as a site that can provide clues, this work provides insights into specific stages of the investigation. Furthermore, it implicitly considers the aestheticization of clues in the series, which is particularly interesting in relation to its links with postmodernism, modernism and the Enlightenment

(see Chapter 3 and 5). As this already clarifies, the emphasis on the gaze is intertwined with the general 'look' of the series. Sue Turnbull (2007) views the series' style in relation to its generic history as neo-noir. This also plays heavily into the visual depiction of science and its role in the narrative, which Cohan analyses in detail (2008: 70-89). Possibly the most comprehensive study on how aesthetics and the detective narrative interact in *CSI* is offered by Jonathan Bignell in his chapter 'The Police Series' in *Close-Up 03* (2009: 52-62). He argues for an understanding of 'visual spectacle' as having a specific function in the broader narrative, with the *CSI*-shot and other supposedly fetishized images in *CSI* driving the narrative forward, offering clues and information relevant for the investigation. In a similar vein, Martha Gever (2005) offers a detailed account of how the aesthetics of the series and the visualisation of science relate to the content of the series, especially in regards to an ideology of science as providing an objective 'truth'.

There are plenty of detective series that employ 'rational-scientific' methods of detection. Since the early 2000s – and the international success of *CSI* should not be under-estimated in this context – methods of detection have been increasingly highlighted by texts. This thesis explores 'rational-scientific' methods of detection further in Chapter 4 and 5, discussing the generic, historical and ideological history of the concept as well as how it relates to specific socio-political discourses.

### 2.2.2. <u>'Irrational-Subjective' Methods of Detection</u>

Apart from very early works that can be broadly termed 'crime fiction' or 'detective fiction' that involve Divine intervention, hard-boiled fiction emerges as an important sub-genre featuring 'irrational-subjective' detection. Not only is the hard-boiled mode an important reference point in all detective fiction, it emerges as an important moment for methods of detection: the sub-genre consciously develops as a counter-reaction to the

'rational-scientific' detectives of the Golden Age rather than an extension of methods that rely on religious belief (see Fig.1 for a list of television texts employing 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection).

Hard-boiled fiction often involves a first-person narrator or, if it is a third-person narrator, the story is told from the point of view of the (male) detective, thus explaining his thought processes. This suggests 'closeness', not only between reader and character, but with the access offered to the characters' emotions, also between detective and case or investigated object or subject.[20] Even though the male hard-boiled detective is emotionally cut off from his surroundings, the method of detection is not led by 'rational-scientific' distance, but rather by an 'irrational-subjective' closeness to victims, suspects and other characters, though accompanied by a deep distrust in humanity as a whole. This can create characters uncomfortable with institutionalised forms of detection. Indeed, Porter (1981: 165-188) argues that the hard-boiled detective stands completely outside the 'establishment'. Yet, both the sub-genre and the medium of television have become increasingly comfortable with the depiction of dissenting opinions that question the institution of the police or highlight the limits of 'rational-scientific' police procedure, often through 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection. Though academic research on the hard-boiled novel has been extensive from a variety of approaches, methods of detection have never featured prominently.[21] This is not particularly surprising since the texts themselves do not highlight methods as much as, for example, Sherlock Holmes stories do: characters rarely state *how* they want to solve a case, sometimes they seem to stumble into an investigation apparently by accident. Thomas (1999: 257-290) argues that much of the Golden Age fiction reveals a rather sceptical attitude to forensic evidence and fingerprinting, but the hard-boiled mode is even more extreme: for example, in *The Maltese Falcon* (1929), Sam

Spade doesn't even want to see the crime scene where his partner was murdered, since he doesn't expect it to hold any useful clues.

Hard-boiled novels seem to be a particularly well suited to adapt to film, as the many critically acclaimed film adaptations, often films that fit into the category of film noir, show. The example of film noir also shows how categorizations into sub-genres that work for serialized literature and television are not necessarily appropriate for the medium of film, which mostly relies on 'one off' texts.[22] Film noir as (not unproblematic) genre category, or rather sub-genre, will be discussed in Chapter 6. Despite a large amount of academic literature and a variety of approaches to the genre, almost no attention is paid to methods of detection in film noir.[23] Yet, while the almost anti-rational stance of the main characters in films like John Huston's *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) is rarely discussed explicitly, its scepticism towards technology and scientific progress in a post-First World War (and later post-Second World War) world is often mentioned. Sarah Casey Benyahia implicitly acknowledges the vast influence film noir and 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection used in them have when she discusses investigative processes in crime films:

> The heroes of *Gone Baby Gone* [Affleck, 2007], *Zodiac* [Fincher, 2007] and *The Secret in Their Eyes* [*El Secreto de sus Ojos*, Campanella, 2009] all share an obsessive approach to the investigation which becomes all-consuming in their lives. […] In telling the story of the investigation, crime films create a structure which functions as a predictable narrative pattern for the spectator. This ingrained pattern then allows for the experimentation in form as well as the exploration of difficult and controversial themes. The figure of the investigator remains central to this structure, functioning as a moral guide with whom the spectator is closely aligned and understands the world through (Benyahia 2012: 98-100).

Yet, this kind of obsessive behaviour and narrative structure is mostly familiar from hard-boiled novels and, more importantly, detective narratives in cinema influenced by film noir. The investigator as moral 'guide' is reminiscent of Chandler's statement in 'The Simple Art of Murder' that hard-boiled detectives must be, "to use a rather weathered

phrase, a man of honor, by instinct, by inevitability, without thought of it, and certainly without saying it" (Chandler 1950). While she only offers a brief discussion of the topic, Benyahia identifies a dominant structure within the genre. While films such as *Memento* (Nolan, 2000) offer a 'play' with the conventions, it is difficult to think of detective films that manage to develop a different structure. Serialised television with its episodic structure tends to rely on significantly different structures.

Other than film noir and neo-noir films, such as *Chinatown* (Polanski, 1974) or *L.A. Confidential* (Hanson, 1997), many action films like *Tango and Cash* (Konchalovskiy, 1989) or the *Lethal Weapon* series (Donner, 1987-1998) could be considered detective films featuring 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection: they feature policemen who have to solve a crime, and their method of detection is led by violence and destruction. Another variation of the film version of 'irrational-subjective' detection is the cop film, most prominently *Dirty Harry* (Siegel, 1971). However, all these films are usually described with the term action film. Much of the literature on action cinema has been concerned with the depiction of the male body and the forms of masculinity constructed, as Richard Sparks (1996), Yvonne Tasker (1993) or Cynthia Fuchs (1993). Meanwhile, much of the criticism of police films (as Thomas Leitch terms it) such as *Dirty Harry* or *Cobra* (Cosmatos, 1986) deals with the detectives' relationship with the institution they work for (see Leitch 2002: 215-240). There is a lack in the critical debate of methods of detection, which may be due to the fact that, other than in fiction dealing with 'rational-scientific' methods of detection, the process of investigation itself is rarely dominant in the text. Especially in film, it is scenes of violence or destruction or the torture of the predominantly male body that dominate as spectacle. The plot is often fragmented and not all clues that could provide viewers with enough information to solve the enigma themselves are provided.

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Television has adapted some of the aesthetic features of film noir, for example, in *Dragnet*. Yet, one of the most important examples of television noirs is *Peter Gunn* (NBC 1958-1960, ABC, 1960-1961). Jeremy Butler states that:

> Blake Edwards, who created and produced *Peter Gunn*, had an established feature-film career when the show debuted – providing one explanation for the show's indisputable borrowing of noir visual style from cinema. Urban iconography […]; unusual low-angle shots, some of which reveal ceilings […]; night-for-night shooting […]; and angular, low-key compositions […] define the program's *mise-en-scène* and shot-on-film cinematography. And, unlike Sgt. Friday, Peter Gunn (Craig Stevens) is a *private* investigator who feels comfortable among the criminal element and is unashamed to use illegal methods to protect his clients (Butler 2010: 100, italics in the original).

While Gunn may be associated with his "friends in low places", as he puts it in "The Grudge" (02/17), he is usually positioned in opposition to criminals and helps to catch them. His link to police Lieutenant Jacoby (Herschel Bernardi), who appears in 102 out of 114 episodes is strong, Gunn's methods rarely break the law. Furthermore, while the main character is a detective, his investigations do not always involve the solution of an enigma, but, as later spy series like *Mission: Impossible* (CBS, 1966-1973) are concerned with the prevention of a crime rather than 'whodunit'. Thus, the solution is already provided in the beginning, the narrative is mostly concerned with some sort of visual 'spectacle' common to action series.[24] *Peter Gunn*'s influence in the arena of television detective series featuring 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection is under-explored in academic criticism.[25] In fact, academic criticism published on crime series' of the 1950s, the 1960s and 1970s is limited. An exception is Anna Gough-Yates essay on *Charlie's Angels* in *Action TV: Tough Guys, Smooth Operators and Foxy Chicks* (2001), though methods of detection are not explicitly discussed.

With the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies producing first works on TV programmes and Television Studies developing as a discipline, and the new possibilities of VCRs, the

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1980s saw more of a critical debate on television drama in academia. Yet, more often than not, specific programmes are discussed on their own rather than in their generic context, for example, focussing on their artistic or political merits. Examples of this in the detective genre are discussions on *Miami Vice* in a number of articles and book chapters as well as two recently published books (see below), *Hill Street Blues* which will be discussed in more detail later on, *Cagney & Lacey*, predominantly in Julie D'Acci's *Defining Women. Television and the Case of Cagney & Lacey* and *Hart to Hart* (ABC, 1979-1984) or *The A-Team* (NBC, 1983-1987) in John Fiske's *Television Culture* (1987). This lack of debate of generic context might also account for the negligence towards methods of detection within critical discussion of the genre.

The main critical approaches to 1980s television use postmodern theory, ideology and feminism as theoretical frameworks, though it should be noted that the categories race, class and gender are prevalent in most analyses. This is probably related to the influence of Cultural Studies in the analysis of popular culture in the development of television studies. However, the 1980s also saw a shift in the 'quality' of programming (as elusive a category as that is) which seems to have drawn a number of academics towards the medium. The early 1980s witnessed with *Hill Street Blues* (NBC, 1981-1987), a police procedural that generated a lot of criticism for its perceived 'high quality' and 'realism'. The series is usually analysed in terms of its production context, in relation to the production company MTM and creator Steven Bochco, who is also responsible for the later *NYPD Blue* (ABC, 1993-2005). Examples of this are Paul Kerr's article 'Drama at MTM: *Lou Grant* and *Hill Street Blues*' (1984) and an analysis of the series by Robert J. Thompson in his book *Television's Second Golden Age: From Hill Street Blues to E.R.* (1996). Caren J. Deming (1985) considers the narrative structure, but without considering methods of detection, while Michael J. Porter (1987) looks at different directing styles within the series and

David Barker discusses the 'realism' of the text by arguing for the use of the term 'verisimilitude' as a less value-laden alternative to 'realism' (1988). Jonathan Bignell discusses how much the aesthetics of the series play into a seemingly 'open' narrative structure (as will be discussed in Chapter 7) and frames the method of detection (Bignell 2009: 11-20).

The 1980s crime series that generated the most critical debate, still on-going with two books published in 2010 (Lyons 2010 and Sanders 2010), was *Miami Vice*. This is mainly due to its visual excess, glossy artificiality and bright colour scheme that seems to echo the critique of 'style over substance' (see Chapter 3) of postmodern arts discourse. In fact, most discussions of the series focus on visual style, which is often paralleled with music videos in the context of MTV's international success in the 1980s. It is Bignell's work on the police series that manages to bind together aesthetic properties and methods of detection while focussing on the way 'visual spectacle' drives the narrative (2009: 21-30). Most critics hint at a fragmented way of storytelling, Rutsky even draws a connection to hard-boiled crime literature. James Lyons, in his book *Miami Vice* (2010), argues that the series adheres to the 'standard' rules in plotting within 1-hour TV drama. Lyons also emphasises what is implied in most other analyses of the series: the predominant method of detection is undercover police investigation, which aligns the policemen with the villains, thus necessitates a strong engagement of the detectives with the criminals. While this thesis does not discuss *Miami Vice* as a case study, the literature on the series helps conceptualize undercover work as 'irrational-subjective' method of detection as will be briefly discussed in Chapter 7.

'Irrational-subjective' detection in the 1990s, in accordance with postmodern arts discourses, was developed and conceptualized in different directions: for the purposes of this thesis, the best examples are the detective dramas *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990-1991) and *The X-Files.* In fact, *Twin Peaks* is one of the first TV series that merited its own edited collection, David Lavery's *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to Twin Peaks* (1995). The collection offers various readings of the series, including feminist and psychoanalytic readings (George 1996 and Stevenson 1996). However, the academic criticism of *Twin Peaks* is very much focussed on the drama's seemingly postmodern characteristics. The series is often used as a case study to illustrate the characteristics of postmodern television, as in Jim Collins' article on 'Postmodernism and Television' (1992) or Allan Page's 'Post-modern Drama' (2001) in *The Television Genre Book*. Glen Creeber in *Serial Television: Big Drama on the Small Screen* (2004: 48-56) argues for an understanding of the series in relation to modernist arts discourses and also focusses on aesthetics rather than methods of detection. Robert J. Thompson (1996: 149-177) looks at industrial and marketing concerns, placing the series in a context of other 'Quality TV' dramas in the 1990s. Some more recent articles discuss the series and its influence in broader contexts of television and television studies like Booy (2010). David Lavery's, John Thorne's and Craig Miller's Kindle-published collection *Twin Peaks in the Rearview Mirror: Appraisals and Reappraisals of the Show that Was Supposed to Change TV* (2012) includes textual analyses of the series, mostly in relation to literature and David Lynch's authorship. Several articles hint at the methods of detection without exploring them in any depth (see Hague 1995, Telotte 1995, Page 2001, Nickerson 2012).

Despite being a generic hybrid, not easily understood when discussed only with the parameters of the detective genre, *The X-Files* is an interesting example when exploring methods of detection.[26] Patricia Feise's *Science – Sex – Gender in der Fernsehserie Akte X*

(*Science – Sex – Gender in the TV Series The X Files*, 2005) considers methods of detection in relation to gender, focussing on the way the 'rational-scientific' female lead is pitted against the 'irrational-subjective' male lead, a pattern often repeated in the detective genre, but rarely explored by academic criticism.

Another detective series that generated critical debate in the 1990s is *NYPD Blue* though there seems to be no analysis of methods of detection.[27] Academic criticism on TV drama featuring 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection after 2000, in particular in relation to 9/11 and Bush's War on Terror, is very much focussed on *24*. Several articles touch on methods of detection, but mostly debate moral issues attached to torture as a means to gain information. Thus, a book like *24 and Philosophy: The World According to Jack* (2008), edited by Jennifer Hart Weed, Richard Davis and Donald Weed includes two articles, Scott Calef's 'Living in a World of Suspicion: The Epistemology of Mistrust' and 'The Knowledge Game can be Torture' by R. Douglas Geivett, which deal, at least partly, with methods of detection in the series. Isabel Pinedo, in an article published in *Jump Cut* in 2010, compares the depiction of torture in *24* and *Battlestar Galactica* (Sci-Fi, 2004-2009) and goes into much detail on how torture serves as a method to gain information, thus a method of detection, especially in the former series with its 'ticking bomb' scenarios. Richard Miniter edited a collection called *Jack Bauer for President: Terrorism and Politics in 24* (2008), which relates the series to issues of real-life political debates, especially surrounding torture in the context of the War on Terror. *Reading 24: TV Against the Clock*, edited by Steven Peacock, is the only collection that also takes into account more explicitly televisual aspects of the series, like the split-screen aesthetics (Allen 2007a, Jermyn 2007b), the real-time mode of narrative (Furby 2007) and industrial concerns (Chamberlain and Ruston 2007). Nichols-Pethick (2012: 151-182) looks at versions of the 'truth' and, in the course of this, the ways to attain it in *CSI*, *The Shield* and *The Wire* and,

in reference to *The Shield* describes Vic Mackey's (Michael Chicklis) methods of beating a

suspect until he confesses as follows: "the methods to which the detectives resort to get a

confession from the suspect [which] point to the inadequacy of facts alone" (ibid: 169).

However, his focus on representations of 'truth' keeps him from any analysis of the

principles behind the methods of detection. In a similar vein, Douglas L. Howard, in

Nicholas Ray's edited collection *Interrogating The Shield* (2012), links Mackey's practice

of violence as interrogation technique with systems of power:

> For Mackey and his Strike Team […], power is demonstrated in its rawest
> form: physicality. Many of the Strike Team's interrogations turn on
> physical violence (or threat of it), a fact that appears to be necessitated by
> the brutality of Farmington streets and the character of the criminals
> themselves […] – and in the process the Constitution perhaps takes the
> greatest beating (Howard 2012: 107).

Howard, thus, points to the unavoidability (due to the world depicted in *The Shield*), of

ethical and legal issues at the centre of 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection in the

morally ambiguous world of the TV III era. The term TV III describes the digital era in

television history and encompasses the immense proliferation of channels and broadcasting

technology that has taken place since roughly the mid-90s. In such an environment,

concepts of 'branding' and the pushing of aesthetic and thematic boundaries has become

increasingly important for channels, franchises and individual programmes (see, for

example, Ritzer 2011: 8-26, Nichols-Pethick 2012: 164-166, or Johnson 2007: 6-20).


### 2.2.3.  Towards an 'Alternative' Method of Detection.

Despite this overall lack of criticism on methods of detection, it is worth looking at more

recent dramas that, as will be discussed in Chapter 8, break open previous notions of

accessing and attaining a 'truth'. How such an 'alternative' method of detection would be

constructed in a television narrative and whether it is possible to construct new ways of

finding 'truth' will be explored here. In light of an overall lack of critical evaluation of

methods of detection, it is hardly surprising that no such evaluation of those dramas with the potential to create an 'alternative' is available. The dramas considered in this thesis with this potential are *The Wire* and *Dexter* (see Fig.1 for a list of television texts employing 'alternative' methods of detection). They are also dramas that generated a large body of literature.

*The Wire* still generates a lot of contemporary criticism, often focussed on the social issues tackled in the narrative, how they relate to more philosophical concerns (often the power relations in neoliberal capitalism), and the complex narrative structure. What is often emphasised is the series 'otherness' from the 'low-culture' properties usually associated with the medium. With its emphasis on legal procedure, *The Wire* could seem like an example of 'rational-scientific' detection, on first sight. Yet, due to the complex narrative structure which provides an overview of many social spaces (schools, politics, the gangs involved in the drug trade, junkies, dock workers who help smuggle drugs into the country, etc.) that are somehow involved in or influenced by the drug trade, what becomes obvious is that the detectives can never grasp the 'whole truth' no matter how hard they try. This foregrounding of the *lack of* knowledge achieved through 'rational-scientific' methods, places the series in a tradition of hard-boiled or 'irrational-subjective' detection. However, the issue of detection in *The Wire* is more complex than 'just' a mixture of different modes of investigation. Jens Schröter's analysis of media practices of criminals and police comes close to acknowledging the complex linkages between surveillance and detection, but remains too descriptive to offer an in-depth analysis of the issue (Schröter 2012).

Apart from a number of (online) articles and book chapters (Rose 2008, Seiler 2008, Sheehan and Sweeney 2009, Bruun Vaage 2011, Mittell 2011), so far, two edited collections, *The Wire: Urban Decay and American Television* (2009) by Tiffany Potter and

C.W. Marshall and *The Wire: Race, Class and Genre* (2012) by Liam Kennedy and Stephen Shapiro, and one special issue of the online journal *darkmatter* has been published. Apart from Alasdair McMillan's 'Heroism, Institutions and the Police Procedural' (2009) which considers concepts of 'good' or 'natural' police within the text and a wider generic context and Tiffany Potter's and C.W. Marshall's investigation of the character Herc (Domenick Lombardozzi), which (somewhat surprisingly) identifies the character as the most 'effective' detective in the series (2009), methods of detection are not considered. Yet, as will be explored throughout this thesis, the process of investigation and narrative structure tend to be closely linked (in fact, methods of detection can serve to structure a narrative), and there is a range of academic work that considers the structure of *The Wire* like Mittell (2011), Nannicelli (2009), Klein (2009) or Johnson-Lewis (2009), though it does not tend to be linked with the police investigation.[28] Thus, what seems to be lacking is the criticism of surveillance as method of detection, which seems surprising since it appears to be one of the few series that is named after it (along with *Dragnet*).

Quite similarly, *Dexter* (Showtime, 2006- ) is hard to conceptualize in terms of methods of detection. This is due to the fact that binary oppositions between criminal and detective appear to collapse in the character of Dexter (Michael C. Hall). This not only complicates matters of methods of detection, but also of genre. The text has received academic attention across several fields, possibly due to its popularity, which may be linked to its peculiar marketing and broadcasting context of being shown on cable channel Showtime as well as network channel CBS (Green 2011: 24). The three edited collections on *Dexter* are Douglas L. Howard's *Dexter: Investigating Cutting Edge Television* (2010), Bella DePaulo's *The Psychology of Dexter* and Richard Greene's, George A. Reisch's and Rachel Robinson Greene's *Dexter and Philosophy* (2011). However, while *Dexter and Philosophy* includes some helpful considerations of morality, only Howard's collection

approaches the series from the perspective of film and television studies. It is also the only collection that includes an analysis from the point of view of broader generic discourses: James Francis, Jr. considers *Dexter* in relation to comedy in the serial killer genre, and Simon Brown and Stacey Abbott look at the influences from the horror sub-genre of the splatter film. Alison Peirce's essay is possibly the most relevant for this thesis: she considers the series in a broader context of film noir, but mentions how the series draws on the tradition of the Golden Age novels "where the smallest of apparently innocuous clues can lead to the resolution of the case" (Peirce 2010: 194). Other articles in the collection also hint at an understanding of methods of detection and genre, but do not explore the topic further. Michele Byers, in an article in the online journal *flow* (2006) and her article in Howard's collection draws comparisons between *Dexter* and *CSI*, but only hints at possible parallels in methods of detection.

## 2.3.    <u>**Conclusion**</u>

This chapter provided an overview of the ways the detective genre has previously been defined and how methods of detection have been evaluated in the past. In the course of this, the chapter managed to produce its own definitions of the detective genre and 'rational-scientific' as well as 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection and outlined how academic criticism may serve to conceptualize possible 'alternative' methods of detection as developed in recent TV dramas.

It needs to be acknowledged that clear lines between different genres and, more so, sub-genres are difficult to define and texts often combine different genre markers in order to develop 'new' approaches to detection. In particular, Chapter 8 on 'alternative' methods of detection shows how the mixing of different sub-generic discourses can deconstruct and complicate models of 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection.

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This seems to be tied up with debates surrounding contemporary 'Quality TV', which tend to incorporate ideas of 'innovation' of genre through generic hybridity. This 'innovation' also affects ways 'alternative' methods of detection can be developed: drawing on more than one genre or sub-genre can imply the 'mixing' of different approaches to 'truth-finding'. Chapter 8, in particular the case study on *Dexter*, considers how drawing on different sub-genres can help develop 'alternative' methods of detection.

As will be discussed throughout this thesis, these discourses of 'quality' appear to be tied up with concepts of a supposed 'transgression' of social norms (and the norms of television), achieved through the frequent use of explicit images of sex and violence as well as swearing (see, for example, Ritzer 2011: 26-53). Much of this is influenced by HBO's example of taking advantage of its status as premium cable channel that is not censored by the FCC:

> In a country seemingly becoming ever more sensitive to moral violations, and a broadcast network increasingly subject to nervous censors, subscription channel HBO with its original programming (introduced in 1997 with *Oz* [HBO, 1997-2003]) has a license to produce edgier drama. Doing things differently, setting itself against what is prohibited on network television, emerges as a crucial institutional strategy for HBO (Akass and McCabe 2007: 66).

Akass and McCabe go on to outline how many writers working for HBO claim that the company allows them more 'creative freedom' than network channels do. This often means freedom regarding the use of sex, violence and profanities, but also regarding the time writers are given to create new seasons (with *The Sopranos* given a record 18 month-hiatus between seasons), the freedom (and budget) to make sure a series has a specific 'look', or casting and general hiring.

Many writers, directors or cast members seem to have links with previous 'Quality TV' dramas: Robert J. Thompson outlines how, with what he calls the 'quality revolution' of

the 1980s, it was not uncommon for established film directors as Steven Spielberg, David Lynch or Michael Mann to create TV programmes, direct and write the pilot and a few episodes, thus setting the 'tone' of the series (Thompson 1996: 150-152). Other creative personnel often have experience working on 'quality' programmes: for example, David Lynch's co-author for *Twin Peaks*, Mark Frost, had already worked on *Hill Street Blues*. Series like *The Shield* often feature known cinema actors, such as Glenn Close, Forest Whitaker or Franka Potente, *Dexter*'s 'quality' status is partly indebted to actor Michael C. Hall's performance in *Six Feet Under* (HBO, 2001-2005) and criticism of *The Wire* often emphasises the authorship of David Simon and his links with *Homicide: Life on the Street* (NBC, 1993-1999). As such, writers, producers, directors and actors can function as signifiers of 'quality'.

Furthermore, 'quality' is often established through links with 'high art' rather than popular culture (see Feuer 2007: 146-157), a phenomenon the slogan "It's not TV. It's HBO" encompasses quite accurately: rather than being associated with a popular medium or popular culture, TV dramas such as *Six Feet Under* are aligned with art cinema or movements in art and literature like magic realism (see Lavery 2005: 19-33). In the 1980s, Pulitzer Price nominee Carol J. Oates compared *Hill Street Blues* to Charles Dickens' literature (as cited by Thomas 1996: 59).

As Oates' comments (or rather, Oates as commentator) also suggest, 'Quality TV' is defined through so-called 'quality demographics'. Ellen Seiter and Mary Jeanne Wilson describe 'quality demographics' as follows when discussing the production company MTM, which was in charge of producing *Hill Street Blues* (among other programmes):

> A quality demographic is young, affluent viewers, with money to spend, and with the cultural capital that translates into recognition by industry tastemakers with Emmys and other prestige awards. The label 'quality'

indicates audiences that would not otherwise want to be associated with the debased television form or the audiences that regularly watch it (Seiter and Wilson 2005: 140).

In a TV III environment, this can imply audiences with the financial means to subscribe to premium cable channels (such as HBO) and buy DVD box sets. Following HBO's success with its original programming in the late 1990s and early 2000s, many subscription and cable networks invested in original programming to attract viewers, for example by tackling social issues with *Queer as Folk* (Showtime 2000-2005), *The L Word* (Showtime, 2004-2009), *Battlestar Galactica* (Sci-Fi, 2004-2009) or *The Wire*, presumably to attract a liberal, well-educated, politically informed 'quality demographics'.

Yet, these discourses of what establishes 'quality' need to be viewed as fluid and historically specific. As Thompson argues in 2007:

> About 12 years ago, I defined 'quality TV' with a list of a dozen characteristics [see Thompson 1996: 13-16]. Now I can find a lot of shows on the air that exhibit all 12 characteristics but in the end, aren't really all that good. Also, I can find some spectacularly innovative programming […] that aggressively resists the category of 'quality TV' (Thompson 2007: xx).

This thesis does not view 'Quality TV' as a genre unto itself, but a term that summarises different discourses of how 'quality' can be established, such as generic hybridity, transgression of social norms, discourses of authorship and stardom where individuals involved in the production are already associated with 'quality', 'quality demographics', comparisons to 'high art' and media forms associated with it rather than popular culture, and social 'relevance'.

Yet, there also seem to be discourses that establish 'quality' that are specific to certain genres. More specific to the detective genre, 'quality', somewhat paradoxically, seems to be established through an 'accomplished' visual style and a supposed 'realism'. In terms of

visual style, this may relate back to the vast influence the visual style of film noir has had on audio-visual versions of the genre (as discussed in the case study on *Dragnet* in Chapter 5). While this thesis does not engage in depth with debates of what different versions of 'realism' exist and how far television can ever accurately reflect 'real life', 'realism' in reference to the detective genre is often used as a specific style, such as a documentary style, and a construction of a chaotic diegetic universe. Thus, it is often entwined with 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection that assume that the world is too chaotic to be 'ordered'. As such, dramas featuring 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection are also often linked with discourses of 'Quality TV'.

The following chapter will develop an idea of a discursive approach to genre and what will emerge is why the definitions of genre and methods of detection became a necessary tool in order to limit and precisely outline the specific discourses this study is concerned with. This thesis is particularly focussed on the detective genre and representations of methods of detection, ways to access and attain 'truth', within the genre. The definition of the detective genre as highlighting investigative processes over other textual features already implies why methods of detection are considered as important in this thesis, dictating its focus. Guiding questions for this thesis are how the methods employed in an investigation are represented by the texts and how does this tie in with socio-political discourses? These discourses external to the genre will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, along with an outline of a broader theory of genre which helps to frame the definitions provided in this chapter.

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[4] Thompson's book was published in the context of Wallflower's *Short Cuts* series; this has as its main purpose to give concise overviews of specific genres and, interestingly enough, also features Mark Bould's *Film Noir: From Berlin to Sin City* (2005), exclusively dedicated to noir cinema. Noir is viewed here as a sub-genre of the crime film rather than a genre unto

itself. This distinction will be discussed further in Chapter 6 in relation to the case study on *The Big Sleep* (Hawks, 1946).

[5]As Seesslen argues:

> In Detektivgeschichten geht es um Probleme, Rätsel, die gelöst werden, von einem, der vor allem das Interesse hat, das Problem zu lösen, weil es ihn fasziniert, nicht, weil er etwas davon hat (Seesslen 2011: 7).

My translation:

> Detective stories deal with problems, mysteries that are being solved by someone who is predominantly interested in solving the mystery because he is fascinated by it, not because he profits from it.

[6] A reason for this may be the breadth of material each television series already provides, thus justifying the impulse of critics to narrow down the object of study as far as possible.

[7] The term describes detective fiction produced largely in the UK and America between the First and Second World War. The best known and most influential author of these novels is Agatha Christie who continued writing Golden Age novels throughout the 1940s.

[8] This may be explained through 'Least Offensive Programming' strategies governing US television broadcasting until the late 1970s. 'Least Offensive Programming' was a strategy employed by the major US television networks. Instead of offering a programme as diverse as possible, the main guideline was not to offend audiences with images of extreme violence or nudity or narratives about controversial topics, such as abortion, or stories about criminals who escape punishment. In line with 'Least Offensive Programming', government institutions would be depicted in a positive light, meaning that criminals cannot escape (legal) punishment.

[9]The loss of popularity of hard-boiled fiction may be due to the moral ambiguity of the sub-genre, which, in light of the Holocaust was no longer acceptable.

[10] This also ties in with a specific political agenda, advocating respect and obedience towards government institutions, especially in light of Cold War anxieties about communist propaganda, though in its short history, the sub-genre has proven to be ideologically flexible, accommodating various political views and enduring many experiments with narrative structure. Even though the police procedural, in its beginnings, appears to be very reactionary in its obedience to state power and government institutions, in later stages it proves to be a sub-genre ideal for revealing flaws in the legal system and social structure. Police procedurals which often deal with social and legal injustice are, for example, *Hill Street Blues* (NBC, 1981-1987) or *The Shield* (fX, 2002-2008).

[11] Due to this thesis' emphasis on American versions of the genre, they are all American, though there are no limitations set on national borders: plenty of police procedurals are set in Paris, Stockholm, Venice, or other international cities. The American cities listed here are all racially and culturally diverse, with extreme differences between the rich and the poor, which tend to become particularly obvious within the relatively small space of the cities and (due to the nature of the genre) in their fictional representations erupt in violence. In addition to that, these cities have long histories of being associated with crime, often mafia or gang activity resulting in riots, murder and general social dis-order.

[12] While the sub-genre's relationship with 'realism' is an interesting and important aspect, it is too complex to be considered in detail in this study.

[13] Of course, this does not mean that other genres do not offer great examples of what 'truth' is and how it can be accessed and attained. In particular, science fiction and fantasy offer a number of examples that deal with such debates. However, the genre conventions, the ability to use metaphor as narrative tool, to introduce 'supernatural' creatures that represent a larger, universal idea of 'good', 'evil' and everything in-between, differ greatly from the tools at the disposal of detective narratives. Of course, there are generic hybrids like *The X-Files* (Fox,

1993-2002) or the later episodes of *Twin Peaks* that consciously discredit and parody 'rational-scientific' means in order to emphasise (meta)physical experience, employing genre conventions dominant in the detective genre.

[14] As Knight also points out, this somewhat less scientific and possibly less complicated form of deduction, dressed up as highly sophisticated thinking, also works to give readers a sense of being able to 'keep up': "an effective illusion allows the average reader to contact with the hero's method" (1980: 86). While Knight seems to make broad assumptions about the readership of Doyle's stories as well as their political affiliations and feelings towards social change, on a textual level, the texts are definitely designed openly enough to offer an invitation to readers to 'take part' in the process of detection.

[15] The James Bond novels and films are considered in this thesis as examples of 'irrational-subjective' detection and *House, M.D.*, while drawing on Sherlock Holmes, is more a medical drama than a detective drama, so the text is excluded from this analysis.

[16] What has been written on it is often concerned with the positioning of the series only within a generic context, or rather debating its influence on other genres, such as reality TV and docudramas (Hoffer and Nelson 1999, Baker 2003). R. Barton Palmer explores how *Dragnet* was influenced by film noir, noir-documentaries and semi-documentaries in ''The story you are about to see is true': *Dragnet,* Film Noir and Postwar Realism' (2008). Sue Turnbull, in her essay 'The Hook and the Look: *CSI* and the Aesthetics of the Television Crime Series' (2007) views the series in the context of the police procedural. Meanwhile, Jason Mittell, in his discussion of *Dragnet* in his book *Genre and Television*, offers a discussion of the generic roots that have a bearing on the formal construction of the series, as well as the production context and the predominant themes.

[17] This may be due to a variety of reasons: the series has not been available on DVD for long, television studies is often concerned with contemporary television and the 1960s and 1970s seem to be particularly neglected by the field, in particular, the textual analysis of these television dramas.

[18] An especially prominent example is the examination of the female victims of a serial killer by Kay Scarpetta in the first novel of the series, *Postmortem* (1990).

[19] Furthermore, Jane Tennison is actually capable of obtaining 'rational-scientific' distance, as opposed to her colleague DCI John Shefford (John Forgeham) who initially leads the investigation, who did sleep with the victim, tampers with evidence and becomes potential suspect himself. Thus, in the series, Tennison as 'rational-scientific' detective is 'better' than the 'irrational-subjective' male detectives surrounding her.

[20] This aspect is most pronounced in Otto Preminger's *Laura* (1944) in which the detective Mark McPherson develops an unusually close relationship with the assumed murder victim Laura Hunt (Gene Tierney).

[21] Much of the academic literature of hard-boiled fiction is concerned with ideological implications of the genre, like Stephen Knight's (1980: 135-167), Dennis Porter's (1981: 165-188) or Ernest Mandel's (1984: 22-39) Marxist approaches or Sean McCann's analysis that links the genre with various issues of American national identity and capitalism in *Gumshoe America: Hard-Boiled Crime Fiction and the Rise and Fall of New Deal Liberalism* (2000). While feminist criticism often looks at the *femme fatale* and the undeniable misogyny of the sub-genre, newer versions have provided the canon with a fair amount of female hard-boiled detectives, like Sara Paretsky's heroine V.I Warshawski, thus attempting to turn an originally anti-feminist sub-genre into a feminist one (Paradis 2001, Scaggs 2005: 77-84, Knight 2004: 162-181). Generally, the hard-boiled mode seems a suitable form to negotiate many social issues, as is particularly obvious in Andrew Pepper's analysis *The Contemporary Crime Novel: Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Class* (2000), in which he predominantly discusses authors like James Ellroy and his 'L.A. Quartet' (*Black Dahlia* (1987)*, The Big Nowhere* (1988), *L.A.*

*Confidential* (1990) and *White Jazz* (1992)), Paretsky's V.I. Warschawski series, which started in 1982 with *Indemnity Only*, or Walter Mosley's Easy Rawlins-series, which started with *Devil in a Blue Dress* in 1990. Cawelti (1977: 139-161) and Pyrhönen (1999: 228-257) both consider narrative structure of the hard-boiled novel, but do not go into any detail concerning methods of detection. The genre developed a distinctly different method of detection from the 'whodunit' form.

[22] This idea can be associated with the necessity for more character development in film, where serialized fiction often relies on relatively 'static' detective characters to allow readers or viewers to start engaging with a series independent of how many instalments preceded a particular novel, short story or episode of a TV series.

[23] There are a number of books on the genre, like Andrew Spicer's *Film Noir* (2002), Mark Bould's *Film Noir: From Berlin to Sin City* (2005), Andrew Dickos' *Street With No Name: A History of the Classic American Noir Film* (2002), James Naremore's *More Than Night: Film Noir and its Contexts* (1998), Frank Krutnik's *In a Lonely Street: Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity* (1991) and a total of four *Film Noir Reader*'s edited by Alain Silver and James Ursini, not to forget countless journal articles focussing on the many different aspects of noir cinema.

[24] The artistic accomplishment of the visual spectacle of *Peter Gunn* should not be underestimated: the episode "The Hunt" (02/21) features barely any dialogue for most of the episode and Peter Mancini's score may be one of the best known theme tunes in television history.

[25] Unfortunately, this thesis also will not focus on the series, mostly due to the fact that Gunn is often hired as an agent of protection rather than detection.

[26] *The X-Files* also generated a respectable body of academic criticism, including a collection of essays edited by David Lavery, Marla Cartwright and Angela Hague entitled *Deny all Knowledge: Reading The X Files* (1996). Authors like Simon Brown (2010) and Jimmie L. Reeves, Mark C. Rodgers and Michael Epstein (1996) consider the series more in context of its status as cult TV, while Susan J. Clerc (1996) points to the importance of online fandom for the series. Other analyses of the representation of gender are offered by Rhonda Wilcox and J.P. Williams (1996) and Lisa Parks (1996). Textual analyses, like Karen Backstein's (2004) article 'Flexing those Anthropological Muscles: *X-Files*, Cult TV, and the Representation of Race and Ethnicity' focus on how the series depicts the 'alien other' as an allegory for race.

[27] Much of the criticism is concerned with representations of the criminal justice system (Eschholz et al, 2004), violence (Soulliere 2003), race (Mastro 2000) or criminals (Siano 2008). Robert S. Hanczor (1997) discusses controversies surrounding the programme's use of sex, violence and obscene language through Stuart Hall's theoretical framework of articulation theory.

[28] Prominent issues discussed in the academic criticism on *The Wire* tend to focus on the relatively 'traditional' Cultural Studies approaches race (Gibb and Sabin 2009, Franklin 2009, Kahn-Harris 2009, McNeil 2009, Kelly 2009, Fraley 2009, Lucasi 2009), gender (Braxton Peterson 2009, Marshall 2009, Robbie 2009, Bruun Vaage 2011) and class, though these considerations tend to be intertwined with critiques of power relations in neoliberal capitalism and government institutions (Sheehan and Sweeney 2009, Read 2009, Lucasi 2009, Taylor 2009, Blum 2009, Fuggle 2009, Anderson 2009). Another critical issue that emerges as prominent in academic discussion as that of space, in this specific case the city of Baltimore, as discussed by Seiler 2008, Speidel 2009, Alff 2009 or Clandfield 2009.

# 3. <u>Methodology</u>

The previous chapter outlined a definition of the detective genre as the object of study and a way to access and make sense of the magnitude of the genre via methods of detection. This chapter aims to provide a methodological framework that explains how this thesis analyses genre. The approach employed is rooted in textual analysis and Foucauldian discourse analysis.[1] Thus, most genre analysis works on the basis of an *a priori* assumption of dominant features (or features emphasised by the text, for example, by highlighting murder investigations through narrative, dialogue and aesthetics), that a number of texts have in common. Other than genres that may be defined more through reception than textual properties (though the debate is, of course, on-going) such as 'cult TV' or 'Quality TV' (as disputed as their status as genre may be) or genres that are defined through specific moments of 'spectacle', such as musicals or torture porn films, the detective genre is 'united' through a large variety of text-based properties. These text-based properties are easily categorized into Douglas Pye's 'local conventions': plot, other structural features (like common binaries used in a genre, for example, legal vs. illegal, 'good' vs. 'bad', day vs. night), character, time and space, iconography and themes (Pye 1975: 33-34).

The text-based approach used in this study is highly influenced by the kind of discourse analysis proposed by John Fiske in *Media Matters* (1994: 1-19), in which the analysis of the text is put in relation to broader social or political discourses. Thus, the text functions as a representation of (and sometimes is used as such in media discourses) or an indicator for and mediator of broader social developments. Fiske focusses more on the power struggles the texts are part of rather than provide an analysis of the texts themselves. Yet, the texts and the way they represent certain issues are essential. In this thesis, the focus on genre discourses makes the texts even more central due to the fact that the genre discourse

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is understood as shaped by the texts themselves. Furthermore, the focus on the representation of methods of detection necessitates textual analysis in order to locate its role in broader discourses. This emphasis on text as object of study is explained further by John Corner when he argues that:

> 'Individual' meanings *are* created around media artefacts, and all meanings have to be *attributed* to artefacts by those who apprehend them. But meanings are attributed in response to powerful *signifiers*, whose job it is precisely to direct and organise meaning-making, to generate sense and significance and as far as possible to cue feelings too (Corner 1998: 101, italics in the original).

Thus, despite 'individual' readings by active audiences, textual analysis serves to 'read' or understand culture through the analysis of common cultural 'codes' or systems of signification (Corner 1998: 45-67; 76-107).

Genre functions as one of these broader systems that shape individual texts as well as a framework for interpretation. Thus, this chapter will move on to outline various text-based approaches to genre in order to achieve a fuller understanding of what it means to analyse a genre. It will then move on to discuss some problems with these approaches in order to then introduce Jason Mittell's conceptualization of genre as discourse. Since Mittell's approach is rooted in Foucauldian discourse analysis, it leaves the issue that the amount of intersecting discourses that have a bearing on the detective genre and individual genre texts is virtually limitless. In order to avoid this problem, this chapter will then move on to offer an outline of the discourses analysed in this thesis and the way these are linked with individual texts.

### 3.1.    Genre as Discourse

Genre theory has long traditions in literature, film and television studies as well as the social sciences which use the term to describe different forms of social action and ritual

(see, for example, Fairclough 2003: 63-119). Genre is a way of grouping texts according to specific characteristics. As Jane Feuer puts it:

> The term *genre* is simply the French word for type or kind. […] The very use of the term implies that works of literature, film and television programs can be categorized; they are not unique. Thus genre theory deals with the ways in which a work may be considered to belong to a class of related works. In many respects the closest analogy to this process would be taxonomy in the biological sciences (Feuer 1992: 138, italics in the original).

Similarly, John Frow, looking at different *systems of genre* within various forms of media (literature, painting, as well as other forms of communication like kinds of shops), points out that genres are:

> …not positive classes, defined only by their salient features, but are defined in relational terms which distinguish these features according to their place and function. […] We can identify a genre because we are on some level aware of other genres that it is not, and it is this relationship that is systemic (Frow 2005: 125).

This kind of approach to genre as systems that relate to each other, often defined through a system of inclusion and exclusion, goes far in explaining how many genres, including the detective genre, tend to be defined through an *a priori* understanding of what 'makes' a detective drama, since it emphasises the implicit knowledge of other genres. This is a useful suggestion since, as an example, romantic comedies usually do not feature microscopes or are set in forensics labs; they rarely feature a detective plot and are mostly set in the present. However, it is not particularly hard to imagine a romantic comedy like that. In fact, despite constantly deferring the union of the heterosexual couple due to its serial form, the TV series *Bones* (Fox, 2005- ) actually comes close to this kind of story. To help clarify such issues, the Russian formalist Roman Jakobson (1971) introduces the idea of the *dominant*, meaning that one structural element 'overrides' the other or is somehow 'more emphasised' by the text. For example, in *Bones*, images of human remains, reconstructions of gruesome murders and the question of 'whodunit' is more pertinent than the question whether Bones (Emily Deschanel) and Booth (David Boreanaz)

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will ever be united. In fact, the moment when they decide to enter in a monogamous relationship happens off-screen, during the summer hiatus between Seasons 6 and 7 and can be read as far less a moment of 'spectacle' than any dead body shown in the series. While these structuralist approaches to genre, meaning text-based approaches that seek to establish 'order' by identifying systems with which genre texts can be classified, offer ways to identify genre texts and their connections with each other, they offer little opportunity for critical analysis.

Another common approach to genre is historical analysis. Thomas Schatz argues, for example, for the idea of the *evolution* of (film) genre. By this he means that genres go through different stages that can be outlined and understood:

> Thus a form passes through an *experimental* stage, during which its conventions are isolated and established, a *classic* stage, in which the conventions reach their 'equilibrium' and are mutually understood by artist and audience, an age of *refinement*, during which certain formal and stylistic details embellish the form, and finally a *baroque* (or 'mannerist' or 'self-reflexive') stage, when the forms of embellishments are accented to the point where they themselves become the 'substance' or 'content' of the work (Schatz 1981: 37-38).

In their introduction to *Deny All Knowledge: Reading The X-Files* (1996a), David Lavery, Angela Hague and Marla Cartwright hypothesise as to whether this model can be applied to the development of a TV series. While this poses an interesting question, the authors unfortunately do not argue their point much further, which may suggest that such an approach to a specific TV drama ignores too many other viewpoints - the least of which being the actual generic context. Yet, this idea may prove helpful in understanding how one text, in particular postmodern television texts, may quite easily draw on different stages of genre development at the same time. Even when looking at TV genre from this angle, the assumption of a straightforward generic development does not account for certain important phenomena. For example, genres, in film, as well as television, tend to

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appear in cycles, and sometimes disappear for a long time in between (Maltby 2003: 74-83). Steve Neale attempts to explain this idea further in 'Westerns and Gangster Films since the 1970s', in which he tries to account for the emergence and re-emergence of those genres. Schatz's model also does not easily allow for generic hybrids or the development of sub-genres. Furthermore, looking only at film, it does not account for the changes within the genre due to a move to different media i.e. from literature to film to radio to television. Another problem is the question of what happens after the last stage. Does the genre 'die' or is it condemned to always stay in the *baroque* phase? Assuming that instead of a chronological order, genre jumps between different developmental stages, for example, with *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990-1991) representing the *baroque* mode of the 'whodunit' while the later *CSI* (CBS, 2000- ) – though often self-mockingly – represents the age of *refinement* in adding new features to the 'whodunit', Schatz's model actually does provide a rather useful framework in which to understand genre. Thus, while the *CSI* franchise and its strict serial form are connected to the formal structure of the 'whodunit', its attitude towards science could also connect it to the original Sherlock Holmes novels (see Chapters 4 and 5). At the same time, *The Shield* (fX, 2002-2008), *The Wire* (HBO, 2002-2008) and *24* (Fox, 2001-2010) incorporate aspects of the hard-boiled mode. When constructing their heroes and his/her urban environments and even the methods of detection, they represent an age of *refinement* rather than a *baroque* phase, a stage which is already occupied by *Twin Peaks* and *The X-Files* (Fox, 1993-2002), the latter one also being a generic hybrid between the sci-fi genre and the detective genre. Such an understanding appreciates the fluidity and, sometimes, non-linear development of genre.

Another way genre is historical is the way it reacts to influences external to the genre itself: it develops in accordance with social change and in the context of socio-political discourses. For example, the detective genre is subject to change in the course of certain

legal debates and changes, especially when they are set in state institutions: Joe Friday (Jack Webb) never had to inform a criminal of his or her right to remain silent, whereas 'reading the rights' or 'mirandizing' has become a staple of the genre since 1966, a fact that *Starsky and Hutch* (9 years after mirandizing was introduced) often draws attention to (with Starsky [Paul Michael Glaser] frequently forgetting the text he is supposed to recite every time he arrests a criminal).[2] Thus, when looking at genre history, the programmes themselves can never be viewed as entirely separate from the historical moment in which they were first made and broadcast, nor can changes in the genre be understood without linking them to wider socio-political forces.

In terms of context, it is important, therefore, not only to consider genre and texts in terms of socio-political or historical debates and events, but also in terms of industrial concerns. Feuer argues that in order to analyse genre, it is necessary to look at it as a dynamic process that is culturally constructed, not only in terms of textual characteristics, but also in light of industrial and cultural concerns:

> … [W]e have to take into account developments in the industry and in social and cultural history as well as developments more or less internal to the genre. These internal developments might be described as *intertextual*. That is, the sitcom develops by reacting to and against previous sitcoms. As the genre ages, it becomes richer by virtue of an increased range of intertexts that can be cited in each new sitcom (Feuer 1992: 151, italics in the original).

What this makes clear is that genre is dependent on internal as well as external changes.

Schatz (1981: 6) argues that genre functions as a method of communication between industry and audience. By employing concepts of genre, the industry produces something similar, but different to what has been popular in the past. For example, following the success of *CSI*, a detective series focussing on forensic science as a means to solve crimes, a number of detective dramas adapted the formula: one example of this is *Bones*, which

adapted structural features such as the laboratory setting, the 'work family' of scientists or gory visuals of dead bodies. However, *Bones* is also distinctively different in a number of ways: leadership is split between a decidedly non-maternal woman and a non-scientist male, one narrative focus is that they may be united in a romantic relationship, dead bodies are (as the title suggests) bones, thus they look different to those in *CSI*, the digitised *CSI*-shot is not used and instead of the police, the cast works for the FBI etc. Thus, both series are *alike*, but different from each other. In relation to literature, Alistair Fowler (1982: 37-53) uses Wittgenstein's( 1953: 30-32) concept of the idea of *family resemblances*, arguing that genre texts may *look alike*, but *act* differently. If genre is an act of communication between industry and audience, then the generic frame of reference allows audience members who liked *CSI* to see that *Bones* might be a show they are interested in watching, or, if they disliked the former series, to avoid the latter. Genre makes it possible for the industry to communicate what *kind* of text they are offering.

Jason Mittell makes explicit what is implicit in these conceptualizations of genre as *in flux*, influenced by external as well as internal developments and a form of communication between audience and industry: referring to Foucault, he introduces the idea of understanding and analysing genre as discursive formation or discursive cluster:

> By approaching genres as discursive practices, we must balance notions of genre as both active process and stable formation. Although genres are constantly in flux and under definitional negotiation, generic terms are still sufficiently salient that most people would agree on a similar working definition for any genre. Even if we cannot provide an essential definition of a genre's core identity, most of us still know a sitcom when we see one. Discourse theory offers a model of such stability in flux – genres work as *discursive clusters*, with certain definitions, interpretations, and evaluations coming together at any given time to suggest a coherent and clear genre. However, these clusters are contingent and transitory, shifting over time and taking on new definitions, meanings, and values within differing contexts. At any given time, a generic cluster functions as a stable cultural convenience, a shorthand label for a set of linked assumptions and categorized texts, yet these discourses (and associated texts) are bound to

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shift meanings and definitions as a genre's history transpires (Mittell 2004: 17, italics in the original).

Understanding genre as 'discursive cluster' means the employment of a somewhat elusive concept.[3] The way the terminology is understood here is influenced by Foucault as a way various speech acts and utterances formulate a network held together by a thematic relationship. This network overlaps and intersects with other networks or systems that all have a bearing on it. Influenced by Foucault, John Fiske understands discourse as a constant power struggle.[4] Discourse is understood as power struggle in two ways here: on the one hand, within the discursive cluster of genre that can relate to formal characteristics like narrative structure, references to literary predecessors or methods of detection. On the other hand, genre can be understood as part of power struggles within other discourses: the detective genre participates in discourses surrounding the legal system, modernist and postmodern art and subjectivity, or expresses attitudes towards 'truth'. As Mittell argues:

> By looking at genre as a contextual discursive process, we can situate genres within larger regimes of power and better understand their cultural operation. Since genres are systems of categorizations and differentiation, linking genre distinctions to other systems of difference can point to the workings of cultural power (Mittell 2004: 26).

Thus, the detective genre is understood and analysed in this thesis in the context of social and political developments in American society, the development of narrative structure in television fiction, changes in the television industry and, most importantly, attitudes towards accessing and attaining 'truth' about the world and their ideological implications.

While this conceptualization of genre accommodates a variety of different approaches to analyse and interrogate genre, it does not offer a way to define genre. Mittell proposes to look at ways genre is used as discursive practice by audiences, industry and text (as ways conventions are repeated and varied by the text). This thesis aims to analyse the detective drama by looking at individual texts from different stages of the genre's history on

television. This history is rooted in literary and film traditions, which will be outlined in Chapters 4 and 6. Through an understanding of this history, this thesis will provide an approach to understand the development of conventions and traditions texts react to or against. In the analysis of individual case studies, this thesis also aims to consider industrial, social and political discourses external to the genre that have a bearing on the individual texts and the genre discourse.

Mittell suggests that one of the major discourses to consider is how audiences conceptualise and make sense of genre (Mittell 2004: 13). This thesis' analysis largely excludes audience discourses of the detective genre. Partly, this is due to the necessity to clearly limit the number of discourses that can be analysed. Another, possibly more significant reason is that this thesis considers a more text-based approach to be particularly useful for the analysis of the detective genre. In particular, this is due to this thesis' interest in ideologies of 'truth-finding' rooted in socio-philosophical discourses rather than the individual viewer. Thus, the detective genre is viewed here as an example of a genre where texts tend to tie in with social discourses in a manner that is worth exploring further. Even Mittell uses *Dragnet* (NBC, 1951-1959) to analyse the role the individual texts play within a broader genre, but also a social discourse:

> Although I have argued against interpretation of genre texts as a mode of genre analysis, textual interpretations can play an important role in a larger project. Just as we might look at how various cultural practices circulate media meanings, from industrial memos to audience fan fiction, media texts themselves are clearly important sites where meanings are articulated and potentially activated into larger cultural circulation. […] Thus, in turning to *Dragnet*, I consider what meanings are activated by the text, but only in context – textual interpretations are not close analyses produced through a theoretical lens, but discussions of meanings that circulated within both the texts and contexts constituting *Dragnet*. For instance, *Dragnet* points toward the importance of structuralist interpretation, not embodying core dualities that are universally grounded in either American culture or the police genre, but as a specific activation of certain binary oppositions that had relevant historical meanings in 1950s America (Mittell 2004: 123).

Thus, an exclusion of audiences is not due the fact that they are considered unimportant, but, rather, a focus on socio-political context is considered to be more pertinent in the analysis of methods of detection and the detective genre.

The major problem of the discursive approach to genre is that the methodology itself barely manages to limit the amount of discourses analysed. Simply put, it does not stop and 'end points' to an analysis can sometimes seem arbitrary. Thus, it necessitates clear outlines of the object of study and the discourses discussed in this thesis. In relation to the internal discourse of methods of detection, what emerges is the prevalence of a variety of intersecting discourses internal as well as external to the genre. The internal discourses discussed in this thesis focus on narrative structure and aesthetics (thus excluding other concerns, such as issues of gender, construction of individual character or interpersonal relationships between characters). The focus on methods of detection also means that in cases of genre hybrids (such as *Dexter* or, to a certain extent, *The Wire*) the analytical emphasis is on storylines of detection. The external discourses considered here are those of socio-political developments that may have a bearing on the construction of popular culture artefacts, such as political tendencies and crisis points, prominent socio-political debates, economic conditions or power struggles between a (broadly termed) political left and a political right. Another external discourse is, where appropriate, significant changes in the television industry that influence the structures of television drama. Yet, the focus of this study is the texts in the individual case studies and their representation of methods of detection, thus, no in-depth analysis of these events can be undertaken. These discourses mostly function as socio-political reference points that influence the production of popular culture and, most importantly for this study, the representation of methods of detection.

What emerges as one discourse (or rather, another discursive cluster) that frames not only social, cultural, industrial and political discourses, but, most importantly for this study, discourses of subjectivity, 'truth-finding' and methods of detection are debates regarding the developments of the Enlightenment, modernism, postmodernism and the idea of 'new' developments in society, technology and philosophy. These have been named, for example, 'remodernism', 'digimodernism', 'post-postmodernism' or simply the death of postmodernism, though they are read here as epistemological shift within postmodernism rather than the beginning of a new epoch (or the end of an 'old' one).

### 3.2.    <u>Enlightenment, Modernism, Postmodernity, Post-Postmodernism, Remodernism?</u>

Apart from a number of industrial, social and political discourses that have a bearing on the individual texts, this thesis claims that the focus on methods of detection reveals broader social attitudes towards 'truth', or rather, 'truth-finding' that are strongly linked to discourses surrounding the Enlightenment, modernism, postmodernity and, in a final stage, possibly even an only emerging concept of a 'remodernism' (Childish and Thompson 1999), a 'digimodernism' (Kirby 2009) or a 'new modernism' – if such a thing exists. All of these concepts and the ideologies attached to them will be explored using concrete examples of texts and the way methods of detection are employed and represented. Yet, all of these epochs need to be viewed as 'unfinished projects' in regards to their philosophical discourses: the terms are highly contested and critics like Jürgen Habermas state that "the project of modernity has not yet been fulfilled" (Habermas 1981: 12) and describes how it is also a continuation of and counter-reaction to Enlightenment discourses surrounding reason. Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer follow similar ideas (though making a different argument) in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947) and postmodernity, as the term already suggests, can only be understood as highly related to modernism. These epochs are

viewed here as highly unstable philosophical, social and artistic debates, loosely understood as (often fragmented, incoherent) 'projects' that necessarily change, shift, remain unfinished, and are carried on into the next epoch without necessarily having reached a 'stable', 'unified' and 'fixed' state. They are used in this thesis to refer to specific attitudes towards 'truth-finding' linked to discourses to these epochal-philosophical tendencies, rather than as a fixed historical time frame or a 'finished' philosophical project. This section aims to very roughly outline an understanding of the epochs and their philosophical and ideological scopes, in particular in regards to 'truth-finding'. Of course, an outline as proposed here will inevitably be incomplete and fragmented, informed largely by the historical developments in the detective genre and methods of detection. Yet, from the analysis of methods of detection, epochal concerns emerge as a major theme and a way to link aesthetic, narrative, political, philosophical, ideological and genre discourses.

It has to be noted that this thesis views the detective genre as a post-Enlightenment phenomenon with all methods of detection implicitly reacting to the mantra of rational thought that emerged during this period. Before (and during) the Enlightenment, crime in literature used to be solved because perpetrators were taken by religious guilt or some sign of God would betray them. The Bible story of Cain and Abel could be viewed as the earliest crime or detective story, with God himself functioning as the detective and judge. He learns the truth because Abel's "blood is crying out to [him] from the ground" (Genesis 4:9-16).[5]

Put crudely, the Enlightenment was an attempt to understand the universe through rational means that later developed into scientific methodologies, as opposed to philosophical or theological approaches. The epoch was governed by a belief in the power of human reason

to change society and liberate humanity from the dogma of religious faith and mysticism (see Outram 1995: 2-3). Kant sees it as "man's emergence from self-incurred immaturity" (Kant 2009 [1784]: 1), thus reducing the pre-Enlightenment subject to the level of an immature child whose decisions are made by somebody else, not themselves. Even though an exact time frame for the Enlightenment is impossible to determine, its beginning is often seen as the publication of Descartes' *Discourse on the Method* in 1637. The French Revolution in 1789, the ensuing political instability of France and the following coronation of Napoleon Bonaparte as emperor can be seen as the end of the age of Enlightenment. A simplified definition of the epoch would read it as a:

> … desire for human affairs to be guided by rationality rather than by faith, superstition, or revelation; a belief in the power of human reason to change society and liberate the individual from the restraints of custom or arbitrary authority; all backed up by a world view increasingly validated by science rather than by religion or tradition (Outram 1995: 3).

However, as much as this definition grasps the important changes and discourses of the time, it is important to note that the Enlightenment, like any other epoch, ought to be seen as "a series of debates which necessarily took different shapes and forms in particular national and cultural contexts" (ibid.). Furthermore, while there may be a way to roughly limit the time frame for political or industrial developments, as a philosophical project many concepts linked with Enlightenment discourses are still prominent in contemporary debates, including issues of 'truth-finding' as will be explored throughout this thesis.

During the Enlightenment, the *Newgate Calendar* stories, crime stories published in the UK as pamphlets from 1773 onwards, can be seen as predecessors of the detective genre. However, at the time they were seen more in the context of the sensation novel or as a morality tale:

> There is no special agent of detection at all. […] Some of these evil-doers, mostly murderers, are transfixed by guilt in the process of their crime. More often the sense of guilt makes them act rashly afterwards, so drawing

attention to themselves and to crucial evidence, such as bloodstains or stolen evidence. The idea behind this is that the Christian conscience is suddenly awakened, the objective Christian pattern reasserts itself against the subjective criminal rejection of those values (Knight 1980: 11-12).

The post-Enlightenment detective does not rely on Divine intervention, but on his or her own reasoning skills. In fact, religion is largely removed from most detective stories.[6] The Enlightenment marks a development in which religious belief was replaced by a belief in science as an 'objective' entity that reveals the truth about the world. Especially building on Isaac Newton's theory of gravity and mathematics, 'natural philosophy' worked on finding God's natural order within nature. The opinion prevailed that there is a *language of nature* that can be read like a book if one could only decode the natural alphabet. The ability of science to understand the 'natural order' was highly contested, though, since many theories were considered to be too hard to prove. Science gradually developed its own methodologies and separated itself from theology and philosophy (Outram 1995: 47-62). Thus, it became possible for science to lose its religious motivation and generally to develop its own methodologies that began the separation of humanities and sciences, and established sciences as more 'objective' than philosophy or theology. This attitude is deeply intertwined with industrialization and created the environment the detectives operate in. More than anything, though, it is the trust in science to access the 'truth' about the world, the employment of rational thought as opposed to religion, superstition, prejudice or subjective impressions.

In *The Order of Things*, Foucault argues that the development of Enlightenment science and scientific methodologies changed how *all* knowledge is structured:

> Up to the end of the 18th century, in fact, life does not exist: only living beings. These beings form one class, or rather several classes, in the series of all things in the world; and if it is possible to speak of life it is only as of one character – in the taxonomic sense of that word – in the universal distribution of beings (Foucault 2009: 177).

In other words, Enlightenment science started to look at living beings as belonging to different subcategories: instead of classifying everything as living, taxonomy divided everything living into plants and animals, and then into more and more categories, species and sub-species. A new language of taxonomy, a new way of observing and ordering the world brought with it a new way of thinking that is still relevant today; especially to the rational detective who has to decide which 'species' evidence belongs to and how important it is to the investigation. The idea that a criminal leaves physical evidence that can prove the guilt or innocence of a person, and that witness statements may not always be reliable, is rooted in the new way of thinking brought about by Enlightenment's reliance on rational thought and scientific methodologies.

In the context of post-Enlightenment discourses surrounding reason and rationality, fictional detectives such as Sherlock Holmes can be read as the popular incarnation of an Enlightened 'truth seeker', an individual who sets out to understand the world around him through seemingly 'scientific' and 'rational' methods of deduction alone. Such 'scientific' procedures can even be regarded as a prelude to structuralism, a means of 'decoding' data as a complex system of 'signs' and interrelated parts, as will be explained later. Seen in this light, Sherlock Holmes can be regarded a modern detective who is deeply indebted to Enlightenment ideologies of accessing and attaining truth. This is not particularly surprising since modernism and industrialization are influenced by an Enlightenment belief in science and optimism towards technological and scientific progress.

To talk about modernism as a single movement with singular social concerns or a singular attitude towards 'truth' and science is impossible, especially regarding that modernism spans across a variety of large developments in the way politics, the 'social', arts, science and technologies can be understood. In terms of detective fiction, the epoch includes the

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two major developments or poles that dominate the genre, not just in terms of methods of detection: on the one end of the spectrum would be Poe's Auguste Dupin stories (as literary root for the 'rational-scientific' detective), on the other end would be the hard-boiled tradition (as first developed by Dashiell Hammett in *Red Harvest* [1929]). Yet, where Dupin and its more popular heir, Sherlock Holmes, can be situated more as post-Enlightenment, in a more positive (regarding science, technology and 'truth') 'branch' of modernism (a tradition carried on much longer by Golden Age writers like Agatha Christie), the hard-boiled writers can be thought of as marking a negative attitude towards scientific thought and 'truth' possibly as a reaction to the horrifying experience of the First World War. This thesis will refer to the mind-set represented by the former 'branch' of detective fiction as modern or post-Enlightenment whereas the latter 'branch' is viewed as a representative of attitudes expressed in the modernist art movements (as will be explained later on).[7] It needs to be noted that the former version of the detective genre is distinctively British whereas its counter-reaction in hard-boiled fiction is American. Even though the focus of this thesis is on American television (which often draws on its British ancestor), the modern context needs to be considered for both countries.

The 'rational-scientific' version of methods of detection linked to Dupin and Holmes can be linked to the 'branch' of modernism related to structuralism: structuralism as a theoretical approach was not developed until the first half of the 20th century, and further expanded after the Second World War. However, Ferdinand de Saussure was already working on his analysis of linguistic systems when Doyle published his Holmes novels. Even though Doyle was probably not familiar with Saussure's work, both reflect a certain world view of approaching seemingly irrational problems, such as the sudden disappearance of a fiancé or language and communication, with rational methods. Saussure's first published book, *Mémoire sur le système primitif des voyelles dans les*

*langues Indo-européenes* (*Memoir on the Original System of Vowels in the Indo-European Languages*), was published in 1878. This work on vowels did not yet include the ideas that later influenced structuralism, but it included an "innovatory vision of language as a collective system [which] demanded equally innovatory ways of studying it" (Lane 1970: 27). The field of linguistics was then dominated by diachronic approaches, focussing on the historical functions and etymological roots of single words. Saussure introduced the synchronic approach which is occupied with the contemporary meaning of words:

> A language as a structured system, […] is both a self-contained whole and a principle of classification. As soon as we give linguistic structure pride of place among the facts of language, we introduce a natural order into an aggregate which lends itself to no other classification. [...] [The] language we use is a convention, and it makes no difference what exactly the nature of the agreed sign is (Saussure 1983 [1916]: 10).

As this suggests, Saussure saw language as a *cultural* system as opposed to a *natural* one. "It is therefore possible to conceive of a science *which studies the role of signs as part of social life*" (ibid: 15, italics in the original). It was this insight that led to semiotics as a theoretical approach. Indeed, what detectives like Dupin and Holmes and the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure have in common is the pursuit to uncover the 'truth' beneath the 'semiotic excess' of the modern world, consistently attempting to uncover the underlying structures that govern the rules of existence – whether they are the rules of language, ideology, culture or a crime scene. From a structuralist perspective, all are 'texts' that can be interpreted through scientific and discursive analysis, the detective acting as the metaphorical representative of the 'Age of Reason', an individual whose heightened awareness allows him or her to stand outside the world and observe material existence from a seemingly objective perspective. From 1945 onwards, the structuralist approach was closely linked to the work of anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. He argued that popular myths around the globe were structured along binary oppositions – such as raw/cooked, man/woman, good/evil, civilisation/nature (Brügger and Vigsø 2008: 46-55).

In fact, Lévi-Strauss himself links his structuralist approach to the sciences and states that "[it] is, I think, absolutely impossible to conceive of meaning without order" (2001: 3). 'Rational-scientific' detection tends to draw on this by finding the 'truth' (or meaning) of an event through the creation of order.

The First World War and the Great Depression in 1929 turned the optimism of industrialization into wariness towards technology and a liberal economy. The literary realism aimed for in hard-boiled fiction is also a movement away from the artificiality of the highly constructed 'whodunit' form. Historically, hard-boiled literature became popular as a genre when the power relations in the world order changed and power was de-centred from Europe, particularly Britain, to the USA (Thomas 1999: 264). Individual and country had to position themselves within a new world order without getting degraded, though corruption and the betrayal of modern technology – most visible during the First World War – were ubiquitous (see Ernest Mandel, 1984: 31-35). Thus, the uncertainty pronounced in the genre is a result of the pessimism that marked at least one 'branch' of the late stages of modernism (with Agatha Christie's literature offering a slightly more positive world view, or at least one that promises the maintenance of a social equilibrium). Among other aspects, this pessimism is marked by the traumatizing experience of the First World War by the European Intelligentsia, as mirrored, for example, in art movements like Expressionism, Cubism, Surrealism or Dadaism with artists like Pablo Picasso, Georges Braques, Marc Chagall, John Heartfield, Hannah Höch or Edvard Munch. In fact, these innovative, individualist and radical art movements come to represent ideas outside a 'dominant' ideology:

> Most of this art is, given the general assumptions of societies in early 20th century Europe, broadly liberal or leftist in intention, in so far as it contrasts prevailing conservative political ideologies with a non-coercive, but critical model of culture (Butler 2010: location 1557).

This 'avant-garde', thus, lies in contrast to the more 'mainstream' fare represented by the hard-boiled novel (or other 'popular' fare). While the American experience was hardly as negative as the European, it cannot be imagined that US culture remained unaffected by the terror depicted in European art. However, this cultural influence works in tandem with America's emergence as a superpower after the First World War. It also marked a historical moment when America was forced to respond to an international provocation, thus, for a short period, abandon its strong isolationist ideology, which (broadly speaking) suggests an America largely independent in trade, politics or resources.

This negative attitude towards violence and the kind of violence inflicted on other humans through technology and the scientific progress that was meant to 'better' life was intensified when the horrors of the Holocaust were revealed. Structuralism and its hopes of providing an 'ideology-free' methodology can be understood as a counter-reaction to the way ideology can 'naturalise' murder in concentration camps. Thus, this development of a 'modern' approach can be read as an attempt to eradicate ideology from the spectrum of analysis, though it never actually managed to be without ideological implications (as evidenced by the essentially conservative creation of binary oppositions). However, this already shows that modernism and postmodernism are not to be neatly separated developments. As already evidenced by the names, postmodernity explicitly links in and grows out of modernism. Yet, it is argued here that around the mid-1970s and 1980s, at least in Western countries, postmodern philosophy, society and arts developed ideas that can be more distinctively separated from modernism.

Mostly, this is evidenced by an increasingly fragmented view of the world. Part of the postmodern 'project' appears to be rigorous questioning and deconstruction of most aspects of the social sphere (gender, family, 'high' art, etc.), thus rendering any notions of

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'natural' state of being mute. To put in a broader (and somewhat generalising and America-centric) social context, the alleged narcissism of Reagan's 1980s America can be seen as a result of the increasing fragmentation and questioning of power structures in the 1970s. The on-going debates surrounding identity construction carried into the 1980s to result in a society that seemed to retreat into the self rather than dive into the complicated field of community values. Much of the crime fiction of the time can be viewed in relation to the hard-boiled detectives mostly isolated from their surroundings (though often more positive about this isolation than its predecessors). With a general focus on the subject, the instability of the self and the community becomes clear, and along with it the complexity of the world, too complex and complicated to access any 'truth' about it through modern ideas of science or technological progress (in other words, through 'rational-scientific' detection) rooted in Enlightenment discourses. Furthermore, the focus on the self also introduced what Jean-François Lyotard describes as the deconstruction of grand narratives: if the American citizen insists on defining him- or herself through a variety of categories or identity axes like race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, political beliefs, etc., the grand narrative of a unified nation state is automatically deconstructed (Lyotard 1984: 11-18). In its 'project of deconstruction', postmodernism opens up different ways to think about identity (one way in which it invites accusations of narcissism). As Judith Butler argues (1999: 3-44), referring back to Foucault's first volume of *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge* (1998: 133-160), postmodern philosophy not only deconstructs a unified idea or grand narrative of 'nation' (as suggested by Lyotard), but also questions the idea of a stable, unified subject. Instead of one stable national identity, a fragmented understanding of society as consisting of a variety of social *milieux* (in a Bourdieudian sense) develops.[8] Away from the complex realities of a new world order, the 'rules' of individual and society are re-negotiated. If no unified subject exists, how can a homogenous, unified community or nation exist?

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Jean Baudrillard, who argues that a breakdown between 'sign' and 'reality' has taken place, describes US society during Reagan as follows:

> …though Americans have maintained a keen sense of individual interest, they do not seem to have preserved a sense of a meaning that could be collectively given to their undertakings. […] Left brittle by the Vietnam War, which was unintelligible to them [Americans] as the interruption of little green men in a cartoon strip – and which, incidentally, they dealt with as though it was a cartoon, as something remote from them, a television war, with no understanding of the world's condemnation of their actions and only able to see their enemy, since they are the achieved utopia of goodness, as the achieved utopia of Evil, Communism – they have taken refuge in a triumphal illusionism (Baudrillard 1988: 108).

Leaving aside Baudrillard's almost polemic criticism of American culture (and postmodernity), especially under the presidency of Reagan, what he argues is that no common political or social project underlies the reality that is constructed through the signs of popular culture. This aspect is clearly visible in *Twin Peaks* where even law becomes something negotiated by the individual rather than a community (see Chapter 7).[9] Of course, this kind of obsession with identity politics invites accusations of 'style over substance', or narcissism over society, but if 'substance' is defined as a political agenda that serves a supposed 'common good', how can this be formulated if the idea of 'community' is already deconstructed? Furthermore, as Paul Patton summarises in his introduction to Baudrillard's essays on the Gulf War:

> The proliferation of archival information including taped audio-visual records allows the event to become utterly dispersed into a morass of conflicting interpretations and hypotheses about what really happened. Did Saddam Hussein undertake the invasion of Kuwait against all indications or was he lured into a trap by US policy makers? Who was really responsible for the assassination of JFK? And who killed Laura Palmer? It is this latter effect of the proliferation of information which sets limits to the effectiveness of the kind of critical media analysis which seeks to discover the truth of events (Patton 2000: 14).

Baudrillard argues that the media event of a war is indistinguishable from the media event of TV drama. Furthermore, neither one can produce any kind of politically radical project since the proliferation of meaning can never produce anything stable enough to construct a

coherent narrative or incite political action. In a similar vein, Frederic Jameson accuses postmodernism of putting style before substance and ultimately proving to be incapable of political action:

> If the ideas of a ruling class were once the dominant (or hegemonic) ideology of bourgeois society, the advanced capitalist countries today are now a field of stylistic and heterogeneity without a norm. Faceless masters continue to inflect the economic strategies which constrain our existences, but they no longer need to impose their speech (or are henceforth unable to); and the postliteracy of the late capitalist world reflects not only the absence of any great collective project, but also the unavailability of the older national language itself (Jameson 1991: 17).

One claim this thesis makes is that methods of detection reflect ideas of accessing 'truth' broadly in line with modern or postmodern ideologies and ways to structure and 'order' the world.

This goes along with theories of post-structuralism that, as part of the broad realm of different postmodern theories, deconstruct the structuralist concept that signs have one specific meaning. Post-structuralism takes into account (mis)understandings, different readings or incoherencies in the relationship between signifier and signified, as will be discussed in more detail in later chapters. An example of a post-structuralist approach is Jacques Derrida's *Law of Genre* (1980), in which he insists that genre is, essentially, subjective, depending on the "I" that de-codes it. He argues that:

> … a text cannot belong to no genre, it cannot be without or less a genre. Every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text; there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging (Derrida 1980: 65).

Yet, Derrida admits to a more subjective approach to genre where borders between genres are fluid and conceptualised by the subject. Post-structuralism takes this subjectivity in de-coding signs, such as signs of genre, into account, for example by texts refusing to offer a clear hierarchy in political messages (as will be discussed further in the case study on *Hill Street Blues* in Chapter 7) or an obvious hierarchy of 'clues' (as debated in the case study

on *Twin Peaks*, also in Chapter 7). As such, post-structuralism is a significant part of a postmodern world view, but is also a specific theory unto itself with a clear focus on signs.

Yet, it emerges that modern ways to structure the world through binaries have never disappeared, despite a number of programmes' attempts to participate in a larger (incoherent) 'project of deconstruction' of binaries, such as *Hill Street Blues* (NBC, 1981-1987) or *Twin Peaks*. There appears to be an increasing scepticism towards the deconstruction of common value systems, religious and social institutions, and instability of concepts such as 'truth' and a desire to move beyond it. As explored in Chapter 5, in relation to *CSI*, one response to this insecurity is an outright return to modern ways of ordering the world while, simultaneously, failing to reject seemingly 'postmodern' style and aesthetics.[10] As explored in Chapter 7, another reaction is the acknowledgement of the complex postmodern world and its 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection and an increasingly resigned attitude towards it. What is implicit in the texts of *Dexter* and *The Wire* is a search for 'alternatives', maybe a kind of post-postmodernism or 'new modernism', maybe 'remodernism' or 'post-postmodernism' that (as is argued here) cannot be articulated, yet.

The claim that postmodernism as an artistic project is dead is not necessarily new. As Josh Toth (2010) argues, in literature studies, a 'return' to 'social realism' in the 1980s already incited some critics to declare the 'death' of postmodernism. Of course, it can be argued that some of the key postmodern television texts like *Twin Peaks*, *The Simpsons* (Fox, 1989- ), or *South Park* (Comedy Central, 1997- ) had not even been produced, yet, and the televising of major historical moments like the first Gulf War or 9/11 had not managed to complicate issues of 'reality' and news to the same extent. The problem with such eulogies is that, firstly, they tend to focus on one specific art form or social movement instead of

attempting to formulate ideas applicable to several branches of 'culture'. Secondly, it draws into question the entire existence of postmodernism as an epoch in its own right: considering its rather short-lived existence, it seems like postmodernism (at least in its more political forms, for example, regarding Butlerian identity politics) has only recently infiltrated society far enough to dominate more popular (in terms of viewing figures) media forms like television.[11] Quite possibly, what is declared to be the 'death' of postmodernism merely signifies a different stage in postmodernism, an epistemological shift in how a globalized, digitised Western world needs to understand itself. As one example among many that announce the beginning of a new epoch, Alan Kirby calls this 'digimodernism':

> …digimodernism has decisively displaced postmodernism to establish itself as the twenty-first century's new cultural paradigm. It owes its emergence and preeminence to the computerization of text, which yields a new form of textuality characterized in its purest instances by onwardness, haphazardness, evanescence, and anonymous, social and multiple authorship. These in turn become the hallmarks of a group of texts in new and established modes that also manifest the digimodernist traits of infantilism, earnestness, endlessness, and apparent reality. Digimodernist texts are found across contemporary culture, ranging from 'reality TV' to Hollywood fantasy blockbusters, from Web 2.0. platforms to the most sophisticated videogames, and from certain kinds of radio show to crossover fiction (Kirby 2009: location 15-19).

Kirby's conceptualization goes far beyond cross-referencing or interactivity, and he clearly identifies 'new' aesthetics and modes of production.

Another way to re-conceptualise this epistemological shift within postmodernism is post-postmodernism. As impractical as the term may be, Jeffrey T. Nealon outlines how appropriate it is by arguing that:

> Post-postmodernism marks an intensification and mutation within postmodernism […]. So the initial 'post' in the word is less a marker of postmodernism's having finally used up its shelf life at the theory store than it is a marker of postmodernism's having mutated, passed beyond a certain tipping point to become something recognizably different in its contours and workings (Nealon 2012: location 75-81).

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Nealon understands post-postmodernism predominantly as an intensification of capitalism rather than a specific style in the different 'branches' of arts production. In other words, capitalism today has adapted to a pluralistic society (or the other way around) and rewards individualism by making it a consumer choice. Yet, this is not necessarily far from Baudrillard's concerns about postmodernism's inability to produce social projects that span beyond capitalism. The dominant theme of this thesis is ideologies of 'truth-finding' as represented on television, but this is viewed as intrinsically linked with economic necessities of a TV III television landscape, socio-political shifts and cultural representations of science in literature. As such, digimodernism or post-postmodernism may more easily viewed as an epistemological shift within postmodernism rather than a new epoch. In fact, their etymological links to modernism and postmodernism almost deny a clear distinction, but seem to encourage an understanding through (and maybe as part of) these epochs and their philosophical tendencies. This thesis is reluctant to use the term post-postmodernism to describe contemporary drama due to a reluctance to use a 'new' terminology to describe this current state that seems to be part of postmodernism and postmodern theory.

Chapters 5, 7 and 8 all deal with case studies that were first broadcast in the first decade of the 2000s and all seem to feed into this re-negotiation from different perspectives, offering a view of how, in a TV landscape with such varied industrial conditions, this struggle of how to access 'truth' is debated via 'rational-scientific', 'irrational-subjective' and possible 'alternative' methods of detection. Yet, despite the fact that texts seem to try to find new ways to access 'truth' postmodern theories are still viewed as the most productive way to conceptualize and understand these epistemological shifts.

### 3.3.    **Conclusion**

This chapter laid out how genre is understood and will be accessed in this thesis. Most importantly, it focuses on specific case studies that represent specific shifts and developments within the detective genre. The use of Foucauldian discourse analysis offers an understanding of genre that considers developments internal as well as external to the genre discourse. However, this methodology's inability to limit itself regarding the amounts of discourses it analyses necessitates a clear outline of the kind of discourses this thesis focusses on. On the other hand, what Foucauldian discourse analysis can offer is an implicit understanding that discursive clusters are vast networks of intersecting discourses and in constant dialogue with a virtually limitless amount of other discourses, none of which is necessarily more prevalent than the other. As Norman Fairclough points out, concepts like discourse have the ability to "cut across disciplines and theories, and can operate as 'bridges' between them – as focuses for a dialogue between them through which perspectives in the one can be drawn upon in the development of the other" (2003: 26).

This thesis employs textual analysis in order to analyse a number of detective dramas as examples of the genre and as marking important shifts in relation to socio-political, industrial or epistemological shifts external to the genre discourse or regarding aesthetic or narrative developments. Using methods of detection as a discourse internal to the discursive cluster of the detective genre, this thesis aims to position the individual texts in relation to specific ideologies of 'truth-finding' or 'truth-seeking' that can broadly be linked to world views framed by epochs.

The two discourses, genre and epochal concerns, largely inform the argument this thesis makes: on the one hand, accessing the discourse of the detective genre via methods of detection offers up new ways to thinking about the means by which specific genre texts

relate to each other, develop as reactions to or against each other while responding to broader social (and implicitly also industrial) concerns. These social concerns are framed by ideologies and philosophies of their time, and, most importantly, ideas of how 'truth' can be accessed and attained.[12] Another reason the epochal discourses are a major part of this thesis has to do with its last chapter and the idea of formulating 'alternative' methods of detection that may move away from any kind of binaries that may be suggested here between 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection: what will emerge is the idea that, while alternatives may not be articulated in more recent texts, the desire for it becomes clear. A resignation towards a (possibly) a-political social project of postmodernism as well as the (potential) 'simplicity' of modern world views necessitate some kind of response, though it is argued here that, at least looking at texts that were produced before the start of the Obama-era, this is not here, yet.[13]

The case studies chosen for this thesis span from examples of the literary and film tradition over early American detective drama to contemporary dramas. Despite the fact that *CSI* and *Dexter* are still on-going, the scope of this research only reaches until the end of George W. Bush's presidency in January 2009 (and the television season starting in autumn 2008). This limit is set by the socio-political discourses that frame discussions of methods of detection in the case studies, as the evaluation of more recent political developments lies outside the scope of this research.

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[1] Foucauldian discourse analysis, as will be explained later in this chapter in more detail, simply means an understanding of the methodology of discourse analysis and terms such as 'discourse' as defined by Foucault. In large parts, but not exclusively, this is based on Foucault's explanations provided in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969).
[2] In 1966, the US Supreme Court ruled in Miranda vs. Arizona that suspects have to be informed of their rights, especially the right to remain silent and the right to seek legal counsel. Because of the name of the suing party, the process of 'reading someone's rights' is often referred to as 'mirandizing'. Any statements are only admissible in court if the suspect

waves these rights (any kind of statement is viewed as an implicit waiver). This decision changed police procedure, especially interrogation, significantly.

[3] Generally, Cultural Studies understands and analyses the world through language. The definition of language is very broad, in the sense that cultural practices, rituals, visual and audio-visual material or objects can be understood as 'speech acts' within a specific language system (Foucault 2002: 89-132). Thus, if television represents a 'language', then a specific programme would represent a speech act within the discourse of television. Yet, a TV programme could also be considered a speech act within a different kind of discourse that cuts across various media forms. For example, an analysis of the representation of crime committed by African Americans in the US would look at police statistics, newspapers, film, radio and some TV programmes. In the case of this thesis, TV series' are the focus of analysis. Yet, they are considered to be 'speech acts' in a wider discourse on legal-scientific issues and issues surrounding the American criminal justice system and other socio-political issues. In this sense, the discourse analysis conducted here relies heavily on Foucault's work, where discourse tends to be understood as a framework where meaning is produced through culturally and historically specific contexts.

[4] As Fiske argues:

> *Discourse* is an elusive term, for it refers both to a general theoretical notion and to specific practices within it. At the theoretical level, 'discourse' challenges the structuralist concept of 'language' as an abstract system (Saussure's *langue*) and relocates the whole process of making and using meanings from an abstracted structural system into particular historical, social and political conditions. Discourse, then, is language in social use; language accented with its history of domination, subordination and resistance; language marked by the social conditions of its use and its users: it is politicized, power-bearing language employed to extend or defend the interests of its discursive community (Fiske 1994: 3, italics in the original).

A 'piece of discourse', as Fiske calls it, is grammatically structured in a specific way. However, most relevant in the analysis is not the signifying system of language that structures a statement, what Fiske sees as most important is the social relations that structure it and "its function in deploying power within those [social] conditions" (ibid.). Thus, for Fiske, analysing discourse means analysing power structures: who gets to say what and when, who is silenced and what simply is not said at all. Discourse is:

> … structured and structuring, for it is both determined by its social conditions and affects them […] Discourse also operates on a lower level on which a number of discourses put discourse-in-general into practice, and this is the level where it can be most particularly analyzed. Here discourse has three dimensions: a topic or area of social experience to which its sense making is applied; a social position from which this sense is made and whose interests it promotes; and a repertoire of words, images, and practices by which meanings are circulated and power applied. To make sense of the world is to exert power over it, and to circulate that sense socially is to exert power over those who use that sense as a way of coping with their daily lives (ibid.).

So, while Foucault mainly looked at dominant discourses within historical societies, Fiske looks at complex power struggles within contemporary society. He states that the US is a multicultural and multi-discursive society and any analysis has to bear in mind this struggle for hegemonic power and resistance. Therefore, if we look at the social through discourse, it is hard to define or identify any such thing as a 'dominant ideology', if it even exists or ever

existed. What can be identified is struggling discourses that work to repress or marginalize certain groups within society. But there is a strong element of resistance, especially in the face of a so-called 'democratization' of media.

[5] While the Oedipus myth is an earlier crime story, it does not feature one clearly discernible agent of detection, while God functions as omniscient detective in the story of Cain and Abel.

[6] One exception are G.K. Chesterton's *Father Brown* stories, but even his hero relies on reason, rather than prayer.

[7] Despite the fact that Raymond Chandler argues for an understanding of hard-boiled fiction as 'high culture' in 'The Simple Art of Murder' (1950), its distribution as 'pulp fiction' and its sometimes exploitative qualities imply that the literary branch was never part of modernist arts discourses, which emphasised the binary between 'high art' and 'low art'. They are viewed here as representative of attitudes expressed in modernist art rather than modernist art in a traditional sense.

[8] The English translation of Bourdieu's *Distinction* uses the term class for *milieu*, though Bourdieu's understanding of society is actually a very refined, fragmented version of class (also due to the fact that his observations are based on French society and its own understanding as divided into a large number of *milieux* rather than by class), defined not just in the three categories of upper class, middle class or working class, depending on economic categories, but also in terms of 'taste' or 'culture' (Bourdieu 2010: 255-502)

[9] Leland Palmer is not tried and sentenced in a court for the murder of his daughter and his niece, his 'punishment' is not framed within a known justice system (i.e. a prison sentence, possibly even death penalty), but rather resembles an exorcism that leaves Leland dead. This 'exorcism' is nothing that was decided by the community, but seems to be initiated by Leland himself and spirit Bob.

[10] Balaka Basu argues something similar in relation to the newest BBC adaptation of Sherlock Holmes, *Sherlock* (BBC, 2010- ) when she points out that audiences:

> are expected to believe in the program's modern character because of its lavish use of postmodern and contemporary technologies, but these merely obfuscate the ways in which *Sherlock* displays a *retrofuturism* that imagines the present solely in terms of the future of an outdated past. As a result of this commingling between past and present, the programme fully endorses neither, and therefore is unable to comment on or even really acknowledge its own perspective, ideology or genre. (Basu 2012: location 2758-2760, my italics).

This thesis contradicts her by arguing that *Sherlock* fits neatly into the American genre tradition of the past decade (at least), often with a similar ideological scope, which makes the term 'retrofuturism' appropriate to describe the generic tendencies that seem to combine aesthetics almost reminiscent of science fiction with somewhat 'outmoded' value systems.

[11] One example of this could be the increasing queer politics visible in popular texts, such as *Nip/Tuck* (FX, 2003-2010) or, as I have argued elsewhere, *The OC* (Fox, 2003-2007) (see Jenner 2011).

[12] The idea of what 'truth' may or may not be is somewhat irrelevant in this context: detectives may find the 'truth' about a specific event, but make no specific statements if this is all we can hope for in terms of 'truth' or if there is some kind of metaphysical 'truth' that may connect all the 'truths' with each other.

[13] Due to this thesis focus on American texts and American society, a division of history according to American political developments signified by presidential 'eras' that mark certain ideological trends is necessary.

# 4. <u>Tackling the Facts: The Literary Ancestry of</u>

# <u>'Rational-Scientific' Detection</u>

This chapter analyses the concept of 'rational-scientific' detection in relation to discourses (internal as well as external) to the detective genre, focussing on literary predecessors of television detective dramas. This means that the debates that are central here deal with internal generic discourses surrounding narrative structure and the establishing of 'rational-scientific' method of detection as features of the text, but also view them in relation to their social-political, socio-economic and post-Enlightenment context regarding how to access knowledge. The analysis of literary texts serves to locate 'rational-scientific' methods of detection within a broader genre framework and to understand how they are linked with specific world views and ideologies that relate to specific historical moments as well as broader discourses surrounding 'truth-finding'. The concept of 'rational-scientific' detection in relation to socio-political debates surrounding methods to access knowledge will be discussed here in relation to two modern literary texts: The Sherlock Holmes story 'A Case of Identity' (1891) by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the Miss Marple novel *The Body in the Library* (1942) by Agatha Christie. The major function of this chapter is to explore 'rational-scientific' methods of detection as located within a specific tradition of thought, its ideological implications and the way they tend to be tied up with a narrative structure that is still predominant in television versions today.

As described in Chapter 3, Sherlock Holmes' method of detection is understood here as rooted in an Enlightenment discourse surrounding 'scientific' methodologies that was carried into the industrialization of Britain and the late 19th century detective novel. As outlined in the previous chapter, Holmes' methodologies can be understood as closely

linked to the development of structuralism in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a way to grasp everyday phenomena like language or, in the case of Holmes, a crime scene, through a methodology similar to the supposedly 'objective' methods of science. The case study in this chapter aims to understand how this attitude is captured in the characters' 'rational-scientific' methods of detection and how the way it creates order may come to represent safety and security in the face of a complex and complicated world where wealth and social status of the increasingly powerful middle classes are in need of protection. This idea of protection of class privilege is dominant in most Sherlock Holmes stories, not least through the scientific methodologies he uses which are linked to a (presumably) expensive education.[1] Holmes, thus, not only becomes innovator and fighter for the use of scientific methodologies to 'order' the seemingly chaotic phenomena of crime, he also becomes 'protector' of class barriers.

No less wary of the breakdown of social structures, Agatha Christie also privileges rational thought and 'rational-scientific' methods of detection over 'hunches' or 'instinct'.[2] This is particularly present in her heroine Miss Marple. While still rooted in an Enlightenment discourse that privileges rational thought, a suspicion towards the routine use of forensic science in 'truth-finding' becomes obvious. Instead of the employment of science, *The Body in the Library* appears to represent a form of 'order' that can be accessed by anyone, not only those with specialized education, in the case of Miss Marple an unmarried, childless and elderly woman. Yet, *The Body in the Library*, published in the turbulent times of the Second World War, comes to represent a similar version of 'safety' as Sherlock Holmes where an abundance of clues guarantees that readers and the detective can create 'order' and protect existing class structures. While this almost escapist fantasy of 'order' and 'truth' is safely located in a contemporary genre discourse, a modest scepticism towards social (and sometimes even scientific) 'progress' is expressed. This

negative reaction towards modernity is much more pronounced in the American hard-boiled novels written around the same time (as discussed in Chapter 6).

Both Miss Marple and Sherlock Holmes have arguably had a large influence on the genre and the popular imagination. Their approach to criminology has influenced the way that methods of detection have been portrayed throughout the detective genre's development as a whole – as will be argued in Chapter 5 – methods that are still discernible in later television dramas. This thesis argues that the approach is a 'rational-scientific' one, which requires personal distance and rational thought as tools to access the 'truth' about a crime and ultimately leads to an (albeit brief) restoration of social order. In line with the broader discourses outlined in Chapter 3, this chapter will locate 'rational-scientific' methods of detection not only in a literary history, but also in a more general history of the later stages of modernity and socio-political developments in Britain. This chapter aims to look closer at the ideological and social powers that might have influenced how grand narratives of accessing 'truth' were sketched out and became a convention within the detective genre.

Both traditions discussed here are decidedly British and are debated in relation to British history. Without trying to gloss over issues of national context, this thesis argues that the tradition of the British detective novel and the way it employs 'rational-scientific' methods of detection has had a vast influence on the genre, as exemplified by the many international adaptations of Sherlock Holmes. Thus, even though the narratives are viewed here within a specific national and ideological context, as a literary tradition within the larger genre discourse, they are understood as influencing the genre far beyond British borders.

### 4.1.    Sherlock Holmes

This chapter will start by looking at Sherlock Holmes' connection with Enlightenment thought and how these ideas were carried over and re-developed for Golden Age literature. The formulaic structure of the 'genius' detective genre was shaped by Edgar Allan Poe in his Auguste Dupin stories *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841), *The Mystery of Marie Rôget* (1842) and *The Purloined Letter* (1844) (see Knight 2004: 26-29). Like Holmes, Dupin is a model of rational thought and repeatedly baffles his friend (the unnamed first-person narrator), with his superior deductive powers, which, in some instances, appear to border on mind-reading.[3] The urban setting was also later mirrored by Arthur Conan Doyle, though Dupin investigated in Paris and Holmes in London. Another important aspect of Poe's novel is that Dupin is not a professional detective and does not necessarily look for financial compensation for his services. The most significant difference between Holmes and Dupin is, however, the fact that Poe's ideal detective manages to solve the puzzle with as little movement as possible. In *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* he visits the crime scene only once and in *The Mystery of Marie Rogêt* (1842) he doesn't even leave his room. For Sherlock Holmes, it is important to leave his house, spy on suspects, disguise himself or dig through archives, sometimes gratuitously or only to confirm his hypothesis, rather than to gather data. Though the impact of Poe's Dupin cannot be denied, this chapter will look at Sherlock Holmes in more detail, since there is arguably no fictional detective that has dominated the public imagination as consistently as Doyle's creation.

The first Sherlock Holmes novella, *A Study in Scarlet*, was published in 1887, the first collection of short stories, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, in 1892. When discussing the narrative structure, this analysis will focus on these short stories. The stories are told from the perspective of the first-person narrator, Dr Watson, who is the focalizor of all Holmes stories. Even though told in the past tense, Watson's perspective is extremely

limited as he often only repeats what Holmes tells him and relies completely on his friends' conclusions. Every story begins with a short exposition which explains how Watson gets involved in the mystery. A problem is presented by Holmes himself or one of his clients, Holmes then ventures outside the house to investigate the case further, usually without Watson. When he returns, he tells Watson what he did all day and declares that he knows the solution to the problem. Even though all the clues are presented to him, Watson (as narrator) cannot deduce the solution and has to wait until Holmes reveals it with the culprit present. The punishment of the perpetrator is excluded from the story, though sometimes no crime has been committed at all or Holmes decides that justice can be served without the help of the legal system. There is much variation in the Holmes stories: The problem can be presented by a client who visits Sherlock Holmes in Baker Street or by Holmes himself. Sometimes Watson's involvement is triggered by a chance meeting; sometimes he is invited by Holmes to take part in the investigation. Holmes often reaches his conclusions by smoking his pipe all night, thinking, or disguising himself or other means of investigation. As Stephen Knight points out in *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction*: "The overall structural pattern is one of fairly intense variation within an unchanging order; in no story do the three basic units, relation, investigation and resolution, change position" (Knight 1980:77). Thus, the stories can be summarised as using a three-act-structure: exposition (presentation of the crime or mystery), investigation and revelation of the culprit and how and why the crime was committed. A solution to the problem, and thus, narrative closure, is always provided. Narrative structure and 'rational-scientific' methods of detection work together to provide narrative as well as ideological closure: with the help of Holmes' methods, no crime remains unsolved; society never remains 'unordered'.

This thesis views Sherlock Holmes as a 'rational-scientific' detective deeply indebted to Enlightenment discourses surrounding science and scientific thought patterns as described in the previous chapter. Apart from the detective's own insistence on scientific methods of logical deduction, Holmes also seems to refer implicitly to scientific discourses that originated in the Enlightenment that inform how scientific thought can be applied to criminology:

> Sherlock Holmes, Conan Doyle tells us, demanded acute observation, accurate data, and careful method. This was precisely the view of the dedicated amateur naturalists of the period. The collection, study, and classification of insects and plants, and the systematic reasoning based on the information so gathered had great implications for evolving forensic science (Wagner 2006: 33).

Yet, the scientific and philosophical discourse of the 18th century focussed on the visible rather than the invisible. Foucault argues that the 17th and 18th century sciences were focussed on visible signs and their classification as opposed to the 'invisible' inside of the human body:

> The plant and the animal are seen not so much in their organic unity as by the visible patterning of their organs. They are paws and hoofs, flowers and fruits, before respiratory systems or internal liquids. […] In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries anatomy lost the leading role that it had played during the Renaissance and that it was to resume in Cuvier's day; it was not that curiosity had diminished in the meantime, or that knowledge had regressed, but rather that the fundamental arrangements of the visible and the expressible no longer passed through the thickness of the [human] body (Foucault 2009: 149).[4]

For example, Conan Doyle's profession, medicine, used to be focussed on anatomy, which, in the absence of the technology science has at its disposal today (like X-rays, CT-scans, etc.), was 'invisible'. This development in view of medicine and anatomy is particularly important when looking at Conan Doyle and his fictional detective. In a comparison of the methods of art historian Giovanni Morelli, Sigmund Freud and Sherlock Holmes, Carlo Ginzburg points out that Morelli, Freud and Conan Doyle come from a medical background:

In all three cases we can invoke the model of *medical semiotics*, or symptomatology – the discipline which permits diagnosis, though the disease cannot be directly observed, on the basis of superficial symptoms or signs, often irrelevant to the eye of the laymen, or even of Dr. Watson […]. Towards the end of the 19th century (more precisely, in the decade 1870-80), this 'semiotic' approach, a paradigm or model based on interpretation of clues, had become increasingly influential in the field of human sciences (Ginzburg 1980: 12, italics in the original).

Thus, the methodologies are based on spotting the 'invisible' by making deductions based on 'symptoms' or 'signs' about an event (or an illness). The 'rational-scientific' detective is framed by discourses and thought patterns that originated in the context of the Enlightenment sciences and highly informed medical science of the 19th century. Sherlock Holmes' method of detection is first and foremost a method of rational thought influenced by the methodologies of science like taxonomy, close observation or deductive thought patterns. He observes and categorizes even the smallest details and infers facts from them.

This case study focusses on the Sherlock Holmes story 'A Case of Identity', first published in the magazine *The Strand* in 1891. The story will be discussed in relation to Holmes' methods of detection as a point where discourses regarding 'truth-finding', scientific thought patterns and ideologies regarding a socio-political moment and the legal system intersect. In 'A Case of Identity', Sherlock Holmes, after baffling Watson and his new client with his knowledge about her on their first meeting explains to his friend:

Never trust general impressions […], but concentrate yourself upon details. My first glance is always at a woman's sleeve. In a man it is perhaps better to take the knee of the trouser. As you observe, this woman had plush upon her sleeves, which is the most useful material for showing traces. The double line a little above the wrist, where the typewritist presses against the table, was beautifully defined. The sewing-machine, of the hand type, leaves a similar mark, but only on the left arm, and on the side farthest from the thumb, instead of being right across the broadest part, as this was. I then glanced at her face and, observing the dint of a prince-nez at either side of her nose, I ventured a remark upon short sight and typewriting, which seemed to surprise her (Doyle 2004: 84).

Holmes' insists on rational thought and scientific methodology: he looks at the 'facts' that present itself, such as Mary Sutherland's sleeves and categorizes her occupation, thus her class. He listens to her problem (which is that her fiancé, Hosmer Angel, is missing) and asks questions about the people in her life, her stepfather Mr Windibank and her mother. From the questions he asks, he seems to be particularly interested in her financial situation from the start, probably because he deduces that she would not need her entire income. He further wishes to know Mr Angel's occupation and the whereabouts of Mr Windibank whenever Mr Angel appeared. Before she leaves, he asks her for the newspaper clipping with Mr Angel's description and his letters. He then tells her that she probably will never see Hosmer Angel again. Thus, he seemingly knows the solution to the problem from the start and follows a specific line of questioning Miss Sutherland. As Knight puts it (explained further in Chapter 2): "he has knowledge of what certain phenomena *will* mean, and is practicing deduction, that is drawing from a set of existent theories to explain new events" (Knight 1980: 86, italics in the original). In fact, he later explains that he finds the solution because he has knowledge of a similar case. He only seeks confirmation through the letters to Mr Windibank's employer and to Mr Windibank himself. As Ronald R. Thomas (1999) points out, Sherlock Holmes reads clues like a text:

> While the typical Wilkie Collins detective is engaged in a quest to discover the content of certain secreted or stolen or even fraudulent legal documents, Holmes narrows the focus of his investigative gaze to concentrate upon physical facts of the process of documentation itself: how the texts are made, of what materials, by whom, with what instruments. He is interested in how the body of the writer of the document inscribes its own truth in the medium of the writing (Thomas 1999:79).[5]

Thus, Holmes' approach of reading 'signs' and texts can be read as an essentially 'structuralist' one – or at least, displays signs of a structuralist methodology. The links between structuralism and scientific thought patterns have already been explained in the previous chapter: in *Myth and Meaning* (1978), Claude Lévi-Strauss argues, in line with structuralist thought, that, if science has managed to explain and 'order' such supposedly

elusive phenomena as smells, visual experience or emotions, then, surely, all phenomena can be 'ordered' and explained through 'rational-scientific' distance: "Probably, there is nothing more than that in the structuralist approach; it is the quest for the invariant, or for the invariant elements among superficial differences" (2001: 2). In other words, Lévi-Strauss argues that beyond the elements of cultural, psychological or individual differences that create supposedly 'chaotic' data, there are constants, an invariable 'truth' and 'meaning'.[6]

Though formulated after Sherlock Holmes, and after the Enlightenment enthusiasm to find 'God's language' through scientific methodologies, structuralist approaches, as developed by Saussure around the same time Conan Doyle wrote his detective stories (see Chapter 3), reflect the same underlying ideas: the application of scientific thought patterns and methodologies will lead to 'truth'. In Saussure's work, these methodologies are applied to the apparently random system of language, Lévi-Strauss focusses on what he describes as myths, narratives common to different cultures, and Sherlock Holmes uses it to understand crime. He does this by following clues or, in a language more common to structuralist approaches, signs and, as suggested later by Lévi-Strauss, strips them of all variables: a structuralist analysis of Sherlock Holmes' methods in 'A Case of Identity' recognises that the sign of a young woman with income is indispensable to a man who "enjoyed the use of the money of the daughter as long as she lived with them. It was a considerable sum, for people in their position, and the loss of it would have made a serious difference" (Doyle 2004: 90). Having deduced a motive and a suspect, Holmes still needs to verify his thesis. One way of doing this is to read Hosmer Angel's body as a 'sign' that is independent from his character. In other words, the body is the denotation; his character is the connotation or association. Without the subjective features, the paradigmatic order of the body can be changed: tinted spectacles can be worn or not, bushy whiskers as well, even the voice can

be changed. A further clue is Holmes' study of the typewritten letters, drawing on scientific publications of the 19th century that compared the qualities of individual typewriters to the individual characteristics of humans, such as scars or birthmarks (Thomas 1999: 85-90). Therefore, every sign has only one possible meaning, but it is one not easily decoded – Watson fails at every turn.  According to Porter, "[s]tripped of all his eccentric trappings, Holmes represents the application of scientific method to police work, the first fictional criminologist" (Porter 1981: 224). This becomes apparent in 'A Case of Identity', when Sherlock Holmes shows more interest in the paper Hosmer Angels' letters were written on and the typewriter it was written with, than the actual content of the letters. "This shift in emphasis displaces attention away from the legal authority […] to the scientific expertise vested in one who is able to read those documents" (Thomas 1999: 79). Science is a tool to access an objective 'truth' about the world, subjective experiences become irrelevant. Even though Knight believes that "[i]nside the scientific mumbo-jumbo, the learned baggage, the mystique of all-night pipe-smoking and austerely distant behaviour is someone who can apply the common knowledge of the human tribe" (Knight, 2004: 57), Holmes' approach consists of more than that. As outlined in Chapter 2 and 3, he uses scientific thought patterns to think about crime. Similar to Saussure and Lévi-Strauss, he seems to make an implicit argument that not 'just' nature, but the whole world, the seemingly random events of everyday experience, can be decoded with the methodologies of science.

It is scientific thought patterns that lead to success in the Victorian era, which was characterized by technological and scientific advances that brought wealth and knowledge to the British middle class. Meanwhile, in line with Lévi-Strauss, Sherlock Holmes also seems to 'order' the world along the lines of particular pairs of binary opposites: a structuralist reading of 'A Case of Identity' reveals several binary oppositions, such as

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good (Holmes)/evil (Mr Windibank), modesty (Watson)/arrogance (Holmes), active (Holmes)/passive (Watson), rational (Holmes)/delusional (Miss Sutherland). As this suggests, Holmes' methods of detection and the 'ordering' of signs (and the world) into 'simple' categories have implications for a specific world view promoted by the texts: the Victorian era was the age of industrialisation and brought unknown prosperity to the middle classes, who used their new financial power to gain more social and political influence. Knight describes Holmes' methodology as inherently reactionary: "The dress of modern materialist science is used for conservative thinking, for a failure to face the real, disorderly experience of data" (Knight 1980: 86). This conservatism can be linked to the 'rational-scientific' method Holmes employs. Structuralist thought has often been associated with ideology theory based in Marxism, but post-structuralists have criticised it as conservative, since it finds it difficult to account for oppositional or even negotiated readings or develop alternative ways of thinking. What Knight criticizes is that Holmes employs an approach that simplifies a complex world in a way that is ideologically biased by bourgeois thinking.[7] What these linkages between structuralism and 'rational-scientific' methods of detection show is an inherent desire to 'order' the world. In order to attain or preserve this 'order', clear-cut categories of an underlying, invariant 'truth' need to be constructed, usually with the help of employing binary oppositions.

Roland Barthes' system of 'myth' shows how ideological meaning is produced in audio-visual or visual material and cultural practices. The structuralist analysis of a text can expose myth and destroy it. The mythical system employs the linguistic system of signifier + signified = sign to form a new linguistic system, a *metalanguage*, in which meaning is determined purely through ideology:

> Entrusted with 'glossing over' an intentional concept, myth encounters nothing but betrayal in language, for language can only obliterate the concept if it hides it, or unmask it if it formulates it. The elaboration of a

second-order semiological system will enable myth to escape its dilemma: driven to having either to unveil or to liquidate the concept, it will *naturalize* it. We reach here the very principle of myth: it transforms history into nature (Barthes 1993: 129, italics in the original).

One example is that fictional texts, including 'A Case of Identity', ignore the fact that capitalism and economic libertarianism are social constructs with a discursive history. Instead, greed is accepted as something *natural*, inherent in the human condition. However, the structuralist methodology can be employed to destroy the myth and expose its ideological agenda.[8] However, the problem with Barthes' theory is the assumption that there is an ideology-free space from which to decode the world. According to Barthes, the mythologist, the person who deconstructs myth, cannot take part in a society dominated by myth and stands thus outside society's ideology: "To decipher the Tour de France or 'the good French Wine' is to cut oneself off from those who are entertained or warmed by them" (Barthes 1993: 157). Similarly, Sherlock Holmes is an isolated character. Watson never describes him as sociable, instead Holmes is confined to his room conducting scientific experiments, playing the violin or taking cocaine. Like the mythologist, Sherlock Holmes believes that his method of detection is an objective way to access 'truth' and thus puts him above ideology and 'general impressions'. Yet, it is Althusser who points out that:

Human societies secrete ideology as the very element and atmosphere indispensable to their historical respiration and life. Only an ideological world outlook could have imagined societies *without ideology* and accepted the utopian idea of a world in which ideology […] would disappear without trace (Althusser 1994: 88, italics in the original).

Thus, it is impossible for the subject to step outside ideology, possibly rendering Holmes just as ideologically biased as Inspector Lestrade.


What this means is that Holmes' methods of detection reinforce capitalist ideology through the predominance of greed as a valid motive for crime. It is not only considered as a

motive, but *assumed* from the start and never questioned. Through the implied exclusion of any other possible motive, greed is naturalised as inherently human or, at the very least, predominant in capitalist society. This focus on greed as motive coincides with the middle classes' extension of its material wealth and power in Victorian England, closely linked with a liberal economic system. Scaggs (2005: 17-26) also attributes the origin of the detective genre as a whole to the growth of crime rates in industrialized cities during the 19th century and the foundation of the first professional police forces across Europe. In view of *fin-de-siècle* decadence and its relationship to Victorian moral ideals, probably best signified by Doyle's contemporary Oscar Wilde, Holmes' efforts to create order through science and rational thought can be viewed as rather conservative.[9]

The end of the 19th century saw stagnation in economic growth and a loss of England's global near-monopoly in industry and commerce. "For the aristocracy there was a sharp reduction of income from land. For the bourgeoisie, the entrepreneur as well as the shareholders, there was a drop in profits and dividends" (Bédarida 1979: 103). Thus, Doyle's preoccupation with greed as a motive for most of his criminal characters, including Mr Windibank, may be rooted in anxieties about the newly acquired wealth of the middle class and the threat of losing it (even though these anxieties are not exclusive to this particular historical moment).[10] 'A Case of Identity' could ask questions about the lower middle class and anxieties about the loss of social status, if Holmes or Watson bothered to find out more than the 'facts' about Mr Windibank.[11] Instead, him marrying an older woman, selling her first husband's business and forbidding his stepdaughter to go out means that he is only interested in money, including Miss Sutherland's. Mr Windibank is also stereotyped in terms of class. According to Bédarida, in the lower middle classes:

> … the obsession was with status. At all costs one had to show one's respectability and distinguish oneself from the common herd, to the point of aping without discrimination the life and habits of the superior classes.

> […] The pity of the upper and solid middle classes descended relentlessly
> on this stratum of society (Bédarida 1979: 52).

Thus Doyle, in casting Mr Windibank as the villain, expresses a common prejudice towards the ambition of the lower middle class, which in 'A Case of Identity' is taken to the extreme. Mr Windibank is stereotyped according to his class; questions that do not refer to his finances are excluded from the text. For example, Mr Windibank could be in love with his stepdaughter who is only a few years younger than him, or he could enjoy the sadism implied in his cruel trick. But according to Holmes, greed is the only possible motive for Mr Windibank in a capitalist society. It has to be disciplined through legal and moral authorities, like the church, the legal system or amateur detectives like Holmes who threatens physical violence. Discourses surrounding the relationship between capitalism and greed are silenced. It is the 'rational-scientific' method of detection, the way it excludes information that does not fit into its system of 'order' that works to silence these discourses.

According to Holmes, Mr Windibank's moral crime is not motivated through necessity. In fact, none of the culprits in the Holmes stories are motivated in this way. None of them live in poverty, which would open up questions about capitalism, industrialization, economic libertarianism or social responsibility. It is Holmes' methods that silence open questions about Mr Windibank's motive and his peculiar way of securing his stepdaughters' income. If Holmes was more interested in subjective impressions, the story certainly could not avoid these discourses. As it is, he does not even trust Miss Sutherland's ability to recognise her stepfather and is proven right. Instead of exposing myth, Sherlock Holmes becomes part of the mythological system itself, his 'structuralist' or, rather, 'rational-scientific' method of detection becomes part of the metalanguage. However, this is not to say that structuralism or a 'structuralist', i.e. 'rational-scientific' method of detection is

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inherently reactionary. But it is important to note that it necessitates the exclusion of many discourses and oppositional readings and thus naturalises a certain world view.

Holmes' obsession with archiving is also linked with post-Enlightenment discourses surrounding how to attain knowledge. Scaggs describes two central elements of Holmes' method of detection: "a scientific approach rooted in a Victorian faith in the accumulation and cataloguing of data, and rational and logical analysis based on this scientific foundation" (Scaggs 2005: 40). Holmes himself often points to his index where he archives his cases. In 'A Case of Identity' he says, "You will find parallel cases, if you consult my index, in Andover in 1877 and in The Hague last year" (Doyle 2004, p. 83). The collection and cataloguing of data became increasingly important throughout the 19th century.[12] Holmes also seems to have an exceptionally good memory of his own archive: he remembers times and places of parallel cases. However, drawing on these similar cases also means *not* to look at the individual circumstances. Even though Miss Sutherland might be different from his clients in the parallel cases, Holmes does not invest a lot of time in investigating her surroundings, her workplace, her social situation other than 'reading' her body and her clothes. By archiving cases and thus stereotyping them and the people involved, Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson can never see why crimes are being committed or why someone becomes the victim of a crime.

The post-Enlightenment obsession with archiving also relates to the legal system. Industrialisation opened up new possibilities to acquire wealth and the liberal economic system created new opportunities for social mobility. On the other hand, urbanisation meant that acquiring a new identity became a lot easier. At the same time, the number of repeat offenders rose. Therefore, new ways of dealing with the criminal threat became necessary. One expression of this need for discipline in the 19th century is Jeremy

Bentham's Panopticon referred to by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1995: 195-221).

Since the Panopticon was only planned, but never built, it merely functions as a theoretical

statement within the discourse. However, it represents a particular line of thought present

in 19th century Europe that emphasises the need for surveillance, discipline and

punishment. Foucault gives several examples of how individuals can be disciplined

through surveillance in the military, at school or in monasteries. The Panopticon was a

prison designed by philosopher and architect Jeremy Bentham in the early 19th century.

The main principle was that it was laid out in a way that made it possible to monitor every

prisoner's behaviour all the time. The prisoner never knows if he or she is being watched,

but is aware that he or she *could be* watched all the time. This sense of visibility is meant

to instil behaviour that conforms to the rules of the institution:

> Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of
> conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning
> of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its
> effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power
> should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural
> apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation
> independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates
> should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the
> bearer (Foucault 1991: 201).

Foucault points to the major effect of the idea of complete visibility of the subject. This

idea of a *disciplinary gaze* is particularly interesting in view of the amateur detective and

his or her capability to note even the smallest detail. This becomes more obvious with Miss

Marple, who carefully watches her surroundings and listens to gossip, but it is also present

when Holmes disguises himself to spy on suspects in 'A Scandal in Bohemia' (1891) or

'The Man with the Twisted Lip' (1891). In 'A Case of Identity' he remarks, watching Miss

Sutherland from the window: "She would like advice, but is not sure that the matter is not

too delicate for communication. […] Here we may take it that there is a love matter, but

that the maiden is not so much angry as perplexed or grieved" (Doyle 2004: 74). Thus, he

is watching her while she cannot see him. He immediately makes deductions about her

problem and her state of mind. After she enters, he deduces even more details about her, as mentioned above. Of course, as opposed to the inmates in the Panopticon, she does not even suspect that she is being watched. Holmes moves the disciplinary gaze to the social realm: the detective is not confined to watching prisoners or criminals in prison, he watches *everyone* in every possible situation. The detective is explicitly *not* part of a state apparatus, he even implicitly and explicitly criticizes the police or other state apparatuses, yet Sherlock Holmes and his generic descendants keep a watchful eye on others. As Foucault puts it: "Our society is one […] of surveillance" (Foucault 1991: 217). Thus, surveillance is part of the 'rational-scientific' method of detection: surveillance technologies offer possibilities for detectives to watch from a distance and evaluate behaviour without engaging with people. The underlying assumption is that by watching from a distance, detectives can judge behaviour 'objectively' without the potentially confusing data that the acknowledgement of individuality might provide. The Panopticon thus serves to illustrate an underlying ideological assumption that underpins the relationship between 'rational-scientific' detection and surveillance. Along with this, other methodologies to collect and archive information about criminals were developed. While photography and systems meant to identify the 'criminal body' were soon viewed as unreliable, it was Galton's work on fingerprints, published in 1888, which was later adopted by the legal system as a positive means of identification. Originally, the system was used in the colonies of Bengal to differentiate the indigenous populace from each other, thus implying not only an expression of racism, but also of oppression and a means of controlling and disciplining individuals (see Ginzburg 1980: 26-27 and Thomas 1999: 201-219). "In both America and England, […] fingerprinting would first be put to use to identify troublesome and otherwise indistinguishable foreigners and then applied systematically to fix the identity of criminals among the population at home" (Thomas

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1999: 208). Thus, when looking at this history of forensics, a system of violent oppression and control is implied.

'Rational-scientific' detection in fictional texts is also linked to the development of police forces across Europe, introducing fundamental changes to the legal systems during the 19th century: in 1749, the so-called Bow Street Runners were organised, a group of free-lance 'thief-takers' who worked on commission. This system invited a lot of corruption, but it was not until 1828 that the Metropolitan Police Act allowed for the creation of London's first police force under Sir Robert Peel.[13] Scaggs explicitly links the development of police forces in the UK and other countries to post-Enlightenment thought:

> Characteristic of the Enlightenment was belief that the application of the power of reason would lead to truth, and this search for truth was integral to the improvement of human life. This faith in reason, which came to replace religious faith, was a development of scientific and intellectual rationalism, and sought to discover the natural laws governing the universe, and human society. Modern police work, as it developed in the nineteenth century, was founded on the faith in knowledge, science and reason that characterized the Enlightenment (Scaggs 2005: 18).

Police work meant the application of scientific thought patterns in order to solve crime. Apart from an ethical code, police work also included the keeping of police records, another version of archiving. Thus, Holmes' methods of detection also serves as an 'ideal' of law enforcement, supposedly 'objective' and 'fair'.[14] According to Thomas (1999) the fact that Holmes relies on science:

> … illustrates a growing rift within the legal community with respect to the gathering claims of scientific criminology upon legal practice in the nineteenth century. *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* was published in the same decade in which Lombroso and Munsterberg would experiment with the lie detector and Sir Francis Galton would author his landmark book on fingerprinting as an infallible identification technique. […] Nevertheless, like the representatives of Scotland Yard in the Holmes stories, the legal profession was slow to pursue this ideal [a closer collaboration between science and the legal system] or to cede too much authority to the expertise of the scientist in evaluating the increasingly technical forensic evidence that was becoming available in criminal trials (Thomas 1999, 35-37).

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In this context, Sherlock Holmes can be seen as an advocate for the integration of science into the legal system. Caprettini even goes so far as to argue that "Holmes's ideal is that investigation ought to be, or become, a science: the positivistic mind dreams of extending rational and checkable procedures to the domain of traces, symptoms, clues, that is, to the dominion of *individual* facts" (Caprettini 1988: 140).

## 4.2.     <u>Miss Marple</u>

There were several authors who followed up Conan Doyle and his characters' scientific methods, mainly in short stories, like the American *The Thinking Machine*-stories by Jacques Futrelle (1906-1912) (Knight 2004: 67-80).[15] However, none have influenced the genre and the public imagination as much as Holmes. During the early 20th century, the novel was gaining ground as a dominant format for the genre. But it was not until the Golden Age – a period in British crime fiction usually limited to the era of 1918 until 1930, though texts, such as a number of Miss Marple novels, were produced until after the Second World War – that similarly powerful detective characters were created, most importantly Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple.[16] This analysis will look more closely at the Miss Marple novel *The Body in the Library* (1942), the novel strictly following the 'whodunit' form associated with the Golden Age.[17] The clue-puzzle form or 'whodunit', probably most commonly associated with detective fiction, moves the genre from an urban setting to the countryside, often into secluded country houses or small villages. There, a murder – which, during the Golden Age, becomes a staple of the genre – occurs. The detective, usually an 'eccentric' amateur from the upper middle class, investigates clues and interviews suspects, a second, maybe more, murders are committed, each of them revealing more clues leading to the identity of the murderer, and finally the detective reveals the criminal:

> The story is […] socially enclosed: lower classes, especially professional criminals, play very minor roles. The criminal comes from among the social circle of the victim, and servants are very rarely guilty – and if so will usually be in some form of social disguise (Knight 2003: 78).

The social, political and historical events of the time are largely ignored, though Agatha Christie incorporates the First and later the Second World War in her stories, often to signify a threatening change in social order.[18] Victim and murderer/murderess usually come from the same class. "The victim is also a person of little emotive value; he or she is not mourned, nor is the real pain and degradation of violent death represented" (ibid.). The same goes for the murderer/murderess, pity or psychological insight into the mental disposition of the criminal is even disdained:

> Detection is rational rather than active or intuitional, a method which fits with the unemotional presentation of the crime. […] The rational and at most semi-official detection will focus strongly on circumstantial evidence and will eventually ratify it, properly interpreted, as a means of identifying the criminal. Sometimes there will be a gesture towards 'psychology' – as in Christie or Van Dine– but this is almost always merely a matter of human types and likely motives, not depth analysis (ibid.).[19]

In fact, most of Christie's criminals are depicted as motivated by 'evil', most explicitly expressed in the title of the Poirot novel *Evil Under the Sun* (1941). Again, greed is a common motive; a variation is the preservation of social status or jealousy.

In *The Body in the Library*, Sir Henry Clithering describes Miss Marple's 'rational-scientific' methods of detection as drawing "an interesting, though occasionally trivial, series of parallels from village life" (Christie 2002:127). For example, Miss Marple explains how the body of a dead girl ended up in Colonel Bantry's library by invoking the parallel of "Tommy Bond […] and Mrs Martin, the new schoolmistress. She went to wind up the clock and a frog jumped out" (ibid: 66). The joke played by a schoolboy is paralleled to the 'joke' played by Basil Blake when he found a murdered girl on his hearthrug and moved her to Colonel Bantry's library. However, Miss Marple's main assets

are her observational skills and rational deduction. She notices that the girl in the library has bitten nails, but Ruby Keene has close-cut nails. Miss Marple then deduces that the girl in the library is *not* Ruby Keene and that Josephine Turner, who identified the body, must therefore be involved in the murder of both girls, Ruby Keene's and Pamela Reeves'. She goes on to infer that Josie only stands to gain by Ruby's death if she were secretly married to Mark Gaskell. Thus, even though Miss Marple does not actually use science, she employs a simplistic version of structuralism (as opposed to Holmes' seemingly more 'scientific' version). Due to her wary attitude towards human nature, she looks for proof of what she is told. Her 'reading' of the dead girls' body, especially her fingernails, does not fit with the lower middle class or working class show dancer Ruby Keene, but rather with the missing schoolgirl Pamela Reeves. Admittedly, Miss Marple's 'reading' of the body is hardly as elaborate as Holmes' 'reading' of Miss Mary Sutherland or Mr Windibank. She is equally sceptical about witness statements as Holmes, and trusts 'facts' more than subjective impressions. Her technique involves a great deal of stereotyping, most often based on classist views. For example, Miss Marple remarks on Ruby's clothes that she would have worn her best dress to meet a lover, not the one she wore when her body was found:

> 'A well-bred girl' continued Miss Marple, warming to her subject, 'is always very particular to wear the right clothes for the right occasion. I mean, however hot the day was, a well-bred girl would never turn up at a point-to-point in a silk flowered frock. […] Ruby, of course, wasn't – well, to put it bluntly – Ruby *wasn't* a lady. She belonged to the class that wear their best clothes however unsuitable to the occasion (ibid: 203-204, italics in the original).

Her reading of the dead girl's fingernails goes along similar lines: "A girl like that usually has absolute talons" (ibid: 153). Knight (1980) argues in relation to Christie's first Poirot novel *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1921), that the Belgian detective's method is also very much grounded in the 'feminine' domestic sphere:

> The facts and their observed interpretations are, it is fascinating to notice, very domestic ones, rising from the world of a woman's experience and understanding, at a time when women were largely restricted to household activity (Knight 1980:109).

Miss Marple is not only aware of the difference of bitten and closely cut fingernails (and what they imply about age and social class), she and other characters often point out how her methods are very much connected with women's experiences of the time (as generalising as such an assumption may be). She is aware of the gossip in St Mary Mead and can deduce from it that Basil Blake and Dinah Lee are married, from her community work with young girls she can identify which one is lying and by drawing parallels to other events, she understands what attracted Mr Jefferson to Ruby. Miss Marple – as an elderly, unmarried, childless woman – gains respect and power through her reasoning skills, which are solidly grounded in the domestic realm.

The character of Jane Marple associates herself with Victorian values like independence and the necessity of proof. Similar to the Holmes stories, her 'rational-scientific' methods often silence discourses that dissent from bourgeois ideology. For example, Britain's economic struggles during the Great Depression in the in-between war era are virtually absent. Ruby and Josie are the only main characters in the story who work (apart from the policemen) and even though Josie is aware of competition for her job, their work as show dancers hardly represents struggles of the working class or the professional middle classes, rather the fierce competition in a liberal economy. Other characters of the upper middle class, like Addie Jefferson, Mark Gaskell or Raymond West, have lost money, yet, they see that rather as a result of 'bad investments' within the realm of personal responsibility, than as a result of a bad economy. Nevertheless, social anxieties are expressed in *The Body in the Library* and 'rational-scientific' methods of detection serve to expel their symptoms from society and (re-)introduce 'order' to family structures and protect class binaries:

Mark's marriage to Josie and Mr Jefferson's intention to adopt Ruby lead to murder, leaving class borders intact and conflicts between Mr Jefferson and his daughter-in-law resolved.[20]

Mark Gaskell is clearly placed within the same social milieu as most other characters and Josie Turner in the same social realm as the victim:

> … the threat of social disorder comes from within society, and the reason for this is simple. By identifying the threat to the social order as coming from within, Golden Age fiction emphasises the necessity, embodied in the figure of Miss Marple, of a society that maintains the social order through self-surveillance (Scaggs 2005: 46).

This anxiety about one's own peers possibly stems from the social change following the First World War. Educated, married middle-class women over 30 gained the right to vote in 1918, and in 1928 all women gained the same electoral rights as men (see Thane 1994: 104). The Labour movement grew in power, especially after the Russian Revolution in 1917, though the Unions in Britain were defeated in the General Strike of 1926 (see Bédarida 1979: 182-186). Socialist ideology became more popular with the middle classes, though they generally voted for the Conservative Party, at least until 1945, when the Labour Party won the general elections with a large majority (ibid: 186-191). Unemployment grew rapidly after the First World War and the early 1930s brought the Great Depression to Britain, which posed a substantial threat to the social and financial power of the bourgeoisie. After the First World War, the USA also replaced Britain as the dominant military and commercial power among the western countries (Bédarida 1979 and Lawrence 1994). Though all of these factors work to de-stabilise the middle classes, they are virtually absent in Golden Age fiction. The only exception are the First and the Second World War, which are frequently mentioned in Agatha Christie novels, but it is not until after the Second World War that its effect on society is put in relation to crime. It has to be pointed out that, again, greed as a motive for murder works to naturalise capitalist

ideology.[21] Especially during times of economic instability, it seems 'natural' that emotional connections or class alliances become meaningless if money is involved, or rather if one's social status is threatened.[22] The methods of detection are ultimately ideologically conservative, seemingly leaving no room to question dominant power structures and institutions and ignorant of social struggles in Britain. But Miss Marple's explicit classism and her 'feminine' approach that frequently embarrasses the male police more or less invites oppositional readings and dissent.

While this thesis argues that the Golden Age novel does not tend to be very 'openly' structured, the texts seem to encourage reader engagement. Todorov (1971: 42-52) argues that the 'whodunit' consists of two stories: the story of the murder, which takes place before the novel even starts, and the story of the investigation:

> The characters of this second story, the story of the investigation, do not act, they learn. Nothing can happen to them: a rule of the genre postulates the detective's immunity. […] The hundred and fifty pages that separate the discovery of the crime from the revelation of the killer are devoted to a slow apprenticeship: we examine clue after clue, lead after lead (Todorov 1977: 44-45).

Thus, as characters, especially the detective, learn the details of the case, he or she is in a similar situation to the reader: "the reader is challenged to match the detective's process of identifying the murderer and there should therefore be 'fair play': the reader must be informed of each clue that the detective sees" (Knight 2003:79). Referring to Roland Barthes' *S/Z* (1975), Fiske defines the 'writerly' text as "multiple and full of contradictions, it foregrounds its own nature as discourse and resists coherence and unity" (Fiske 1987: 94). He describes it as 'openly' structured, so that readers from diverse cultural and ideological background can decode it. In the case of the Golden Age novel, the reader knows all the necessary clues to solve the puzzle (something not offered in the Sherlock Holmes stories), but is excluded from the conclusions of the detective until the

end. Thus, deliberate gaps in the narrative invite the reader to join into 'the game' and take part in the investigation. But the end of the novel, the solution of the puzzle and the narrative closure it provides, leaves little room for oppositional readings that question existing power structures or social order:

> [In] representing crime and its punishment, whether evoked or merely anticipated, detective novels invariably project the image of a given social order and the implied value system that helps sustain it. By naming a place and by evoking, however, glancingly, the socio-economic order that prevails within it, they confirm, in fact, that there can be no transgression without a code, no individual criminal act without a community that condemns it. What is particularly notable about detective stories, however, is that they only exceptionally raise questions concerning the code; the law itself is accepted as given (Porter 1981: 121).

Thus, even though the texts are 'writerly' only in a limited sense, the 'whodunit' form's success depends on the readers' willingness to 'play the game' and find the solution to the problem before the detective does. However, readers also have to conform to the 'rules', the social norms, of the 'game'.

While Miss Marple is not contemptuous of the police, she is more capable of finding the murderer than they are. Henry Clithering, ex-commissioner of Scotland Yard, explains: "*we* use police work. We get a burglary, we usually know pretty well who did it – of the regular crowd, that is. We know the sort of burglar who acts in a particular sort of way" (Christie 2002: 127, italics in the original). Where the 'archives' of the likes of Marple or even Holmes seem to contain stories, complete cases and, in the case of Miss Marple, examples of human behaviour in any situation, Christie seems to view police work as an archive of fingerprints and *modi operandi* of criminals – scientifically collected and archived material. The staples of modern police work seem "to have already declined to the status of outmoded cliché in the cultural imagination of the British and the American detective story of the 1930s" (Thomas 1999: 258). While the police are perfectly capable of dealing with everyday crime, any thought-out, original crime is better solved by

someone whose social position is outside the 'mainstream' (like foreigners or 'old spinsters'). This reveals scepticism towards the modern project of progress through scientific methodologies: what in Sherlock Holmes is outright enthusiasm, can even be read as part of a campaign for the inclusion of scientific methods in legal processes, is viewed with less eagerness by most Golden Age authors. Published in 1942, *The Body in the Library* may largely ignore the effects of the First and Second World War (apart from the celebration of war heroes), but can hardly claim a lack of knowledge when it comes to the destructive powers of technology and also shows an awareness of its American hard-boiled cousins.[23] Thus, while the novel celebrates distanced, 'rational-scientific' thought patterns, it shows scepticism towards the rigid methodologies employed to 'order' the world. Yet, in comparison with the contemporary hard-boiled fiction (as discussed in Chapter 6), this scepticism is hinted at rather than explicitly pronounced.

The detectives' scepticism towards the state apparatus also shows the libertarian attitude inherent in the 'genius' detective genre which, by its premise, seems to value individual effort more than the government institution of the police force. Scaggs even argues that Miss Marple "becomes in Christie's fiction the embodiment of Bentham's Panopticon" (Scaggs 2005:45), described by Foucault as a means of discipline through visual surveillance (Foucault 1991 [1975]: 248-256). She and her bourgeois value system go further than the police, which looks at likely suspects like repeat offenders, and even further than Sherlock Holmes: "the objects of Miss Marple's gaze are nothing more than suspects and *potential* criminals, and in the textual Panopticon of detective fiction, it would seem that everybody is a suspect" (Scaggs 2005: 46, italics in the original). Where in Sherlock Holmes stories, people are examined closely before they are branded 'suspect', 'victim', 'criminal' or completely 'innocent', if – as in Golden Age fiction – the threat to the status quo comes from within society, everybody has to watch their surroundings, and

they might even be in a better position to do so than the police or other official agents. Though rational, 'structuralist' thought and forensic science are useful in fighting criminal behaviour, the 'evil mind' can easily circumvent them – simply by identifying a body as the wrong person, confusing the issue of identity that was supposed to be solved by fingerprinting.

### 4.3.    Conclusion

This chapter discussed the literary tradition of 'rational-scientific' methods of detection, rooted in modern traditions of thought that refer back to Enlightenment discourses of 'truth-finding'. Ultimately, 'rational-scientific' methods of detection appear to imply a belief in the possibility of creating social order by the application of specific thought patterns. Meanwhile, the diegesis in which crime is located in the traditions of the Sherlock Holmes stories and Golden Age novels is surprisingly easy to order if one only pays attention to the 'clues' or evidence, such as fingernails or sleeves, and other signs or indicators of the underlying invariable 'order' that structures the world. This automatically means ignoring data that does not fit into certain perceptions of 'order'. The use of 'rational-scientific' methods seems to imply a creation of 'order' through binary oppositions, based on a detailed re-construction of the crime, made possible by establishing the 'correct' relationship between a number of signs (or clues or individual pieces of evidence). This rigid 'order' is mostly read as conservative (not necessarily in a political sense), since its exclusion of a number of discourses indicates little possibility for social change or alternative systems of 'order'. Yet, what all these texts have in common is the certainty that scientific thought patterns and the 'order' they create can uncover some form of 'truth'. This 'truth' remains undetermined, none of the texts seems to suggest any such thing that goes beyond the secure knowledge that a criminal has been found (and punished). This is supported by a three-act narrative structure that invariably offers

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narrative closure and a 'solution' to the central mystery. The invariable narrative structure combined with the (relatively) stable 'rational-scientific' methods of detection ultimately aims to preserve existing social and aesthetic order in the sense that 'new' thought patterns and experimental narrative structures can rarely be explored.

The analysis of 'rational-scientific' methods of detection in 'A Case of Identity' and *The Body in the Library* in relation to a broader genre discourse as well as socio-political discourses external to the genre has shown how these methods of detection originated in specific Enlightenment discourses that were carried into modernity. Another aspect revealed by this exploration of 'rational-scientific' methods of detection is a link to structuralist thought (as also described in Chapter 3) and ideological implications that can be viewed as a result of an imperative to create some kind of 'order'. This 'order' can also be linked, in this British tradition, with a desire to keep up class boundaries and protect middle and upper class interests.

Both texts have been considered in this chapter in their distinctively British context and as a reaction to socio-political developments in Britain at the time of original publication. Yet, both texts' influence is also considered here as a transnational influence: Sherlock Holmes stories and Miss Marple novels have been adapted numerous times, both have entered the cultural imagination of western societies and influenced an international genre development. The significance of the detective character of Sherlock Holmes on fictional detectives such as Lord Peter Wimsey or Columbo (Peter Falk) cannot be underestimated. Similarly, Christie's 'whodunit' structure has dominated TV drama and, incidentally, most Sherlock Holmes adaptations, significantly. Without discussing the concept of transnational flows, Thomas Leitch, discussing the many different ways Sherlock Holmes features as hero in a large number of films, remarks:

> Holmes, Watson, and their milieu can be selectively modernized despite the obviously contemporary situations in which they are placed because they have the luxury of drawing on many different sources: Conan Doyle's stories, the illustrations of Paget and Steele, the Golden Age whodunits of Agatha Christie and Ellery Queen that provide an influential model for Holmes's wartime mysteries [and] earlier movie versions of Holmes (Leitch 2007: 221-222).

While Leitch focusses on the character of Holmes rather than the methods of detection, both are linked. While the 'rational-scientific' approach sometimes is compromised, in particular when the detective encounters supernatural beings, the approach seems to be easily adapted to different national contexts and media. Meanwhile, Miss Marple seems to function as a model for female detectives worldwide: always underestimated as 'irrational' and 'emotional', but, in the end, the only one who can judge which clues are significant and why. The most obvious example for the ease with which Miss Marple transcends national context is the American series *Murder, She Wrote* (CBS, 1984-1996), loosely based on Christie's heroine. Most importantly for this thesis, both texts seem to function as template for the way 'rational-scientific' methods are presented as 'rational' deduction rather than 'instinct' or 'hunches'.

The next chapter will look at 'rational-scientific' methods of detection in the context of American television drama, the different national context possibly implying different ideological and class structures, as well as different socio-political and socio-economical discourses. In the course of this, it will analyse how ultimately conservative, post-Enlightenment modern, 'rational-scientific' methods of detection are employed in a modern and postmodern television landscape and genre discourse.

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[1] While this may not be related to class privilege, Conan Doyle also uses exclusionary tactics by offering readers only limited access to clues. This also serves to reinforce Holmes' status as 'genius'.

[2] Yet, Agatha Christie offers much more access to clues to the reader, while still protecting the 'genius' status of her detectives.

[3] As this scene in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* describes:

> We were strolling one night in the vicinity of the Palais Royal. Being both, apparently, occupied with thought, neither of us had spoken a syllable for fifteen minutes at least. All at once Dupin broke forth with these words: 'He is a very little fellow, that's true, and would do better for the *Théâtre des Variétés*.' 'There can be no doubt of that,' I replied unwittingly and not at first observing (so much had I been absorbed in my reflection) the extraordinary manner in which the speaker had chimed in with my meditations. In an instant afterward I recollected myself and my astonishment was profound. 'Dupin,' said I, gravely, 'this is beyond my comprehension. I do not hesitate to say that I am amazed, and can scarcely credit my senses. How was it possible you should know I was thinking of ---?' (Poe 2011: location 91-100, italics in the original).

Dupin then goes on to explain, in detail, how he was able to deduce his friends' thought processes in so much detail that he could tell his thoughts exactly enough to make his comment 'fit' the meditations. This kind of rational deduction that appears like mind-reading has recently been revived in the TV programmes like *The Mentalist* (CBS, 2008- ) and *Lie to Me* (Fox, 2009-2011).

[4] Georges Cuvier (1769-1832) was a French naturalist and zoologist who is seen as the founder of comparative anatomy between animals.

[5] Wilkie Collins' novels *The Woman in White* (1860) and *The Moonstone* (1868) are 'sensation novels' commonly seen as popular examples of crime or detective fiction in the period in-between Poe's Dupin-novels and Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories.

[6] While Lévi-Strauss writes this in the 1970s, as argued in Chapter 3 and 4, the Sherlock Holmes stories and structuralism developed out of similar roots at roughly the same time.

[7] Of course, the link between 'realism' and the 'disorderly experience of data' appears ideologically biased in itself.

[8] Ideology is here defined in the terms of Louis Althusser:

> [I]t is not their real conditions of existence, their real world, that 'men' 'represent to themselves' in ideology, but above all it is their relation to those conditions of existence which is represented to them there. It is this relation which is at the centre of every ideological, i.e. imaginary, representation of the real world. […] [I]t is the *imaginary nature of this relation* which underlies all the imaginary distortion that we can observe (if we do not live in its truth) in all ideology" (Althusser 1994: 103, italics in the original).

Seen in this light, ideology represents our relation to our conditions of existence, mediated through myth. Sherlock Holmes-stories work as myth.

[9] Despite the conservative leanings expressed in Sherlock Holmes, Doyle expressed doubts regarding the prison sentence Wilde received for his homosexuality and suggested medical treatment instead. In fact, he had met Wilde once and seemed to be very impressed with the writer. After Wilde's death, Doyle was convinced he had been in touch with his ghost during one of his spiritual sessions. Graham Robb even suggests that the character of Holmes is somewhat based on Oscar Wilde (Robb 2003: 261).

[10] Industrialism offered many opportunities for the middle classes, whether in economics, engineering or trade. Incomes increased drastically many ceased the chance to climb the social ladder.

[11] Bédarida (1979) describes how the middle class during the 19th century was divided into the upper middle class (bankers, directors of railway companies, owners of large factories, magnates in mining, etc.), the middle class (industrial employers, solicitors, doctors, civil engineers, university professors, accountants, etc.) and the lower middle class (small employers, shopkeepers, bank clerks, office workers, schoolmasters, railway staff, travelling salesmen, etc.). The differences in income were immense.

[12] For example, increased efforts were made to catalogue and archive information about criminals. In 1839, photography was invented and quickly utilized in police work, mainly to identify known criminals:

> The immediate adaptation to the bureaucratic procedures of personal
> documentation and identification in police work seemed as natural as its
> rapid rise to popularity among the middle classes as an inexpensive form of
> personal portraiture (Thomas 1999: 113).

A photograph was taken as positive proof that a person looked a certain way and that they were criminals. However, it soon became apparent that photographs could be misleading, since criminals could disguise themselves. Yet, the necessity for positive identification of known criminals was a primary concern of police work. In Paris, Alphonse Bertillon experimented with the measuring and written description of the physical features of criminals. But this method proved to be unpractical and time-consuming. In 1890, Havelock Ellis published *The Criminal*, in which he tried to define the anatomy of the criminal, thus decoding the 'signs' of the criminal body. As Thomas points out, Ellis' description is ultimately the description of a 'foreign', non-white body (Thomas 1999: 208-211). *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* is very much concerned with the dangers of foreignness, especially non-European foreignness, manifested in the form of an Orang-Utan from Borneo that violently kills two white women (Thomas 1999: 41-56).

[13] Sir Robert Peel (1788-1850) was Home Secretary at the time and became Prime Minister in December 1934.

[14] What is silenced is that Holmes' scientific approach is linked to an (presumably) exceptional education that is furthered by him. Since he lives off his family fortune and does not have a profession, he has all the time he wants to acquire new knowledge. Also, his financial situation makes it possible for him to focus only on those cases he chooses. He investigates and archives his cases himself and is not dependent upon his colleagues. He, therefore, embodies the Victorian value of self-help and self-reliance connected with the libertarian economics and Social Darwinism of the Victorian era: the economic system was one "of unlimited competition and [the middle classes] sanctified the race for money, power and advancement" (Bédarida 1979:53). The economic values were also transformed into social values. Next to Puritanism, hard work, sacrifice and discipline, in "the middle class creed, two articles were inscribed with letters of gold – individual effort and the spirit of enterprise and competition." (ibid: 54). Each individual is responsible for itself, socially as well as economically.

[15] The stories surrounding Professor S.F.X. Van Dusen feature a main character who promotes the application of logic to all situations. The stories focus on spectacular displays of Van Dusen's mental abilities: the stories varied in both length and method, but typically depend on the professor penetrating the mystery of some technically complicated crime" (Knight 2004: 68).

[16] For the purposes of this thesis, I do not restrict the Golden Age to a specific time frame. Rather, the work of particular authors employing the 'whodunit' form and the detectives most defining for the literary form – most notably Lord Peter Wimsey, Hercule Poirot and Jane Marple – is looked at.

[17] Another striking feature of the novel is that Miss Marple is one of the first – and certainly the best known – female detectives, created by a female author. Also, according to Knight (1980:108), more than two thirds of the readers were female. As interesting as these gendered discourses are, they have to be ignored here due to the focus of this thesis.

[18] Often, male characters are described through their status in the military, though labels like 'war hero' or 'coward' often prove to be deceiving, as, for example Basil Blake in *The Body in the Library*, who was forced not to join the Second World War as a soldier due to an injury he received during a previous act of 'heroism'. Also, the Second World War, in particular, often marks a point in British history when British society changes. This change is often perceived as breeding ground for crime and deception. The Second World War also becomes a significant reference point in Agatha Christie's spy novels where certain nationalities (most obviously Germans) become synonymous with 'enemy'.

[19] S.S. Van Dine was the pseudonym of the American writer Willard Huntington Wright (1888-1939). His Philo Vance series an, example of the whodunit or clue puzzle set in the USA.

[20] The bourgeois family is described as endangered when – through the death of both Mr Jefferson's biological children – his family consists of in-laws rather than blood relatives, as is frequently pointed out. This fragile family unit comes under threat when Mr Jefferson decides to adopt lower middle/working class Ruby Keene, who is then murdered by Mr Jefferson's son in-law Mark Gaskell and his second wife Josie, who also is Ruby's second cousin. This incoherent net of family relations clearly describes how danger is embedded in non-'traditional' families, where the members are not biologically related to each other. This danger also affects coherent, 'traditional' families, like the Reeves', whose daughter Pamela becomes a victim as well. This anxiety about the disintegration of the 'traditional' family is even further expressed in the post-Second World War Miss Marple novels *A Murder is Announced* (1950) and *They do it with Mirrors* (1952), but also in the first Miss Marple novel *Murder at the Vicarage* (1930).

[21] As Knight (2004: 89-93) and Scaggs (2005: 46-49) point out, the cast of the Golden Age detective novel is usually just as secluded in terms of class as its setting is in terms of space. All the major characters are part of the middle classes, the motive for murder, greed, is associated with Josie's 'natural' wish for social climbing, and other assumptions are also linked with bourgeois ideology.

[22] Of course, Golden Age detective stories are not known for being emotional. The victims don't tend to be mourned and the emotional connections between the characters are usually not explored by the novels. 'Family' or 'love' serve merely as a signifier for an emotional connection that is not necessarily there.

[23] In *A Murder is Announced*, Miss Marple refers to the notion of the 'Fall Guy', referencing Dashiell Hammett.

# 5. <u>"Follow the Evidence": 'Rational-Scientific' Detection and the Detective Drama on TV</u>

This chapter will discuss ways in which 'rational-scientific' methods of detection have been represented on television, using the following case studies: *Dragnet* (NBC, 1951-1959), *Quincy M.E.* (NBC, 1976-1983) and *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (CBS, 2000- ). Implicitly, all three dramas seem to refer to the modern sensibilities, following on from Enlightenment discourses, expressed in the Sherlock Holmes stories, possibly suggesting a desire for 'law and order' in a world seemingly dominated by political crises and instability. The methods of detection imply a similar desire to create 'order', competing discourses artificially put in a hierarchy, in which discourses are silenced and (seemingly) coherent grand narratives constructed. This has ideological implications, not only in the sense that it promotes a certain value system and creates specific binary structures, but also in relation to political crisis points that dominate American socio-political debates and appear to be implicit reference points for the texts discussed here. Yet, the 'rational-scientific' methods of detection, following on from modern discourses rooted in Enlightenment about how to access knowledge, are increasingly positioned in environments dominated by postmodern aesthetics, suggesting a desire for 'disorder' and the deconstruction of grand narratives. Thus, this chapter will explore how both ideological and philosophical impulses are brought together. It will locate the texts within an internal genre discourse as well as external discourses relating to the socio-political moments the texts were produced in. It will then explore how the case studies may be read as a reaction to or reflection of broader socio-political discourses as well as broader philosophical concerns regarding 'truth-finding'.

The 'whodunit' three act structure of discovery – investigation – revelation (see Kompare 2010: 22-35) appears to be the predominant narrative mode of detective drama employing 'rational-scientific' methods of detection on television. Without discussing literary history and dividing the sub-genre of the police procedural (or police drama) according to narrative structure (open-ended or closed) rather than methods of detection, Nichols-Pethick explains that:

> …more 'traditional' police series typically follow a closed episodic structure in which all major narrative threads (usually one particular case and a secondary narrative) are resolved by the end of each episode. These series tend to rely heavily on one of two primary formulas of the detective genre. The first we might call 'swift justice' model in which the perpetrator is known from the outset and the job of the police is to apprehend him or her. This form typically relies on heightened action sequences, especially car chases, fistfights, and gun battles, to bring closure to the narrative. The second structure is simply the 'whodunit' model in which the criminal is unknown and the role of the police detective, using his or her superior sleuthing abilities, is to solve the mystery. Because these series rely so heavily on these recognizable structures and tend toward closure, they are often dismissed as trite and predictable escapism, sensationalist exploitation or, in the worst cases, politically reactionary dogma not to be taken seriously (Nichols-Pethick 2012: 7).

The first structure Nichols-Pethick describes is often featured in spy dramas (like *Mission: Impossible* [CBS, 1966-1973]) or action series (like *The Untouchables* [CBS, 1959-1963] or *The A-Team* [NBC, 1983-1987]), which feature mostly non-investigative storylines or detective dramas like *Columbo* (NBC, 1971-1990), which work on 'hunches' or 'instinct' (and find proof of these later on), thus featuring 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection. The second version Nichols-Pethick describes is strongly linked to 'rational-scientific' detection as the description of 'whodunit' already implies. Thus, narrative closure and 'rational-scientific' detection are not intrinsically linked, but the 'whodunit' or procedural structure and the method of detection are.

This thesis argues that this narrative structure is very much linked to the 'rational-scientific' methods of detection. The investigation, commonly the central part of the

narrative is structured by clues (in the widest sense of the word, including witnesses, the finding, examination and re-examination of pieces of evidence, the forming and falsification of hypotheses by the detectives, etc.) and the deductions related to them. In more contemporary series, such as *CSI*, the investigation is structured into even smaller 'instalments' because more than one case (usually two, sometimes up to three) is solved by different team members in the course of an episode. This multi-storyline narrative is common with 'rational-scientific' police procedurals, drawing on the innovations of narrative structure in 'irrational-subjective' police procedurals, made possible through the sub-genre's emphasis on team work and division of labour (which allows for the team to 'split up'). This is not possible in the 'genius' detective genre since only one person can be expected to solve the crime.

Detective series employing 'rational-scientific' detection rarely seem to be sites of narrative experimentation. Mostly, this is related to the fact that a world view, which suggests that a 'truth' can be accessed by following clues and employing rational thought, presumes that crime is merely a disruption of 'order' in the world and that this 'order' can be restored – even if only for the short intervals between episodes. It may take years, but as an audience, we could always be sure that Adrian Monk (Tony Shalhoub) in *Monk* (USA, 2002-2009) will find out how, why, and by whom his wife Trudy was killed and we can count on Patrick Jane (Simon Baker) in *The Mentalist* (CBS, 2008- ) finding the murderer of his wife and daughter, 'Red John'. These storylines, that spread over many episodes and can frame an entire series, are essentially just 'bigger' instances of disorder. To resolve them, order needs to be restored in the 'small' cases that are solved every week.[1] While 'order' can be envisaged in very different ways, from Monk's obsession to create geometric order in the world to Poirot's carefully groomed moustaches, to *Dragnet*'s sentencing of criminals in a court of law at the end of each episode, the idea

that clues have to be followed, rational deduction *has to* lead to a solution and the crime *has to* be solved to restore social 'order', seems to leave little room to vary the narrative structure (or, at the very least, there seems to be no alternative to narrative closure). Social chaos and disorder, presumed by 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection, on the other hand, leaves more room for experimentation, since there is no 'set' narrative formula that needs to be followed to offer narrative closure. As discussed in the previous chapter, the invariable elements of the narrative structure leave little room for experimentation, thus reinforcing a method of detection that seeks to establish 'order' at the expense of silencing discourses and closing off 'unconventional' avenues of thought. As will become clear in the case studies, in many regards, conservative (in the sense of 'preserving' cultural ideas and values) thought patterns are at work, supported by an ideology structured along binaries. The ways in which these binaries are structured necessarily vary depending on the historical moment and external discourses, but also in relation to 'stages' in the broader internal discourse of the detective genre.

## 5.1.     *Dragnet* (NBC, 1951-1959)

*Dragnet* was one of the first detective dramas to arrive on American television. It employed 'rational-scientific' methods of detection, which had by now been integrated into 'official' police procedure in the form of fingerprinting, medical examiners, archives, and so on. In *Dragnet*, the strict professionalism of its main character Joe Friday (Jack Webb) and his team implies 'rational-scientific', analytical distance to the crime, victim and criminal. Yet, as already mentioned in Chapter 2, the literature on the series tends to focus on discourses surrounding 'quality' and 'realism' rather than methods of detection and attitudes towards 'truth-finding'.[2]

The series is based on a radio drama of the same name, also created by Jack Webb, that ran from 1949-1957, so roughly around the same time as the television series (though it started a few years earlier). The 30 minute-episodes (in both media) employ the three-act-structure common to Golden Age fiction.[3] The series works hard to communicate that procedures depicted are a 'realistic' reflection of the methods of the LAPD, starting with the introductory voiceover: "The story you are about to see is true. Only the names have been changed to protect the innocent". This textual feature partly serves to depict the LAPD as 'objective', relying on the 'rational-scientific' police procedures developed through the implementation of scientific methods into institutionalised crime fighting. Every episode concludes with the voiceover summarising the sentence criminals received in court, emphasizing that this story really happened (and that this is how the methods make sure that 'justice' can be served).

Stylistic features, such as an implied 'realism' and noir aesthetics and the way both can be linked to 'rational-scientific' methods of detection (later often linked more closely with 'irrational-subjective' methods, as described in Chapter 7), is related to a specific industry discourse that might help explain how somewhat contradictory movements in film aesthetics (see Chapter 6) and conservative Cold War ideology work together in *Dragnet*. As David Marc and Robert J. Thompson point out:

> Much of the programming on early television, especially before about 1955, was adapted from two tried-and-true media: radio and theater. […] The two major broadcasting companies, NBC and CBS did not want the Hollywood movie studios owning competitive television networks, so they fought to identify television as something other than an outlet for film (Marc and Thompson 2005: 55-56).

Thus, both networks tried to emphasise the similarities with media other than film. ABC started broadcasting in 1948 and though it also had its roots in radio broadcasting, even used to be owned by the same company as NBC, the network had less financial and artistic

resources to rely on. In order to compete with NBC and CBS, ABC got involved with film studios like Walt Disney or Warner Bros.[4] Thus, despite its roots in radio, the 'quality' of *Dragnet* and a visual linkage to film noir (see below) can be seen as an effort by NBC, not only to explore and establish the aesthetics of the new medium, but to compete with CBS and ABC over audiences, by providing them with (to use a more recent terminology) 'quality programming'. Thus, *Dragnet* also functions as an early example of assessing markers of 'quality' that still affect contemporary detective dramas.

In *Dragnet*, 'rational-scientific' methods of detection are depicted as 'realistic', thus implying a close relationship between protocol used by LAPD officers in 'actual reality', supposedly unbiased and objective, and the possibility to 'order' the world.[5] Yet, at the same time, the series is highly stylized: this may also be linked to its film noir aesthetics, a group of films where detection (where it is featured) is mostly 'irrational-subjective'. Film noir as aesthetic category and its links with 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection will be discussed in Chapter 6. *Dragnet* employs few plot devices and – despite an emphasis on crime – shares few themes with film noir.[6] Yet, some stylistic references to noir – whether as a genre category or sub-genre or as a set of specific conventions dominant in cinema at the time (see Chapter 6) – are clearly discernible in the television drama. Palmer points out that in naming episodes "The Big…" the series consciously invokes parallels to film noirs, such as *The Big Sleep* (Hawks, 1946). Another way in which the text invokes this comparison is that many of the female criminal characters are visually framed as *femme fatales*. Similar to this, within a drama dominated by surprisingly monotone acting performances, episodes like "The Big Crime" (04/03) feature highly emotional performances, in this case by Jack Kruschen, playing a paedophile, seemingly drawing on Peter Lorre's performance in Fritz Lang's *M* (Lang, 1931). The most significant elements linking the series to film noir are the voiceover narrative that

accompanies each episode (but is significantly different from the voiceovers of films like *Double Indemnity* [Wilder, 1944], *The Postman Always Rings Twice* [Garnett, 1946] or *Sunset Boulevard* [Wilder, 1950] where they are provided by dead criminals), and a highly stylised aesthetic, most obviously present in a play with shadow and light, that is more reminiscent of film than early television. Sue Turnbull points to the film noir aesthetics:

> *Dragnet w*as shot on film and, despite its claims to documentary realism, was highly stylized in terms of both performance and look, frequently displaying cinematic self-consciousness in the set-up of elaborate and carefully lit shots (Turnbull 2007: 21).

This more filmic look can be explained through the competition with ABC that necessitated this aesthetic improvement and reliance on the visual conventions of a genre that was, at the time, dominated by film noir. Despite using film noir as aesthetic reference point, *Dragnet* uses 'rational-scientific' methods of detection and suggests the possibility of 'law and order' in society.


The imperative to create 'order' that is implicit in the 'rational-scientific' methods of detection may be linked to debates surrounding American foreign politics in the earlier years of the Cold War as well as public discussion regarding a number of scandals in the institution of the LAPD and extensions of Enlightenment discourses surrounding the use of new technology by the police. *Dragnet* can be seen as an adaptation of J. Edgar Hoover's aggressive public relations strategy (see below) by the chief of the Los Angeles Police Department William Parker. Following several scandals involving police corruption in the 1940s, Parker was appointed in 1950 to 'clean up' the department and improve its image (Walker 1998: 172-174). *Dragnet* can easily be viewed as part of this effort, mostly due to the access given to Jack Webb to the police force in return for a positive depiction of the LAPD. Actor Jack Webb produced, wrote, directed and starred as main character Joe Friday in the radio and TV version of *Dragnet*, becoming one of the first TV *auteurs*

(Marc and Thompson 1992: 132-140). Webb never had access to case files, but the stories were based on actual cases: Los Angeles police officers were encouraged to write up accounts of interesting investigations that were then turned into scripts. The LAPD attempted to use the drama to improve its own image:

> The scripts were vetted through the LAPD before shooting, making changes to ensure authenticity within the bound of 'positive images' of LAPD. Scripts were filtered for content as well, as the LAPD served both as a steward of its own image and also as a guardian of public morality, censoring topics like abortion and overt sexual content (Mittell 2004: 134).

The LAPD provided advisors from the relevant divisions for the production process and screened the episodes before airing.[7] While this close connection to the LAPD opens up questions about impartiality, it also works to establish a sense of authenticity and 'realism' for the programme and the accuracy of the 'rational-scientific' police procedures is guaranteed by the LAPD. This is reinforced by the voiceover, which draws attention to this co-operation, as well as the acting style, which seem more reminiscent of someone reading out a police report in its bureaucratic language than the method acting styles that were featured in programmes such as the episode "Marty" (05/23) within *The Philco Television Playhouse* (NBC, 1948-1955) series featuring Rod Steiger or the more carnivalesque performance styles in *I Love Lucy* (CBS, 1951-1957). Mittell suggests that the style in which lines are delivered "points to the prioritization of *systemic* over *emotional* realism – the police are emotionally detached from the drama due to the proper and accurate functioning of the criminal justice system" (ibid: 137, italics in the original). Thus, the lack of emotions displayed by detective characters displays how they function as part of the collective 'system' rather than individuals.

To support this ideological function to legitimize the LAPD (and the police forces in general) through 'rational-scientific' methods of detection, Joe Friday is a morally unambiguous police detective who understands himself as part of a government institution,

serving the public, with few signs of individualism.[8] Generally speaking, Joe Friday and his colleagues represent a police protocol that consists of the questioning of witnesses, the analysis of evidence found at and around the crime scene by lab technicians (who mainly stay off-screen, though their work is acknowledged in the dialogue and voiceover), a reliance on tips from the general public as well as surveillance and the questioning of known criminals. This also involves the extensive archiving of cases and known criminals and their signifying markers, such as fingerprints. This method of detection carries specific ideological meanings:

> *Dragnet*'s obsession with authenticity and representing the world from an 'official' perspective gives the show a dominant ideological viewpoint. One of these representational strategies that *Dragnet* uses to solidify this worldview is the use of overt binary oppositions, such as law versus crime, order versus chaos, and efficient system versus rogue individualism. *Dragnet* invests these dualities with unambiguous difference, eschewing the grey area that might suggest that these lines between law and crime were anything less than crystal clear. Throughout *Dragnet*'s run, the show categorizes society into two distinct camps, with the police working to maintain the rigid boundary between chaos and order, the latter always triumphant in half-hour increments (Mittell 2004: 146).

As justified as this harsh judgement of *Dragnet*'s political and ideological agenda may be, this thesis will look more specifically at how the methods of detection may contribute to the creation of binary structures and how this may be linked with the socio-political climate *Dragnet* was produced in.

In line with a modern enthusiasm towards scientific and technological developments and their implementation into police procedure, supposedly adding greater 'objectivity' to 'rational-scientific' methods of detection, it is important to understand how discourses of science, technology and police procedures intersect. Samuel Walker describes the 1920s to the 1950s as a period of consolidation and reform for the American police and the US criminal justice system.[9] The patrol car was introduced in the 1920s and the telephone allowed the public to call the police whenever needed:

By the 1950s Americans had become socialized into the new habit of 'calling the cops' and they began calling for even the most trivial situations. The two way radio was the final link in the chain, allowing the police department to dispatch patrol cars in response to citizen requests for service. It also revolutionized police supervision by allowing the department to maintain continuous contact with patrol officers for the first time in police history. […] The prosperity of the 1950s allowed cities to add patrol cars and expensive communications systems (Walker 1998: 166).

Throughout the 1950s, the impact of the technology on policing stayed largely unquestioned, though it meant that the field of responsibility for police officers increased widely, now ranging into more 'domestic' areas, whether it was noise pollution or domestic abuse. However, the patrol car also meant that the contact with law-abiding citizens was restricted to situations when those were involved in a crime, as victims, witnesses or otherwise. This was significantly different from the policemen patrolling neighbourhoods on foot. This idea that policemen do not know the citizens they are dealing with implies the necessity of 'rational-scientific', seemingly 'unprejudiced' methods of detection as depicted in *Dragnet*.[10] Quite possibly, this distance between the police and citizens encouraged the creation of a 'law-abiding' vs. 'criminal' binary that tends to be represented in *Dragnet*, where there seems no space for moral ambiguity between 'guilty' and 'not guilty', as is, for example, shown in the sentencing in "The Big September Man" (01/11) where even psychological illness is excluded as a possibility to explain the murderer's actions. On the other hand, the 'rational-scientific' methods of detection may also serve to re-assure audiences that they are being treated 'objectively' and 'fairly'.

*Dragnet*'s need to create rigid order through binaries needs to be understood in relation to socio-political discourses external to the genre and its relationship to post-Second World War anxieties in America. For the purposes of this chapter, it is sufficient to say that the beginning of the Cold War brought on an era of a largely conservative ideology in many areas of US society:[11]

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> …The United States emerged from World War II as the most powerful
> nation in the world, both economically and militarily. It controlled most of
> the former Japanese islands in the Pacific, took an active role in the
> occupation of Germany and Japan, and by virtue of its massive gold
> reserves and industrial plants was in a position to act both as the world's
> banker and its chief supplier of manufactured goods. […] In the spring of
> 1945, the United States led the way in establishing a new collective
> security organization, the United Nations, whose stated goals were the
> prevention of armed aggression and the promotion of prosperity and
> democracy throughout the world (Woods 2005: 2-3).

Emerging from the Second World War as a superpower, it became obvious in the US that

the ideas prominent after the First World War of an isolationist, largely independent

America that stays more or less uninvolved in European conflicts, was not an attitude that

could be upheld after Pearl Harbour.[12] Instead, the adopted approach was one of fierce

patriotism and the export of American ideology.[13]


This change in how America saw itself reached beyond foreign policies, the Second World

War also brought about significant social change in US society. Many women had worked

during the war when many male workers were fighting abroad, and refused to give up their

jobs afterwards, despite being urged to do so in order to create jobs for returning G.I.s.[14]

During the war, many African Americans gained better job opportunities in the army,

which resulted in more confidence and ultimately a demand for civil rights.[15] Furthermore,

following the shock of the Holocaust, in 1948 the UN declaration of Human Rights

declared all humans (and all races) to be equal. The groundwork was laid for the Civil

Rights Movement, the beginning of which is usually dated as 1st of December 1955, the

beginning of the Montgomery Bus Boycott following Rosa Parks' resistance against white

superiority.[16] However, the 'Separate but Equal' doctrine was already declared

unconstitutional in 1954.[17] Immediately after the war, many returning G.I.s could not find

work, but, thanks to social welfare for veterans (and economic growth within the US),

could afford to go to college, managed to advance socially and become members of the

middle class. Birth rates rose steadily between 1940 and 1960, thus creating the generation of 'baby boomers' (Woods 2005: 9-10). Since, during the Depression, only a few new houses could be built, the return of veterans after the Second World War, combined with the 'baby boom' and an increase of those who could afford to buy their own house, brought on a housing shortage in the US, which, in turn, brought about the 'suburbanization' of America: the suburbs were built, providing new houses for the new middle class (see Woods 2005: 1-31).

These social changes in the US were accompanied by significant changes in foreign policy and the world order.[18] While the fears associated with Cold War foreign politics and nuclear threat should not be underestimated, the Cold War also influenced US domestic politics significantly. Furthermore, it carried a specific ideology and anxieties associated with it into many branches of social and cultural life. The most significant expression of this was quite possibly the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), which, in 1947, started its investigation into the communist influence in Hollywood. The persecution of the so-called 'Hollywood Ten', a group of screenwriters and directors who refused to admit to their own political affiliations and name Communist Party members, generated a lot of media attention. They were sentenced to prison terms and Hollywood adopted the practice of 'blacklisting' individuals who were known to be affiliated with the Communist Party, who were subsequently prevented from working (see Chafe, Sitkoff and Bailey 2003: 28). Rhetorically, politicians like US senator Joseph McCarthy worked hard to create binary structures that made different ideas of democracy and economics into ideological issues of values.[19] The binaries were not just capitalism and communism, but also Christianity vs. Atheism, 'good' vs. 'evil', 'freedom' vs. 'oppression', 'wealth' vs. 'poverty', and so on. As Joseph McCarthy himself put it in a speech from 1950:

> The great difference between our *western Christian world* and the *atheistic Communist world* is not political, gentlemen, it is moral. For instance, the Marxian idea of confiscating the land and factories and running the entire economy as a single enterprise is momentous. Likewise, Lenin's invention of the one-party police state as a way to make Marx's idea work is hardly less momentous. Stalin's resolute putting across of these two ideas, of course, did much to divide the world. With only these differences, however, the east and the west could most certainly still live in peace. *The real, basic difference, however, lies in the religion of immoralism . . .* invented by Marx, preached feverishly by Lenin, and carried to unimaginable extremes by Stalin. This religion of immoralism, if the Red half of the world triumphs—and well it may, gentlemen—this religion of immoralism will more deeply wound and damage mankind than any conceivable economic or political system. Karl Marx dismissed God as a hoax, and Lenin and Stalin have added in clear-cut, unmistakable language their resolve that *no nation, no people who believe in a god, can exist side by side with their communistic state*. (McCarthy 1950, my italics).

As the HUAC investigations against people who worked in Hollywood indicate, American popular media generated a lot of anxiety concerning communist subversion through film and television. This anxiety was possibly rooted in successful propaganda campaigns in Nazi Germany, but also to mobilize the US to join into the War or how popular media was used to create pro-American imagery. One example of this is how J. Edgar Hoover influenced the popular media in order to push his agency's agenda:[20]

> To shape public opinion, Hoover actively manipulated the mass media, working closely with sympathetic journalists who wrote flattering and often exaggerated stories about the Bureau's exploits. He was particularly alarmed about the glorification of crime and criminals in a series of 1930s films […]. Along with the IACP [International Association of Chiefs of Police], he pressured Hollywood into making pro-law-enforcement films (Walker 1998: 161).[21]

As a consequence of this kind of pressure, Hollywood adapted the Production Code in 1934, which "required movies to show that crime did not pay and forbidding any unflattering images of law enforcement" (ibid.). This kind of pressure on popular media was also felt in television, though McCarthy and his committee steered away from 'big' television stars, like, for example Lucille Ball, star of *I Love Lucy*, who apparently registered with the Communist Party in 1936, but was quickly cleared of all charges (see Barnouw 1970: 11-21). Jack Webb himself was an expressed anti-communist, and there

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are no hints that *Dragnet* was ever under suspicion by the HUAC: the text itself, its production context and its method of detection can offer an explanation for this.

The episode analysed here is "The Big September Man", which shows Joe Friday and his partner Sergeant Ed Jacobs (Barney Phillips) investigating the murder of a secretary. It has to be noted that most episodes of *Dragnet* do not deal with murder, but with a variety of crimes, such as robbery, kidnapping, sexual abuse (even of children), fraud or drug trade.[22] Due to this broad range of crimes, the series also shows a diversity of witnesses and suspects and social environments, though non-white characters are almost completely absent.[23] What is interesting about "The Big September Man" is how evidence is dealt with and the emphasis the detectives put on proof to reach a conviction in court. Friday's voiceover always emphasises police procedure, but in this particular episode, the analysis of physical evidence is mentioned as an especially important aspect of the investigation, though it does not necessarily reveal crucial information.

The main details of the case, a woman beaten to death with a steel pipe wrapped in paper, no trace of the killer or a motive for the killing, are given in the voiceover, the body or even the scene of the crime are not shown. More details about the nature of the evidence are given when Friday, returning from the crime lab and looking for his partner, discusses the case with a colleague. He reveals that while fingerprints have been lifted, they all belonged to the victim. Thus, while lab technicians or forensics experts are not the main investigators, the analysis of the crime scene, especially in regards to fingerprints, is immediately introduced as the first step in the investigation of a homicide. Friday's colleague, Sergeant Lopez (George Sawaya), also asks about whether the identity of the victim has been established. Generally, possibly in the absence of images of the victim or the crime scene, police work is depicted as something rather mundane. The policemen

spend their time getting information from the lab technicians and in the huge police archives. They do a lot of what Friday calls 'legwork', meaning that they interview witnesses in order to verify alibis, track down suspects or to find out more about the characters of those involved in the crime. This is all done in a rather 'objective' manner, in the sense that the policemen 'follow the evidence', as *CSI* would put it, without imposing subjective impressions on others. In fact, when Friday's partner Edwards states that he has a 'hunch' that the first suspect brought in is probably the killer, Friday replies: "We're gonna have to place him a lot closer to the murder scene than two blocks away, we can't prove a thing the way it stands", thus emphasising the importance of proof in order to achieve a conviction in court. A policeman cannot simply work on 'hunches' (as film noir detectives might do), they have to be verified. A suspect is 'innocent until proven guilty' appears, therefore, to be the underlying message (and this particular suspect cannot be proven guilty). Another aspect of the 'rational-scientific' method of detection is the use of archives. Through police records, the policemen find out that one of the murder suspects, William Tanner (Stacy Harris), was already questioned in relation to a similar, still unsolved, murder case. It later turns out that Tanner is the murderer, thus proving the necessity of such archives and the unreliability of 'hunches'. The police procedure in *Dragnet* can thus be divided into the following branches (in line with the three broad categories identified in Chapter 2: teamwork, science and witnesses): division of labour and communication with different branches of the LAPD, forensic science, the collection of fingerprints and analysis of clues and the use of loosely 'scientific' methodologies like archives of police records and, most important for *Dragnet*, the questioning of and looking for witnesses.

As outlined above, the imperative to create 'order' may be linked to the social climate *Dragnet* was located in: one of immense change, socially, politically and globally.[24] The

series is not only clearly biased in favour of the institution of the police; the institution also seems to represent, first and foremost, a white, middle-class America. The 1950s was also a time of economic prosperity for the country, which brought with it anxieties that the newly gained wealth could be lost. These anxieties were possibly also related to the beginnings of changing race and gender relations after the Second World War, as well as the fears regarding communist ideas of the abolition of private property. However, *Dragnet* not only articulates fears that property may get stolen, but also other ways that threaten the fragile middle class lifestyle: 'loose' morals and religious extremism ("The Big September Man"), how teenagers with all their economic potential and free time can fall victim to the detrimental effects of drugs and sex ("The Big Seventeen", 02/04 and "The Big Producer", 04/01) or sexual 'deviancy' ("The Big Girl", 03/31). Joe Friday fights this multiplicity of threats and potential for chaos with a 'rational-scientific', supposedly 'objective' attitude. He does not pass judgement, as a police officer it is not his place, the court does. And in this well-functioning legal system, the criminal does not get away, all criminals are convicted. Even though in rare cases, like in "The Big Seventeen" or in "The Big Thief" (03/17), the criminals die at the end of the episode, the message is clear: 'crime does not pay'. Yet, as Claude S. Fischer points out:

> Violence – most dramatically lynching and riots – continued, but during the first half of the century slowly subsided. Homicide rates, the most reliable indicators of violence generally, dropped to what was probably their lowest ever […]. Americans in the late 1950s lived in what was most likely the era of greatest safety from violence. Scholars offer several reasons for this abatement of criminal violence. Quieting trends of the late nineteenth century continued into the twentieth, such as increasing school attendance, more factory work, waning of saloons, development of the justice system, sanctification of life, and declines in the number of single men on the loose. (The percentage of men aged twenty-five to forty-four living outside of a family declined from a peak of 22 per cent in 1920 to 10 per cent in 1950) (Fischer 2010: 34).

While the reasons for the decline in violence may be interrogated further (for example, in terms of ideology, especially concerning family, masculinity and gender relations), what is

relevant for this thesis is that the decline in violent crime may indicate that the fears expressed in *Dragnet* were largely unjustified.

*Dragnet* does much to draw lines within US society between 'right' and 'wrong'. Despite the indifferent, monotonous acting styles in the series, which suggests 'objectivity' and neutrality, there is an ideological bias in favour of the institution. For example, in police interviews, policemen tend to be shot from below and suspects on eye-level, thus establishing power relations between both parties. In the court sentencing at the end of each episode, we see a close up of the guilty suspect, looking up to some invisible entity (presumably a judge or, more abstract, the powerful legal institution) while the voiceover summarises the sentence. Often, the criminals look guilty or humiliated while hearing their sentence (which invariably finds them guilty), thus implying that, faced with their punishment and state authority, criminals finally repent. There is only 'law abiding' and 'criminal' behaviour, and while there may be varying degrees of the latter one, it will always be punished. The introductory voiceover already highlights this when explaining: "the names have been changed to protect the innocent". The guilty ones need no protection, there is no grey area between 'innocent' and 'guilty' and convicted criminals have lost their right to be protected from exploitation through television.

The actors deliver lines without revealing much empathy or emotional investment in what they are saying: only the 'facts' of the case are delivered, making the characters into exchangeable figures who only serve the purpose of giving information to audiences and other characters. This unemotional acting style supports the notion that the policemen are part of a system, without their own emotions or political attitudes. It is not the job of the policemen to question whether the legal system is just and they do not question it. They merely follow a rule book, which is similar to the relatively strict police procedure they

follow. However, the clear-cut lines between 'good' and 'bad' actually function to give the police a rather neutral role: they are more powerful, they represent the 'almighty' legal system, they fight on the side of 'good'; But they are not the judges, while they may find the unambiguously 'guilty', they do not decide about sentencing, sanity of the criminals or moral implications of the crime. The lines drawn in *Dragnet* are between order and chaos, legal and illegal, and Friday's reaction to criminals usually remains without emotion.

Yet, the episodes actually leave more room for moral ambiguity than critics (such as Mittell 2004: 146) usually suggest: the murderer William Tanner, as depicted in "The Big Seventeen", is coded as mentally disturbed, which is shown by his obvious confusion and his trivial motives for the murder. He also seems nervous, is sweating and appears to be close to tears by the end of the interrogation. The conclusion later reveals that he was pronounced 'mentally sane' at the time of the murders, after being examined by "three psychiatrists appointed by the state" and sentenced to death. One reading of this closing scene may be that murder is punished harshly in any circumstance, and that, just because somebody may be visually coded as mentally disturbed, this is not enough to be pronounced 'insane'. Another reading could be that there is only the 'innocent' and the 'guilty' leaving no room for the moral ambiguity of 'criminal insanity'. However, interestingly enough, the scene is structured openly enough to question the 'almighty' legal system, to question whether the murderer should be sentenced as 'mentally sane' and deserves the death penalty. Thus, the series may ultimately be uncritical of legal institutions, but certainly leaves room for oppositional readings. In fact, despite a clear-cut binary between 'innocent' and 'guilty', criminals are often depicted as mentally ill, aberrations from the social 'norm' and possibly not fully responsible for the crime.

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Ideologically, this unquestioning affirmation of legal institutions may reflect a desire for clear-cut rules to deal with an increasingly complex world: internationally, while the Cold War drew clear lines between the East and the West, investing money into building a new Germany and Japan after the Holocaust and the Pearl Harbor attack on the USA, may have been politically necessary (from a US perspective), but certainly for many Americans a morally questionable issue. Nationally, through changing gender and racial relations as well as the ideological war against a domestic communist threat, some of the 'traditional' binary structures started to lose their meaning. Thus, *Dragnet*'s attitude that there is a 'rule book', namely the law and the legal system, which helps differentiate between 'right' and 'wrong' certainly has a reassuring element to it. In times of huge social, political and global changes and confusion, *Dragnet* may reflect a desire for a 'simpler' world, with 'clear-cut' rules and limitations.

This 'rational-scientific' approach, the development and employment of new technology and scientific knowledge in the reformed and expanded police force, reflects post-Enlightenment ideas of institutionalised policing. *Dragnet* may not show explicit enthusiasm about these developments, but it certainly depicts the efficiency of this system. The connection between *Dragnet*'s belief in 'rational-scientific' methods of detection and post-Enlightenment ideals of rationality can be established, in the sense that *Dragnet* employs logical deduction, 'objectivity' and science, in order to reveal the 'truth'. It can thus be argued that the series furthers post-Enlightenment ideas and brings them into the institution of the police force. The ideas of rationality and the employment of scientific research to increase the standard of living are thus carried into governmental structures and institutions. This is a significant step from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes novels which can be read as advocating this idea, but also from Agatha Christie's Miss Marple novels, which saw the implementation of science into the police procedure as

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something to be cautious of. Thus, *Dragnet* can be viewed as an addition to the project of post-Enlightenment modernism: the depiction of police procedure, the integration of technology and science into crime fighting as well as the representation of methods of detection as a way to create 'order' through binaries combined with aesthetics rooted in loosely modernist film noir and its innovative aesthetics. Yet, the combination of post-Enlightenment 'rational-scientific' methods of detection with the aesthetics of a pessimist modernism that can be understood as eventually leading into postmodernity (see Chapter 3 and 6) may already provide hints towards the unstable balancing act between post-Enlightenment, modern 'order' and postmodern 'chaos' that appears to dominate more recent versions of the genre.

### 5.2.  *Quincy M.E.* (NBC, 1976-1983)

As with all the case studies in this chapter, *Quincy M.E.* needs to be contextualised within a broader landscape of its contemporaries in American detective drama and a (necessarily generalised) overview of how methods of detection are employed: despite the enormous success of *Dragnet*, the genre as a whole was not vastly popular in America until the late 1960s and 1970s. Cobley points out that this period saw an "unprecedented explosion of police narratives onto the 1970s entertainment scene" (Cobley 2001: 56) in print, film and television.[25] One reason for this change may be that the police procedural and 'genius' detective series set within the legal system are well suited to depict various social *milieux* and proved to be a significant vehicle to reflect social change: series like *The Mod Squad* (ABC, 1968-1973) or *Ironside* (NBC, 1967-1975) featured teams of professional women, African American and white men and the latter one a wheelchair bound paternal leader. Meanwhile, the setting in the legal system ultimately offers affirmation of democracy, the constitution and government authority. The narratives show the system's openness for

change and its willingness to enforce constitutional rights, while at the same time reinforcing police power.

The detectives of these narratives had varied social backgrounds and respect the law, though often not the authoritarian structures of the legal system. The narrative structures reached from 'genius' detective series like *Kojak* (CBS, 1973-1978) or police procedurals like *Hawaii Five-0* (CBS, 1968-1980) to the class wars fought in the "inverted whodunit" (Cobley 2001:58) *Columbo* (NBC, 1971-1990) or *The Streets of San Francisco* (ABC, 1972-1977).[26] The pilot episode of *Kojak*, "The Marcus-Nelson Murders", first aired in 1973, may show most explicitly the change in tone that marked the genre during this 'boom': the episode tackles issues of institutionalised racism. It was based on a real murder case, which led to significant reforms in the US legal system concerning suspects' and witnesses' rights (most importantly that suspects need to be informed of their rights upon arrest). While the flaws of the legal system are uncovered, the law itself is then used to improve it, thus ultimately affirming the system and its ability to reform. Meanwhile, the incorruptible Kojak (Telly Salavas) becomes an agent of change from *inside* the system. Another example is the title character of *Quincy M.E.*, a medical examiner, who, as such, is part of the legal system, but spends almost every episode fighting corrupt political structures within the legal system.[27] In terms of narrative structure, apart from the extension of *Dragnet*'s 30-minute-format to 1-hour-drama (sometimes 90 min., see below), *Columbo*'s and *The Streets of San Francisco*'s 'inverted whodunit', in which the criminal and, in the case of the former series, the *how* of the case is given away in the beginning of the episode may be the biggest variations in the genre during this time. But most series still relied on the three-act-structure and narrative closure. Thus, while detective characters (in terms of class, race and gender) and the depiction of 'villains' (now often victims of institutionalised racism and social circumstance, or, at the other end of the spectrum,

entitled, arrogant, over-privileged and morally 'bankrupt') change, 'rational-scientific' police procedures are considered a useful way to explore social and institutional reform.

The most immediate generic predecessor to *Quincy M.E.* within the internal genre discourse of American detective drama and in terms of its use of 'rational-scientific' methods of detection was probably *Ironside*, starring Raymond Burr (who previously played TV lawyer *Perry Mason* [CBS, 1957-1966]). Burr plays the title character, wheelchair-bound and (because of his injury) retired San Francisco police chief Robert T. Ironside, who works officially as a consultant to the police, but seems to enjoy all legal rights that come with being part of the police force and has access to police resources: one policewoman and one policeman are part of his team, he can view case files and use police labs for the analysis of evidence.[28] Thus, he can be seen as a fully accredited member of the police force. Similar to *Dragnet*, *Ironside* emphasises the need for proof within the legal process. In the series, evidence is taken very seriously, some scenes even take place in the forensics lab, and Ironside pushes the scientists in the lab to thoroughly analyse the evidence found at scenes. The show also often sees the team members going against superiors, not accepting conclusions deduced by other police detectives. The series emphasises that the detectives should not jump to conclusions, or make assumptions, but instead use analytical distance and 'rational-scientific' methods of detection. Of course, the other police procedurals of the time emphasise proof and feature forensic science, as well. Yet, (possibly because Ironside is less mobile than other detectives), an almost 'Holmesian' reliance on logical deduction over physical force is rarely as pronounced as in *Ironside*.

*Quincy M.E.*, starring Jack Klugman in the title role, does not reference *Ironside* directly, and its main character is certainly less authoritative, but the series represents similar

attitudes to 'rational-scientific' methods of detection. To briefly mention its industrial context, it was originally shown in 1976, a year after *Ironside* was cancelled, and stayed on the air until 1983.[29] It was first broadcast in the context of a format named *NBC Mystery Movie*, which featured an episode of a different crime series every week, first including *Columbo* with Peter Falk, *McMillan & Wife* (NBC, 1971-1977), starring Rock Hudson and Susan Saint James and *McCloud* (NBC, 1970-1977), starring Dennis Weaver. Not surprisingly, with stars like Peter Falk and Rock Hudson, this rotation format did quite well in the ratings, at first, and soon included more programmes, like *Quincy M.E.* in 1976. However, audiences apparently grew tired of this 'wheel' structure and it was abolished in 1978. *Quincy M.E.* continued running as a prime time series, though the individual instalments changed from 75 minutes running time (without commercials) to roughly 45 minutes running time (without commercials).

In terms of 'rational-scientific' methods of detection, *Quincy M.E.* arguably added a new perspective to the 'genius' detective series as sub-genre: of course, Quincy is not the first detective working inside the legal system and not even the first to try to change the system from within, but as a scientist who is part of the legal system in the 1970s, he certainly is linked with post-Enlightenment and modern discourses regarding the integration of science into the legal system, as a mode of investigation which can even further society. The character of Quincy is conservative in the sense that he wants to preserve the system and his 'rational-scientific' methods of detection correspond with a rhetoric of binary structures, but, much like his fellow detectives of the 1970s he wants to reform the legal system by making it transparent and fight corrupt institutional structures. The series does employ and construct binary structures, but 'the system', 'the government' and politics in general appear to be 'evil' and corrupt. Looking at the social context of mid-1970s America may go a long way in explaining this attitude and the way methods of detection

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may need to be interpreted. Thus, this case study will start off by explaining the social climate in which *Quincy M.E.* is set. The outline of the historical context will inform an understanding of how the methods of detection can be read as a reaction to the social and political crisis point of America in the mid-1970s.

Richard Nixon followed Dwight D. Eisenhower as President of the United States in 1969 and stayed in office until 1974. Nixon had inherited several problematic and expensive projects from his predecessors, most notably the Vietnam War, which was not only expensive and was becoming more difficult to win, but resistance against it grew in the American populace.[30] Domestically, the student movement began to focus more on issues of identity politics, which led to huge cultural battles in the early 1970s: the gay movement and the women's movement also formed as serious forces influencing US society. The Nixon administration, representing the more conservative forces in US society, stood firmly against many of their requests, for example, the fight of the women's movement for the right to abortion, and only reluctantly implemented equal rights for African Americans (Woods 2005: 281-393). In co-operation with J. Edgar Hoover's FBI, many left wing radicals were tried in highly publicised cases, as an example how the political right laboured to restore 'law and order'.[31] Many of the issues addressed by the left at the time concerned the constitution, specifically constitutional rights, and were thus hard to avoid by the administration.

Despite this apparently fierce fight for hegemonic power between the political left and conservatives, Nixon's legacy is probably mostly connected with what is commonly known as the Watergate scandal, which shook America's belief in its own politicians. The Nixon administration was notoriously paranoid about any kind of opponent, especially activists who spoke out against the Vietnam War.[32] The president approved the planting of

so-called 'counter-subversives' in order to sabotage 'enemy' operations, mainly through illegal wiretaps and the theft of documents discrediting members of the anti-war movement or political opponents. This attitude was carried into the 1972 presidential campaign. The 'Watergate' incident itself refers to a group of burglars hired by the Committee to Re-Elect the President (CREEP), who were apprehended during a break-in into the office of chairman of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), Larry O'Brien. CREEP members became involved in the case by posting bail, attending trial hearings and generally covering up the incident.[33] As became obvious later, the men had broken in to replace a bug in O'Brien's office.[34] The investigations led to close inquiries into the administration, which, in turn, led to hearings, firings, resignations and criminal charges brought against members of the Washington elite. Nixon resigned in August 1974 and was pardoned for any federal crimes while in office by his successor Gerald Ford:

> In one sense, the Watergate scandal constituted America's darkest hour. Nixon was the first president to resign under fire. Twenty-five members of the administration, including four cabinet officers, were convicted. In 1974, in a letter to President Ford, CIA Director William Colby acknowledged that during the Nixon administration, the agency had maintained files on some 10,000 U.S. citizens and engaged in illegal domestic operations against opponents of U.S. policy in Vietnam as well as other dissidents. In short, Watergate confronted the nation with its gravest constitutional crisis since the Civil War. […] Following in the aftermath of Vietnam, the break-in and the cover-up only deepened public cynicism toward a government that lied to its citizens and violated their constitutional rights (Woods 2005: 349).

As can be expected, the following years were dominated by the implementation of new laws guaranteeing transparency and restricting the rights of the president:

> In the process of attempting to resolve the conflict about the proper scope of presidential, congressional, and judicial power in the United States, the judges, legislators, and executive branch officials – with assists from investigative journalists – were faced with the fact that presidential power had vastly increased during the Cold War […]. It was now up to the Congress and the courts to determine how far to scale back executive privileges and the assumptions about national security that rationalized so many of those privileges (McQuaid 2003: 340).

On the other hand, the uncovering of the scandal also proved that the democratic system was intact. In 1976, the year that *Quincy M.E.* premiered, the film *All the President's Men* (Pakula, 1976), was also released, dealing with how journalists Woodward and Bernstein uncovered the scandal, celebrating free press, investigative journalism and free speech as 'correctives' in a well-functioning democracy. 1976 was also the year in which Democrat candidate Jimmy Carter was elected into office. But while the democratic system of the US was affirmed, Watergate and the investigations into the Nixon administration left the American public with a deep distrust in governmental structures. This was accompanied by an economic downturn, the oil-crisis, the perseverance of social injustice and the loss of the war in Vietnam:

> Throughout the thirty years after World War II American politics had functioned on the premise that nothing was impossible if America wished to achieve it. We [America] would be guardians of freedom, send a man to the moon, conquer social injustice, eliminate poverty, develop impressive technology – in short, control the universe. That sense of confidence and of power had been hallmark of all political factions in the country, even young radicals who thought that by their own endeavors they could change the world. In the 1970s, however, a new sense of limits struck home. The United States suffered its first loss in war, Richard Nixon [resigned in disgrace], in large parts because he himself had no sense of limits to his own presidential power. The oil-producing countries of OPEC quickly made Americans conscious of their dependence on the rest of the world during the 1973-1974 oil boycott and the sporadic shortages thereafter (Chafe, Sitkoff and Bailey 2003: 351).

In times of such radical change within American society, foreign and domestic politics, but also in the way America saw itself and its government, it may not be completely surprising that a scientist, someone who has the means to access an 'objective' truth, becomes a hero who is capable of re-establishing 'law and order'. *Quincy M.E.*'s methods of detection can thus be understood as a reaction to the social uncertainty the USA was faced with after the Watergate scandal.

The title character of *Quincy M.E.* is not a police detective, he is a medical examiner. In the series, it is often mentioned that he is one of the best in his field and would have better job opportunities – and a better income – if he worked outside of the public service. However, it is his set goal to find 'truth' and 'justice' for those who were murdered, and for those who are wrongly accused of a crime. To achieve this, he frequently goes beyond what is asked of him as medical examiner and interviews witnesses or collects samples of evidence himself. Most of his colleagues appear somehow caught up in the (corrupt) politics of the legal system. The boss of the lab Quincy works in, Dr Robert Asten (John S. Ragin), often obstructs Quincy's investigations in favour of political concerns, for example, regarding funding for the lab. Meanwhile, the police detectives, mainly Lt. Frank Monahan (Gary Walberg), usually settle for the 'easiest' explanation, not necessarily out of laziness, but due to a lack of understanding of science and the evidence produced by Quincy, and because of a lack of personnel. Especially Quincy's relationship with Dr Asten seems marked by a deep distrust of politics in general. While Dr Asten is not a completely unlikeable character, he seems to be an example of how those higher up in the hierarchy of a government institution have to frequently compromise their ideals and sacrifice the scientific values of 'objectivity' and 'truth'.

The series reflects a general suspicion towards the legal system and government institutions. While this can be linked to the distrust of government following the Watergate scandal, this may also be related to a general inability of the justice system to deal with dissent. As a solution to the problem, the series proposes transparency on the one hand (in having Quincy uncover the details), and science as an 'objective' entity to serve justice on the other. Science, or rather, 'rational-scientific' approaches to detection thus appear in a slightly different light. Sherlock Holmes' 'rational-scientific' methods of detection were linked with a belief in scientific progress and its promises to advance society, but also to

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discipline it. In *Quincy M.E.* science almost appears as something to police, discipline and control government institutions with, as if society has to be protected from the police and from miscarriages of justice, not from rogue individuals (as suggested by *Dragnet*).[35] Especially in the first few episodes, murders often happen in connection with fraud or political 'conspiracies'. In fact, Quincy is frequently accused of formulating fanciful "conspiracy theories" – an implicit rhetoric connection to Watergate.

What appears to be a big issue in the audio-visual adaptation of 'whodunit' novels, even often in Sherlock Holmes adaptations, but also in the police procedural, is the visualisation of clues. In most Sherlock Holmes adaptations, clues tend to be (ironically) over-emphasised (for example, by drawing attention to huge magnifying glasses used to look at them), but the connection between them stays generally mysterious. In most adaptations of Agatha Christie novels, attention is drawn to inter-personal relationships of the suspects and victims instead. In *Dragnet*, clues are rarely shown at all, since images of the crime scene are excluded and scientific analysis through the crime lab happens off-screen; later detective dramas on television also avoid the visualisation of clues. However, *Quincy M.E.* found a completely different way to visualise clues: instead of showing artefacts understandable for almost anyone, or clues visible to the naked eye, *Quincy* focussed on clues to be found on or even inside a dead or living body. Examples of this are bruising patterns on a murder victim, which point to height and weight of her killer (01/01 "Go Fight City Hall… to the Death") or images of a deadly virus (02/01 and 02/02, "Snake Eyes Part 1" and "Snake Eyes Part 2" ). While it is shown on-screen, most audience members cannot be expected to understand the images, or the implications of this clue, without further explanation. The clue is thus translated into a visual sign, which has to be 'decoded' by the characters. As mentioned in Chapters 3 and 4, Enlightenment science was obsessed with *making things visible*, especially those things not visible to the naked eye,

even linking it with understanding 'nature's language'. Once the signs are made visible, they become clues that lead the detective to the murderer. This idea seems to govern the visuals on *Quincy M.E.*, by allowing the viewer to see images otherwise only visible through strong microscope lenses. Thus, to a certain extent, *Quincy M.E.* goes back to optimistic Enlightenment ideas, in which science can not only explain the world, but even 'better' society by helping to get rid of 'evil'. In the pilot episode, "Go Fight City Hall… to the Death!", Quincy tries to lift fingerprints off a murder victim's neck, and he explains that this is a technique he is pioneering. In the process, detailed images of the bruises on the dead girl's neck are shown and Quincy explains his conclusion that the killer had very large hands. He is thus not 'just' a scientist, but (like Sherlock Holmes) an innovator who actively seeks new techniques to find killers, trying to make more things visible and to find more ways to explain the world and expel 'evil' from society. Through its visualisation of clues, the series informs an internal generic discourse regarding how to depict methods of detection.

In this same episode, Quincy is shown at work, examining the body of a young girl found on the beach, just dressed in a bikini. The first image after he has been called away from home is of a Dictaphone, laid down on a plastic bag on the beach next to the victim's hand. As Quincy is recording his initial findings into the Dictaphone, bruises on her neck, well-kept fingernails, no defence wounds on hands or arms, and so on, the relevant areas of her body are shown. Thus, while viewers get to see the injuries on the neck of the strangled girl in close-up, the dead body is only shown in a fragmented manner, avoiding the spectacle of the dead body.[36] Quincy examines the body thoroughly; he is even shown scraping her bare feet in order to look for any kind of material that might stick to her soles. Accompanying the examination is a police officer, or possibly a CSI, taking photographs of the body. Quincy then asks a police officer about the personal belongings of the girl had

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with her and gets annoyed at the way the officer describes the items as 'insignificant'. When Lieutenant Monahan arrives at the scene and finds out that Quincy is the medical examiner, he reacts with an "Oh, no!", and it is obvious, that in his opinion, Quincy's attention to detail is something that inconveniences the police. Quincy is also quickly positioned as the party who cares more about the dead girl, when Monahan insists: "Don't try to make this into more than a simple rape", and he replies "I never knew there was such a thing".[37] Thus, Quincy is introduced as a scientist who works thoroughly, so much that police officers get annoyed with him, but who obviously cares about the murder victim, thus giving him moral authority. The next scene shows Quincy and Monahan debating over a young man who was found getting rid of the dead girl's purse and then got shot by an officer. Monahan concludes that the boy committed the murder, whereas Quincy sees no evidence to corroborate this hypothesis.

Thus, within the first few minutes of the episode, a binary is constructed between Quincy and Monahan. Quincy represents the rational, he needs to verify hypotheses, he is thorough, and he relies on science. Yet, interestingly enough, he also seems to feel very passionate about bringing the killer to justice. In contrast, Monahan seems to represent the 'irrational-subjective' as a mode of detection. He jumps to conclusions, makes assumptions about people, uses stereotypes and seems indifferent to the murdered girl as well as her murderer. The episode then goes on to show Dr Asten, head of the Medical Examiner's Office, threatened by other parties with budget cuts, asking Quincy to perform an autopsy in a hurry, thus positioning him on the side of the binary which makes assumptions and takes short cuts to quickly close case files and serve their own interest, rather than society. When, in a second murder case, Quincy refuses to certify suicide and insists on his authority as medical examiner to decide whether something is a suicide or a homicide, it is even revealed that Asten is reviewing the case, presumably to confirm the police's

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conclusion of suicide. Evidence is therefore made to fit the assumptions. Instead of overtly rational and detached, science, or rather, the scientist is depicted as the party that shows empathy and seeks 'truth', even if it is inconvenient. While this could be said of most detectives, what sets Quincy apart from his literary predecessors like Sherlock Holmes or Miss Marple, is that it is always implied that justice will be served within the legal system and scandal will be made public. Earlier detectives often helped (upper class) criminals to avoid scandal and public humiliation, by letting them flee or commit suicide.[38] Quincy thus functions as a hero for the working class, as also suggested by his favourite bar near the harbour where he spends his free time with his working class friends. In opposition to Marple and Holmes who policed class boundaries by protecting the middle class, Quincy uses 'rational-scientific' methods of detection to protect the working class from the conspiracies of a political elite.

The impression is created that Quincy and his assistant Sam Fujiyama (Robert Ito) are fighting, not only their colleagues, Monahan and Asten, but later on in the episode, even the deputy mayor who promises to instigate an investigation into the goings on in City Hall that led to several murders, but fails to do so. Governmental systems, the police, the medical examiner's office and City Hall, all appear to be caught up in conspiracies, lies and cover-ups. Interestingly enough, it is not the legal system itself that can serve justice; it is Quincy, one individual who sacrifices a higher income and possibly a reputation, to fight for the 'truth'. As such, he represents the 'American Dream', in which the individual has the power to change the world. Science, and the 'rational-scientific' method of detection in *Quincy M.E.,* work not necessarily to affirm the legal system, but to help reform it. While the legal system has the potential to serve justice, it is thoroughly corrupted. Dr Asten is blackmailed into falsifying reports almost every episode, while Quincy seems to uncover cases of corruption and conspiracy everywhere. Science, again, has the power to uncover

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'truth' and serve 'justice', to change society and make it 'better', and to transform politics after the Watergate scandal.

Where previously, 'rational-scientific' detection could be read as reinforcing class, gender or race binaries, *Quincy M.E.* seems to try to re-define those binaries, exploring the structures of institutional and executive power within the state. In a corrupt state, science can function as an 'objective' means for political reform. This reinforces an ideology of the 'American Dream' in the sense that an individual has the ability to bring about social change and institutional reform. What is affirmed is an ideology which privileges the individual as lonesome hero, fighting on his own, perhaps referencing 'classic' American Western heroes. In generic terms, this is particularly interesting since the police procedural traditionally emphasises team work. Yet, many 1970s 'genius' detective series are set in the legal system, featuring mainly small teams of two, like Quincy and his assistant Sam, *McMillan & Wife* or Mike Stone (Karl Malden) and Steve Keller (Michael Douglas) in *The Streets of San Francisco*. This trend is predominant for quite a long time, with the exceptions such as *Hawaii Five-0* or *Hill Street Blues* (NBC, 1981-1987). While Quincy is supported by his assistant Sam Fujiyama, he still seems to fight mostly on his own.[39] Politics and organized groups or institutions may be viewed as capable of reform, but *Quincy M.E.* seems to leave little possibility for a group effort to bring about political change. Science functions as an 'objective' means to find 'truth', restore order and offer salvation from political conspiracy. Thus, the 'system' is ultimately not challenged by the series, but its ability to change through individual effort and the 'tool' of 'rational-scientific' methods of detection is celebrated. The series, at least in regards to its methods of detection, seems to reflect a modern project with roots in Enlightenment discourses surrounding ways to access 'truth'. Despite the socio-political 'chaos' surrounding it, the texts suggests technological progress and the possibility of 'order'. *Quincy M.E.*'s

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innovation of the genre is not the way 'rational-scientific' methods of detection are used and the explicit emphasis on science, but the way contemporary technology is employed to visualise the science and clues, thus linking with modern discourses surrounding the 'advancement' of society, not just through logic and reason, but scientific methodologies and technological innovation.

### 5.3.  *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (CBS, 2000 - )

Again, it is necessary to place *CSI* within the broader discourse of the detective genre and methods of detection. Already in the 1970s and, more obviously in the 1980s, the genre of the American detective series was dominated by series featuring 'irrational-subjective' detection: examples are *Columbo* (NBC, 1971-1990), *Charlie's Angels* (ABC, 1976-1981) or *Starsky & Hutch* (ABC, 1975-1979) in the 1970s and *Hill Street Blues*, *Cagney & Lacey* (CBS, 1981-1988) or *21, Jump Street* (Fox, 1987-1991) in the 1980s. This may be related to 'irrational-subjective' detection's links with experimental narrative structures, 'realism' and 'quality' (as will be briefly explored in Chapters 6 and 7) and a changing television landscape that increasingly encouraged detective dramas which privileged social issues.[40] While the 1990s generally saw less detective series, police procedurals like *NYPD Blue* (ABC, 1993-2005) employed 'irrational-subjective' detection to explore moral ambiguity while *Law & Order* (NBC, 1990-2010) and its spin-offs are only partly a detective drama and binaries constructed in the first half of an episode are deconstructed in the second half, which draws more on legal drama.[41] Thus, it could be argued that despite technological and scientific progress in forensic medicine as well as television production (especially in regards to use of CGI), the  police procedural, guided by 'rational-scientific' methods of detection, was largely absent on American TV until the early 2000s, when series' like *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (CBS, 2000- ) and its spin-offs *CSI: Miami* (CBS, 2002-2012)

and *CSI: NY* (CBS, 2004-2013), as well as other series like *NCIS* (CBS, 2003- ), *Crossing Jordan* (NBC, 2001-2007) or *Bones* (Fox, 2005- ) became popular.[42]

In line with internal genre discourses regarding the police procedural, in *CSI*, team work is heavily emphasised, possibly even more so than in *Dragnet* (see above). Where *Dragnet* does not provide much information about its characters and defined their relationship with each other through their function within the legal process, *CSI* equips its characters with psychological motivations and backstories. As Roberta Pearson puts it:

> The occasional, casual viewer [can infer] enough of the characters' backstories to follow the case of the week while the dedicated, competent viewer would have had her enjoyment enriched by detailed knowledge of the backstories (Pearson 2007: 39-40).

Even though headed by the almost paternal figure Gil Grissom (William Peterson) (and later Dr Raymond Langston [Laurence Fishburne] and D.B. Russell [Ted Danson]), team members carry out various parts of the investigation independently, often even work by themselves. There is a clear division of labour within the lab between trace analysis, DNA analysis, fingerprint analysis, ballistics, pathology, the analysis of audio-visual material and the CSIs who work 'in the field', process crime scenes and ultimately bring all the test results together to come up with an hypothesis. The teamwork and division of labour becomes possible because the method of detection provides the assurance that 'truth' will be found, if science can offer 'objectivity', 'justice' can be served without the help of 'genius' detectives. The scientist characters are ultimately exchangeable. The series does not focus on policemen and women, but on scientists. They are part of the legal system in a government funded laboratory, working with the police and the prosecutor's office. The text heavily emphasises legal procedures in dealing with evidence.

Despite its 'rational-scientific' methods of detection rooted in post-Enlightenment discourses, aesthetically, the series draws on a discourse of what many critics might regard as 'postmodern' television: particularly in the sense that it is very self-reflexive, ironic and is profoundly intertextual.[43] Its glossy look, especially in terms of colour scheme and its use of CGI, also reflects a general leaning towards a 'style over substance' aesthetic that one could associate with elements of contemporary culture, as does the often stilted dialogue (mainly the ironic one-liners delivered at the opening of each episode by the team leader). In particular, the *CSI*-shots as well as the slick, almost fetishized, presentation of dead bodies, appear to emphasise the 'spectacle' of violent death, rather than its effects on society. This could fit in with what Jameson calls "a new kind of flatness or depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality in the most literal sense" (Jameson 1991: 9). The formulaic narrative structure supports this notion that the 'spectacle' of the image supersedes any 'depth' the story may offer, since the story seems so predictable that in-depth engagement may be superfluous.[44] As mentioned in Chapter 3, postmodernism is often accused of putting style and looks before the expression of any political or philosophical statement, or, as Jameson observes, refuses to take part in any collective social or ideological project (ibid: 17). In his essays on the Gulf War, for example, Baudrillard argues that the media spectacle of war turns it into a simulacrum and trivialises the violence while silencing political discourses surrounding it:

> Unlike earlier wars, in which there were political aims either of conquest or domination, what is at stake in this one is war itself: its status, its meaning, its future. […] In the absence of the (greatly diminished) will to power, and the (problematic) will to knowledge, there remains today the widespread will to spectacle (Baudrillard 2000: 32).

This is in line with Baudrillard's concept of the simulacrum and the hyperreal where everything becomes 'artificial':

> It is no longer a question of imitation, nor of redublication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself, that is, an operation to deter every real process by its operational

double, a metastable, programmatic, perfect descriptive machine which provides all the signs of the real and short-circuits vicissitudes. Never again will the real have been produced – this is the vital function of the model in a system of death, or rather anticipated resurrection which no longer leaves any chance, even in the event of death. A hyperreal henceforth sheltered from the imaginary, and from any distinction between the real and the imaginary, leaving room only for the orbitual recurrence of models and the simulated generation of difference (Baudrillard 1983: 4).

Applied to *CSI*, it can easily be argued that the bodies become 'spectacle' and 'mere' simulacrum of violent death while all discourses surrounding causes and effects of (often brutal) murder are silenced. The series uses distinctively postmodern aesthetics, pointing to its own artificiality through irony and showing awareness of its own genre roots, self-referentiality and intertextuality (for example in episode 05/11 "Who Shot Sherlock?"). As David Harvey summarises:

> The collapse of time horizons [meaning the de-construction of grand narratives of a unified history] and the preoccupation with instantaneity have in part arisen through the contemporary emphasis in cultural production on events, spectacles, happenings and media images. Cultural producers have learned to explore and use new technologies, the media and ultimately multi-media possibilities. The effect, however, has been to re-emphasise the fleeting qualities of modern life and even to celebrate them. […] The closing of the gap between popular culture and cultural production in the contemporary period, while strongly dependent on new technologies of communication, seems to lack any avant-gardist or revolutionary impulse, leading many to accuse postmodernism of a simple and direct surrender to commodification, commercialisation, and the market. However this may be, much of postmodernism is consciously anti-auratic and anti-avant-garde and seeks to explore cultural arenas open to all (Harvey 1991: 312).

With this agenda, popular culture consciously functions as expression of style *and* substance. What appears to be lack of substance or depth, Harvey describes in *The Condition of Postmodernity* as:

> …the most startling fact about postmodernism: its total acceptance of the ephemerality, fragmentation, discontinuity and the chaotic […]. But postmodernism responds to that fact in a very particular way. It does not try to transcend it, counteract it, or even define the 'internal and immutable' elements that might lie within it. Postmodernism swims, even wallows, in the fragmentary and the chaotic currents of change as if that is all there is (Harvey 1989: 44).

The postmodern aesthetics of *CSI*, its often ahistorical gesturing towards film noir styles (for example in "Rashomama", 06/21 or "Fannysmackin'", 07/04) or its humorous mixing of high-tech science with silent film aesthetics (as in "Ending Happy", 07/21), serves to aesthetically suggest the chaos of the deconstruction of a unified idea of film and genre history.

At the same time, images of the lab, the all-explaining *CSI*-shot, montages that privilege scientific processes help to 'order' chaos, even though this 'order' relates to the event of the murder rather than the grand narrative of film history. While the 'spectacle' of violent death may become 'mere' simulacrum in *CSI*, the series is earnest about its own ideological agenda in which science equals 'truth'. The images are not simply contradictory: in unison with the narrative's earnest attitude towards science's ability to help access an 'objective truth' about an event, the visuals emphasise that the chaos left by the deconstruction of grand narratives can be 'ordered'. Suspicious of politics (similar to *Quincy M.E.*), the legal system itself is not questioned, since, with the help of 'objective' science and the scientists of the *CSI* team, it is ultimately 'just'. Jim Collins (1991: 116), trying to get to terms with (mass) cultural production and ideology points out that postmodern ideology theory needs to push identity construction to the foreground. Yet, the, what he calls, 'semiotic glut', is still organized:

> The situation, then, is not a 'democratic' plurality, where aesthetic and ideological alternatives are carefully arranged in any kind of laissez-faire smorgasbord. Instead, a semiotic glut necessitates the arrangement, even hierarchizing of conflicting discourses by individual subjects at a localized level (Collins 1991: 116).

Collins is arguably right to state that discourses are ultimately hierarchized by the individual subject, but it is argued here that, in addition to this, despite a postmodern 'semiotic excess' and contradictory messages (how can the series be earnest and simultaneously push its own artificiality to the foreground?), the text itself creates 'order'

or a specific arrangement or 'hierarchy' of discourses in an ideological sense: *CSI*'s glossy visuals are not surface without depth, they are intrinsically linked with the drama's completely un-ironic stance on science, 'truth' and 'order'.

*CSI* was first broadcast in the 2000-2001 season on the US Network channel CBS.[45] In 2010, Kompare pointed out that in ratings, "it has been a top 10 network series for each of its 10 seasons, a top five series for eight seasons, and was the top-rated series on [American] TV for two consecutive seasons (2002-4), drawing over 26 million viewers at its peak" (Kompare 2010: 4). The series' postmodern aesthetics may need to be understood in the context of a television landscape dominated by the 'high quality' dramas produced by HBO and other cable channels, as a strategy by Network channel CBS to compete with dramas that can offer profanities, nudity and violence without fear of censorship:

> …formulaic series like *CSI* that could be expanded through a particular brand identity and then syndicated through multiple partnerships across the broadcast and cable landscape became a centerpiece of network programming strategies and brand construction in the post-network era (Nichols-Pethick 2012: 166).

While critics like Michael Allen (2007b) or Ellen Burton Harrington (2007) read *CSI*'s success as a reaction to the insecurity and moral ambiguity following 9/11 and the ensuing War on Terror, at least the first season's success cannot be explained by it. The connection with terrorism and the Bush administration will be discussed later in more detail, but the question remains why a series like *CSI* was successful in 2000? First of all, while there was no equivalent in its treatment of science or crime fighting on US television since *Quincy M.E.*, 'forensic detection' was already very popular in literature, most notably in the Kay Scarpetta-series by Patricia Cornwell.[46] Furthermore, British television saw the 'forensic realism' of *Prime Suspect*, which not only showed dead bodies in gruesome detail, but also introduced viewers to forensic procedures (Jermyn 2010: 5).[47] It is, thus, rather surprising that a format like *CSI* did not occur sooner on American television.[48]

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The occurrence of *CSI* at this specific point in time is related to several discourses, for example, the amount of popular knowledge on science in society, the continuous development of CGI that allows the series to visualise not only the inside of a body, but also the most minute clues found at a crime scene and an aesthetic sensitivity that can easily accommodate *CSI*'s visuals. Martha Gever calls these "feats of micro-voyeurism" (2005: 458) and argues that "this triumph of videographic image-making brings to mind non-invasive medical technologies like the magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) used to render internal body tissues transparent" (ibid.). However, bearing in mind that some of the most successful crime series of the 1990s were *NYPD Blue*, *The X-Files* (Fox, 1993-2002), *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990-1991) (at least in terms of aesthetic influence and critical acclaim, if not ratings) or *Law & Order*, the success of *CSI* signals a significant shift for the genre.[49] The narrative of *CSI* centres not on their private lives or the whole of the legal system. The crimes committed can be solved by 'rational-scientific' methods and do not involve anything supernatural, occult or paranormal (as even a 'social realist' drama like *Homicide: Life on the Street* [NBC, 1993-1999] sometimes suggests). The series re-constructs binary structures pertaining to 'good' and 'evil' rather than exploring moral ambiguity. In this sense, *CSI*, or more so its immense success, signals a break with the genre output of the previous decades. The central role 'rational-scientific' methods of detection play in the narratives of the series also seems to signal a 'return' to the fantasy of social 'order' modern binaries can provide within a postmodern, pluralistic society.

While its initial success is related to other discourses, the extraordinary longevity of *CSI's* success – and the success of its spin-offs – could be read as immediately related to the trauma of 9/11 and be put in relation to the discourses surrounding the War on Terror, as well as its consequences for the legal system. First aired in October 2000, the first season of *CSI* was actually set in the middle of the presidential election race between Al Gore and

George W. Bush, Jr., and Bush won the election narrowly only a month after *CSI* premiered.[50] Interestingly enough, Ryan Sager, writing on the Republican Party from a Republican point of view, explains how the 2000 election was not about much more than establishing power after Clinton's eight-year-run:

> There were policy disagreements, of course, but little was at stake in terms of big ideas. Both candidates had plans for Social Security and Medicare. Both candidates pledged, in their different ways, to give the public a break from the embarrassing scandals of the Clinton years. And both candidates (though especially Bush) gave short shrift to foreign policy, seeing no new foreign threat in need of immediate attention. This was not, the assumption seemed to be, an election that would define any new era in American politics. Whoever was elected would be little more than a place holder until some more inspiring figure came along – hopefully in four, not eight years (Sager 2006: 95).

Thus, Bush's win in the election race seems to mark an overall shift in US society towards the political right, rather than a belief in the candidate. Economically, the so-called 'dot-com bubble', which saw stock in online-based companies and products elaborately over-valued, had burst in early 2000, but the biggest consequences were yet to follow, most namely the bankruptcy of Enron in late 2001 (Elkind and McLean 2004). However, the country was still experiencing an economic downturn.

Concerning science, especially forensic science, the 1990s had seen huge changes in popular scientific knowledge. In 1987, DNA was admitted as evidence in a US court for the first time (Weedn 2007: 491). The Human Genome Project, charged with the deciphering of the whole human genome, started in 1990.[51] Forensic evidence became a major part of the highly publicised trial against O.J. Simpson (Fiske 1994: xiii-xviii).[52] DNA tests establishing paternity became a staple of afternoon talk shows. The significant advances made during the 1980s on deciphering and understanding DNA were presumably reflected in school curricula, producing a television audience with at least some knowledge on it. In 1996, sheep Dolly was cloned in the UK and moral issues concerning cloning and

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stem cell research were publicly debated all across the world. Many films directly or indirectly reflected fears concerning genetic manufacturing, like *Gattaca* (Niccol, 1997), *Alien: Resurrection* (Jeunet, 1997) or *Artificial Intelligence: A.I.* (Spielberg, 2001). Kompare argues that "*CSI* constantly *teaches* us about its world" (Kompare 2010: 17, emphasis in the original), namely the world of science, autopsies, DNA, gunshot-residue (GSR) or how blood previously invisible can be made visible. *CSI*-shots, autopsies, tests involving chemical reactions, the properties of toxins, and so on, are accompanied by narration. Yet, quite a sophisticated general knowledge of DNA and science in general is usually expected of the audience, which appears to be well-trained in genre conventions as well as a basic knowledge of the possibilities of forensic science. The fact that *CSI* draws on this kind of 'mainstream knowledge' may go a long way in explaining its initial success. Since this kind of knowledge is relatively new and rarely tested in most people's everyday life, some audience members may also feel that they can prove or enhance some of their knowledge while watching the series.[53] However, it ought to be noted that, as Martha Gever (2005) points out, the scientific knowledge produced in and by *CSI* is often inaccurate (possibly as much as 'mainstream knowledge' of science is often inaccurate) and almost excludes the idea of human fallibility, probably to depict a coherent idea of science as a way to access 'truth'. Thus, it is in line with other dramas that employ 'rational-scientific' methods of detection: discourses that do not 'fit' into the binary structure are actively silenced since, as in Sherlock Holmes, the series goes beyond the possible to silence them.[54]

As mentioned above, it can be argued that if not the initial success of the series, at least its longevity can be partially explained by associating it with a discourse concerning 9/11 and terrorism. It is almost a cliché now to say that 9/11 changed 'everything' or that it defined the early 21st century (or at least the first decade of it). However, it can be agreed upon

that 9/11 constitutes a national and international trauma, changing how America and the West in general, understands itself and its role in the world. Arguably, it also highly influenced international politics and the way America dealt with other countries, also fuelled by a need of the Bush administration to order the world into binaries of 'good' vs. 'evil', or rather 'friend' vs. 'enemy'. Possibly, the best examples of this can be found leading up to the second Gulf War, starting in March 2003. This time very much shows an attitude of 'either you're with us or against us', culminating in a press conference on 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 2003, in which Donald Rumsfeld's famously described NATO countries not willing to join into the war in Iraq as 'Old Europe', thus implying that Europe can be divided into 'modern' and 'old-fashioned' attitudes, depending on the position they take towards a war the US government deems necessary. The Republican Party laboured hard to create binary structures similar to those that dominated the Cold War. In his second inaugural address in 2005, Bush said:

> For a half a century, America defended our own freedom by standing watch on distant borders. After the shipwreck of communism came years of relative quiet, years of repose, and years of sabbatical. And then there came a day of fire. We have seen our vulnerability and we have seen its deepest source. For as long as whole regions of the world simmer in resentment and tyranny, prone to ideologies that feed hatred and excuse murder, violence will gather and multiply in destructive power and cross the most defended borders and raise a mortal threat (Bush 2005).

'Fighting' communism is thus somehow compared to fighting terrorism; there are entire regions in the world full of negative attitudes and actions like resentment, tyranny, hatred, murder and violence. Bush then goes on to describe American ideals, most of all 'freedom' and democracy as something to fight 'tyranny' with. Thus, this speech, as one example of many, marks how a binary structure is created, if not geographically, then ideologically. Of course, these regions are countries like Afghanistan and Iraq, already under US occupation at the time, or Iran and North Korea (Iraq, Iran and North Korea forming Bush's idea of an 'Axis of Evil').

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*CSI* shows a similar way of thinking and of 'ordering' the world into easily understandable categories. In this, visual spectacle often seems to 'gloss over' complex explanations over a murderer's motives. The episode "Pirates of the Third Reich" (06/15) is one example of how the narrative of each episode works to create a binary of 'good' and 'evil', and how 'establishing the facts' becomes more important than questioning *why* certain crimes are committed. The episode opens with a body of a young woman, dressed only in underwear, found in the desert. Her head is shaved and her right hand is missing, a number is branded on her shoulder. Autopsy and DNA testing reveal that she died of starvation, one of her eyes was removed and replaced with someone else's eye and that flesh-eating bacteria was introduced to her blood stream, destroying most of her organs, and that she chewed off her own hand. The investigation shows that the eye is from a man who was lobotomized through the eye socket. As it turns out, both were two of several victims of Johann Sneller (Kevin Crowley) who conducted experiments on his victims in the manner of Auschwitz doctor Josef Mengele.[55] While the episode deals with extreme torture and violence, what is mostly surprising about it is the complete absence of an investigation into motive.[56] The motivation provided by the episode explains neither the murderers' ideological persuasion nor the logic behind repeating unsuccessful experiments with outdated equipment.[57]

Thus, excluding any investigation into motive (to subscribe to Nazi ideology or perform experiments), the episode, instead, deals with signs like 'Nazi', 'Mengele' or 'Auschwitz', signifying 'evil' and 'sadism'. This is heightened with spectacular images, not only of the dead body found in the desert, but later two Asian men sewn together. This 'spectacular evil' represented by Nazi Germany and the killer is opposed by the *CSI* investigators, expressing their horror and disdain. Yet, instead of an 'irrational-subjective' response to the violence, they 'serve justice', even to the extent that Gil Grissom keeps the mother of the victim from exercising her own vigilante justice against the murderer.

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The moral binary between 'good' and 'evil' is naturalised by arguing that the binary is created by the law ('legal' and 'illegal'), 'rational-scientific' detection is 'objective', thus incapable of differentiating between 'right' and 'wrong'. Yet, the amount of discourses silenced by the text (such as an investigation into motive) also draws attention to the 'artificiality' and 'constructedness' of this binary. Furthermore, the scientists (even Grissom) can rarely escape voicing moral judgement.[58] Despite being almost anti-religious in some instances and without making any kinds of statements about a universal 'truth', the series' unwavering belief in science as a way to access the 'truth' about an event seems to reflect the Enlightenment idea that researching nature could somehow reveal 'God's plan' or 'God's language', presumably also in terms of morals (Outram 1995: 47-62). The binaries *CSI* creates can almost be read as a moral guideline to find one's way through the 'sinful' world of Las Vegas. In a comparison between *CSI* and Sherlock Holmes, Burton Harrington points out that:

> The stability of individual and national identity as portrayed in these forensic science shows reassures the contemporary viewer that identity, responsibility and truth are not relative concepts, even in the postmodern world. [The] *CSI*s replay a similar sort of procedural detective story [as Sherlock Holmes stories] to reassure viewers with the fantasy that the United States can be secured amid threats of violence and terrorism; that the individual identity, as well as national identity, can be fixed and scientifically assured (Burton Harrington 2007: 366).

The text certainly provides an idea that a coherent 'good' subject and a coherent nation can be produced, which can be defended against 'outside' influences. As mentioned above, this reflects political debates. These efforts are mirrored by the way 'good' and 'bad' (which, in this case, is also foreign) is constructed. This 'foreignness' is mainly defined through an ideology, but also in terms of 'past' and 'present'. In fact, this is a way the 'good' science in the episode (performed by the CSIs) is set apart from the 'bad' science, performed by the murderer: the clean, cool, sterile atmosphere of the lab (see Fig. 3 & 4) is juxtaposed with the cluttered, dark and wood-panelled house of the murderer, filled with hand-written

notes and old-fashioned medical equipment (see Fig. 1 & 2). 'Good' science is 'ordered', 'bad' science is cluttered. The text also seems to suggest that the 'good' science is just more 'up to date' with scientific progress than the 'bad' science, which is apparently stuck in the 1940s. This binary structure appears to lay down an ideological structure for the narrative.


Fig. 1 & 2: Sneller's 'lab', signifying 'old science', foreignness, 'disorder', dirt = 'bad science'.


Fig. 3 & 4: The *CSI* lab: signifying glossy, symmetrical 'order', 'high tech science', hygiene = good science.

Any deconstruction of the binaries by questioning them in court or other branches of the legal system is denied since the legal drama included in *Law and Order* or the court sentencing provided in *Dragnet* is excluded. As Martha Gever points out:

> The CSIs' routine statements about the need for rigorous adherence to scientific practices seems to promise a new approach to justice, in which outlaws are convicted well before they appear before a judge or a jury is impanelled, well before the evidence is presented in court to be tested by the defense attorney's cross-examination, well before a jury decides whether the evidence presented by the prosecution is indeed credible and relevant and therefore qualifies as evidence at all (Gever 2005: 455).

Michele Byers and Val Marie Johnson even go a step further by arguing that:

> …*CSI* engages in a typically neoliberal balancing act. It offers up a critique
> of the state even as it relegitimizes state power, in that each franchise
> centers on a neoliberal hero (white, male, middle-class, educated, straight,
> technologically advanced) who has to do the work of truth and justice that
> the state and its representatives have failed to do. Although they work on
> its behalf, as men (and secondarily women) of science, the CSIs are
> presented as beyond the state (Byers and Johnson 2009: xxiv).

In opposition to Byers and Johnson, this thesis argues that the collective team effort,
facilitated by a 'rational-scientific' method of detection is held above the individual hero
(prone to mistakes) by the text. The state is legitimized through the institutionalised use of
science, not any notions of individual heroism (as, for example, suggested by *Quincy
M.E.*). In the course of this, however, large parts of the legal system seem to be declared
redundant, as the science (if performed correctly) not only solves crime, but already
assures a 'guilty' verdict.

More so than even *Quincy M.E.*, *CSI* is preoccupied with showing the 'rational-scientific'
method of detection, making it central to the narrative:

> Upon close inspection […] much of the action occurring in any episode of
> *CSI* dramatises the forensic team's mundane labour: dusting for and lifting
> fingerprints, collecting hair samples, taking digital photos, testing surfaces
> for traces of human blood, observing an autopsy, swabbing for and then
> awaiting results of DNA, viewing surveillance videos, or, for that matter,
> breeding insects found on a corpse in order to ascertain time of death
> through 'linear regression' (Cohan 2008: 8).

In "Pirates of the Third Reich", it is the dead body of the woman found at the beginning of
the episode which provides most of the initial clues: the eye that is not hers, puncture
wounds, flesh eating bacteria that was introduced to her blood stream, instead of first
attacking her skin, some kind of string found in her teeth.[59] Images of the autopsy are inter-
cut with Wendy (Liz Vassey) performing DNA tests on both eyes found in the victims' eye
sockets. Then, Dr Robbins (Robert David Hall) summarises the autopsy results for
Grissom: when he explains about the flesh eating bacteria, his narration is accompanied by
a digitalized 'CSI shot' showing how the bacteria normally behave. Even this very short

sequence is already exemplary of what Kompare calls "visual-verbal teaching" (Kompare 2010: 17), or a 'show-and-tell' mentality.[60] Thus, aesthetics and narrative work together to focus on the 'rational-scientific' method of detection as visual 'spectacle' and narrative focus. On the level of dialogue, characters constantly explain the science. Sometimes they explain it before the test is shown, sometimes afterwards when they present their findings, and sometimes at the same time as the visuals occur on the screen (as is the case with most '*CSI* shots').

One consequence of the close (visual) attention paid to scientific experiments is the way clues are made visible through them. To use a more 'structuralist' (in line with Holmes) terminology, evidence is turned into 'signs' that, if put in the correct 'order' will provide an accurate account of the past event (the murder).[61] The evidence functions as signs, made visible and decoded with the help of scientific methods. The sign changes so that it becomes decodeable. Substances are analysed and the ratio of their compounds shows exactly what kind of substance it is, ideally even when, where and by whom it was produced. Audio technology can reveal that an engine is running in the background of a 911-call, even exactly what kind of car would make this noise. Everything is made into a sign and there is no sign that cannot be decoded. In this regard, *CSI* is reminiscent of Sherlock Holmes and the way he decodes Miss Mary Sutherland's body. The main difference is the way television and CGI technology allow for a visualisation of signs that are not visible to the naked eye. Even signs that are only audible are made into visual signs through technology that translates wavelengths into images. Not only is all of this being told to the audience through dialogue, displaying a 'seeing is believing'-attitude, it is made visible. It is literally 'show-and-tell':

> We might see the *CSI* phenomenon as an extension of this Enlightenment manner, a fictional illustration of a longed-for world where deceit is no longer possible and where language finds a close, unbreachable connection

to the events it seeks to describe. If we know how to look for it, the truth is self-evident. It will, in effect, narrate itself (Campbell 2009).

Thus, *CSI* seems to offer what Lévi-Strauss is asking for when he describes how structuralism offers a methodology to grasp all seemingly random phenomena through an 'objective' science (Lévi-Strauss 2001: 1-4), though at the expense of silencing a number of discourses.

*CSI* stays true to the 'whodunit' narrative structure: discovery, where the body is found, preliminary cause of death established, crime scenes processed etc. – Investigation, where suspects and witnesses are interviewed and evidence is analysed, first hypotheses are formulated and falsified – Revelation, where the different bits of information are put into a (usually correct) hypothesis and the murderer is revealed (see Kompare 2010: 24-34). But while the traditional 'whodunit' structure only reveals how to correctly collect and decode signs at the end of each episode, *CSI* visualises what used to be invisible – not only minute data, but also the different (later falsified) hypotheses and thought processes. By falsifying hypotheses until the 'truth' is found and narrative closure achieved, this structure closes off particular avenues of thought, thus supporting the artificial creation of binaries.

Despite its apparent 'postmodern' aesthetics, then, the method of detection is similar to that of Holmes. What comes to light is an Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment modern ideal of science as all-powerful and always able to reveal an objective 'truth'. Rationality and reason can thus lead to a 'better' society and a 'better' legal system where those who commit crimes can be immediately dispelled from society. How and why they should be dispelled is not a question *CSI* engages with, but they are able to prove guilt beyond a shadow of a doubt in the majority of cases (there are exceptions, but not too many).[62] *CSI* even extends on the modern enthusiasm towards technology that Sherlock Holmes

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represented, in line with its ideology of making things visible, often through surveillance technology. It seems as if the 'better' society has to be a society of surveillance. CCTV cameras, GPS, IP addresses, phone calls, voice mails, emails, social networks, and so on appear to record everybody's whereabouts, all the time. And *CSI* represents a society where it is in everybody's best interest if the police have the ability to access personal data to protect the individual. With the help of DNA and fingerprints, the CSIs can even find traces of the individual, physical manifestations of where a person was days, sometimes weeks or years ago. The principle appears to be similar to Foucault's idea of Bentham's Panopticon. Members of society are always under surveillance; huge data bases hold information on fingerprints and DNA. In episode 9/18, "Mascara", several suspects refuse to give DNA samples. As one character puts it: "too many innocent people have been sent to jail because of DNA. You guys, you think that the DNA is everything now. Everything is DNA, DNA", only to be dismissed by Detective Brass (Paul Guilfoyle): "it helps a lot of people get out of jail, too", as if the argument that the surveillance technology of DNA is fallible is worthless in comparison to its value. As this suggests, *CSI* can be seen as an extension of Sherlock Holmes' and Miss Marple's all-seeing, all-knowing eye. But while Miss Marple's knowledge was only on a small village community, on *CSI*, the police's knowledge seems to be reaching all across America. Compared with Miss Marple, *Dragnet* and *Quincy M.E.*, *CSI* depicts a huge amount of surveillance technology. The 'rational-scientific' methods of detection rely on the ability to make 'signs' visible, facilitated by scientific tests and surveillance technology.

### 5.4. <u>Conclusion</u>

This chapter dealt with 'rational-scientific' methods of detection in the detective genre, using three case studies from different moments in American history. What emerges is that 'rational-scientific' methods of detection can be (at least partly) linked to political crisis

points, whether they have to do with anxieties about outside threats to a nation and its institutions (*Dragnet*), corrupt federal government (*Quincy M.E.*) or threats of international terrorism (*CSI*). This desire to respond to chaos with clear ways to 'order' the world into binaries can be seen as loosely reflecting tendencies with a set of 'modern' ideals. In the case of *Dragnet*, this is hardly surprising since it represents the police as a relatively 'modern' institution, firmly rooted in a post-Enlightenment discourse. Yet, *Dragnet* already shows how detective dramas employing 'rational-scientific' detection gesture towards aesthetic movements, in this case film noir (which will be discussed further in Chapter 6), that, ideologically, seem to be at odds with the kind of 'order' and strict binary structures created by the texts. This tension becomes even more pronounced in *CSI* and, possibly, the fact that it is already present within the different branches of modernism implies that this kind of tension was always bound to (re-)emerge in postmodern discourses.

*Quincy M.E.* was produced at a moment in American history when society had to come to terms with rapid social changes, an economic downturn and Watergate, which arguably changed the way politics are perceived in American society for many years to come. The series can be read as some sort of 'compromise', creating often conservative binaries, uncovering 'truth', representing science and 'rational-scientific' methods of detection as supposedly politically unbiased (an ideology that has been attached to this method of detection from Poe's Dupin-stories onwards). Yet, Quincy's distrust of political organizations certainly carries an ideology that promoted transparency in the democratic institutions. Ideologically, the series seems to work similarly to Pakula's *All the President's Men* and TV dramas like *Kojak*: heavily criticizing an institution, but ultimately legitimizing it by showing that it is capable of reform. *Quincy M.E.* seems to promise a return to the security these institutions used to offer, advocated by the 'lonesome

hero', thus promoting aspects of the 'American Dream' - ideology which tends to privilege

individual over group effort. As such, the method of detection seems to reflect the modern

enthusiasm towards scientific and technological progress, a methodology and technology

that can 'order' society and dispel 'evil' (whether that is political conspiracy or murderers).

*CSI* arguably shows a similar 'modern' enthusiasm towards science and technological

progress, but other than the previous examples employs postmodern aesthetics to express

this. Yet, reacting against developments in postmodern philosophy that question grand

narratives (including the grand narrative of science) or stable identities, the 'rational-

scientific' method of detection provides a form of 'order' that had been largely absent in

the genre since *Quincy M.E.* (as will be discussed further in Chapter 7). As Ellen Burton

Harrington summarises in an article comparing the methods of detection and their

functions in Sherlock Holmes and *CSI*:

> The stability of individual and national identity as portrayed in the forensic
> science shows reassures the contemporary viewer that identity,
> responsibility and truth are not relative concepts, even in the postmodern
> world. While the Holmes stories use reassuring, formulaic narratives to
> consolidate a normative national identity and counter increasing
> disenchantment with empire, the CSIs replay a similar sort of procedural
> detective story to reassure viewers with the fantasy that the United States
> can be secured amid threats of violence and terrorism; that individual
> identity, as well as national identity, can be fixed and scientifically assured.
> […] Readers and viewers alike are encouraged to set aside scientific
> scepticism and immerse themselves in a fantastic world where ambiguous
> or disruptive identities can be fixed by the traces or DNA left by the
> individual; *a world where crime can be solved, the truth known with
> certitude, and order restored* (Burton Harrington 2007: 366, my italics).

'Rational-scientific' methods of detection may correspond with a desire for reassurance in

times of social change and national crises, a way to assert a 'stable' identity along the lines

of specific binary structures when the experience of everyday existence becomes 'too'

chaotic  (as during and after the Second World War, the Cold War, the Watergate scandal

or 9/11). All these texts are united by an almost desperate belief in something 'objective'

that can order the chaos and guide humanity towards some kind of verifiable 'truth'. They may also function as representations of the possibility for a stable moral code: the creation of binaries and the representations of US society in these texts seem to leave little ambiguity towards who is 'innocent' and who is 'guilty'. Science becomes a way to 'objectively' measure 'guilt'. There is no room for ambiguity or moral 'grey' areas, at least not in the realm of the responsibilities of the detectives. Read like this, the almost 'religious' belief in science as tool or 'entity' that can provide 'truth' becomes also a desire for a clear moral code, and a counter-reaction to television dramas that promote moral ambiguity (as will be discussed in the case studies in Chapter 7). Possibly, the three case studies can all be understood as impulses that emerge at points of social and political crisis and insecurity, as assurance that there is, indeed, an 'objective truth' and if we use the 'right' methodology, we can access it. However, it may be too 'simplistic' to view them merely as reactions to political crisis: in a more general sense they predominantly seem to mark a reaction against fragmented, pluralist society, and, in particular in the case of *CSI*, postmodernism's celebration of 'chaos'.

This chapter also traced how, essentially, Enlightenment and modern 'rational-scientific' methods of detection are re-invented in the 21$^{st}$ century, when they are 'packaged' in seemingly 'postmodern' aesthetics. *CSI* is hardly alone or without influence in a genre discourse that embraces this balancing act between opposing philosophical ideas. In fact, Balaka Basu's critique of the BBC drama *Sherlock* (BBC, 2010- ) invokes similar criticisms of the newer British programme: "…it projects the image of a postmodern visual aesthetic, which only superficially disguises its essentially conservative, pre-modern message" (Basu 2012: location 2760). This influence *CSI* appears to have on contemporary television production (beyond American borders) that routinely seems to combine modern ideas of 'order' and binaries with postmodern aesthetics points to a desire to 're-create'

'order' out of the postmodern chaos. While it seems to embrace the glossy aesthetics of postmodernism, it appears to use them to create strict binaries:

> Sherlock's [Benedict Cumberbatch] thought processes, as illustrated on our screens, purport to be unordered, but are still subject to the anti-pluralistic idea that only one interpretation fits the facts. The presentation of information flow is deceptively overwhelming, but only seemingly disunified; in reality, it is so streamlined and ordered that it includes almost no cultural 'white noise' that might work against the reactionary hierarchies that its cautiously selected elements subscribe to, whether unconsciously or not (ibid: location 2817-2820).

While this depiction of thought processes is generally more pronounced in the British Sherlock Holmes adaptation, Basu's criticism can be easily applied to American television dramas such as *CSI* and its spin-offs as well as other texts like *Bones* (Fox, 2005- ), *Numb3rs* (CBS, 2005-2010) or *The Mentalist* (CBS, 2008- ), where visuals that emphasise this 'streamlined' and 'ordered' flow of information range from the camera focussing on small details over digitised *CSI*-shots to showing maths formulas. Yet, this ever-increasing amount of detective dramas that employ 'rational-scientific' detection, 'order' and 'modern' binary structures does not necessarily mark a 'return' to modern social 'order'. Such a return would imply the exclusion of postmodern aesthetics. It is argued here that *CSI* serves not only as an influential text within a broader genre discourse regarding the aesthetics of crime and logical deduction, but also as a programme that may mark a specific movement within the postmodern 'project' (though a unified 'project' of postmodernism is impossible): a desire for a 'return' (if it ever existed) to some sort of 'order', a desire for guidelines within the chaotic 'project of deconstruction' of postmodernism. As its aesthetics show, neither *CSI* nor *Sherlock* manage to completely reject postmodernism – in the same way *Dragnet* has been incapable of rejecting film noir aesthetics while *Quincy M.E.* seems to imply less conservative ideals through character construction (even if little seems to counter the modern binaries created through the 'rational-scientific' methods of detection, though it appears to shift binaries, for example

by positioning government as 'evil') – but they seem to ask for methods that create some sort of 'order' or 'moral guidelines' in a post-9/11 and post-7/7 world. As the next chapter will show, in this, they are hardly alone as even dramas that feature 'irrational-scientific' detection appear to be increasingly sceptical of a postmodern 'project' that ultimately leaves us with only individual moral codes to rely on.

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[1] Furthermore, the characters either operate surprisingly rationally in all these cases, despite their personal involvement, or their emotional involvement is considered to be a hindrance to the process of detection and impeding their ability to solve the case in a 'rational-scientific' manner. In that case, the central conflict of the characters is to overcome their 'irrational-subjective' closeness to the case and develop 'rational-scientific' distance that allows them to solve the case.

[2] Looking at the generic discourse *Dragnet* participates in, it is interesting to note that the series is framed in varying generic contexts by academics: most of the literature is relatively recent and the series is often looked at in terms of docudrama or reality TV and as a predecessor of this genre (see Palmer 2008; Hoffer and Nelson 1999, Baker 2003). In terms of aesthetics, it is also often linked to film noir (see Mittell 2004, Turnbull 2007, Palmer 2008, Butler 2010), though, while similar aesthetics may be used, the methods of detection are significantly different.

[3] The focus will be on the TV series, here, and it has to be noted that while some of the conclusions may be relevant to the radio version as well, television and radio are significantly different media. As Sue Turnbull points out, some of the visuals serve no narrative purpose at all and are "completely untranslatable in radio terms" (2007: 20). Yet, the theme music is the same and the introduction is delivered by a voiceover in the television series. In the radio episodes, the narrator explains "Ladies and Gentlemen, the story you are about to hear [in the TV version changed to 'see'] is true. Only the names have been changed to protect the innocent".

[4] According to Erik Barnouw, the most-watched programmes in 1952 were still predominantly live, but "the runaway success of the filmed *I Love Lucy* [on CBS] made it clear that films would play a role in the new age" (Barnouw 1966: 296). Marc and Thompson argue that the key figure in the programming choices of ABC is Leonard Goldenson, who, "it can be argued, did more in the long run to affect the style and substance of American TV than either of his rivals" (Marc and Thompson 2005: 62).

[5] In relation to the marker of 'realism', most critics point out that the series is influenced by the semi-documentary *He Walked by Night* (Werker, 1948), in which Webb starred in a minor role as a forensics expert. This argument is based on Webb's autobiography, in which he himself states that his part in the film spurred his interest in the depiction of the legal system in fiction and provided him with initial contacts to the LAPD (see Palmer 2008: 68 or Turnbull 2007: 17-18). The film is based on a true story and the narrative is split between the point of view of a criminal who shot and killed a cop and the policemen investigating his crime.

[6] This becomes particularly obvious when compared to the later *Peter Gunn* (NBC, 1958-1961) on the same channel.

[7] Author James Ellroy references this in his novel *L.A. Confidential* (1990) in the character of Jack Vincennes who works as advisor for the fictional TV drama *Badge of Honor*.

[8] In fact, the audience never learns much about the main character that is not related to his professional life: "Sergeant Friday was a man without much of a present or a past, whose only life was his work" (Palmer 2008: 68), the character never had a private life in the series; only his work life is relevant. However, unlike hard-boiled detectives, this does not mean that he has no personal life; it just is not relevant to the stories told in the series or showed on-screen. His private life is hinted at in 'The Big Thief' (03/16), when a woman who appears to be Friday's wife visits him at the police station and his partner Frank Smith (Ben Alexander) mentions his two children.

[9] As Walker points out:

> In the 1930s, the U.S. Supreme Court took the first tentative steps toward imposing constitutional standards of due process on criminal justice agencies. These developments had only minor impact at the time, but they reflected deeper changes in American society: a rising demand for equality on the part of racial minorities and a revolution in the law that demanded minimum standards of constitutionality in the justice system (Walker 1998: 147).

The 1930s saw much judicial reform, also related to the foundation of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The FBI is an office that deals with federal crimes, for example, when criminals cross state lines, thus causing conflict between jurisdictions, or with domestic threats. Especially under the leadership of J. Edgar Hoover, US law saw an extension of the power of the FBI in dealing with crimes that concern more than one state. Despite much change in legal procedure, the most perceivable and remarkable changes were made through technology.

[10] This may also indicate a change within the culture of surveillance. Police cars and police radios certainly made it easier for policemen to communicate with each other and maybe widened the radius of surveillance. However, it is debatable whether this kind of surveillance really provides more information about citizens than patrol on foot. An increase in 911 calls and the change in police responsibilities to include domestic disputes includes that matters that were previously resolved by the community or privately now became matters of the state and were dealt with on the level of the legal system. Furthermore, the HUAC investigations show how the state tried to intervene by revealing and controlling the individuals' ideological and political attitudes. In combination with the extension of the FBI's responsibilities, government surveillance became quite common. However, this was not always legal or in line with democratic principles.

[11] Of course, this conservative agenda also brought on counter-cultures, most notably those left-winged and sometimes Marxist movements led by European intellectuals who were forced to immigrate to the US during the Second World War, or later on in the Beatnik movement.

[12] Isolationalism describes the foreign policy strategy adopted by the US after the First World War, which dictates as little involvement (political, economically, military etc.) with foreign countries, particularly Western Europe, as possible. This will be explained further in Chapter 6.

[13] Especially concerning former fascist countries like Germany and Japan, it became important, from an American point of view, to exercise control over foreign countries and to export American ideals (see Zunz 1998: 159-182 or Wittner 1974: 3-30). Much of these 'American ideals' were connected to ideas of capitalism: The 'Marshall Plan' re-built the German economy, and thus helped stabilise European markets, and an even fiercer version of free market capitalism was introduced in Japan. Plans for Germany had to be made in

accordance with the other allies occupying Germany, mainly France and the UK. As Zunz points out, in Japan, the US as sole occupying force, tried to introduce many American principles, especially in economic terms (Zunz 1998: 160-182).

[14] However, more women returned to domesticity than stayed in the workplace. This is presumably also related to the re-establishment of male dominance, as early second wave feminist theories like Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) point out. Friedan analyses in detail the ideological efforts made to promote the image of the 'American housewife', who enjoys taking care of her family while being encouraged to buy various household products.

[15] Of course, the roots of the civil rights movements are more complex than this rather simplistic reasoning. However, higher ranks within US military for returning G.I.s as well as a wider range of experiences in Europe during the Second World War could be seen as one of many aspects that caused African Americans to demand equal rights.

[16] On 1st of December 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white person. She was arrested for disorderly conduct and convicted in court. The Montgomery Bus Boycott ensued as a protest against white superiority, led by Martin Luther King, Jr., who quickly rose to be one of the most important leaders of the American Civil Rights Movement. As Woods points out:

> The original goal of the boycott was simply to make seating [in busses] available on a first-come, first-served basis, but after Mrs. Parks decided to appeal her conviction [of disorderly conduct and violating local ordinance], its goal became the judicial invalidation of Alabama's segregated seating law. An effective car pooling system enabled the protesters to bring the municipal transport authority to the verge of bankruptcy (Woods 2005: 93)

[17] This was achieved following the US Supreme Court ruling in 'Brown vs. the Board of Education' and other cases declaring the 'Separate but Equal' doctrine unconstitutional.

[18] The origins of the Cold War are diverse and still heavily discussed within the field of history. This is not the place to enter into a discussion on how it came about, but, for the purposes of this thesis, it is sufficient to say that the ideological differences between the Soviet Union and the United States of America became more and more obvious and increasingly insurmountable (or rather, were perceived as such by politicians on both sides) between the end of the Second World War and the culmination in the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. Of course, the term 'culmination' in this context is relative, since the Cold War saw many of them and such an assessment of a situation is always dependant on social and national contexts. However, it can be argued that, from a Western point of view, the Cuban Missile Crisis brought on a change in foreign politics.

[19] While the term McCarthyism is often used to describe 'witch hunts' against those who were suspected of subscribing to communist ideology, and senator Joseph McCarthy was possibly the most prominent spokesperson for this cause, he was supported by many politicians, private citizens and J. Edgar Hoover, director of the FBI, who ordered his G-Men to spy on many Americans suspected of being communists.

[20] J. Edgar Hoover was head of the F.B.I. from 1924 until his death in 1972, and highly formative in the institutions' structures, often hiding illegal activities, such as spying on political figures, including Civil Rights leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr.

[21] The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) was an association dedicated to the apprehension of fugitives who fled across state lines. The IACP worked closely with Hoover's F.B.I. and was later annexed.

[22] Friday appears to be working in different divisions of the LAPD in different episodes, but always mentions in his voiceover which division he is working in.

[23] One exception is the apparently Hispanic Sergeant Lopez (in the series always pronounced as Lopee). This general absence of non-white characters may not only be an expression of a racist society governed by 'separate, but equal' policies, but also of an institutionalised racism of the LAPD, where patrol cars were segregated until 1968 (Walker 1998: 174)

[24] Of course, social change is continuous and cannot be said to only happen at one specific time in history. However, a lot of the social and political change appears to be quite radical.

[25] As Steven D. Stark suggests, the detective genre lost its popularity in the late 1950s and the 1960s (1987: 251-259). Meanwhile, spy shows like *Mission: Impossible* (CBS, 1966-1973) and *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* (NBC, 1964-1968) became increasingly popular. While Stark describes them as "simply police shows transferred abroad with more gadgetry" (Stark 1987: 252), they rarely describe legal processes, the American legal system or any process of investigating crimes.

[26] *The Streets of San Francisco* is not an 'inverted whodunit' in the sense that *Columbo* is: the audience knows who the criminal is from the start, but not usually what the crime is and a huge emphasis is put on the social circumstance of the criminal and how they are driven to illegal actions.

[27] Quincy does not express his political alliances as such, in terms of party politics. However, he is depicted as rather 'free-spirited': he lives on a boat, in the first season, he has a girlfriend, though their relationship seems rather casual, in later seasons he is single without a long-term relationship, the character rarely wears suit and tie and associates a lot with the 'working class' in his favourite bar.

[28] In a rather obvious attempt to provide social diversity, *Ironside*'s team of detectives also consists of African American Mark Sanger (Don Mitchell). A year later, *The Mod Squad* (ABC, 1968-1973) would provide a similarly diverse team of teenage ex-criminals, working as undercover agents for the police, though it did not feature a disabled team member. Also in 1968, *Hawaii Five-0* featured two Native Hawaiian team members. Of course, this racial and social diversity is nothing new - as mentioned above, *Dragnet* featured a Hispanic police officer – but in the late 1960s, American TV networks appear to make a real effort to provide as much social diversity as possible. While all these series' carried into the 1970s, the trend was apparently not continued in detective series in the 1970s, when most police detectives were white males (as in *The Streets of San Francisco, McCloud* or *Columbo*, though most of these series' feature detectives working alone or in teams of two).

[29] The series does not appear in the top 20 of the Nielsen ratings in the years from 1976 until 1983. Yet, it seems to have done well enough, not only to justify eight seasons, but also several Emmy nominations as well as nominations for the Edgar Allan Poe Award for detective fiction. The series won the Edgar in 1978 and was nominated again in 1981 and 1982. From 1977 to 1983 *Quincy M.E.* was nominated in various different categories for the Emmy (Best Drama Series, Best Cinematography, Best Editing, etc.) and actor Jack Klugman was nominated as best lead actor in a Drama series each year from 1977 until 1980, but never won. The series is also quite well known internationally through syndication in countries like the UK, the Netherlands, France or West Germany. Furthermore, the international success of *CSI* has opened up new possibilities of marketing for the DVDs, which are sold with the tagline "The Original Crime Scene Investigator".

[30] This attitude may be linked to several factors: One may be the technological progress, which allowed press to broadcast graphic images of the terrors of war, especially the disfiguring effects of napalm. Furthermore, stars like Jane Fonda helped to publicise an anti-war-attitude. Another factor in the resistance towards the Vietnam War was probably the re-introduction of a draft lottery, where from 1970 onwards, young men were forced to go to war, if, by chance, their name was drawn in the lottery.

[31] In the course of a trial against 'The Chicago Eight', charging several left-wing activists with "conspiracy to cross state lines to incite a riot" (Woods 2005: 324), Black Panthers leader Bobby Seale, was ordered bound and gagged by the judge, following insults against the judge and the prosecutor:

> Activists and some moderates were appalled at the sight of a black defendant sitting manacled before a white judge and prosecutor. While respect for authority plummeted on major college campuses and respect for dissent and alternative lifestyles among conservatives, never high in any case, evaporated, Nixon enthusiastically assumed the pose of a strong leader who could defend the United States against the forces of anarchy (ibid.).

However, many harsh legal sentences against the left, like the conviction of the 'Chicago Eight', were later overturned.

[32] Nixon and his closest political advisors Haldeman and Ehrlichman even compiled an 'enemies list', which:

> …included such diverse figures as actress Jane Fonda, New York Jets quarterback Joe Namath, actors Steve McQueen and Tony Randall, and Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman J. William Fulbright. The White House pressured the Internal Revenue Service to harass the president's enemies. Over a two-year period, that agency launched investigations of 4,300 individuals and 1,025 groups that the chief executive considered his enemy (Woods 2005: 340-341).

[33] While Nixon himself may not have known about the specifics of this particular break-in, he knew about the activities of his advisors and the cover-up that followed the Watergate break-in, as was later revealed. This became obvious from a series of tapes, recorded by Nixon himself (who apparently taped most of his conversations). Much of the public hearings revolved around whether Nixon would have to hand over these tapes to an investigative committee.

[34] In light of how much the Watergate scandal revealed about government surveillance, it is interesting to note how little *Quincy M.E.* seems to be concerned with such issues. Quincy investigates dead bodies in detail and questions witnesses, but other techniques of surveillance, such as audio surveillance through telephone bugs or wire taps are rarely used by the authorities. If they are used, they are often employed by criminals. This may be read as an implicit critique of criminal behaviour by government authorities, but audio surveillance is often depicted as criminal practice in the 1970s within the genre, possibly reflecting real-life anxieties of being listened to – whether it is by government or by criminals.

[35] Of course, most crimes are committed by rogue individuals, but there are a surprising amount of politicians who lie or cover for someone else to protect their own agenda. There is crime and violence inside government institutions and threats are made towards Asten and Quincy from within the legal system.

[36] According to Laura Mulvey (1976), the fragmentation of the female body often works to fetishize it, and to a certain degree the dead body is fetishized in *Quincy M.E.* However, what is shown of the body is the bruises on her neck in such extreme close-up that the part of the body is barely recognisable, and other body parts shown are mainly hands and the soles of her feet, which are not very common in the objectification and the fetishization of the female body.

[37] While the rape is mentioned before in the episode, it is not obvious from Quincy's examination of the body.

[38] Examples of this are Sherlock Holmes in 'The Boscombe Valley Mystery' (1891) allowing the murderer not to reveal his deed to the proper authorities, given that no one else is

convicted for the murder; Poirot, who lets Lady Westholme overhear the revelation and shoot herself to avoid scandal in *Appointment with Death* (1938).

[39] Sam is incredibly loyal towards Quincy and works hard for him, but is ultimately vulnerable to blackmail by higher authorities (Dr Asten) and appears to be less passionate about the murder cases than Quincy, possibly because he rarely leaves the lab in the course of investigations. He often appears rather passive, possibly re-affirming a stereotype of Asian masculinity, though physically and through his constant dilemma of being caught between authority figures Asten and Quincy, the writers and producers seem to be working against this stereotype on some levels. In a way, Sam mirrors Watson in the Sherlock Holmes stories: when asked to do something he will do it, sometimes taking a considerable risk and often without understanding the larger context.

[40] Even series like *Scarecrow and Mrs. King* (CBS, 1983-1987) or *Remington Steele* (NBC, 1982-1987) experimented with the genre conventions, genre hybridity and are examples of attempts of a 'male' genre to come to terms with the feminism of the 1980s in the context of a Reaganist ideology.

[41] As Nichols-Pethick points out, every episode was:

> …broken down into two half-hour segments: The first half-hour told the story of the police investigation which inevitably leads to an arrest; the second half-hour was the story of the criminal prosecution of the suspect by the District Attorney's office that did not always result in a conviction (Nichols-Pethick 2012: 128).

[42] Of course, in the UK, *Prime Suspect* (ITV, ITV1, 1991-2003) was very much ahead of American versions of the genre, showing explicit images of an autopsy as early as 1991. Furthermore, the British series was shown and proved relatively successful on American TV screens. Yet, any further analysis of this would lead into the critical examination of international syndication, which lies outside the scope of this thesis.

[43] Examples range from Gil Grissom's artificially sounding quip at the beginning of each episode to episodes that clearly reference other texts like "Who Shot Sherlock" (05/11) (referencing Sherlock Holmes and Sherlock Holmes fandom) or "A Space Oddity" (09/20) (referencing *Star Trek* [NBC, 1966-1969] and *Star Trek* fandom).

[44] In other words, the familiar character tropes, structure and themes may 'relieve' audiences of the imperative to question the representation of the legal system, state authority, science, and so on, in *CSI*.

[45] Other Network channels had turned it down previously and the production company, Touchstone Television, withdrew funds unexpectedly, believing that an investment in the series did not make financial sense. However, the Canadian Alliance Atlantis took over instead, co-producing with Jerry Bruckheimer, who had been (and still is) successful in producing Hollywood films like *Beverly Hills Cop* (Brest, 1984) and its sequels, *Top Gun* (Scott, 1986), *Bad Boys* (Bay, 1995) and *Bad Boys II* (Bay, 2003) or, most recently, *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* (Verbinski, 2003) and its sequels (Cohan 2008: 2-5 and Allen 2007b: 4-6). Neither writers nor directors were well-known, but the series was almost instantly successful on American TV, meriting two spin-offs, *CSI: Miami* (CBS, 2002-2012) and *CSI: New York* (CBS, 2004- ).

[46] The series deals with the Chief Medical Examiner of Virginia, Kay Scarpetta, who employs forensic science to solve crimes. The first novel in the series, *Postmortem*, was published in 1990 and soon became a bestseller. The novels have been highly successful internationally since then.

[47] The series' later instalments were also co-produced by the American production company WGBH and broadcast on PBS.

[48] A predecessor on American television, even if the link between both dramas is a bit weak, could be Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) from *The X-Files* (Fox, 1993-2002), who, at least for the first few seasons, very much represents 'rational-scientific' notions, despite being proven wrong in most episodes. Yet, as this example already shows, it can be argued that the 1990s generally neglected detective drams in favour of generic hybridity and more 'esoteric' approaches to 'truth'.

[49] Of course, *Law & Order* was possibly the most successful series of the genre, though it is excluded from this analysis due to its structure, in which at least half of each episode takes place in court and does not put detection at the centre of its narrative. Yet, Nichols-Pethick points out how the series can be easily viewed as marking a major change in the television industry regarding the creation of spin-offs and franchises. In this regard, *Law & Order* and *CSI* can easily be linked as fulfilling similar economic functions: "*Law & Order* is the epitome of the new business of television: an expansive brand identity comprised of seemingly endless spin-offs as well as increasingly lucrative syndication deals (Nichols-Pethick 2012: 127).

[50] The results of this election were highly disputed by the left at the time, due to (what is now largely accepted as) Bush's very narrow win in Florida, a state governed at the time by George Bush's brother Jeb. This already indicates the left's distrust towards the Republicans and their fears of conspiracies – either left over from the Watergate scandal or revived by Bush in particular. These anxieties would dominate much of the left's reactions against Bush during his presidency.

[51] The Human Genome Project is a broad-scale long-term international research project that is charged with the gathering and de-coding information about DNA (http://www.ornl.gov/sci/techresources/Human_Genome/home.shtml).

[52] In 1994, American Football Player and actor O.J. Simpson was charged with the murder of his ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman. The highly publicised trial involved much DNA evidence, mainly traces of blood, and the question of whether this evidence could have been planted.

[53] This is also often seen as a problem, namely the so-called 'CSI effect', explained by Cavender and Deutsch as follows: "Members of the television audience, convinced that they understand forensic science, maintain these beliefs as jurors. One prosecutor says that because of programs like *CSI*, jurors now have unreasonable expectations about scientific technology" (Cavender and Deutsch 2007: 78). However, other critics like Cole and Dioso-Villa (2007) maintain that the 'CSI effect' does not actually exist to the extent feared by many prosecutors.

[54] One example of how Holmes extends the realm of what is scientifically possible is the way the detective can tell from cigarette and cigar ash, what kind of tobacco was chewed, which, for example, leads to the solution in 'The Boscombe Valley Mystery' (1891).

[55] As doctor in Auschwitz, Mengele is possibly known as one of the most sadistic Nazi criminal. Not only did he decide which Auschwitz prisoners were to be gassed immediately and who was kept alive, he also performed gruesome experiments on prisoners, especially those with genetic disabilities or twins. In January 1945, he fled to South America. He died in 1979 in Sao Paulo/Brazil without ever being arrested or persecuted, despite international efforts (especially from the Israeli and German governments) to catch him.

[56] Sneller was stationed at a field hospital near Berlin for a while, while working for the US army and he was raised by Jewish adoptive parents. Neither of these facts about the suspect seems to give an obvious motive.

[57] The *CSI* episode suggests that the murderer wanted to create an 'Übermensch' (in the Nazi sense, not necessarily the Nietzschean sense). Yet, apart from moral implications, conducting research similar to Mengele's means repeating unsuccessful experiments despite a more

advanced scientific knowledge that proves any experiments (such as the sadist twin studies) unnecessary at the point of hypothesis (for example, knowledge of how different blood types react with each other or how dead tissue would correspond with live tissue) (Lifton 2000: 344-369).

[58] Another example of this is the episode "Swap Meet" (05/05) which involves a group of suburban couples involved in swinging. Sara and Grissom seem to cast judgement on them in a short exchange at the end of the episode when it turns out that every rule the group has set for themselves has been broken, leading to murder. Thus, the community's promiscuous behaviour seems to be judged as so 'deviant' that it opens up a 'slippery slope' to more 'deviant' behaviour and the breaking of self-imposed rules.

[59] Even though criticism tends to make much of the importance of the dead body as a site of evidence or in terms of how it is visually fetishized (see Weissmann 2009, Weissmann and Boyle 2007, Jermyn 2007, Tait 2006), in this particular episode, an exceptional amount of evidence is provided by the dead body. However, this is also due to the fact that the body is found in the desert during a sand storm, thus all evidence at the crime scene where the body was found is gone.

[60] As Kompare points out:

> However intoxicating its spectacles, since *CSI* is ostensibly concerned with science, its pedagogical remit would not function without its protagonists' expository dialogue that teaches viewers what it all means. What is the significance of a particular insect on a decomposing body? What is the effect of this chemical on lung tissue. How do organized gamblers illegally affect the betting line on an upcoming basketball game? Most of us are not experts on most of what arises in the series' investigations; whether or not it is entirely accurate is irrelevant, as we have to accept it, and the CSIs credibility, for the sake of the narrative (Kompare 2010: 20).

[61] As Kompare argues:

> Importantly, beyond their eyes, ears, ears, noses, hands, and occasionally tongues, the CSIs conspicuously use a wide variety of tools to extract evidence in the field, much of which would be otherwise invisible to immediate human perception. These tools are deployed in spectacular sequences that emphasize, and even eroticize, visibility even further, beyond normal human perception. Blood is magically made to appear on otherwise innocuous-looking surfaces and objects by a few sprays of phenolphthalein solution, which turns pink on contact. Semen – the second most-prevalent bodily fluid on the series – glows blue on examined sheets and clothing seen under ultraviolet (UV) light. Fibers, scraps of cloth, paint flecks, and other miniscule bits of material are carefully bagged and collected. Photographs are taken from every angle and surveillance tapes examined. Odors are even 'recorded' as evidence as with the incriminating perfume in 2.4. The series' pedagogical function, and full scope of show-and-tell, comes to the fore in the midst of all this observing, gathering and measuring. In these dazzling sequences, the scientific method is not only a means to plot ends; *it is made to perform* (Kompare 2010: 28, my italics).

In a slight adjustment, this thesis argues that it is not the scientific method that is made to 'perform', but the evidence (the diverse substances and objects) through science.

[62] Most notably, in episode 02/06, "Alter Boys", based on the evidence found by the team, a boy gets prosecuted even though Grissom is sure the crimes were committed by his brother. As Cohan points out, episode 03/06, "The Execution of Catherine Willows" deals with the

'Blue Paint Killer' who is mainly found because of his confession (which he gives willingly, without being pressured into it), rather than the scientific analysis of evidence.

# 6. <u>No More Facts to Tackle: 'Irrational-Subjective' Detection and its American Roots</u>

Following on from the literary roots outlined in Chapter 4, this chapter will outline examples from literature and film to form a clearer understanding of 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection. It will link these methods of detection with discourses of the later stages of modernism surrounding concepts of accessing knowledge, moral ambiguity and narrative structures. These methods will be connected with internal genre discourses as well as external discourses relating to socio-political issues within the American national context. As outlined in Chapter 3, hard-boiled novels and their film noir adaptations are broadly rooted within an often pessimistic modernist arts discourse. This pessimism can be partly linked to the traumatizing experience of World War I and the way technological progress became associated with weaponry. While the 'pulp fiction' hard-boiled novels are explicitly not 'high culture', the sub-genre, with the help of the appreciation film noir later received from film critics, Raymond Chandler's struggle to re-frame the literary works and the supposed 'realism' of the sub-genre, it can now be understood as 'high culture' (or at least breaking down the 'high culture' vs. 'low culture' binary).[1] It is, thus, hardly surprising that, despite being safely rooted in modernism, as a sub-genre employing largely 'irrational-subjective' detection, it later served as a major reference point for loosely 'postmodern' dramas that re-appropriated narrative structures and developed the methods of detection further, as will be explored in Chapter 7. The case studies in this chapter, then, will explore how discourses of the later stages of modernity that express increasing fears and anxieties regarding technological progress and the possibility of creating 'order' can be linked with socio-political discourses external to the genre and internal discourses within detective fiction.

'Irrational-subjective' methods tend to be harder to define than 'rational-scientific' methods, since the category is more inclusive of a large variety of different approaches (ranging from torture as interrogation technique to dreams). However, the moment when they appear in literature as a discernible convention is easier to pin-point (at least if 'religious' crime stories where God functions as 'detective' or religious guilt and Divine intervention 'solve' the crime are ignored): the hard-boiled novel. This sub-genre focuses more on character development than on plot. Detective characters rely highly on coincidence, as, for example, in Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* (1929), where the dying Captain Jacoby happens to show up with the Falcon at Sam Spade's office at a moment when nobody knows where to look for it any more (1992: 151-160). As such, the hard-boiled novel can be seen as an explicit movement against the 'whodunit' crime novel, employing 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection that tend to oppose the 'rational-scientific' methods of the Golden Age detective. Although developed at around the same time as the Golden Age novel, the hard-boiled detective novel (developed mainly in America) implicitly deconstructed many of the main conventions employed by the 'whodunit' narrative. In particular, a setting in grand houses in the English countryside was transformed into American cities (like San Francisco or Los Angeles); a morally and intellectually superior detective was replaced by a morally ambiguous private eye who was primarily looking for financial gain; a (mostly) omniscient narrator was replaced by a highly subjective first-person narrator (often represented through the laconic and world-weary voiceover that so typified film noir); rational thought was converted into coincidence and distrust; relatively clean and bloodless murders became violent and bloody and chaste English middle or upper class girls became *femme fatales* who led the male detectives (and others) into a deep crisis of masculinity.

Film noir is often based on hard-boiled novels and does not stray far from the methods of detection employed in them. However, it is still important to consider this sub-genre here (at least those versions that are detective films) due to its aesthetic influence on audio-visual versions of the detective genre and possibly specific ideological or philosophical attitudes implied in 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection.[2] The case study this analysis will be focussing on is Howard Hawks' *The Big Sleep* (Hawks, 1946).

While 'irrational-subjective' detection later became a dominant feature in much European detective fiction (from *Luther* [BBC, 2010- ] to Henning Mankell's Wallander novels), its roots, the way they are understood here, are in American hard-boiled novels. 'Irrational-subjective' detection can even be understood as the American reaction against the British 'rational-scientific' version of detection. Thus, this chapter not only deals with a shift in methods of detection, but also with a shift in national traditions that influences the American television genre that will be discussed in the following chapter.

### 6.1.     *The Maltese Falcon* **(1929)**

What the American hard-boiled novel and the British Golden Age fiction by Agatha Christie have in common is a similar scepticism towards forensic science as a method of detection, though, in line with the pessimism of the later stages of modernism expressed in the hard-boiled novel, the American detectives proved to be significantly more paranoid:

> As figures such as Poe, Dickens, and Doyle had provided the fantasies of knowledge that allowed the devices of detection to be invented by science and implemented by the law, writers such as Conrad, Hammett, and Chandler would bring to light the ways in which those same scientific devices could be deployed as tools of deception by institutions corrupted by their own will for power (Thomas 1999: 219).

The hard-boiled detective novel was developed in the USA around the same time British writers produced the 'whodunit' form and can be found in American literature from the

1880s onwards. However, it was Dashiell Hammett's *Red Harvest* (first published in 1929 and immediately followed by *The Maltese Falcon* in the same year), that established the genre as a credible and influential sub-genre of detective fiction with its own distinct language patterns, narrative structures, themes, etc. (Scaggs 2005: 55-56). The sub-genre is very much concerned with images of masculine detectives, with this masculinity somehow under threat, and it is frequently described as misogynistic, rejecting the idea of the supposedly 'effeminate' detectives created by writers like Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers (Knight 2004: 110-112). The roots of the genre – pointing to its explicitly American origins – lie partly in the Western novel, moved to an urban environment:

> …hard-boiled fiction is typically identified as a distinctively American sub-genre, and such an identification is reinforced by three elements that characterise most of the early fiction. First, the Californian setting of most of the early hard-boiled novels, and many of the later ones, is a direct extension of the frontier stories of the Western genre, and underlines the identification of the private eye as a quick-fisted urban cowboy, who, when he speaks at all, speaks in the tough, laconic American vernacular. This American vernacular, the second of these characteristics, is the same language of the 'mean streets' identified by Chandler […]. The third distinctly American characteristic is the portrayal of crimes that were increasingly becoming part of the everyday world of early twentieth-century America (Scaggs 2005:57).

This third characteristic refers particularly to the development of organized crime during the 1920s, following Prohibition in 1919 (see Ernest Mandel, 1984: 31-35). The literary genre was soon picked up by Hollywood and developed into what became film noir in the 1940s. The genre was also brought to radio in the late 1930s, told by a first-person narrator i.e. the detective, a convention which was also used in many of the radio, TV and film adaptations.[3]

The hard-boiled novel demands a completely different kind of detection than the Golden Age novel, partly due to a different social world depicted in these novels. This may be due to the American setting, as opposed to the British one, which necessitates the description of

different cultural attitudes towards class, national history and social, economic and political systems of power. Several discourses seem to intersect in hard-boiled fiction, exemplified by Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*. Firstly, there is a distinct reaction against the contemporary, largely British, Golden Age fiction, in terms of 'realism', language, the kind of crime and society depicted and the methods of detection used to investigate such a society.[4] Another discourse, similarly geared against Europe, has to do with America's politics of isolationism, a foreign policy strategy that seeks America's independence from other countries, in particular, Western Europe.[5] In a slightly different move, the hard-boiled novel appears to draw on Western European developments in art that seem to express wary and negative attitudes towards the supposed promises of technological and social 'progress'. All of these attitudes are arguably discernible in hard-boiled fiction. While the concept of 'realism' is too complex and broad to be analysed in detail, here, in the context of hard-boiled fiction, it mostly tends to express an understanding of the world as chaotic, complex and largely impossible to 'order', thus necessitating 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection. As Martin Priestman argues:

> If there is any literary realism to be found in *The Maltese Falcon* then, apart from a few evocations and settings, it is to be found in a kind of witty, laconic, hard-bitten philosophy of life that insists on the absurdity and randomness of events, and the individual's existential loneliness, as the anecdote Spade tells about a certain Flitcraft is designed to suggest (Priestman 2003: 101).[6]

Crime appears to be ubiquitous in the chaotic world of the hard-boiled novel where everything, from politics and the police to romantic relationships is burdened by moral ambiguity at best, but mostly downright corruption. In  a world where 'legal' and 'criminal' or 'good' and 'bad' cannot always be separated or clearly defined, 'rational-scientific' methods of detection are not sufficient to establish even the most fragile form of 'order'. As Raymond Chandler argues in 'The Simple Art of Murder':

> 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 bootleg 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 moneymaking, where no man can walk down a dark street in safety because law and order are things we talk about but refrain from practising; a world where you may witness a hold-up in broad daylight and see who did it, but you will fade quickly back into the crowd rather than tell anyone, because the hold-up men may have friends with long guns, or the police may not like your testimony, and in any case the shyster for the defense will be allowed to abuse and vilify you in open court, before a jury of selected morons, without any but the most perfunctory interference from a political judge (Chandler 1950).

Such a world clearly has implications for the methods of detection that are employed to solve these crimes: the crimes Chandler describes are not solved by following clues (these either do not exist or they can be false, manipulated or simply misleading), but by intuitively understanding the environment they inhabit.

Generally, in hard-boiled novels society tends to be depicted as too chaotic and corrupt to be policed by following the 'letter of the law', and at the end of most stories, there seems little optimism that 'order' can and will be restored to society. Following clues in a world where the solution of one enigma will only lead to the uncovering of bigger crimes, criminal organisations, political conspiracies and personal moral dilemmas, seems like a futile exercise. In *The Maltese Falcon*, for example, Sam Spade doesn't even look at the body of his partner Miles Archer, attesting to his negative attitude towards forensics or the collection of clues at a crime scene. This does not mean that hard-boiled detectives do not follow those clues they find, but they generally rely very much on coincidence, to the extent that Sam Spade has most of the vital characters involved in the story either come to his office, house or summon him. Spade is perceptive about his surroundings and can deduce connections between events, he figures out from the newspapers Brigid O'Shaughnessy and Joel Cairo look at, that they are expecting the arrival of the boat *La*

*Paloma* and from Miles' character (but also from his own familiarity with Miles), he deduces that Brigid O'Shaughnessy killed him. But he does not look at crime scenes, he does not investigate dead bodies and when he interviews witnesses, he usually assumes that they are lying or at least omitting something. He produces murder weapons in the end, but only for the benefit of the police, not because he feels he needs them to verify his results. Some information he gets by exerting or threatening violence, preferably towards men representing a 'weaker' form of masculinity, for example, towards the young Wilmer or the homosexual Joel Cairo. But overall, he seems surprisingly passive: most clues seem to 'happen' to come his way and force a reaction, rather than Spade actively looking for them.

Thus, the methods of detection in the hard-boiled genre differ sharply from the 'rational-scientific' approach employed by Sherlock Holmes and Miss Marple. In fact, it could be argued that, apart from a paranoid distrust in everybody the detective hero Sam Spade encounters (with the exception of his secretary Effie Perrine), there is little evidence of rational thought patterns, logical deduction or an idea that social order is something that can be easily maintained or restored. In fact, it is questionable if 'social order' ever exists within hard-boiled fiction. As Scaggs summarises:

> The fakery and artifice that characterize the modern city of hard-boiled fiction drive a wedge between what is seen and what is known, and in this way the private eye's quest to restore order becomes a quest to make sense of a fragmented, disjointed, and largely unintelligible world by understanding its connections, or, more often, its lack of connections (Scaggs 2005: 72).

Seen in this light, then, the 'irrational-subjective' method of detection, as an approach to the solution of a crime, reflects a general uncertainty about the possibility of social order and a resignation towards the fight against the complex structures of organized crime, at least through official agents.

Instead of the judicial system, it is Wilmer who serves justice by killing Gutman, even though (or maybe because) he himself is a violent criminal. The policemen are incapable of acquiring information, mainly because the meaning they deduce from the 'signs' they are given by forensic evidence and witness statements repeatedly leads them to wrongly suspect Spade. In fact, Spade's view of the legal system (and its failures) is linked to its need for a clear connection between 'signifier' and 'signified', which also leads to its corruption:

> Bryan is like most district attorneys. He's more interested in how his record will look on paper than anything else. He'd rather drop a doubtful case than try it and have it go against him. I don't know that he ever deliberately framed anybody he believed innocent, but I can't imagine him letting himself believe them innocent if he could scrape up, or twist into shape, proof of their guilt. To be sure of convicting one man he'll let half a dozen equally guilty accomplices go free – if trying to convict them all might confuse his case. […] I can show him that if he starts fooling around trying to gather up everybody he's going to have a tangled case that no jury will be able to make heads or tails of, while if he sticks to the punk [Wilmer] he can get a conviction standing on his head (Hammett 1992: 180).

However, at the end, Spade hands all the criminals over to the police. Thus, even though the outcome will be a complex case for the district attorney, he does seem to respect the law and legal procedures and its ability to make sense of 'tangled' cases, after all. He does not even expect Brigid O'Shaughnessy to get away with the murder of Miles Archer, even though her involvement is only proven by Sam's subjective assessment that Miles would have let her close enough to be shot, but not Thursby. Also, he trusts the police enough, that once they stop chasing after red herrings, such as their suspicions about Spade, "it's ten to one they'll sooner or later stumble on information about the falcon" (ibid: 177) and then go after Gutman. The text is not very definitive on its view of the legal system implied in its method of detection. There is no fundamental critique; it seems mere coincidence that Sam Spade reaches the solution before the police.

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Yet, where Spade does criticize the police, this mainly implies a critique of the 'rational-scientific' methods of detection that dominated the detective novel at the time. Instead of transforming "a potentially disordered world into a community bound by webs of shared meaning" (McCann 2000: 89), meaning becomes relative. The falcon itself serves as either an ordinary or an exquisite piece of art; it signifies wealth, but it is just a worthless illusion, it is tied up with a complex and mysterious history, but that might be fiction and, most importantly, it is simultaneously real and fake. It is a real object, but not the one it is supposed to be and, at the same time, the 'real' falcon may not exist. The characters' identity is similarly unstable:

> As we see, throughout *The Maltese Falcon*, Hammett works to break down the binary of 'good' and 'evil', characterising Spade as 'half gangster'. Whilst a detective he also uses the same methods and violence as those he investigates. We see at one point him beating Cairo unconscious even when he has been 'disarmed' […]. Bridgid also frequently moves between polar positions, appearing as both victim and willing perpetrator of violence a fluid, transgressive nature indicated by her unstable identity (Riley 2004).

This deconstruction of a binary order is associated with distrust in the certainty Holmes' 'rational-scientific' approach provided. This view of objects and society as inherently unstable can be seen as one of the developments in modernist art that later influence the development of postmodern world views. In particular, European modernist art movements between the two World Wars (like Expressionism, Dadaism, Surrealism and Cubism) seems to express uncertainty and pessimism towards technological 'progress', distrust in social order and hierarchies and a questioning of the stability of social order and concepts of 'trust'. As such, hard-boiled novels could be understood within this tradition in the later stages of the modern (or even modernist) movement, particularly one that tends to move away from optimistic views of technological and scientific progress. Furthermore, hard-boiled novels even declare 'rational-scientific' methods of detection as fundamentally flawed and unsuitable for a society as corrupt as the urban America they describe.

While the comparatively optimistic Golden Age literature was dominated by British authors and a setting in the UK, at a time when the country had to come to terms with a significant loss of (economic and military) power, hard-boiled novels, with its pessimistic attitude emerge and are set in America at a time when the country achieves its status as 'superpower'. The 'trust no one' attitude expressed in the hard-boiled version of 'irrational-scientific' detection may, thus, be seen as reflecting the country's attitude towards Western Europe. The US adopted a strategy (and an ideology) of 'isolationism', meaning that the country tried to avoid relying too heavily (economically, socially, etc.) on other countries or being drawn into Western European conflicts. The changes in this world order and in America's foreign politics may therefore find expression in the hard-boiled novel: it is safer not to trust anybody, isolate oneself from the people and the world that surrounds the individual, and especially avoid any kind of 'foreignness'. As such, the hard-boiled novel can be seen as a specifically American sub-genre, dealing with an American social setting, with American heroes and derived from the explicitly American Western genre.[7] In combination with this, America's employment of a particularly aggressive free market capitalism, comes to play a part in the hard-boiled novels' inherent paranoia. Thus, the hero of the hard-boiled novel appears to personify the independence of a liberal market society which arguably distrusts everybody:

> For Sam Spade, detection is all business, not science; and the enemy is anybody or anything that is not good for business. He doesn't need fingerprints to identify his opponent because he doesn't need to find out who his opponent is. Spade's very identity as a detective is defined in terms of his recognition of the power of capital to eradicate traditional markers of difference or interest; he presents himself in all his dealings with criminals and policemen alike as the independent broker negotiating a deal among a band of foreigners and cops he knows are trying to swindle each other and him at the same time (Thomas 1999: 265).

Thus, the detective himself is an agent of capitalist thought, but unlike Gutman his expectations of wealth are not limitless. Unlike Miles Archer, he will not be corrupted by sexual or emotional desire and hands Brigid over to the police. However, even though he

frequently states that his allegiance can be bought, he ultimately only shows allegiance to the legal system, which is intertwined with his economic interests, since in the detective business, "when one of our organization gets killed it's bad business to let the killer get away with it" (Hammett 1992: 214). At the same time, Thomas (1999: 261-269) identifies the villains in *The Maltese Falcon* as 'foreign'. None of them seem to be clearly associated with one nationality, rather they represent internationality and 'otherness', whereas Sam Spade represents 'Americanness': the hero can be read as representing the USA replacing Britain as commercial and military superpower after the First World War. In this context, the detective's stubborn individualism is linked with the USA's isolationism, especially in comparison to European powers, represented in the villains who first team up, only to betray each other within seconds. This xenophobia places *The Maltese Falcon* in an ideologically conservative arena.

*The Maltese Falcon* was first published in 1929 and the fruitless chase after the elusive idea of wealth symbolized by the falcon can also be seen as a critique of a liberal economic system in a time "when America was suddenly forced to rethink its dominant socioeconomic ideology in a wholly unprecedented way" (Priestman 2003: 98), particularly in light of the stock market crash that started the Great Depression. All the characters are not only motivated, but corrupted by money. Gutman's quest for the falcon is not about a beautiful piece of art, it is about the economic value of this piece of art. Gutman doesn't want to own it; he wants to sell it as soon as possible. The value of the falcon – like everything else – can only be measured in terms of monetary gain. "Hammett's imprisonment during the McCarthy period for his suspected involvement with the Communist Party only serves to reinforce such a reading" (Scaggs 2005: 74), that is, an anti-capitalist reading that doubts the value of monetary wealth, and especially the amount of corruption an individual has to endure for financial gain. At the same time, though, the

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hero's interest in money easily counters such a reading, even though Spade practices moderation in his demands or requests for money, to a certain extent mirroring American protestant middle class values (as described by Max Weber in 1920).[8] This apparent ideological incoherence and insecurity already hints at ways the 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection are later used as a tool to express the unstable nature of signs in postmodernity. Thus, 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection can be read, not only as a reaction against 'rational-scientific' methods of detection, but also as an expression of anxieties regarding an increasingly complex, morally ambiguous world where a politics of isolationism serves as the best policy for country and individual to hold one's ground against a fierce market economy.

### 6.2.    *The Big Sleep* (Hawks, 1946)

As Andrew Spicer outlines, the term film noir was coined by French film critic Nino Frank, commenting on the release of the films *The Maltese Falcon*, *Murder, My Sweet* (Dmytryk, 1944), *Double Indemnity* (Wilder, 1944) and *Laura* (Preminger, 1944) in France in 1946, after the wartime occupation.

> In France, especially through the work of left-wing critics writing for the film journal *Positif*, film noir became an important component of a self-questioning intellectual climate dominated by Existentialism. This philosophy emphasizes contingency and chance, a world where there are no values or moral absolutes, and which is devoid of meaning except those that are self-created by the alienated and confused 'non-heroic hero'. French intellectuals saw in film noir a reflection of their own pessimism and angst (Spicer 2002: 2).

Many noir directors were highly influenced by the German Expressionist cinema of the 1920s and a number of those directors immigrated to Hollywood (often to avoid persecution by the Nazis), such as Max Ophüls, Robert Siodmak, Otto Preminger or Fritz Lang, most of whom went on to direct some noir films in America. Spicer goes on to explain: "As there was no equivalent intellectual film culture in America at this point, it

was not until the late 1960s that the term film noir […] became widespread" (ibid: 3). The genealogy of noir is broad, drawing on traditions within art and traced through various media forms and epochs, as outlined, for example, by James Naremore (1998: 9-95), who also specifically places film noir in the context of modernism and modernist art. Thus, film noir, following only a decade after Hammett's first novels (albeit a decade that saw huge social changes with the Great Depression and the start of the Second World War), depicts a similar philosophical world view as the hard-boiled novels and, as usual for adaptations, the same 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection, necessitated by a view of the world as chaotic, corrupt and alienating. While some film noirs are detective narratives, many also tell the story of how a (male) lead character was led to commit murder or are semi-documentaries. However, film noir is one of the few sub-genres where plot is not necessarily seen as a uniting factor.[9] Rather, a visual style and a specific world view, influenced by existentialist philosophy, play a key role in the sub-genre's (of crime film and, partly, of the detective genre) conceptualization. According to Kirsten Moana Thompson:

> Noir films shared similar visual styles, narrative strategies, characterisation and subject matter, and had their roots in German Expressionism, French Poetic Realism and American hard-boiled pulp fiction. Stylistically, noir films were characterized by chiaroscuro lighting (or dramatic contrasts of light and shadow), tight frames, oblique compositions, canted camera angles, long takes, deep focus, distorting wide-angle lenses and static camera work. As a style, noir crossed several different genres, including the thriller, melodrama, gangster and detective films, and even influenced comedies, westerns and musicals (Thompson 2007: 50).

Yet, the rather elusive criteria by which the genre is established, mostly the emphasis on a 'style' that is not exclusive to film noir, have raised doubt with critics like Steve Neale on whether or not we can view film noir as a genre at all: due to the fact that contemporary audiences, industry and advertising executives marketing the films, producers, actors, directors and other crew members or reviewers did not use the term noir, didn't even necessarily group these films as *one* body of films belonging to the same category:

It is in essence a critical category. This means that its corpus can only be established by means of critical observation and analysis; its constituents and contours cannot be verified by reference to contemporary studio documents, discussions or reviews, or to any other contemporary intertextual source. This is not in itself an insuperable problem, provided that the nature and status of the term are acknowledged, and provided that the canon is established by applying a clear and consistent set of criteria to as broad an initial corpus of films as is possible. Unfortunately many of the proponents of *film noir* have on the one hand been unable to decide on the nature of the phenomenon with which they are dealing [...]. On the other, they have tended to seek to derive their criteria from a small group of films – those initially identified or labelled as *noir*s – while trying to privilege the genres with which those films were associated and to extend the corpus numerically and chronologically in order to substantiate noirs existence. The result has been considerable disagreement of basic criteria, about the overall contours of the larger *noir* canon and about some of the antecedents, roots and causes of *noir* (Neale 2000: 153).

Apart from the fact that crimes are committed as a central part of the narrative, *The Big Sleep*, *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (Garnett, 1946) and *Sunset Boulevard* (Wilder, 1950) seem to have little in common.[10] These films are film noirs that tell very different stories that mostly seem to share a world view that emphasises chaos, violence and unhappiness. Neale offers a detailed analysis of claims made in criticism of film noir on the 'genre's' significance, ideological agenda, gender within the genre, literary roots, narrative structure and aesthetics (2000: 151-177), which makes clear how heterogeneous the noir canon really is. Without trying to delve into this debate further, in the context of genre analysis, film noir here is thus viewed as a sub-genre, describing crime films of the 1940s, often adaptations of hard-boiled novels that functioned as establishing aesthetic conventions for Hollywood and later television, in order to visualise crime. As the case study on *Dragnet* (NBC, 1951-1959) in Chapter 5 has suggested, the visual style has influenced television drama significantly, even though it seems to have relatively little bearing on methods of detection. Yet, considering that the noir style is tied up with a specific world view and negative attitudes towards the possibility of 'order', its use in television dramas that employ 'rational-scientific' methods of detection may already point

to a tension between aesthetic 'disorder' and 'order' restored through methods of detection, as shown in Chapter 5.

Spicer, in reference to Robert Porfirio (1979), divides the category into several stages or cycles: the experimental period (1940-1943); studio expressionism (1944-1947); the location period and the semi-documentary (1947-1952); fragmentation and decay (1952-1958). With its release date in 1946, *The Big Sleep* belongs in the category of studio expressionism, which (among others) started off with the first Philip Marlowe film adaptation, *Murder, My Sweet*:

> The early developments of film noir paved the way for a trio of films released in 1944 – *Double Indemnity*, *Laura* and *Murder, My Sweet* – whose success was crucial to the establishment of the cycle. All three were almost entirely studio-bound, a characteristic of this phase of noir's evolution (Spicer 2002: 52).

Raymond Chandler finished seven novels and several short stories featuring Marlowe between 1936 and 1958. All of the novels have been adapted to film in various points in time.[11] The novel *The Big Sleep* was published in 1939, a year before *Farewell, My Lovely* (*Murder, My Sweet*). However, as Andrew Pepper (2010: 58-60) points out, it is important to bear in mind the difference between the film noirs and what he calls the 'roman noirs' many of the films are based on. In *The Big Sleep*, Marlowe is played by Humphrey Bogart and his love interest Vivian Rutledge by Lauren Bacall. It has to be considered that Bogart's star power and the intertextual link he represents to *The Maltese Falcon* may be more significant to some audience members than to other adaptations of Philip Marlowe novels.

Aesthetically, one key feature of film noir style is chiaroscuro lighting, which particularly emphasises shadows, light and dark. This feature is stronger in the first stage of film noir, for example, *Murder, My Sweet*, uses the lighting to produce what could almost be

described as special effects, with sharp shadows on every wall or faces reflected in windows being visible before we see the actual person. *The Big Sleep* also emphasises shadows, with the first image of the opening credits (after the WB sign) showing what looks like Bogart's shadow lighting Bacall's shadow's cigarette (hands creep out of this darkness in the next frame to put cigarettes in an ashtray), thus already depicting a kind of self-reflexiveness, possibly even playful irony or parody.[12] The first image in the film shows a door with a big sign on it saying 'Sternwood'; footsteps are heard and a shadow darkens the sign on the door. The camera then pans down to the left to show a hand ringing the doorbell. A cut to the interior reveals the Butler Norris (Charles D. Brown) opening the door, enough so that he can see who is on the other side, but not the audience and we hear the person on the other side of the door say "My name is Marlowe, General Sternwood wanted to see me". Only when the Butler invites him in, the main character is shown. This 'game with shadows' lasts little more than a minute, but it emphasises the relevance of lighting and shadows for films of the time, particularly regarding crime films. Bogart's slightly mumbled introduction may also already point to a specific use of language within film noir and the specific film. As Marlowe, only a few minutes later, makes clear when he explains: "I went to college. I can still speak English when my business demands it". Marlowe sets himself apart with a number of quips and one-liners, which give the entire film an overall less serious note than other noirs, and set the detective character apart from Bogart's other iconic detective, Sam Spade. Marlowe, in juxtaposition to Spade, is also a very active detective who is rarely shown in his own office. He follows clues and people, but each clue provides more questions than answers, and the detective ends up getting caught in a complicated net of criminal activity, in the course of which he not only gets threatened by guns, but also is brutally beaten, has to watch "like a sap" while Harry Jones (Elisha Cook Jr.) is killed and is clearly affected by it, and falls in love with Vivian Rutledge, his employer's daughter.[13] The death of the Sternwood family's chauffeur is

never even definitely solved: it remains unknown if he committed suicide or if Carmen Sternwood (Martha Vickers) is somehow implicated in his murder.

Politically, film noir (when discussed as genre) tends to be interpreted as relatively left-wing (despite extremely conservative ideas of gender), almost Marxist. This may be related to Hammett's alleged involvement with the Communist Party, the general distrust towards the legal system expressed in the films or the fact that those French intellectuals who first identified film noir as a genre were Marxists, thus conceptualized this category in a way which allows for left-leaning readings. Discussing film noir in general, Philip Kemp argues that the entire genre follows a leftist world view, in that:

> … it portrays single-minded cupidity as standard, the element in which everyone swims. A 1930s gangster – Cagney, Muni or Robinson – might be ruthless in pursuit of loot, but against him there stood the regular citizen, honest and industrious, supporter of the forces of law. [Furthermore, class] functions as an instrument of oppression, a cause of hatred and violence. [Third,] Noir depicts a society largely devoid of any communal sense, where the cult of individualism and the deification of free enterprise have eroded belief in loyalty to a general good. Anyone who underestimates the ferocity of the prevailing self-interest is liable to suffer for it (Kemp 1998: 82-83).

Class is not necessarily a predominant theme in *The Big Sleep*, but Marlowe often makes remarks which reveal a deep-seated suspicion towards the Sternwood family, especially Vivian and Carmen, and their (inherited) wealth. Similarly, Marlowe (despite his college education) seems suspicious of Vivian when she makes a remark about Proust, whom he doesn't know, and seems unimpressed by her knowledge of 'high culture'. Most of the criminals' backgrounds are not explained in detail, but the impression is created that none of them commit crimes out of necessity; rather, much of the criminal activity seems to stem from Carmen's elusive involvement with Regan's murder and the following cover-up. Thus, one way of reading the film could concern the way a 'weak' (disabled) father cannot contain his daughters who 'run wild' due to an abundance of wealth: this reading would

suggest the corrupting powers of money. In this interpretation, Marlowe functions as the middle class hero who manages to steer the family away from trouble by sending Carmen to an institution (presumably either a rehabilitation facility to help her overcome her drug addiction or a mental hospital, which helps her deal with her psychotic episodes) and then – as the last lines of the film, in which he asks Vivian: "What's wrong with you?" and she replies "Nothing you can't fix", suggests – moves on to 'fix' Vivian. Yet 'order' is not restored: Regan's death is not solved and criminal activity (such as pornography and gambling) may still continue. While the tone of *The Big Sleep* is overall more humorous than in other film noirs (also due to the banter between the star couple), the diegetic universe is still dominated by crime, violence and chaos, independent of whether the thrice divorced Vivian can be 'fixed' or not.

### 6.3.    <u>Conclusion</u>

This chapter dealt with the way 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection were established as a general counter-reaction to the British 'rational-scientific' methods of detection. The two case studies discussed the ways 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection were developed in the 20th century in literature and later film, where they tend to be strongly linked with film noirs. Both, hard-boiled literature and film noir can be linked to (largely European) arts discourses situated in the later stages of modernism, critical of technological and scientific progress and emphasizing alienation of the individual (partly linked to urbanisation and industrialisation). This attitude can be read as a reaction to the way technology was used to kill in the First World War. What is also expressed is the specifically American reaction to the First World War: isolationism as a dictum for American foreign politics. As the term suggests, what was emphasised was the idea that America would isolate itself from other countries. The isolation of hard-boiled and film noir heroes can be read as an expression of this attitude. Furthermore, the literary tradition

rooted in hard-boiled crime also represents how ties to Europe were cut, with an explicitly American literary tradition where setting, stock characters, narrative structures and methods of detection were significantly different from the British Golden Age tradition.

This chapter also explored film noir as a major reference point in the genre due to the way crime and a specific world view that necessitates 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection were visualised. Of course, the sub-genre of film noir was neither the first nor the last to add to a 'canon' of the way 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection and a disorderly society are visualised in film and television, but, arguably, it has been highly influential. Especially the way film noir has influenced early television detective dramas is important for this thesis (as has been shown in the discussion of *Dragnet* in Chapter 5). Yet, many aesthetic features have been used by television dramas that employ 'rational-scientific' detection since *Dragnet*, thus showing that even the chaotic world they signify can be ordered somehow.

Beyond this, the pessimistic world view and Existentialist alienation of the hard-boiled novels and film noir are important predecessors to the way later detective dramas depict the chaos left by postmodern deconstruction and an increasingly fragmented postmodern society. What is 'merely' alienation in the former version becomes confusion, even resignation, from the 1980s onwards. The hard-boiled and film noir detectives, at the very least, have their own moral code they can follow (which leads Spade to hand over Brigid to a possible death sentence), but the detectives of *The Shield* (fX, 2002-2008) cannot even rely on that any more. Thus, this analysis of hard-boiled novels and film noir also serves as an example of how modern and modernist thought on the one hand highly influences postmodern thought patterns, but, on the other hand, is also distinctively different from it.

This chapter's main purpose has been to situate television drama that employs 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection in a generic context. What has been shown in this chapter is that discourses surrounding the issue of how to access knowledge in a chaotic, 'un-ordered' and 'un-orderable' have been dominant within the genre since the 1920s, running parallel to Golden Age literature's 'rational-scientific' methods of detection and conceptualizations of 'order'. This issue has not only been relevant to literary discourses, but has also influenced how 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection have been depicted in audio-visual media, with noir aesthetics possibly signifying a specific attitude towards 'order' and chaos.

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[1] Sean McCann even argues that Hammett, quite elitist in his opinions on 'literature' and popular culture was explicitly seeking this kind of critical acclaim (McCann 2000: 98-101). Raymond Chandler, in his essay 'The Simple Art of Murder' (1950), aims to position hard-boiled fiction as a 'higher' art form than Golden Age fiction.

[2] It is important to note that while film noir always deals with crime, it is by no means always a detective story: many films like *Double Indemnity* (Wilder, 1944) or *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (Garnett, 1946) are told from the criminals' point of view and tell how they were led to criminal behaviour by a *femme fatale*. Thus, while much has been written on film noir, not all is applicable to films and novels dealing with detectives like Sam Spade or Philip Marlowe.

[3] Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler also adapted several of their books for radio and developed original scripts: "Radio writers were having a field day adapting these noiric precursors [like *The Thin Man* (1934)], so *Lux Radio Theatre* and the many other programs devoted to sound representation of the visual began to attempt to replicate these filmed tales and their mood" (Nadel 1998: 347).

[4] Raymond Chandler, in his 1950-essay 'The Simple Art of Murder', in which he argues for an understanding of hard-boiled fiction as art superior to British Golden Age fiction, proposes 'realism' as a way to measure the quality of the literature. In Hammett's novels, Chandler detects this 'realism' in two aspects: the language and the way crime is located within a broader social context:

> 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. All language begins with speech, and the speech of common men at that, but when it develops

to the point of becoming a literary medium it only looks like speech. Hammett's style at its worst was almost as formalized as a page of Marius the Epicurean; at its best it could say almost anything. I believe this style, which does not belong to Hammett or to anybody, but is the American language (and not even exclusively that any more), can say things he did not know how to say or feel the need of saying. In his hands it had no overtones, left no echo, evoked no image beyond a distant hill. He is said to have lacked heart, yet the story he thought most of himself is the record of a man's devotion to a friend. He was spare, frugal, hardboiled, but he did over and over again what only the best writers can ever do at all. He wrote scenes that seemed never to have been written before (Chandler 1950).

[5] Isolationism, which became particularly prominent after the First World War, mostly concerns foreign politics and military intervention:

Isolationism is an attitude, policy, doctrine, or position opposed to the commitment of American force outside the Western Hemisphere, except in the rarest and briefest instances. The essence of isolationism is refusal to commit force beyond hemispheric bounds, or absolute avoidance of overseas military alliances. […] The isolationist position […] emerged in response to the specific historical circumstances surrounding American entry into the [First] World War. The physical threat of embroilment interacted with the intellectual challenges of internationalist ideas to bring about the conjunction of popular noninterventionist sentiment with carefully through-out policies and doctrinal statements of opposition to overseas involvement (Cooper 1969: 2-3).

However, this ideology can be easily extended to imply economic isolation, since economic alliances often necessitate military intervention.

[6] After a near-death experience, Flitcraft wants to change his life and leaves his wife, home and job, only to end up in a similar town in a similar job, (presumably) in a similar marriage (Hammett 1992: 61-64).

[7] Though, also somewhat ironically, the genre has been haunted by accusations of 'un-American' activities, pertaining, in particular, to author Dashiell Hammett.

[8] In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1920) sociologist Max Weber outlines how Calvin's and Luther's theology is in line with early capitalist ideas. Especially in the USA, as Weber's analysis of the writings of Benjamin Franklin, who, while being a devout Christian, advocated for the accumulation of money. However, the accumulation of money for Franklin and other early capitalists, should not lead to extravagance or wastefulness; prudence, honesty, punctuality, even avarice are promoted as good values. Earning money becomes an important part of life in capitalist society, but this should never lead to greed (as contradictory as this may seem), it is imprudent to live beyond one's means, or to live extravagantly, even if one's financial situation would allow it. At the same time, it is part of one's aims in life to make money and poverty is viewed as individual failure or even 'punishment from God' rather than a fault in the system. This leads to a middle class value system where those who live comfortably appear to be more prudent than the rich who live in luxury. Related to this, there is an underlying assumption that those who inherited money and did not work for it are somehow less prudent then any 'self-made man'. According to Weber, this leads back to a protestant ideal of asceticism. In the American tradition, these ideas that promote a connection between a protestant ethics and a liberal economy tend to be stronger than in Europe where other aspects of religion are more emphasised, maybe because of a

stronger catholic influence, which is reflected in governmental programmes, especially concerning welfare.

[9] Another genre where this is the case is, for example, the musical where plot is secondary to the 'spectacle' of songs and dancing as a uniting feature.

[10] The first one is a detective story, the second one is the story about a young man who falls in love with his bosses' wife, played by Lana Turner, and both plot to kill her husband to be together, and the third one sees a delusional silent film actress take advantage of a young, broke journalist.

[11] Both, *Murder, My Sweet* and *The Big Sleep*, the first adaptations, were re-made in 1975 and 1978, respectively, with Robert Mitchum as Philip Marlowe Curiously, Mitchum seems to be the only actor who played the detective in more than one film adaptation, it can thus hardly be imagined that the films were perceived as a series.

[12] Yet, the earlier *Double Indemnity* shows a similar play with shadows in its opening credits, which depicts the shadow of main character Walter Neff (Frank MacMurray) on crutches, a major feature in the film's narrative.

[13] Even though Vivian is deeply involved in most of the criminal activity of the film, and the ending is hardly a 'happy ending', the film still ends with the union of the heterosexual couple, though this is also related to the relationship between the films' stars, which was highly popularized at the time. Megan E. Abbott outlines just how much the star's relationship plays into the adaptation of the novel:

> The film serves a process by which the potential femme fatale is turned into, or tamed into, a romantic love interest. Vivian Sternwood, cold, deceitful, and thrice married in the novel, is reconfigured, in the form of Lauren Bacall, as a once-married banter-partner for Humphrey Bogart's Marlowe. As she proves her fealty to the detective, Vivian undergoes a reformation from spoiled rich girl to able romantic partner (Abbott 2002: 141).

As Abbott goes on to explain, the romantic storyline not only follows one of Howard Hawks' (alleged) themes, who often explores relationships between "tough men and efficient women" (ibid.), but also played into a marketing campaign that served to promote both stars as a couple. Of course, the analysis of female characters and their roles in film noirs is crucial to an understanding of this sub-genre, which is so highly influenced by Freudian psychoanalysis. *The Big Sleep* certainly offers an interesting example of this, since the union of the heterosexual couple at the end of a noir film is relatively rare. For a brief discussion how *The Big Sleep* figures into film noirs' conceptualization of masculinity, see Krutnik (1991: 96-100).

# 7. <u>"The only thing Columbus discovered was that he was lost!"[1]:</u>

## <u>Narrative Structures and 'Irrational-Subjective' Detection</u>

This chapter will consider 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection in various television series. As described in Chapter 6, the literary roots of 'irrational-subjective' detection in modernist or modern detective fiction lie in the American hard-boiled novel and rely largely on coincidence, but also imply some kind of personal emotional involvement of the detective character with witnesses, victims and suspects (the suspects sometimes being the detectives themselves, as Sam Spade in *Red Harvest* [1929]). This chapter's focus will be three case studies: *Hill Street Blues* (NBC, 1981-1987), *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990-1991) and *The Shield* (fX, 2002-2008).[2] All three represent a chaotic world view, at least in parts, derived from the hard-boiled novel. This is linked with discourses surrounding a changing television industry, economic and political developments as well as discourses surrounding postmodern aesthetics, the postmodern subject and a postmodern world view. 'Irrational-subjective' methods of detection appear to be particularly suited to express how a postmodern world and the desire, even imperative, to access and attain 'truth' about an event can be brought together. What emerges is the celebration of diverse avenues of thought that can be opened up through a 'project' of deconstructing a variety of grand narratives and 'myths' governing a modern society. Yet, as discussed in the previous chapter in relation to *CSI*'s desire to mix a modern system of order with postmodern aesthetics, *The Shield* also seems to express scepticism towards the postmodern 'project'. But in opposition to its 'rational-scientific' contemporary, it refuses to look for answers in a modern past, but seems to pose questions about where to go from here (a question explored in Chapter 8).

'Irrational-subjective' detection was common to television drama before the 1980s and *Hill Street Blues*. *The Mod Squad* (ABC, 1968-1973) shows a team of three juvenile delinquents working for the police, often undercover and this work suggests an intimate involvement with those that are being investigated. James Lyons even argues that one of the central narrative tensions of at least the first season of *Miami Vice* (NBC, 1984-1990) is:

> …the question of whether Crockett [Don Johnson] and/or Tubbs [Philip Michael Thomas] will surrender to the temptations of the 'Vice' is one which is posed in relation to their work as *undercover* cops, as it is operating in the guise of drug dealers or smugglers that brings them close to the enticements (wealth, narcotics, power, beautiful women, and, more generally, a life of hedonism) that they must resist (Lyons 2010: 68; italics in the original).

Lyons goes on to outline that, while the more successful second season shifted the central narrative tension onto other characters:

> Interestingly, the [second] season can be argued to have diffused that problematic across its cast of episode-specific characters, so that most instalments see a plotline involving an individual being tempted (and crucially succumbing) to vices such as drugs, bribery, dangerous sex, or theft. The result is that we rather less frequently witness Crockett and Tubbs in psychological peril, but enjoy other characters' fall into the traps that they tend to avoid (ibid: 70).[3]

Without wanting to diminish the many unique and innovative characteristics of *Miami Vice*, this kind of tension is often associated with detective series dealing with undercover work, though it may not always be a central problematic of the narrative. *The Mod Squad* often involves instances where the teenagers are reminded of their own past and tempted to return to it (white male Pete [Michael Cole] is a car thief, African American Linc [Clarence Williams III] was arrested during race riots and Julie [Peggy Lipton] ran away from her promiscuous mother), but while they certainly get close to victims and sometimes criminals, their own virtue is rarely seriously threatened, as is frequently the case in *Miami Vice*. In fact, the undercover role of the teens seems to function predominantly as a vehicle to negotiate identity politics: especially civil rights issues are often discussed in relation to

African American Linc. Later series dealing with undercover cops, like *21, Jump Street* (Fox, 1987-1991) also often explore the question if the personal involvement required could corrupt the policeman or woman.

Other than *The Mod Squad*, the 1970s saw plenty of 'irrational-subjective' detectives, possibly most famously detective Columbo (Peter Falk), who always seems to 'know' who the murderer is from the start and then goes on to find proof to verify his thesis, rather than deducing who the murderer is based on the clues he finds.[4] Also featured in the rotation of the *NBC Mystery Movie* (which is explained in Chapter 5 in relation to *Quincy M.E.* [NBC, 1976-1983]) was *McMillan & Wife* (NBC, 1971-1979) featuring Rock Hudson as police commissioner Stewart McMillan who solves cases with his wife Sally (Susan Saint James). The series went to great lengths to explain Sally McMillan's involvement in criminal investigations, often put her in situations where she was in some way threatened and generally had its detectives rely heavily on coincidence.[5] *Starsky and Hutch* (ABC, 1975-1979) also frequently went undercover and had a tendency to get extraordinarily close to Confidential Informants (CIs), witnesses or victims, as well as often ending up in fist fights or car chases. *Charlie's Angels* (ABC, 1976-1981) also relied on putting its main characters into action-packed scenarios in which their physical wellbeing was threatened, rather than having them follow clues and proving their 'genius'.

The 1980s also saw a variety of formats and individual programmes employing 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection, in many ways updating known formulas from the 1970s for a new decade. Apart from *Hill Street Blues*, which will be discussed later, private investigators seemed to gain new popularity in Reagan's USA, as opposed to the numerous 1970s detective series' set inside the legal system (like *McMillan & Wife*, *Columbo* [NBC, 1971-2003], *Starsky & Hutch*, *Quincy M.E.*, *Kojak* [CBS, 1973-1978] or *McCloud* [NBC,

1970-1977]). Examples of this are *Hart to Hart* (ABC, 1979-1984), which followed the formula of *McMillan & Wife* and both feature married couples who seem to treat detective work mainly as a hobby. Series like *Remington Steele* (NBC, 1982-1987) and *Scarecrow & Mrs King* (CBS, 1983-1987) varied the formula featuring a female private investigator and her somewhat elusive partner, a figurehead of her P.I. bureau and a male CIA agent who reluctantly works with a divorced housewife 'freelancer', respectively. Both series heavily emphasise the sexual tension between the partners. *Moonlighting* (ABC, 1985-1989) can be read as a parody of the formula (by not only copying it, but also through its use of self-referential humour). Other private investigators, which tended to reflect more of a 'macho' culture are *Magnum, P.I.* (CBS, 1980-1989), *Simon & Simon* (CBS, 1981-1989) or *Riptide* (NBC, 1984-1986), featuring male detectives working alone or in teams of two and three, respectively.

Richard J. Kjelstrup points to a crossover episode between 'rational-scientific' detective Jessica Fletcher (Angela Landsbury) in *Murder, She Wrote* (CBS, 1984-1996) and Magnum (Tom Selleck), in which both detectives' methods are juxtaposed:

> Faced with a competitor of another school, Magnum sees himself as a 'competent professional' and an investigator. He gives Fletcher credit for having 'good instincts' and 'interesting observations,' but he feels that deep inside she sees herself as 'the consummate crime solver'; in Magnum's opinion she clearly is not. His way, as he is portrayed here, is the nonintellectual way – gut feelings rather than deductions. He is a descendent of the classic hardboiled private eye, adjusted to the yuppie era of the 1980s. […] Playing up to Magnum's prejudices about her, Fletcher 'suggests' towards the end of the episode that she has 'a hunch' about who the hit man is after. To this Magnum replies, rather patronizingly, that he 'don't play hunches. I stick to logic and deductive reasoning.' He ends his condescending lecture by saying that this is the logic of 'relativity. That's the kind of knowledge that makes me a private investigator and you a novelist, and a very good one' (Kjelstrup 2007: 34).

What Kjelstrup's analysis of this unusual crossover episode makes obvious is the self-awareness of these texts in how 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' methods can

be separated into different categories. What all of these series focussing on 'irrational-subjective' private investigators have in common is a reliance on coincidence and spectacle, often in the form of physical violence or explosions, but also in the form of 'romance'.[6] Of course, this reliance on visual spectacle moves these series close to the action genre, though a difference has to be made between programmes like *The A-Team* (NBC, 1983-1987), which features "soldiers of fortune" who are usually hired as agents of protection rather than detection, similar to *The Equalizer* (CBS, 1985-1989) which features a retired CIA agent-turned private detective, *The Fall Guy* (ABC, 1981-1986), which features a stuntman and head hunter, who catches escaped criminals rather than establishing who the criminal is, or *Knight Rider* (NBC, 1982-1986), which crosses generic borders with Michael Knight's partner being a car which can think for itself. Despite a bright colour scheme and a relatively light-hearted tone, the series' featuring 'irrational-subjective' private investigators tend to be quite close to the self-reliant, profit-oriented hard-boiled detective who is not afraid to take a beating or seek short term romantic involvement with a client. What is different from the hard- boiled detectives is that the private investigators of the 1980s work in small teams; even Magnum relies heavily on a cast of series regulars who support him. Thus, they appear to be less paranoid than those of the 1930s and 1940s, who tend not to trust anybody.[7] The 1980s also saw detective series set within the legal system featuring 'irrational-subjective' detection, like *Cagney & Lacey* (CBS, 1981-1988), which updated the formula to focus on female detectives and their struggles in a male-dominated work environment or *T.J. Hooker* (ABC, 1982-1986), which depicted beat cops, and, as already mentioned, *Miami Vice* which offered a new moral ambiguity of undercover police work, so much so that Steven Sanders terms it "Sunshine Noir" (Sanders 2010: 19).[8]

Possibly as a reaction to the boom of various detective and crime narratives in the 1970s and 1980s, the 1990s saw fewer detective dramas on television, even though the licencing of Fox as a network channel in 1986 and the growing competition with cable channels led to a larger variety of programmes, which meant that the genre did not 'die down' quite as much as in the 1960s. However, few proved to be successful enough to last for many seasons: more or less combining the formulas of detective duos of opposite genders and visuals akin to those of *Baywatch* (NBC, 1989-2001) with beaches and women in bikinis, maybe also drawing on *Magnum* and *Hawaii Five-0* (CBS, 1968-1980), *Silk Stalkings* (CBS, 1991-1999), featuring Rob Estes, lasted eight seasons and found a copycat in the less successful, *The Big Easy* (USA, 1996-1997), set in New Orleans. The 1990s also saw another updated version of the police procedural, like *NYPD Blue* (ABC, 1993-2005), which, in many ways drew on *Hill Street Blues* and was also created by Steven Bochco.[9] Furthermore, the exceptionally successful *Law and Order* franchise was introduced in 1990 with the original series only ending in 2010, which depicted not only investigative procedures, but also the prosecution of criminals in court, thus examining more than one branch of the legal system. The 1990s also saw unprecedented approaches to detection (at least for the detective drama on television) and the 'truth' that can be accessed through 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection. Possibly the most famous and most influential example of this is *Twin Peaks*, which still manages to attract large audiences through DVD box sets or fan festivals, in parts possibly because of the 'cult' status of director David Lynch, but also because of a dedicated fan following. Drawing on *Twin Peaks* and its move towards the supernatural, *The X-Files* (Fox, 1993-2002) negotiated (in the early seasons) between 'rational-scientific' methods of detection and 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection, which privilege feeling and intuition over science, usually with Mulder's (David Duchovny) 'I want to believe'-approach (not 'I want to prove') prevailing

over Scully's (Gillian Anderson) scientific attitudes, especially after she gets abducted and impregnated by aliens herself and adopts Mulder's views (Feise 2005: 149-176).

The first decade of the 2000s saw a move towards more 'cinematic' qualities in television drama across all genres and networks, possibly in response to the high critical acclaim and ratings success of HBO's *The Sopranos* (HBO, 1999-2007), *Sex and the City* (HBO, 1998-2004) or *Six Feet Under* (HBO, 2001-2005). While the *CSI* franchise discussed in Chapter 5 was certainly one of the most successful franchises of the decade (as far as ratings suggest), around the same time, plenty of 'irrational-subjective' detectives re-appeared on television. Even though the detectives of *24* (Fox, 2001-2010), *The Shield* or *The Wire* (HBO, 2002-2008) (which will be discussed in the next chapter) in many ways draw on their predecessors in hard-boiled literature and can be read as a movement against the 'rational-scientific' methods of *CSI* (CBS, 2000- ), they also should be viewed in light of a post-9/11 re-evaluation of the American justice system, depicting its moral dilemmas and weaknesses with more vigour than known to the genre before 9/11 (as argued in the case study on *The Shield* in this chapter and in Chapter 8). Scaggs points out how hard-boiled fiction appears to be particularly open to what he calls 'ideological appropriation':

> Its attempts to contain various threatening 'others' ultimately deconstruct it, and the general tendency of hard-boiled fiction to replicate, explore, and even interrogate its own conventions allows the entire sub-genre to be appropriated for a variety of ideological, formal, and generic purposes (Scaggs 2005: 78).

This thesis argues that, in terms of narrative structure and methods of detection, hard-boiled fiction serves as a template for 'irrational-subjective' detection across the genre. This also includes the police procedural, which (as illegal weapons, gang violence, drug crimes, etc. rise and become seemingly insurmountable throughout the 1970s and 1980s until today) increasingly draw on the hard-boiled tradition to tell complex stories of alleged 'others'. The three case studies chosen for this chapter all work as important examples

within the development of the genre, but also mark specific and diverse ways to access 'truth', not just about criminal activities, but also about American culture and national identity.

## 7.1.     *Hill Street Blues* (NBC, 1981-1987)

Steve Jenkins starts his analysis of *Hill Street Blues* by saying that:

> Anyone writing about *Hill Street Blues* has to confront the idea that this series is 'different'. This is not simply a matter of the supposed singular nature of this cop show against others – its intersection with soap opera, its realism, its mix of drama and comedy, its more complex narrative strategies – but of the ways in which it is talked and written about, and of the image of the series which emerges. And this image relates not only to *Hill Street* itself, but to the ways in which a wider image of television is constructed (Jenkins 1984: 183).

*Hill Street Blues* is arguably one of the most critically acclaimed television programmes of the 1980s. While sometimes dismissed as pretentious (as some newspaper critics did at the time, as cited by Jenkins 1984: 186-187), some critics seem to romanticise producer-turned-head of NBC Grant Tinker's decision to renew the series after disappointing ratings in its first season (Todd Gitlin even starts off his analysis of production context by using the phrase "The tale of *Hill Street Blues*…" [2000: 275]).[10] While the series itself is an innovation, not only of the police procedural, but of televisual narrative structure in general, it is equally important to understand how, at the time, it was understood as intellectually stimulating and challenging or "upscale, literate and uncommercial" (Gitlin 2000: 297), thus offering new ways to understand the possibilities of the medium and the genre.   Some of these ways are linked to 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection: narrative structure and methods of detection are closely related, the narrative structure of 'irrational-subjective' detection offering little narrative closure (or ambiguous endings) and much room for experimentation. The chaotic world that necessitates 'irrational-subjective' detection is also one that cannot be contained in the binaries represented in the 3-act-

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structure of the 'whodunit'. The method of detection and the narrative structure are also bound up with an increasingly postmodern world view which acknowledges the complexities of late 20<sup>th</sup> century politics, identity construction and remains without stable moral values or solutions.

*Hill Street Blues*, first broadcast in 1981, coincided with the beginning of Ronald Reagan's 8-year presidency, which would also come to impact on the nature and economic structure of the US television landscape. Reagan's presidency was shaped by the emergence of the New Right and ideas of neo-conservatism:

> Neoconservatism was a blend of both old and new. It encompassed traditional positions such as anticommunism, opposition to government intervention and bureaucracy, and support for free enterprise and a balanced budget. At the same time, the New Right included Americans, many of them working-class Democrats, who were outraged at social issues they believed attacked and undermined conventional morality, the nuclear family, and religious faith. Thus, they mobilized in anger over busing to achieve racial balance, bans over prayer in public schools, the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion, the extension of the First Amendment to cover pornography, the ongoing campaign to have Congress pass the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), and the extension of antidiscrimination laws to cover homosexuals (Woods 2005: 439).

Furthermore, the 1970s had seen the extension of prisoner's and criminals rights, and the strengthening of women's rights. A powerful Christian Right became increasingly involved in politics and provided an ideological framework for the Republicans.[11] Reagan spent most of his presidency negotiating the ideological tension within the Republican Party between economic libertarians, who supported small government and the Religious Right, which promoted a specific Christian value system to be reflected in the state and its institutions. As a leader of the right, Reagan attempted to keep both sides united in their fight against communism while uniting the left in a common hatred. At the same time, two major (domestic) crises shook American culture throughout the 1980s: drugs had started to sweep the nation during the 1970s, but the numbers of drug users kept climbing throughout

the 1980s: "Untold numbers of people used marijuana. By the end of the decade, a million Americans were heroin addicts, and there were between 1.5 and 2.5 million cocaine addicts and crack cocaine users" (Reeves 2000: 244). The highly lucrative drug trade was accompanied by a number of crimes, one of which was an increase in gang violence.[12] As Nichols-Pethick puts it:

> …the streets of *Hill Street Blues* are the rotting veins of America's urban industrial landscape of the 1970s: the logical outcome of an economy in peril. It is a metaphoric modern nightmare, replete with gang warfare, burned-out storefronts, deteriorating public utilities, and a civic service overseen by increasingly absent bureaucrats. Random violence lurks around every corner and even bursts into the station house. The police themselves are left to react to the violence and try to keep the community from crumbling completely (Nichols-Pethick 2012: 53).

Another issue was the discovery and spread of the HIV virus throughout America, often termed the 'AIDS crisis'. The drug crisis and the AIDS crises went hand in hand, since the virus affected many drug addicts who shared needles and often unknowingly passed on the virus. The AIDS crisis also brought more visibility to the gay community and while it gave the 'New Right' a supposed reason to demonize them and link different kinds of 'deviant' behaviour (drug use and sodomy), it also caused more people to empathize and listen to the stories told by marginalized and often ignored communities.


One of Reagan's major projects during his presidency, which informed the ideology of what is often understood as a culture of narcissism that dominated the 1980s, was an emphasis on supply-side economics.[13] This is also often termed 'Reaganomics' or 'trickle down' economics and argues that big corporations and wealthy individuals ought to be granted tax breaks and generally a lot of leeway (also concerning government policies that may slow down their growth like ecological concerns or laws that force employers to provide health benefits for their employees).[14] In line with these policies was a culture that turned away from the ideals of a common social and political project of the 1970s and

focussed more on personal wealth, identity politics, 'happiness' and an idolization of high-risk Wall Street endeavours (supported by the Reagan administration's anti-regulation policies in most areas). This ideology of small government and de-regulation also affected the television landscape, since it allowed Fox to become a network channel, cable networks to challenge the 'big three' and the launching of CNN as the first 24-hour-news channel in 1980, as well as MTV in 1981, which changed the music industry as well as television aesthetics in numerous ways.[15] While historians like Woods appear critical of the 1980s popular culture and describe it as generally superficial, providing the capitalist signifiers of the 1980s (as in *Miami Vice*, *Dallas* or *Dynasty* where expensive cars, jewellery and other consumer items are fetishized), Jane Feuer provides an interesting overview of the ideological tensions at work in the 1980s television landscape in *Seeing through the Eighties: Television and Reaganism* (1995). Even though she does not discuss *Hill Street Blues* at length, an analysis of the 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection displayed in the series may help to grasp those tensions.

*Hill Street Blues* depicts a chaotic diegetic universe where 'order' seems impossible to achieve. This is supported by methods of detection that rely extensively on coincidence and a narrative structure that proves suitable for the formulation of complex and contradictory ideologies, succeeding in showing an increasingly fragmented and pluralistic society. The 'irrational-subjective' method of detection informs how characters guide viewers through this complex universe, often unable to sustain 'rational-scientific' distance.[16] The complexity, insecurity and chaos are represented aesthetically through shaky cameras and a supposedly 'realist' documentary aesthetics. 'Realism' here is merely discussed as a set of textual features that aim to depict a chaotic, confusing diegetic universe which necessitates 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection. It seems to be assumed in criticism of *Hill Street Bl*ues that 'realism' implies disorder and an

impossibility of the 'order' promised by 'rational-subjective' methods of detection. Jenkins argues that the debates surrounding *Hill Street Blues* are governed by a paradox in which, on the one hand, the series is perceived as 'realist', in the sense that it reflects 'actual reality', but, on the other hand, the series is highly stylized to look 'authentic' and the narrative is heavily structured (Jenkins 1983: 185-199). Thus 'reality' seems to become a Baudrillardian simulacrum, an aesthetic feature, more than a representation of an empirical 'reality' (Baudrillard 1983: 1-81). Gitlin outlines how much of the racist, classist or sexist speech acts in the series were justified through a supposed relationship with 'actual reality' – and because of this, were approved by Broadcasting Standards, NBCs department to censor potentially offensive content (Gitlin 2000: 281-288).[17] The perception of 'realism' in terms of content was created by picking up on contemporary social issues, with gang violence becoming an acute problem in urban areas from the late 1960s onwards, and the issue intensifying with the drug crisis hitting America, creating a lucrative source of income for impoverished youths. At least in the early seasons of *Hill Street Blues*, while drugs are an issue, they don't tend to be linked with gang violence, which often tends to be depicted as a result of racial tensions between Irish, Hispanic and African American youths.[18]

David Barker (1988: 46-47) outlines how the visual aesthetics of *Hill Street Blues*, which was often filmed with an excessively shaky hand-held camera, is reminiscent of documentary or news broadcasts, thus suggesting verisimilitude.[19] Gitlin also points out that director Robert Butler, who helped establish *Hill Street Blues*' visual style, influenced by the documentary anthology *The Police Tapes* (ABC, 1977), originally started shooting with only handheld cameras in black and white.[20] The 'nervousness' produced by this was toned down later, limiting the hand-held sequences to the roll-call scenes and points of heightened drama. Thompson argues that:

> The audio-visual style was the first thing to strike the new viewer. Each episode opens with a scene of the morning roll call at Hill Street station, the law enforcement center of a ghetto precinct in a big unnamed city. Unlike the clean, steady, beautifully lit scenes of other network television, however, this one had the look of a low-budget documentary. Shaking cameras seemed to be roaming around the room in search of subjects, sometimes correcting their focus right before our eyes. The sound track was just chaotic. Overlapping conversations in a style that would be compared to the movies of Robert Altman could be heard under and around the main dialogue of the roll call sergeant's recitations of the crimes *du jour*. Music wasn't incorporated at all in the roll-call scenes and only sparingly throughout the episodes, contributing to the sense that this show didn't sound like all the rest (Thompson 1996: 68, italics in the original).

The use of language (which is one of the aspects that links the series to hard-boiled literature) was also perceived as unusually 'realist':

> The language of *Hill Street* was uncommonly quick, smart, and, at least at first, rarely damaged by episodic television's occupational hazard, the sure-shot trademark line. In bad television, every point is made twice. In mediocre television, an expository line is certain to come once, framed for effect, On *Hill Street Blues* at its best, the obvious line was uttered in passing, or not at all (Gitlin 2000: 275).

'Realism' in *Hill Street Blues* is linked with a complex world, represented with confusing, shaky images. A 'realistic' world is a world where coincidence, 'luck' and other 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection become the only viable option to solve at least some crimes, to "keep a lid on things" as Furillo keeps repeating almost like a mantra, suggesting that he does not actually expect to solve all crimes, but merely to avoid complete chaos. This chaos appears to be lurking all the time, represented through the shaky images at points of heightened drama and during the summary of all the crimes in the roll call scenes. This chaos cannot be 'ordered' visually or through methods of detection, as the geometric and hygienic images of *Quincy M.E.* (NBC, 1976-1983) and *CSI* suggest, this world is too messy and asymmetric to start with.[21]

As Robin Nelson (2004: 101) points out, *Hill Street Blues* diverted from the common narrative structures of the 1970s, which focussed on small teams or single 'genius'

detectives. The series features a large ensemble cast with characters having different functions within the institution (beat cops, detectives, chief of police, even lawyers and prosecutors). Yet, all characters also have private lives that influence their work, thus setting the series apart from *Dragnet* (NBC, 1951-1959) by extending the characters beyond their function in a system. Instead of one crime being solved in each episode, storylines are extended across several episodes. One particularly powerful example of this can be found in the pilot episode, which sees officers Andy Renko (Charles Haid) and Bobby Hill (Michael Warren) getting shot and not being found until the end of the episode.[22] The next episode shows that both survived and several episodes in the first season deal with the emotional trauma both officers suffered, but clues that could lead to the identity of the shooter are not found until episode 6 ("Film at Eleven"), and even then through coincidence. It takes until episode 9, "Your Kind, My Kind, Humankind" until the shooter, a junkie, is caught and confesses, but Hill summarises that he believes the shooter "confessed to a crime he doesn't even remember doing. And because of that, I may not sleep at night".

Before going into the specifics of the narrative structure, it is important to first look at the representation of 'irrational-subjective' detection as the only way to solve violent crime. One example of how the series fails to offer a way to 'order' its chaos is a storyline that deals with the murder of African American public defender Pam Gilliam (Kaaren Ragland), who is found shot and killed at the end of episode 02/11, "Freedom's Last Stand". The investigation is one of the major storylines in "Of Mouse and Man" (02/12), is continued in "Zen and the Art of Law Enforcement" (02/13) and ends in "The Young, the Beautiful and the Degraded" (02/14).[23] As Esterhaus (Michael Conrad) summarises in the roll call meeting: "Item 8: We had a bad one last night, people. Pamela Gilliam was shot to death in an attempted robbery outside a neighbourhood restaurant on Jefferson. Her

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companion was critically wounded. Some of you may have known Miss Gilliam in her capacity as a public defender, others in her private work with young offenders. For those of you who didn't, suffice it to say we've all suffered a grievous loss". Thus, despite the fact that the victim was perceived as an oppositional force to the police in her role as public defender, she is part of the 'we' of the legal system. It is also revealed that she was friends with Joyce Davenport (Veronica Hamel) who is public defender herself and part of the regular cast.

Pam Gilliam's killer is quickly caught during a 'shakedown' of an area where a local gang is known to assemble. Lt. Howard Hunter (James Sikking), careful to follow procedure, has the suspect's car transported to the nearest licenced (to be used for police investigation) impound lot, searches it and finds the gun that killed the victim. Yet, it is soon revealed that the impound lot was not licensed anymore (a memo on the topic was lost), the search therefore illegal and the gun inadmissible in court. Also, any confessions coerced on the basis of this evidence would be dismissed. This storyline shows the flaws of the legal system and the chaos that governs the world of *Hill Street Blues*, which cannot be ordered, not by detection and not by police procedure; and even if 'truth' can be found, that does not necessarily mean that 'justice' will follow, since more chaos will be found in an endlessly fallible system.

The seemingly random nature of the crime also suggests that this series is far away from the 'rational-scientific' whodunit. No complicated plots were thought out by enemies or heirs of the public defender, no jealous lover or psychopathic killer was at work, and no further murders are committed to cover up the crime and make it look like something it wasn't. Instead of somebody intentionally making it look random, the murder actually *is* random. Pam Gilliam was at the wrong place at the wrong time (or maybe her killer was);

the killer was not concerned with who she or her companion were, he was simply in need of money. As Joyce, devastated after identifying her friend's body, puts it: "we live in the freest, most secure society in the world, and you can get blown away, just because you just happened to leave a restaurant at the wrong time". Similarly, nobody intentionally hindered the investigation, a memo simply got lost, showing the fallibility of 'the system'. Unlike in *Dragnet*, police detectives are more than just representatives of the law, they are flawed individuals who drink on the job like LaRue (Kiel Martin), can be aggressive like Renko, get emotionally invested like Hill, and forget memos in drawers, like the invisible person who told Hunter which impound lot to use. Just like the 'randomness' of the crime, since police procedure and 'rational-scientific' methods fail, coincidence shapes the investigation: results achieved through police procedure are dismissed, only 'luck' or other relatively 'random' forces bring results. While all characters are part of a 'system', this 'system' is just as fallible and vulnerable as the individuals involved in it and the fragmented society that shapes it.

The narrative structure supports 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection through the employment of the soap structure rather than the three-act 'whodunit' common to the genre at the time. Just like contemporary prime time soaps *Dallas* (CBS, 1978-1991) or *Dynasty* (ABC, 1981-1989), *Hill Street Blues* features a large number of characters in the opening credits. Each episode features a number of different storylines and narrative closure is deferred, causing storylines to go on over several episodes. Sometimes storylines are completely ignored for several episodes, to be picked up at a later date. As Tania Modleski points out, the soap narrative stays deliberately open-ended:

> Tune in tomorrow, not in order to find out the answers, but to see what further complications will defer the resolutions and introduce new questions. Thus the narrative, by placing ever more complex obstacles between desire and its fulfilment, makes anticipation of an end to an end in itself (Modleski 1979: 12).

Similarly, Robin Nelson argues that:

> Going even further than soaps, many of the narrative strands were left open to be taken up in later episodes whilst others simply trailed off unresolved. Thus *Hill Street* achieved its dense textures and sense of a lack of resolution to difficult problems for an audience who sensed the complexity of things in the historical world (Nelson 1997: 31).

Possibly due to gendered notions related to the detective genre and prime time soaps, Robin Nelson argues that *Hill Street Blu*es represents something entirely new, flexi-narrative, through the way it links supposedly 'masculine' content with 'feminine' narrative structure (to use Nelson's somewhat problematic terminology, borrowed from Fiske 1987: 179-223):[24]

> [The flexi-narrative series] has achieved a narrative structure which combines the allegedly 'masculine' preference for action and narrative resolution with the supposedly 'feminine' fluidity and open-endedness in story-telling with emphasis on human interest. By combining a number of stories in one episode, it is indeed possible to appeal to a range of audience segments (Nelson 1997: 33).

In other words, the flexi-narrative structure combines the serial and the series format or the soap structure with the (traditional) procedural structure.[25] While one 'big' storyline dominates each episode and is resolved at the end of it (a hostage situation, a murder, etc.), though often not completely, a large number of sub-plots are carried on throughout a number of episodes, dropped for a while and picked up in later episodes. Even the 'big' storylines are often not entirely resolved, but rather, some fragile, temporary kind of order is created at the end of an episode, to be picked up on a later date. This is more inherent to the soap structure than the detective genre. On the other hand, Steven Johnson claims that *Hill Street Blues* does not actually go further than soaps:

> The structure of a *Hill Street* episode – and indeed all of the critically acclaimed dramas that followed, from *thirtysomething* to *Six Feet Under* – is the structure of a soap opera. […] Bochco's genius with *Hill Street* was to marry complex narrative structure with complex subject matter (Johnson 2005: 68).[26]

Yet, storylines in 1980s prime time soaps tend to be comparatively repetitive.[27] While power relations shift constantly and no real stability can ever be achieved, the repetitive nature of these struggles and the relatively stable function of the individual characters make it easy for viewers to enter or re-enter the story at any given point. While *Hill Street Blues* offers less repetition, it does have re-occurring storylines and scenes that structure episodes: the roll call at the beginning of each episode, closing with the sentence "let's be careful out there"; scenes that feature Captain Furillo (Daniel J. Travanti) and Joyce Davenport in the 'safe haven' of their home, with Furillo usually being called away on police business; comedic storylines like Sargent Esterhaus' inability to decide between a relationship with his teen girlfriend or Grace Gardner (Barbara Babcock). These repetitive elements serve to structure the narrative of each episode and often provide comic relief (through repetition). *Hill Street Blues*' narrative structure is considered here as an important predecessor to the story arc dramas like *The Sopranos* or *The Shield* that are common today, which offer (often complex, ambiguous) narrative closure at the end of each season or, at least, the series. This narrative structure facilitates the depiction of a world in which coincidence and other 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection become the only means to access 'truth'.

The 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection, the confusion over how to access 'truth' (and the inability to establish any kind of 'order') in the chaotic diegesis represented in the series, are necessitated by this narrative structure. The refusal of narrative closure and moral and social 'order' suggested through the soap structure and the methods of detection cannot establish a system of 'order' based on binary oppositions. While the characters remain relatively stable, their function within the narrative changes: for example, Howard Hunter can function as an ally in the fight against crime ("Of Mouse and Man"), comic relief ("Gatorbait", 01/10) or a character audiences can empathize with ("The Spy Who

Came in from Delgado", 02/10) in different episodes. Yet, as Nelson points out, what mostly sets *Hill Street Blues* apart from prime time soaps is its content rather than narrative structure: its setting in the public sphere of a police station in a socially disadvantaged urban area, its genre associations and the way issues of race, gender, 'justice' and 'truth' are dealt with, often in an explicitly political manner and its aesthetics. The frequent mixing of the private and the public – like scenes of domesticity between Frank Furillo (Daniel J. Travanti) and Joyce Davenport, who often fight each other in their public lives; as well as the way the private frequently breaks into the public sphere, most obviously in the form of the policemen's female partners and ex-partners, like Fay Furillo (Barbara Bosson), Grace Gardner; or even the complicated relationship Lucy Bates (Betty White) has with her male (work) partner Joe Coffey (Ed Mariano) – should not be underestimated: critics like Mimi White (1985: 424), Philip J. Lane (2001: 139), Larry Landrum (1984: 93-94) or Caren J. Deming (1985: 1-9) suggest that this is one of the major innovations *Hill Street Blues* offered at the time.[28] The series actively moves away from binary structures of 'public' vs. 'private', 'good' vs. 'bad', 'law-abiding/police' vs. 'criminal', 'right-wing' vs. 'left-wing', 'black' vs. 'white', 'law and order' vs. 'chaos', etc. The long-running, open-ended nature of the soap structure does not necessarily lend itself to the creation of binaries, since 'evil' is rarely punished in any way that could be considered definite (even those considered dead can come back).[29]

One way the series manages to depict a fragmented, pluralistic world where more than one likely reading of the outcome of an investigation is possible is through its use of political statement: characters who come from different socio-economic backgrounds and have different political opinions are partnered (as Hill and Renko or Bates and Coffey) or are forced to work together (as Goldblume [Joe Spano] and Hunter). All are given room to express their opinion, without changing their underlying positions (as Hunter's belief in

militaristic oppression versus Goldblume's belief in diplomacy and negotiation).[30] Their varying positions are usually stated, but since characters do not really engage in serious debate to arrive at a common, mediated position (though this is often represented through Furillo) left relatively unsanctioned and unchallenged, leaving viewers to decide for themselves who they agree with.[31] This demand that viewers formulate their own positions is what critics praise when they call the series "intellectually stimulating" (Gitlin 2000: 297) and suggests a level of apparent 'objectivity'. This refusal to prioritize one agenda over another, one personal point of view over another may be rooted in a postmodern attitude, as Terry Eagleton summarises:

> The postmodernist move of expanding the concept of interests to encompass the whole social life, while valid enough in itself, then serves to displace attention from these [for example, feminism or Marxism] political struggles, collapsing them into a neo-Nietzschean cosmos in which throwing off an overcoat is secretly just as much a matter of conflict and domination as overthrowing the state (Eagleton 1991: 167).[32]

In line with this 'equality' between discourses, at the very least, the text is structured openly enough to not judge or punish any of the characters for their opinions (despite the often comical depictions of Hunter's fantasies of total control). Robin Nelson states that this is inherent in the narrative structure of flexi-narrative:

> …TV drama texts are by no means innocent in their discursive positions, flexi-narratives particularly evidence a model of negotiation of a range of meanings rather than an inoculation theory of ideology (Nelson 1997: 41-42).

In other words, while a flexi-narrative structure does not stay away from articulating specific ideological views, it tends to provide more than one perspective.[33] These multiple perspectives and impossibility of binaries are reflected in the 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection that rely largely on coincidence. Since the police procedural tends to be more tied up with explicitly political issues regarding the legal system and democracy in itself, *Hill Street Blues* displays these qualities in a more explicit manner than prime time soaps. Furthermore, by not relying on detective characters, but also officers, the series

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manages to depict a broader picture of the daily struggles of police work, focussing not just on murder, but in this case the police's responsibility and ability to judge cases on a more subjective basis than the law can dictate.

To summarise, then, the flexi-narrative of *Hill Street Blues* offers a narrative structure highly influenced by prime time soaps, but with a (genre) content traditionally associated with the series structure. Where, in soap narratives, a variety of viewpoints are presented and ideological coherence avoided on the matter of mostly 'private' concerns (often related to 'family' matters), *Hill Street Blues* applies the structure to 'public' concerns dealing with policing, public institutions, the criminal justice system and often current social concerns regarding a punitive legal system. *Hill Street Blues* seems to function as a way for the soap structure to be 'appropriated' by complex, ambiguous stories in a similar way that the hard-boiled structure (with its often sexist content) is often used in contemporary literature to accommodate opposite political purposes. In other words, *Hill Street Blues* can be read as the 'ideological appropriation' of the soap structure (Scaggs 2005: 77-85).

This 'ideological appropriation' lies not only in the narrative structure, but also in a similarly open-ended, often ideologically unfixed (through its use of binaries, or lack thereof) method of detection. 'Irrational-subjective' methods of detection are indeterminate, anything not arrived at through the process of logical, rational, distanced deduction is valid. Because the soap structure delays narrative closure, it leaves room to delay the coincidence that will lead to the criminals. In the case of *Hill Street Blues*, the chaos of the world is depicted extensively, making it look like solving a crime, like finding whoever shot Hill and Renko, is impossible: there are fingerprints from too many suspects at the crime scene and too many guns on the street to find the one that fired the bullet, despite the efforts of forensics and ballistics. In a world as chaotic as this, only the

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coincidental appearance of the weapon in the investigation of another crime leads to narrative closure, though often unsatisfactory and overshadowed by the continuance of other storylines. In its refusal to provide clues that have a definite meaning, the drama seems to move far beyond 'rational-scientific' links to structuralism, as discussed in Chapter 3, 4 and 5. While signifiers like fingerprints may belong to one specific signified (person), the investigators have no chance of establishing a connection to the crime that was committed: there are just too many 'signs'. In line with post-structuralist, pluralistic world views, *Hill Street Blues* depicts a world where one signifier may have more than one signified and 'stable' meanings are impossible to establish.

Possibly in line with the series' refusal to formulate its own political agenda, *Hill Street Blues* depicts a world where the criminal justice system does not always work to the advantage of police characters or citizens, where evidence cannot be found at every crime scene and instead of 'ordering' the world, the police merely tries to contain chaos to the best of its abilities, relying on coincidence and compassionate 'closeness' (to CIs, witnesses, victims and even suspects and criminals). This means striking deals with gang leaders and helping them to negotiate territories and treaties with each other (thus accepting their 'unavoidable' existence, for example in "Presidential Fever", 01/03 and "Politics as Usual", 01/04), it can mean having to let guilty criminals go in order to achieve 'justice' in other areas or simply because no proof can be found to verify what the detectives somehow 'know' (as in the case of Pam Gilliam's murder), or simply having to arrest the same person over and over again, as Belker's (Bruce Weitz) repeated arrest of pickpocket James Logan (Nick Savage) shows. In fact, Lieutenant Howard Hunter's fantasies of total control are depicted in an often comedic manner as the ideas of a fanatic, unable to relate to the inhabitants of the crime- and poverty-stricken district that the series is set in. Arguably, this multiplicity of how society can be read in many ways reflects post-

structuralist and postmodern views of society. In a move against supposedly unifying ideas

of modernism, rooted in the Enlightenment project, critics like Jean-Francois Lyotard

suggest that what he terms 'traditional theory' views society as a whole and 'critical

theory' views it as split in two, divided by class struggle, heavily influenced by Marxism

(Lyotard 1984: 11-14). Dismissing such unifying narratives as simplistic, Lyotard aims to

deconstruct them by pointing to the various heterogeneous forces within society. However:

> From this point of view, an institution differs from a conversation [between
> individuals, with flexible rules] in that it always requires supplementary
> constraints for statements to be declared admissible within its bounds. The
> constraints function to filter discursive potentials, interrupting possible
> connections in the communication networks: there are things that should
> not be said. They also privilege certain classes of statements (sometimes
> only one) whose predominance characterizes the discourse of the particular
> institution: there are things that should be said, and there are ways of
> saying them (Lyotard 1984: 17).

Thus, discourses within an institution, such as the police, are clearly less flexible than in

other contexts and framed and hierarchized by the institution. An institution such as the

police is bound by a certain 'rule system' set by the law and framed by other branches of

the legal system. Yet, as Lyotard goes on to argue, institutional discourses tend to be open

to change. *Hill Street Blues* offers an interesting example of how discourses within a

postmodern understanding of society and institutions are negotiated: of course, certain

statements are utterly omitted by the text, such as the suggestion that in light of the

insurmountable chaos in the district, the police might as well be eradicated. Other

discursive utterances, like LaRue's drinking or Macaffee's (Dan Hedaya) corruption are

heavily sanctioned. Yet, the variety of approaches to policing and political opinion serve to

show the breadth of discourse possible within the institution, deconstructing any ideas of

homogeneity within the legal system, the police or even just one station house. Thus, *Hill

Street Blues* deconstructs the grand narrative that *Dragnet* promoted: that of a legal system

that is run by individuals without their own needs, desires or 'hunches'.

In light of the chaos that ensues when the system is made up of flawed individuals as opposed to *Dragnet*'s 'objective' detectives or the scientists of *Quincy M.E.* and *CSI*, all points of view seem valid, but subjective and negotiable: from the totalitarian fantasies of absolute control Hunter expresses to the understanding approach of Goldblume and Furillo's mediating position. The large ensemble cast and their differing political views, or just the way they understand the world, the legal system and their part in it, may be key to understanding the disorder depicted in *Hill Street Blues*: instead of *one* case, *one* common goal and *one* method, as in other versions of the police procedural, and instead of *one* 'genius' detective, various ideas of 'truth' and 'justice' already clash in the Hill Street station house, let alone what happens once gangs are invited in to negotiate truces or police officers spread out to provide 'law and order' for law-abiding citizens, but also for themselves.[34]

This insistence on subjective points of views as valid may reflect the alleged narcissism of 1980s America, in which, ultimately, everybody fends for themselves (and their opinions) while any kind of security provided by welfare is rigorously cut. Yet, it also questions any ideas of an 'us' vs. 'them' structure, since the 'us' is revealed to be highly heterogeneous. This poses the question: in a society that is so individualistic, can there really be an 'us'? Isn't any sort of binary immediately deconstructed if the 'us' consists of so many different points of view? Seen in this light, *Hill Street Blues* becomes part of a broader (incoherent) 'project' of postmodernity that aims to deconstruct grand narratives and clear-cut binary structures where each side is homogenous and easily identifiable. It also becomes one of the first examples of television drama in which aesthetics, narrative structure and a 'project' of postmodernity become almost inseparable. The 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection employed also work to reflect this unstable environment.

## 7.2.    *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990-1991)

Arguably, *Twin Peaks* manages to express postmodern attitudes even further with its own narrative structure, content and aesthetics all taking part in a 'project of deconstruction' that barely leaves any grand narratives untouched. This is expressed in a very different manner from *Hill Street Blues*, abandoning all aesthetic and narrative 'realism'. For the majority of its two seasons, *Twin Peaks* is dominated by one case, one 'genius' detective who easily outshines his 'assistant' Harry S. Truman (Michael Ontkean) and one common, seemingly achievable goal, to restore 'law and order' in the small town of Twin Peaks by solving the murder of teenager Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee). As Catherine Nickerson points out:

> *Twin Peaks* asks us to compare it with the literary detective novel in both its parody of the genre and its celebration of detective conventions, but, at the same time, the series slyly disassembles the narrative structure that undergirds detective fiction. This subversion is precisely what makes the show so simultaneously like and unlike a detective novel (Nickerson 2012: location 1404-1412).

On first sight, crime and chaos are not a 'natural state' in the small town, but it soon becomes clear that in Twin Peaks, it is impossible to identify what this 'natural state' is. It can never be definitely said what 'law and order' is, let alone a way to restore it, when there is not even a coherent idea of what the crime is (Laura has several injuries from events not related to her death), who the criminal (a spirit or a person?) or who the victim is (Prom Queen or prostitute?). As Glen Creeber puts it, "Twin Peaks is a town (and perhaps even a 'mind-set') where 'surreal' juxtapositions are to be expected" (2004: 52). This results in a vague idea of what 'justice' is and whether it can be provided by a legal system, something 'otherworldly', the 'conscience', or not at all. Of course, if it is impossible to define these concepts through science or other rational means, the way to access 'truth' would be 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection. In this regard, *Twin*

*Peaks* goes beyond *Hill Street Blues* by not just employing coincidence, but also dreams or hallucinations, instinct and spiritual, semi-religious aspects.

*Twin Peaks* was first broadcast on ABC in 1990 and 1991, and was a continuation of a corporate policy of ABC to build an image of a network that puts art before profits:

> Series like *Moonlighting*, *thirtysomething*, *Max Headroom* [ABC, 1987-1989], and *The Wonder Years* [ABC, 1988-1993] had succeeded in establishing ABC's reputation as the network of innovation, and this reputation had, among other things, helped [Brandon Stoddard, head of ABC from 1985 to 1989] to lure quality king Steven Bochco away from NBC. […] Innovative programming meant programming that was different – different from the kind of TV ABC had been insisting upon from producers in the years before 1985. The network was actively looking for shows that would defy the very rules they had so stubbornly adhered to throughout most of the medium's history. The traditional, old-fashioned programming was now used as the definition of what they *didn't* want (Thompson 1996: 153, italics in the original).

*Twin Peak*s is often seen as a prime example of postmodern television by, for example Robin Nelson (1997: 235-239) or David Lavery (1995a: 1-16), in terms of textual aspects (generic hybridity, irony, semiotic excess, the questioning of subjectivity and reality, etc.), but also because of extra-textual criteria, such as "commodity intertexts" (Collins 1992: 342), for example, books that tie in with the series or a soundtrack album. As Creeber states:

> …critics have connected postmodernism with the serial's tendency to disrupt any stable notion of the 'real', replacing it with a complex array of dreamlike fantasies and bizarre hallucinations. This is reflected in a hybridity of form that seemed to incorporate many different visual styles and narrative traditions, apparently taking great delight in unsettling its audience's own generic desires and expectations (2004: 48-49).

In light of its historical context, it is hardly surprising that *Twin Peaks* is also an important example for 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection: located, as it is, in the turbulent era of the early 1990s which saw the one-term presidency of George H.W. Bush, the start of a re-evaluation of the Reagan years, the First Gulf War, a recession, the L.A. race riots and, significantly, the end of the Cold War, which saw a re-definition of a geographical

and political 'world order'. *Twin Peaks* addresses none of these issues directly, and in some ways seems almost aggressively non-political. This may be anchored in the postmodern narcissism of the 1980s, and maybe the series needs to be considered as part of a modernist and postmodern arts discourse, as critics such as Feuer (1995: 82), Creeber (2004: 48-55) or Collins (1992: 327-353) suggest. This may also be linked to the way the precise historical moment the series is set in is hard to determine: while a range of signifiers point to contemporary America (the forensic science Albert Rosenfield [Miguel Ferrer] uses or the range of characters who put Hawk's [Michael Horse] Native American racial background in context of a 1990s discourse that questions white supremacy), other signifiers (like Cooper's [Kyle MacLachlan] value system or the interior of the Double R Diner) point to 1950s or 1960s America, or at least the way these decades have been conceptualized in popular media (such as *American Graffiti* [Lucas, 1973] or *Happy Days* [ABC, 1974-1984]).

*Twin Peaks* deconstructs a range of grand narratives from chronological concepts of history and time to science or legal institutions. Furthermore, it also deconstructs narratives of coherent, stable subjects and, along with it, the idea of a stable nation or society: this, of course, complicates any ideas of a simplistic 'us' vs. 'them' binary, after all, if subjects are unstable products of a variety of unstable identity axes, and society is fragmented into various sub-groups and sub-cultures, any idea of a stable 'us' or 'them' becomes unimaginable. *Twin Peaks*' unstable signs and meanings arguably draw attention to this instability that is personal (regarding identity politics) and political (regarding an entire fragmented, unstable world order) at once. In light of this, it is hardly surprising that *Twin Peaks* and the more successful (according to Nielsen ratings) *The X-Files,* allocate the enemy in more or less unknown spaces, in the case of the former series in the human body (the unstable subject), the spirit world, the woods surrounding the town, the 'Black Lodge',

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the 'Red Room', 'Another Place', at some plot points invoking religious motifs (Tibetan Buddhism), then turning to 'magic' only to then move on to a vague notion of aliens. Cooper summarises his methods of detection in 02/16 as follows: "As a member of the Bureau I spend most of my time seeking simple answers to difficult questions. In the pursuit of Laura's killer I have employed Bureau guidelines, deductive technique, Tibetan method, instinct and luck. But now I find myself in need of something new, which for lack of a better word, we shall call magic".[35] *The X-Files*, with a (at least in the first season) simpler narrative structure, fewer characters and a different genre allocation, can be loosely viewed as inspired by *Twin Peaks*, which also questions ways to access knowledge ('the truth is out there', 'I want to believe – therefore I do believe') and seeks spaces to locate it, often deconstructing binaries between what is part of the self and what is not (for example, when aliens enter the human body or, as in *Twin Peaks*, spirits possess it).[36]

Thus, *Twin Peaks*' politics are ultimately identity politics, which is why it is hardly surprising that some of the most important 'tools' to investigate Laura's death are visions (like Sarah Palmer's [Grace Zabriskie] vision of Bob [Frank Silva]) or Cooper's dream of the Red Room), in other words subjective, 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection. Yet, within postmodern philosophy, the private subject is deeply intertwined with the organisation of the public and the positioning of the subject within a world that cannot be conceptualized through 'simplistic' binaries. Rather than a nation summarised as 'us' in opposition to 'them', the 1990s become governed by identity politics and a review of American identity, focussing on the oppression of minorities defined through race, gender, class, sexual orientation and other identity axes. In other words, white, patriarchal heteronormativity is increasingly questioned and the gay rights movement, moves against oppression of Native American and African American culture, affirmative action and a

general sense of 'white guilt' become dominant in the negotiation of American culture (see Becker 2006: 13-36 and 189-226).

Aesthetically, *Hill Street Blues* and *Miami Vice* set the 'quality' standard at the time (at least for the detective genre). It is, thus, hardly surprising that innovation, for *Twin Peaks*, would lie in defying the 'rules' both had set up for themselves. *Twin Peaks* can, in one way, almost be understood as countering the 'gritty realism' of *Hill Street Blues* and parodying the glossy artificiality of *Miami Vice* or other 1980s detective series. Where *Miami Vice* followed Michael Mann's 'no earth tones'-dictum (Lyons 2010: 29-57) and *Hill Street Blues* positioned itself in opposition to the glossy prime time soaps of its era, *Twin Peaks* responded by uniting an earth tone-based colour scheme of browns, beiges and dark reds with an extremely stylized, glossy aesthetic (see Fig. 2). Martha Nochimson states that: "Richard Hoover, the production designer of all the series episodes except the pilot, created a look for the show in which the concepts of inside and outside were conflated" (Nochimson 1995: 148), with the use of wooden interiors and "dead animals and their parts – horns, shells – and nature drawings" (ibid.), as well as lighting and camera filters that give the series a dark yellow, brownish tone, sometimes juxtaposed with costume choices, like the waitresses uniforms in the Double R Diner, a white shirt, doughnut or coffee mug (see Fig. 1).



Fig 1.: brown tones juxtaposed with white, the stacking of the doughnuts represent a desperate attempt to create 'order'

Fig. 2: earth tone based colour scheme

The series is set in the secluded small town of Twin Peaks, surrounded by Douglas firs and seemingly fitted with all the stereotypical properties (and morals) a small town might possess. Cooper describes the town as follows in the third episode to Albert Rosenfield: "I have only been in Twin Peaks a short time, but in this time I have seen decency, honour and dignity. Murder is not a faceless event here; it is not a statistic to be tallied up at the end of the day. Laura Palmer's death has affected each and every man, woman and child, because life has meaning here. Every life. That's a way of living I thought had vanished from the earth, but it hasn't, Albert. It's right here in Twin Peaks". Yet, at least some of the 'quirkiness' Thompson identifies in the series (1996: 150-160) stems from a conscious defiance of genre conventions: a secluded small town does not mean a 'country house whodunit', as the cast is hardly small enough to justify that and provides a mix of social groups Golden Age fiction rarely offers. The various emotional outbursts at the news of Laura Palmer's death by Sarah and Leland Palmer (Ray Wise), Pete Martell (Jack Nance), Donna Hayward (Lara Flynn Boyle) and even the policemen who are expected to be distanced – the most obvious example being Andy Brennan (Harry Goaz), who repeatedly starts crying at crime scenes – suggests anything but 'rational-scientific' distance. At the same time, many of these outbursts seem so inappropriate against their backdrop (a policeman crying at a crime scene, Leland Palmer jumping on Laura's coffin as it is lowered into the ground) that they seem absurd. Sheriff Truman's relief at Cooper's arrival suggests a re-write of the common FBI narrative, since fictional federal agents do not tend to be received well as taking charge where local police feel it is their duty to protect their own community. Where a reference to hard-boiled fiction may be expected, the friendly welcome Cooper receives and his quick integration into the community are hardly signs of existentialist alienation. Where his FBI association sets him apart from the fierce individualism of the hard-boiled private eye, his, by any standard, unusual methods, also

set him apart from the heroes who traditionally represent the legal system like Joe Friday (Jack Webb), Quincy (Jack Klugman), Kojak (Telly Salavas) or Frank Furillo.

In terms of narrative structure, *Twin Peaks* offers an adjustment of *Hill Street Blues*' flexi-narrative: instead of one case that provides closure at the end of each episode or storylines that last for three episodes, most story arcs in *Twin Peaks* are on-going with the central question of the narrative, 'who killed Laura Palmer?', not solved until episode 16 of the second season, 24 episodes after her body is found. Thus, the series displays, for most of its run, a more explicit drive towards narrative closure than *Hill Street Blues*. The narrative structure of *Twin Peaks* parodies the soap narrative (even to the extent that the fictional soap 'Invitation to Love' mirrors the narrative of *Twin Peaks* on the characters' television screens), with cliff hangers and a huge amount of intrigue and betrayal in the business as well as the private realms. Yet, the series is 'goal-oriented' in the way it seeks the solution of the central enigma (and provides it, however confusing it may seem to viewers), thus moving towards closure. While innovations in terms of narrative may not have been as extreme as in *Hill Street Blues*, the series managed to establish a different attitude of the medium towards postmodern philosophy and its translation into visuals, through its 'play' with genre conventions as well as a movement towards a more 'esoteric' or 'spiritual' understanding of 'truth', crime, 'justice', or detection. One way this is done is its endless stream of supposed clues or hints from the name of the town that closely resembles the name of the Twin Oaks diner in *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (Garnett, 1946) to Sheriff Harry S. Truman's name, that ultimately proved insignificant, when the only 'clue' that actually pointed to the person who murdered Laura (albeit possessed) is the fact that both the Little Man from Another Place (Michael J. Anderson) and Leland Palmer, dance. Even the abundance of forensic evidence Albert Rosenfield can provide offers little insight

into who the murderer may be or what exactly happened to Laura, thus showing what could be viewed as an outright rejection of 'rational-scientific' methods of detection.

While critics like Diane Stevenson (1995: 70-78) or Creeber (2004: 53-55) argue that *Twin Peaks* is structured along binaries like the conscious vs. the unconscious, The White Lodge vs. The Black Lodge, Mike vs. Bob, etc., this thesis argues that most of these binaries tend to get deconstructed along the way; for example, when Cooper and Laura 'share' a dream, or the many instances when diegetic reality and dreamlike fantasy cannot be separated anymore.[37] In a similar vein, most romantic relationships seem to involve more than two people (possibly in parody of prime time soaps and mirroring 'Invitation to Love'), like James (James Marshall) – Donna – Laura (later Maddie, played by the same actress as Laura), Bobby (Dana Ashbrook) – Leo (Eric DaRe) – Laura – Shelly (Mädchen Amick), Ed (Everett McGill) – Norma (Peggy Lipton) and their respective spouses, and in the second season even Andy's and Lucy's relationship is complicated through Dick Tremayne's (Ian Buchanan) appearance as the possible father of her child; thus the relationships could be read as even deconstructing heteronormative ideas of romance. Therefore, the supposed binaries that structure *Twin Peaks* may just be a desperate, but ultimately unsuccessful attempt to restore 'order'. While the series, as Creeber argues (2004: 54-56), draws on modernist aesthetics of surrealist art, it seems to develop ideological ideas of deconstruction much further by exploring methods of detection far beyond Sam Spade's version of 'irrational-subjective' methods. As J.P. Telotte points out, *Twin Peaks* is marked by desperate, but ultimately futile, attempts to restore order:

> Here, the order of our world shows just how threadbare and fragile it really is, while the signs that sustain that order, including the various codes of television narrative, reveal a sense of meaninglessness or blankness that also haunts our world (Telotte 1995: 160).[38]

The world as presented in *Twin Peaks* is dominated by chaos, by signs that ultimately have no meaning (or too many of them), or at least none that point audiences towards the murderer, and 'law and order' seem impossible to achieve or even define.

Yet, they are signs, and the texts' glossy aesthetics as well as its content seem to constantly point to its own artificial nature. The second episode of *Twin Peaks* ends with Dale Cooper waking up in the middle of the night, calling Truman and declaring that he knows who murdered Laura Palmer. The next episode sees Cooper explain to Lucy and Sheriff Truman the dream that holds the solution to the crime:

> COOPER: Harry, let me tell you about the dream I had last night […] Harry, my dream is a code waiting to be broken. Break the code, solve the crime. […] In my dream, Sarah Palmer has a vision of her daughters' killer. Deputy Hawk sketched his picture. I got a phone call from a one-armed man named Mike. The killers' name was Bob.
> TRUMAN: Mike and Bobby?
> COOPER: No. It was a different Mike and a different Bob. They lived above a convenience store. They had a tattoo: 'Fire, Walk with Me'. Mike couldn't stand the killing anymore, so he cut off his arm. Bob vowed to kill again, so Mike shot him. Do you know where dreams come from? […] Acetylcholine neurons fire high-voltage impulses into the forebrain. These impulses become pictures, the pictures become dreams. But no one knows why we choose these particular pictures.
> TRUMAN: So, what was the end of this dream?
> COOPER: Suddenly, it was 25 years later. I was old, sitting in a red room. There was a midget in a red suit and a beautiful woman. The little man told me that my favourite gum was coming back into style and didn't his cousin look exactly like Laura Palmer, which she did.
> TRUMAN: What cousin?
> COOPER: The beautiful woman. She's filled with secrets. Sometimes her arms bend back. Where she's from the birds sing a pretty song and there's always music in the air. Laura kissed me and she whispered the name of the killer in my ear.
> TRUMAN: Who was it?
> COOPER: I don't remember.
> TRUMAN: Damn!
> LUCY: Damn!
> COOPER: Harry, our job is simple: break the code, solve the crime.

This exchange highlights the main issues at stake in *Twin Peaks*' methods of detection. First, it emphasises how central semiotics are to the solution of this crime. Cooper's

language of coding and de-coding signs and his reliance on the 'audio-visual medium' of a dream points to a consciousness of the 'semiotic excess' of television as a medium, *Twin Peaks* as a television text and the language of the dream. In this regard, the text points to its own artificial nature, the way signs and signifiers are consciously constructed and the way Cooper's dream may be mirroring the viewer's experience of de-coding clues left by writers, directors and producers, in other words, de-coding not only *Twin Peaks*, but *all* television. However, while the genre usually requires its audience or readers to refer to material objects as clues (an object out of place, a drip of blood, a fibre on a dead body), in *Twin Peaks*, they are found in the entirely subjective experience of Cooper's dream. Furthermore, the dream contains many signs contesting for meaning and some can only be understood through the character of Cooper, like what his favourite gum is and what it means that it comes back into style. The series parodies 'rational-scientific' deduction by allocating the (potential) solution to the crime in a meta-physical or transcendental world as opposed to the physical one:

> Clearly, *Twin Peaks* is not the place for viewers in search of brilliant logical deductions, high-tech forensics, and comforting rational solutions. Cooper's unorthodox crime-solving techniques, which include clairvoyance, precognitive and 'shared' dreams, visions and an obsession with Tibetan Buddhism, not only violate traditional ratiocinative detection but also generally fail to provide any real solutions to the 'crimes'; […] his revelations more frequently lead to a set of larger, more unanswerable questions (Hague 1995: 136).

This parody and questioning of 'rational-scientific' methods of detection becomes particularly obvious in the text's treatment of pathologist Albert Rosenfield: the scene following Cooper's description of his dream takes place in the morgue where a fight between the local doctor and the FBI forensics expert (Albert) breaks out over whether or not Laura's body can be released for her funeral. The 'emotional' argument made by Dr Hayward (Warren Frost), Ben Horne (Richard Beymer), supported by Andy, Truman and even Cooper wins over Albert's desire to gather evidence from Laura's body (ending in a

scene of morbid humour when a punch from Truman sends Albert to fall on top of Laura's body). When Albert presents his findings, the clues he finds through 'rational-scientific' detection appear to be a string of signs without meaning: Laura has wounds caused by a bird on her shoulder, fibres from different kinds of twine, which means that she was tied up twice on the night of her murder, traces of soap on her face, a piece of half-digested plastic in her stomach. Ultimately, these findings pose more questions than give answers and while they point to what she (willingly) did earlier on the night she died, they don't point towards her murderer.

Truman introduces Cooper to the Bookhouse Boys, a group fighting "…a sort of evil out there. Something very, very strange in these old woods. Call it what you want, a darkness, a presence, call it what you want. It takes many forms, but it's been out there for as long as anyone can remember and we've always been here to fight it". While the Bookhouse Boys consist of Truman and Hawk as law enforcement officials, their 'club' is mainly concerned, not with restoring 'law and order', but with fighting a supposed 'evil' with semi-legal methods (as the next scene in the 'Bookhouse' shows, with Bernard Renault [Clay Wilcox] tied up and gagged), which already, in some ways, poses a question about their own 'goodness'. While the 'Bookhouse Boys' open up a 'good' vs. 'evil' binary within the text, and do become, at least in some respects, part of the investigation as agents of 'good' not bound by laws, any such binary is disrupted within the diegesis all the time (after all, the first time we see them they use torture to get information). By repeatedly drawing attention to its own artificiality and its deconstruction of binary structures, the text somewhat loses its ability to 'naturalise': any binary ('male' vs. 'female', 'culture' vs. 'nature', 'law and order' vs. 'chaos', 'material world' vs. 'spirit world', and so on) seems to be dissolved throughout the two seasons, as a new 'world order' without (or at least with less) binaries is about to take shape in 'actual reality'. As already implied, while the

murder investigation certainly seems central to the narrative, much of the series also deals with other crimes (prostitution in One-Eyed Jack's or Horne's department store, Leo Johnson's and the Renault brothers' drug trade, Catherine Martell's [Piper Laurie] fraudulent plans to gain control over the family business) and breaches of moral 'rules' (most characters cheat on their partners or spouses, betray their friends and families, etc.), drawing attention to the ways in which *Twin Peaks* truly mixes soap content and structure with the detective genre to create a flexi-narrative form unable to formulate a coherent ideological perspective. In many ways, *Twin Peaks* can even be seen as celebrating a world without binaries, a world in utter confusion, with dissolving ideological as well as geographical and genre binary structures.

Like *Hill Street Blues*, which offered up a variety of viewpoints and left audiences to form their own opinions; ideologically, the open structure of *Twin Peaks* leaves the viewer with a text that only marginally engages with issues of criminal justice or moral standards. In fact, a crime like child abuse is dispelled outside the realm of human moral judgement to the spirit world. Considering that (despite everything else she may have been), Laura Palmer was raped by her father (possessed or not) on a regular basis and ultimately murdered by him, the lack of moral judgment and legal consequences that lies at the end of the investigation into the murder, but is a sentiment continued in the following episodes, is rather unsettling. Yet, this leaves open the question of how to deal with crime itself, since, apparently, nobody is responsible, 'justice' cannot be served. In this way, the series' may mirror the liminality and insecurity of the first months and years after and during the end of the Cold War. However, this 'plurality of truths', or rather, the deconstruction of the grand narrative of 'one truth' (whether constructed through science or a unified society) and ways to access it also reflects postmodern philosophy in the sense that the 'structuralist'

approach of one sign = one meaning is being deconstructed. In fact, *Twin Peaks* may be best understood through a post-structuralist framework:

> Post-structuralism emphasizes the slippage between signifier and signified – between one sign and the next, between one context and the next – while emphasizing that meaning is always situated, specific to a given context (Seiter 1993: 61).

It can be argued that *Twin Peaks* mirrors this attitude towards signs, this understanding of the world as chaotic and complex. The chaos of crime and of the complexity of characters like Laura cannot be understood by only attaching one possible meaning to a sign. While in *Twin Peaks* everything is artificial sign, each sign has more than one possible meaning, and it cannot be determined which meaning is 'dominant'. The series almost dares the audience to misunderstand, to decode signs that are impossible to decode. As a world view, this suggests that there is no one single 'truth' that can be accessed, but many, often incoherent, subjective versions of the truth.

### 7.3. *The Shield* (fX, 2002-2008)

Where *Twin Peaks*, in its a-political manner, appears to enjoy 'playing' with signs and the incoherence, subjectivity and plurality of 'truth', detective series of the early 2000s seemed to be more critical of such a confusing world view without moral guidelines. In a 2001 article in the *Journal of Popular Culture*, Philip J. Lane asks about TV policemen and women:

> Are the cops the 'detached, objective observers' or do they act on their own personal experience and convictions? They use scientific tests to determine the type and caliber of the murder weapon, the chemical contents of the human cadaver or the identity of a caller's voice on the telephone. In this 'information age' they gather facts from every conceivable source – interviewing witnesses, computer data bases, files of various types. They use criminal profiles from past cases. More often than not, these cops follow procedures that are required by their jobs. However, sometimes their personal convictions get in the way of their job, and rational thought goes out the window. There is always this conflict or tension between acting as a 'moral' individual and as part of a team which does not completely share your world view (Lane 2001: 141).

The series he discusses in detail in his article are *NYPD Blue* and *Homicide: Life on the Street* (NBC, 1993-1999) (which will be discussed in the introduction to Chapter 8), and while this statement encompasses 'irrational-subjective' detection in most police procedurals, *The Shield* certainly re-invents the idea of 'personal morals' and the problems that arise from individualized, conflicting moral codes:

> …morality, as such, is not necessarily a given in the series; and although there are many voices of dissent that speak against Mackey's compelling Pérez-like excesses, none of the Barn's employees – even the most ethically driven – has a monopoly on integrity and honesty (Ray 2012: 8).[39]

The Strike Team's moral code and notion of vigilante justice that often goes along with it (mostly when suspects or witnesses are beaten or threatened) inform methods of detection, in particular, when the personal moral code diverts from the procedures and laws provided by the legal system.[40] *Hill Street Blues* represents 'irrational-subjective' detection from the perspective of coincidence, but like *Dragnet*, or *CSI* following the 'legal' vs. 'illegal' binary as a loose (but permeable) moral guideline. *Twin Peaks* manages to deconstruct almost all signs and systems of shared values along with it (even including the incest taboo). In contrast, *The Shield* appears to depict how the retreat into the individual and the loss of common goals and value systems leads to personalized moral codes dictated by personal agenda (not a 'community standard' as set, for example, by the law), thus implicitly questioning *Twin Peaks*' 'project of deconstruction'.[41] As Nichols-Pethick summarises: "*The Shield* is populated by characters caught between their ambitions (professional, economic and political) and their sense of what is 'right'" (2012: 170). In *The Shield*, the question of how to achieve 'law and order' and the question of ethics become intertwined through the corrupt detective Vic Mackey (Michael Chicklis) and his Strike Team who, in disregard of a law book as moral guideline, make up their own 'rules'.

*The Shield*'s version of 'irrational-subjective' detection is linked with an industrial

discourse that, in the first decade of the 2000s, seemed to demand an increasing amount of

moral ambiguity, often in opposition to the highly popular 'rational-scientific' *CSI*. It is

placed within an industrial context in which the success of HBO's *The Sopranos*, with its

high production values, complex narrative structure, 'cinematic' aesthetics and 'adult'

content (meaning a lot of swearing, violence, nudity and sex, 'adult themes' and moral

ambiguity), that spawned other American cable and network channels to invest in

expensive, complex and often controversial television drama. Glyn White puts *The Shield*

explicitly in a tradition of *The Sopranos*, arguing that:

> Vic Mackey is not simply a maverick detective like Andy Sipowicz
> [Dennis Franz] from *NYPD Blue* […], but an out-and-out antihero like
> Tony Soprano [James Gandolfini], and he may be worse. In following *The
> Sopranos* and placing an antihero at its center, *The Shield* recasts the
> moral/ethical basis of the cop show. […] Quite simply, without Tony
> Soprano, Vic Mackey could not have existed (White 2012: 89).

One aspect that governed this television landscape was experimentation with generic

hybridity or the introduction of genres traditionally associated with cinema to television (as

will be discussed in more detail in the analysis of *Dexter* [Showtime, 2006- ] in Chapter 8).

*The Shield* was one of the few series' that returned to the 'classic' television genre of the

police procedural. While Network channels, in light of CBS' success with the *CSI*

franchise, featured a number of dramas employing 'rational-scientific' methods of

detection, in particular, in the form of forensic science, it seems unsurprising that cable

channels like fX (later FX) aimed to position themselves in opposition to this movement by

featuring 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection with little narrative closure and the

morally ambiguous anti-heroes. *The Shield* profited from a television landscape that

allowed for much creative freedom, asked for 'moral ambiguity', narrative complexity, and

thrived on 'difference' from other TV series. As Concepción Cascajosa Virino puts it, the

"key to the early success [of FX] was developing a series that took popular genres to dark and unexplored territory" (Virino 2012: 14).

*The Shield* provides little innovation in narrative structure or aesthetics, but rather improves on many conventions established by *Hill Street Blues* or *NYPD Blue*. Aesthetically, the series looks very grainy and is shot mostly with hand-held camera in a 'documentary' style, much like the former series used to represent the emotional, legal and social chaos the policemen and women are faced with. The camera rarely stays still for longer than a few seconds, follows an extra walking along a corridor seemingly without any motivation, films through windows or with large objects blocking part of the view (see Fig. 3 and 4), has establishing shots in the middle of a scene (as opposed to the beginning, thus somewhat distorting its function to show where characters are) and many 'unusual' perspectives (see Fig. 5 and 6).[42] The series was often shot on-location rather than on a studio set on low-quality film stock. Costume and often natural lighting make sure that physical flaws of actors are enhanced rather than hidden (for example, detective Wagenbach's [Jay Karnes] ill-fitting suits). While there is not necessarily a coherent colour scheme, due to natural lighting, it differs sharply between interiors and exteriors, with the former being dominated by shabby-looking yellow, green or brown-tones (inside the police station often suggesting a lack of funds to renovate it, as also represented by the always out-of-order men's room) and the latter often in sharp blue-grey-black and white tones to accommodate uniforms or to draw attention to the intense sunlight, with cameras often shooting against the sun. Little extra-diegetic music is played, usually only in the closing montage of each episode.

Fig. 3: filmed from the perspective of characters who do not feature in the story and remains invisible



Fig. 4: Objects blocking the view



Fig.5: Shot against the light



Fig. 6: 'unusual' camera perspectives

While premium cable channels like HBO and programmes like *The Wire* seem particularly concerned with creating increasingly cinematic imagery on television, Gary Needham points out how *The Shield*, in its use of close-ups, extreme close-ups and 'live' aesthetics that seem to implicitly refer to documentary series like *COPS* (Fox, 1989- ), is explicitly televisual, taking advantage of the medium's established conventions (Needham 2012: 32-35). He describes the style of the series as deliberately "messy, disorienting, and choppy" (Needham 2012: 38), already implying the postmodern world view of a pluralistic and confusing society reflected through its aesthetics. *The Shield* can be understood as a reaction against the glossy *CSI* in many ways, its actors whose 'attractiveness' is enhanced through lighting, costume, make-up, etc., its high-tech lab, and its cold, calculated colour scheme. Where *CSI* often features extremely violent content, it also offers clear-cut solutions, while in *The Shield*, detectives often send home rapists or paedophiles for lack of evidence or because they simply are not guilty of the crime they are investigating (though still posing a danger).[43]

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On a formal level, the instability of communal values is described through a complex narrative structure and shaky images. In terms of narrative structure, *The Shield* is safely located in the tradition of flexi-narrative as outlined in the previous case studies in this chapter, with a large ensemble cast and a rich diegetic universe (often provided through the variety of locations). While each season offers an overarching narrative and a (in this case, sometimes 'good', sometimes 'evil' – though such binaries are hard to apply here) 'Big Bad' who threatens the existence of the Strike Team, there also is a narrative arc that stretches across the entire series:[44] with a number of characters investigating the Strike Team for corruption, much of the narrative tension in need of resolution in the end of the series stems from the question *if* , *how* and *by whom* the Strike Team will be brought to 'justice'. As such, the series, like most contemporary 'Quality TV', seems to be striving for (albeit often unstable) narrative closure while providing a number of complications and 'mini-resolutions' along the way.

*The Shield* combines the gangster genre with the police procedural, locating the 'gangsters' inside the police force. Narratives of corruption within the police force are common to series' like *Kojak*, *Hill Street Blues* or *NYPD Blue*, but corrupt officers were always clearly marked as villains. *The Shield* makes corrupt cops the doubtful 'heroes' of its narrative (with the pilot episode showing how Vic Mackey cold-bloodedly murders a team member). The series can be understood as showing where Furrillo's idea of 'keeping a lid on things' (for example, negotiating truces with gangs, thus accepting their right to exist) can lead: the Strike Team is 'keeping a lid on things' and contains chaos, but routinely using violence and other illegal techniques to do so. Much like *Hill Street Blues*, *The Shield* shows a variety of policemen and women in different positions within the hierarchy of the police force (from patrol officers to detectives to the captain of the station). This leads to a depiction of a number of different functions the police can have as well as a breadth of

approaches to detection, especially when it comes to the detectives of the station who all have different areas they are specialized in: for example, the Strike Team is specialized in gang violence while Dutch Wagenbach is interested in the psychology of serial offenders (mostly serial killers or rapists). Where the Strike Team often achieves results with legally questionable (at best) violence or threats, Dutch relies on forensic psychology and his partner Claudette Wyms (CCH Pounder) equally employs supposedly 'rational-scientific' police procedure. Yet, while this may seem like a juxtaposition of 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' methods, the logic of the series ultimately renders everything 'irrational-subjective' due to its focus on personal agenda (which suggests emotional involvement as Dutch's obsession, with finding the killer of a teenage prostitute in "Cherrypoppers", 01/06 to "Dragonchasers" 01/10), on the psychology of characters (thus showing how their personal lives may interfere with their 'insight into human nature' or 'instinct') and a chaotic diegetic world governed by crime and corruption rather than 'law and order'. Even Kavanaugh (Forest Whitaker), a detective who willingly hands over his ex-wife to legal prosecution ("Kavanaugh", 05/08) in his desire to restore 'law and order' through 'rational-scientific' distance, is driven to 'irrationality' by the extent of chaos and corruption Vic Mackey (as detective and 'case' to be investigated) represents.

*The Shield*'s method of detection appears to be a hyperbolic version of hard-boiled narratives: the Strike Team uses violence, even torture, bribery and instead of just being suspected of committing crime, they do commit it. This tends to pose a variety of problems for the detectives as their use of illegal methods, often a conscious reaction against 'rational-scientific' police procedure, means that suspects cannot be tried in court since all evidence against them will be inadmissible. For example, in "Enemy of Good" (05/02), the team enters a house without a search warrant, beats a suspect and chains him to a metal rod in his house, takes money from the house and ends up handing the criminal over to

Mexican law enforcement while burning his driving license (and proof of US citizenship). The first action (entering a house without legal grounds) already sets the 'tone': this entire case has to be solved using 'illegal' methods, since any court case would be tainted by an illegal search and the criminal could never be prosecuted. Stripping the criminal of his citizenship (at least symbolically) and sending him to a Mexican prison is an extreme measure that results from the Strike Team's inability to establish 'law and order' using the means provided by the American legal system. Yet, the text leaves no doubt that the criminal, responsible for killing three teenagers and intimidating a witness by killing her dogs, is not only 'guilty' of a crime, but poses a long-term threat. Thus, there is a sense of moral ambiguity since the Strike Team's illegal methods are certainly 'better' than what Doomsday's (Lobo Sebastian) revenge would look like. The illegal action by the investigators in the beginning of the episode determines the entire investigation, which can never be 'legal' again. Yet, not taking Doomsday into custody would likely result in the murder and torture of a witness and a range of other crimes. Even if he were to be taken into custody and, in spite of the illegal search of his property, convicted, the workings of the legal system cannot guarantee a severity of punishment that 'fits' his crimes as desired by the Strike Team. In other words, if criminals like Doomsday are 'worse' than the Strike Team, than maybe their violence and corruption are legitimate.[45]

The series can, thus, be read almost as a complete rejection of *CSI* in its aesthetics, its narrative structure, its methods of detection and its refusal to offer one 'objective' way to access 'truth' that also implies 'justice' in a court of law. In the course of this, it also seems incapable of offering a 'response' to postmodern chaos: where *CSI* offers modern binaries as a way to provide 'order' for the semiotic excess of postmodernity, *The Shield* highlights the impossibility to provide 'order' within a fallible institution, as evidenced, for example, in the main characters' routine practice of planting evidence at crime scenes. How can the

detectives 'follow the evidence' if signs/clues are 'fake'? When it comes to evidence, the Strike Team's practice of planting evidence seems to eradicate any possibility of a stable relationship between signifier and signified. Often, the evidence that seems to exist in abundance in *CSI*, is non-existent or inconclusive, thus detectives rely on confessions to arrest the criminals, and if those cannot be coerced, drawn out by interrogators, or leveraged against something else, then the police are absolutely powerless. In a similar way Hammett reacted against Golden Age fictions' ability to create social order, *The Shield* questions *CSI*'s proposition to 'return' to modernism in the face of the insecurity left by a postmodern 'project of deconstruction' and the national crisis of 9/11. In this world without proof, 'gut feeling' as method of detection and violence as interrogation technique seems understandable, but its shockingly graphic depiction certainly draws into question whether these methods are justified. After all, a central focus of the narrative is the moral dilemma and obstruction of justice implied by these methods. Inherent in *The Shield*'s use of 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection is a damning view of the American legal system, which seems to force characters like Vic Mackey to exercise vigilante justice, since it cannot perform 'justice' itself without compromising democratic values. Yet, while this vigilante justice allows for corrupt characters to earn money (like the Strike Team's drug trade in the first two seasons and the robbing of the Armenian mob's 'money train' in "Dominoes Falling", 02/13) the Season 1 storyline involving Assistant Chief Ben Gilroy (John Diehl) shows that there are limits to the Strike Team's corruption: where Gilroy is exclusively looking for personal gain and willingly puts 'innocents' in danger, Vic condemns his friend's actions ("Two Days of Blood, 01/12 and "Circles", 01/13). Thus, the 'irrational-subjective' methods used by the Strike Team are not gratuitous; they serve the purpose of providing some sort of justice, for example, to stop Doomsday from terrorizing the neighbourhood.

The questioning of violence as a mode of 'irrational-subjective' detection in the face of worse violence mirrors a central moral dilemma faced by American society in the aftermath of 9/11. In his address to Congress on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September 2001, in which George W. Bush declared the War on Terror, he actually already points to the contradictions inherent in this 'war':

> The terrorists practice *a fringe form of Islamic extremism that has been rejected by Muslim scholars and the vast majority of Muslim clerics*, a fringe movement that perverts the peaceful teachings of Islam. The terrorists' directive commands them to *kill Christians and Jews, to kill all Americans*, and make no distinctions among military and civilians, including women and children. […]
> I also want to speak tonight directly to Muslims throughout the world. We respect your faith. It's practiced freely by many millions of Americans and by millions more in countries that America counts as friends. Its teachings are good and peaceful, and those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of Allah. The terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself. *The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends*; it is not our many Arab friends. Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists and every government that supports them.
> Our war on terror begins with Al Qaida, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated.
> Americans are asking, why do *they* hate us? *They* hate what we see right here in this Chamber, a democratically elected government. *Their* leaders are self-appointed. *They* hate our freedoms - our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other. […]
> We are not deceived by their pretenses to piety. We have seen their kind before. They are the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions, by abandoning every value except the will to power, *they follow in the path of fascism and Nazism and totalitarianism*. And they will follow that path all the way, to where it ends, in history's unmarked grave of discarded lies (Bush: 2001, my italics)

This speech already encapsulates the tension between a somewhat modern system of binary structures and a loosely 'postmodern' system of deconstructing binaries and grand narratives (of religion, for example) that would mark the following years, regarding many aspects of politics, social change and popular culture in Western societies. In the earlier parts of his speech, Bush readily admits (at least implicitly) to the complexity of the situation by differentiating and acknowledging that Muslim terrorists are a 'fringe group',

many Muslims and Muslim countries are 'friends', part of the 'us', they live in America and across the world and are neither anti-Western nor anti-Christian. Thus, it quickly becomes clear that, other than the USSR or the Nazis, the threat is not easily located within a political system and in a specific geographical location and fought with a 'traditional' military strategy. Later in the excerpt, he moves on to endorse a binary of 'us', 'our friends', 'our way of life' and emphasises the 'them' by comparing the terrorism of the 21st century with totalitarian systems of the 20th century, like fascism. While *CSI* is very much in line with a world view that relies on binary structures, as promoted by the rhetoric of the Bush administration, *The Shield* seems to offer a counter-argument that encourages a more complex world view that constantly deconstructs binaries of 'good' vs. 'evil', 'law-abiding' vs. 'law-breaking', 'police' vs. 'criminal', 'us' vs. 'them'. The heightened moral ambiguity at the heart of *The Shield* (where every character is in some way legally or morally 'guilty') encapsulates the inability of the Bush administration to create an 'other' without attacking the values it stands for: unlike communism during the Cold War, Islam cannot be demonized without attacking the religious freedom America and other democratic systems want to stand for. Al Qaeda is a relatively loose network of terrorists, without a specific geographical allocation or a coherent ideology (other than anti-Western), thus not lending itself to be an 'other' in the sense the USSR was. Furthermore, the Bush administration, through various policies and scandals, frequently and increasingly compromised the USA's position as 'morally superior'.[46]

*The Shield* appears to mirror the tensions that became obvious in US society about vague concepts of 'security' vs. 'democracy' or democratic rights and values, assuming that one cannot be upheld without damaging the other. While the series seems to be in line with *Hill Street Blues*' attitude to offer 'equality' to various political viewpoints, approaches to detection and methods to access knowledge and achieve 'law and order' (whatever that

may be), it also draws attention to the disorienting effect the impossibility of a common social project has. *The Shield* appears to show how this 'postmodern' attitude is thrown into crisis, not necessarily by 9/11, but the War on Terror seems to draw out the major problems of such a stance: after *Twin Peaks* served to deconstruct all moral codes and guidelines that modern binaries tend to provide, *The Shield* appears to be at a complete loss in its formulation of moral guidelines that are applicable to all. As Iain Hamilton Grant summarises in 1998 in his account of the implications postmodern theory has for the study of politics:

> Surely, any prospect of tackling endemic racism, the horrors of the military-industrial-entertainment complex, the obviously economically motivated, console-cowboy overkill of the Gulf War, religious or political persecution or Chinese tanks crushing the bodies of protesting students, is given up in advance by any movement that, like postmodernism, renounces the modern ideals of universal freedom, equality and rights [in other words, any ideals of a universal 'truth'] without providing any alternatives (Grant 2001: 28)?

As this suggests, no universal 'truth' and a refusal to provide alternative concepts of thinking about grand narratives leads to confusion and, in the case of *The Shield*, the disorientation regarding moral guidelines appears to be one of the main themes that is reflected in the series' use of 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection.

Yet, the text also heavily sanctions the illegal 'irrational-subjective' methods used by the Strike Team: the series ends in tragedy for the group, though only one of them is punished through the legal system. On the one hand, this fits into an agenda of contemporary television to seem 'intelligent' by posing questions without providing answers, but leaving viewers to decide. On the other hand, it also means that while systemic problems are analysed in depth, no alternative or solution for the problems are provided. In *The Shield*, even more so than in the other case studies provided in this chapter, a grand narrative of 'community' or 'society' becomes completely impossible: Ben Gilroy sacrifices the

security of the district for personal financial gain, Vic Mackey sacrifices his team for his family and Aceveda (Benito Martinez) sacrifices his mission to limit corruption for votes. Yet, while the series remains morally ambiguous, such behaviour is often sanctioned (Ben Gilroy ends up drinking himself to death in Mexico and Vic Mackey's family joins the witness protection programme to get away from him), despite the fact that the legal system rarely provides the punishment.

The series, then, clearly problematizes and questions society governed by individualized concerns, possibly deconstructing libertarian ideas (as promoted by Reagan) that the individual good equals the common good. Furthermore, it could be argued that, if the questions and doubts expressed towards the legal system in the series (which can easily be viewed as questions regarding more than 'just' the microcosm of L.A., but also questions of national and international law) in some way mirror legal concerns the US was and is faced with in light of the War on Terror. Through its methods of detection, the series poses questions as to whether or not the American legal system can grasp the crimes and criminal conspiracies at work in the US and internationally and if it is sufficient to deal with national and international crime. Its open structure allows for a relatively politically unbiased view of these questions, which may give viewers the option to ponder these questions in a space without any ideological Democrats vs. Republicans bias. Thus, *The Shield* appears to counter *CSI*s 'return' to modernism by highlighting the impossibility of binary structures.

### 7.4.    Conclusion

This chapter explored the way the analysis of different versions of 'irrational-subjective' detection can help understand developments within postmodernism that range from a celebration of pluralism (*Hill Street Blues*), to an optimistic enthusiasm towards the new

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possibilities that can emerge after the 'project of deconstruction' is completed (*Twin Peaks*) to utter dis-enchantment with the moral and legal 'relativism' that ensues (*The Shield*). As Grant observes, the increased amount of competing grand narratives of economical and ideological concepts (like Marxism or Capitalism), various religions and a coherent idea of 'good' and 'evil' has:

> …weakened them all, so that, at the end of the twentieth century, there seem to be no candidates to take over from them in tying all our knowledge and our actions to some coherent historical plan. All that is left is a field where fragments left over from these grand narratives compete with one another and with new rivals (Grant 2001: 29-30).

In such a pluralistic world where 'dominant' narratives seem an impossibility, including a straightforward narrative of 'good and 'bad' or even 'legal' or 'illegal' (is Pam Gilliam's shooter in *Hill Street Blues* 'guilty' if he cannot be convicted for the murder?), 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection become a necessity.

The arguments texts implicitly make for 'rational-scientific' methods of detection seem to be structured significantly differently than in cases of 'rational-scientific' detection. 'Rational-scientific' methods of detection seem to assume an *a priori* 'order' of the world, the detectives just need to put all the signs in the right 'order', in other words, put the puzzle together to create a coherent image. 'Irrational-subjective' methods assume disorder and take it as their starting point, with methods of detection mirroring and intensifying the sense of disorientation and 'chaos'. Ultimately, this world is dominated by chaos, by multiple 'truths', social injustice, unstable signs and meanings, 'evil', random crime, lack of evidence and a flawed and often unjust legal system. As contradictory and varied as the broad field of 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection is, as shown in the case studies in this chapter, they relate to the modernist pessimism and existentialist alienation expressed in hard-boiled literature and detective films of the 1940s. Yet, as Jameson argues: "…concepts such as anxiety and alienation […] are no longer appropriate in the

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world of the postmodern" Jameson 1991: 14). He, thus, points to significant changes in the modernist and the postmodern arts discourses that frame developments within the genre discourse. However, they also work to represent a loosely 'postmodern' or 'post-structuralist' world view that actively tries to deconstruct binaries and encourages and appreciates a multiplicity of 'truths' and subjective experience. Stephen Knight, discussing postmodern crime fiction in literature summarises it as follows:

> …postmodernism is a form of resistance with its own version of politics, rejecting what are seen as invalid and deforming concepts of consistency and subjective identity as being based on unduly constraining rational and aesthetic systems, whether of classical realism or modernism. In postmodern fiction coincidence, overlapping accounts, indeterminacy are the plot motifs and parody, irony and inconsequence are technical tools to dislodge the idea of a single knowing and moralising subject, operating in ordered time with purposive function. Postmodern crime fiction has a special importance because major early post-modernists employed the genre to establish their positions against rationality and humanism (Knight 2004: 195).

While *Hill Street Blues* and *The Shield* both use markers of 'realism' (as aesthetic feature), they offer multiple accounts of the world surrounding them, whether it is through Hill's and Renko's different accounts of what is going on around them as they sit in the same car or the different views of the Strike Team as corrupt and immoral, necessary evil, useful resources, or 'just' crime fighters. Meanwhile, *Twin Peaks* may fulfil all 'criteria' (aesthetically, in the indeterminate relationship between signifier and signified it promotes and in its use of extra-textual material) of postmodernism, but struggles for any political, ideological or moral guidelines, possibly reflecting a historical moment when many people felt these issues were up for an in-depth re-negotiation, not only with the end of the Cold War, but also with debates regarding family values, gender roles or race relations. In other words, *Twin Peaks* may reflect an increasingly fragmented, individualized postmodern society.

As already mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, accounts of hard-boiled literature by most critics (see, for example Knight 2004: 135-194, Scaggs 2005: 77-84, McCann 2010: 56) tend to point to an 'open' narrative structure, which allows for an 'ideological appropriation' of the genre by narratives with a variety of political agendas. Unlike Golden Age literature, the hard-boiled mode remains relatively open due to a certain degree of 'irrationality' and 'subjectivity': it does not rely on clues to structure a narrative, a solution is not reached through logical, distanced deduction. Coincidence, 'closeness', compassion and the vulnerability of the detective are key features that allow for 'irrational-subjective' methods to access a 'truth' about their diegetic universe, while rejecting the idea of *one* universal 'truth'. The personal, subjective experience of data is central to the way detectives can find 'truth' and serve 'justice', even if the experience is negative and painful, detectives gain information, power and incentive, more so than any of Agatha Christie's detectives whose main incentive seems to be a dislike of murder.

Yet, Agatha Christie's simple, but broad, formulation of a moral code (murder needs to be punished) also represents a value system easily shared by a community. Meanwhile, the variety of political opinions and views expressed in *Hill Street Blues* on how 'law and order' can be achieved already point to an increasingly fragmented and complex idea of 'the social', let alone the institution of the police. *Twin Peaks* is unable to formulate any kind of communal project in light of an increasingly unstable subject, unable to form a community. As such, *Twin Peaks* appears to be without need for a communal political project; rather, it seems to celebrate the deconstruction of all manner of grand narratives. Both, *Hill Street Blues* and *Twin Peaks* tend to be positive about the heterogeneity of society and social *milieux*. Where the former series seems to find some kind of negotiated position between the right and the left in the form of Frank Furillo, the latter, almost aggressively staying away from 'real-life' politics, points to an incredibly fragmented

society without stable categories (not even between subject and object, as the Log Lady's [Catherine E. Coulson] piece of tree that seems to have some sort of 'consciousness' shows) that would allow for a 'community'. Of course, there are ways the inhabitants of Twin Peaks are bound together by the loss of Laura Palmer, for example, but the fact that all are affected in one way or another does not mean that the consequences are the same. Considering that the 1990s were a time in American history when national identity was re-negotiated to appreciate its heterogeneity and question white, patriarchal, heteronormative superiority, it is hardly surprising that *Twin Peaks* relishes the freedom produced by the postmodern deconstruction of binaries, subject and society. In a post-9/11 America, *The Shield* seems increasingly critical of such pluralism, by focussing on how a fragmented society and increasingly individualized moral codes ultimately work to erode the institutions that serve a democratic system and allows for the supposed 'freedom' a heterogeneous society provides. Thus, where the alleged culture of narcissism (see Woods 2005: 443-444) of the 1980s that seems to be carried into *Twin Peaks* celebrates the focus on the subject, the unstable individual and the construction of identity, *The Shield* seems uncertain as to whether a 'return' to common political projects (or ethics) is required, implicitly questioning the moral relativism of personal agendas and 'moral codes'.

This idea of the unstable subject which can only produce an incoherent idea of society inevitably leads to a constant negotiation and re-negotiation of the public and the private spheres. Quite possibly, all three series rely on the soap and flexi-narrative structure since these are narrative forms that allow for such long-term negotiations and offer no, or only unstable, resolutions. The complex narrative structure seems deeply intertwined with 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection and connected ideologies of unstable meanings and a fragmented, constantly changing world that is impossible to grasp through 'simplifying' binaries.

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While the links between postmodernity and an alleged culture of narcissism not only promote an ideology of extreme individualism, maybe even isolationism (even if the more contemporary detectives form strong bonds with their small teams, they rarely trust anyone outside this team), which connects it to the literary ancestry of hard-boiled fiction, the almost aggressive insistence on subjectivity, multiple 'truths', unstable meanings, moral ambiguity, and the impossibility of *one* common 'truth', meaning or world view, let alone one version of 'justice' or 'order', links the case studies discussed in these chapters more closely to post-modern ideas.

The inability of 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection and, often, postmodernism to formulate alternatives to the moral dilemmas posed by a 'project of deconstruction' – in particular, in regards to clear definitions of 'good' and 'evil' – will be addressed in the next chapter which explores how binaries between 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection can be deconstructed in order to possibly formulate 'alternative' methods of detection and ways to access and attain 'truth'.

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[1] Quoted from *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990-1991), 02/03.

[2] The basic cable channel seems to alternate between the spelling fX and FX, with imdb.com citing fX as the network where *The Shield* was originally aired, but *Nip/Tuck* (FX, 2003-2010), which was first broadcast a year later, as running on FX. Nichols-Pethick, rather confusingly, cites *The Shield* as broadcast by FX, arguing that it was part of the network's strategy to re-brand itself: "What *The Shield* represented was the network's strong move away from its reliance on traditional broadcast network fare, its unabashed appeal to a male audience, and its willingness to push at the boundaries of acceptable content" (Nichols-Pethick 2012: 161). Of course, being part of the re-branding of the basic cable network in no way excludes the series from being first broadcast *before* the new name/spelling was introduced.

[3] Similarly, Jonathan Bignell describes the central problem of the narrative of *Miami Vice* as a problem of deception or surface and depth: are characters really what they seem? How can we establish who is good and who is 'evil'? (Bignell 2009: 22-23).

[4] For example, in "Etude in Black" (02/01) an orchestra conductor murders his mistress. Despite his convincing alibi (conducting on national television), Columbo suspects him based on nothing more than a flower found on the crime scene that *could* have been pinned to Alex Benedict's (John Cassavetes) buttonhole. There does not even seem to be any hints that the

murderer and his victim were having an affair. Yet, Columbo gets fixated on Benedict before even interviewing other witnesses. Thus, he seems to be following a 'hunch' that he tries to confirm rather than deducing who the killer is based on evidence, witness statements and other clues.

[5] For example, in the episode "Murder by the Barrel" (01/02), Sally McMillan finds a body in a barrel among her things while moving house and is later personally threatened by the killer. She thus becomes a key witness in a murder case her husband's department is charged with solving.

[6] Probably inadvertently, *Moonlighting* does pick up on this with episodes that are notoriously 'unfinished'. As far as legend goes, this is due to the writing staff's inability to finish scripts on time, but the sometimes completely inexplicable plot twists or storylines that end nowhere other than in the studio parking lot (as, for example, in the episode 'Camille' [02/18] with Judd Nelson and Whoopi Goldberg) could be read as a comment or parody of how 'irrational' many of the methods of detection featured in contemporary detective series actually were.

[7] There are exceptions to this: Sam Spade trusts his secretary Effie Perrine and maybe even his friend in the police force, Tom Polhaus, but other than the private investigators of the 1980s, he does not share much information with them or rely on their help.

[8] Sanders (2010: 19-40) outlines how Miami, once a vacation resort, suffered greatly from the recession of the 1970s and soon became known for high crime rates, social unrest and racial tensions. In 1984, Dade Country, the County of Miami reported the highest murder rates in the US:

> At the same time, perhaps no other American destination was as passionate about its transformation. With its genius for self-promotion on full display, metropolitan Miami went about remaking itself. Miami Beach […] began restoring its Art Deco district and turning it from a seedy, run-down refuge for drug dealers, street thugs and drifters into a bustling center of social and commercial activity with fashionable clubs, restaurants and boutiques. (Sanders 2010: 21).

*Miami Vice* picks up on this tension between high crime rates, excessive consumerism and the efforts to promote and restore Miami with postmodern architecture, bright colours and images of sunshine, beaches and a blue sea. This leads to an "approach to episodic crime drama that combined a noir sensibility with South Florida locales" (ibid. 2010: 22), in other words, 'sunshine noir'. The tension between extreme wealth, innovative architecture, 'hip' cultural events, bars and restaurants and crime, poverty, racial tensions (with a relatively large Cuban immigrant population) and social unrest is still present in other depictions of Miami, such as *CSI Miami* (CBS, 2002-2012) or *Dexter* (Showtime, 2006- ), as will be discussed in Chapter 8.

[9] The vague term 'creator' means that Bochco wrote the first few episodes together with Michael Kozoll, who was 'head writer' of the programme. He also worked as executive producer on 73 of the 113 episodes of the series, meaning that he was in charge of everyday business of producing the series, making sure that the artistic vision is realized, for example by communicating to directors what 'look' needs to be established or hiring actors that 'fit in' well in terms of performance style and looks.

[10] Discussing the series in relation to the changing television landscape of the 1980s, Jonathan Nichols-Pethick argues that *Hill Street Blues* fit well into NBCs business strategy to compete in the changing market:

> Part of [the] legend, of course, is the oft-cited fact that *Hill Street Blues* was potentially the lowest-rated series ever to be renewed for the next season by its network. By most accounts, there were two reasons for this unprecedented renewal: last-place NBC had little to lose in taking a chance

on a provocative and challenging series, and the show received unequivocal critical acclaim (including 21 Emmy nominations). But perhaps the two most important factors had to do with the way that *Hill Street Blues* addressed the network's programming needs in this period of transition (2012: 31).

Nichols-Pethick argues further that the series' attractiveness to 'quality demographics' seems to suggest the network's readiness to adapt to the changing television industry.

[11] Ryan Sager argues that this may be related to a proposed IRS (Inland Revenue Service) ruling in 1978, in which:

Carter's director of the IRS threatened to strip all private schools founded after 1953 of their tax-deductible status – based on the theory that, absent proof otherwise, such schools should be assumed to have been founded in an attempt to get around *Brown v. the Board of Education*. The majority of these schools, especially in the South, were Christian. The IRS received more than 200,000 letters, and the change was never enacted. Nonetheless, the incident spurred the Reverend Jerry Falwell and social-conservative strategist Paul Weyrich to form the Moral Majority in 1979. […] These folks, the Religious Right, would become the foot soldiers of the conservative movement, in the way that labor unions had long been for the Democrats (Sager 2006: 49-50).

[12] Tom Hayden links an increase in gang violence to the violent deaths of civil rights leaders like Malcolm X and Martin Luther King in 1965 and 1968, respectively, and the slow dying down of the Civil Rights Movement as well as the general sense of resignation prevalent in the 1970s America. With the left's efforts to make law enforcement abide the constitution dying down, new, stricter policies to deal with crimes, especially immigrant youths in urban ghettos, were put in place (Hayden 2005: 1-17).

[13] Woods (2005: 443) invokes examples for this culture of narcissism such as Tom Wolfe's *Bonfire of the Vanities* (1987) (who also coined the phrase 'me decade'), the rise of the Blockbuster after the decade of New Hollywood, and a new boom in books on self-help, dieting or fitness. Feuer (1995: 43-80) also points to the obsessive identity politics of 'yuppie culture' represented in *thirtysomething* (ABC, 1987-1989) or *St Elmo's Fire* (Schumacher, 1985), though pointing out that the figure of the yuppie as such seems to reflect a specific ideal more than the realities of urban life.

[14] The philosophy behind this is that a healthy economy benefits everyone and the profits earned by the rich would 'trickle down' to even the poorest through an increase in wages for the employees of a healthy business, possibly expansions which create more jobs, etc., thus creating more tax payers, which leads to more money for the government to spend on the public. Ultimately, while tax rates would be lowered, the revenue would increase due to a larger base of tax payers, in other words, the belief that the "individual good is always tied to the common good" (Woods 2005: 438).

[15] One of these ways is *Miami Vice*'s aesthetics, which with its postmodern 'no earth tones'-dictum and rapid editing is often termed 'MTV cops'. As John Fiske points out:

One of the stylistic innovations of *Miami Vice* is the use of current top twenty pop songs accompanied by visuals of masculinity, of cruising the urban landscape, as interruptions in the narrative. Their style is usually borrowed from music video or from commercials, and as they rarely advance the narrative, or increase our understanding of the characters, plot or setting, or provide any clues to the solving of the enigmas that drive the narrative, it is fair to assume that their function is purely pleasurable (1987: 255).

[16] Examples of how close the officers and detectives of the series tend to be with criminals is the station's fondness for Malibu (Charles Fleischer) in "Can World War III Be an Attitude?" (01/04), mentally ill Kevin Herman Dracula (Tony Plana) crying in Belker's arms in "Film at Eleven" (01/06) or Lucy Bates being attacked by a rapist while undercover in "Dressed to Kill" (01/05, on imdb.com listed as "Double Jeopardy"), thus making any dealings by anyone in the station with the rapist personal.

[17] This even goes so far as dismissing feminist criticism as 'not getting the point'. This criticism was geared against a scene in the pilot, in which Hill and Renko dissolve a domestic dispute following a woman's discovery that her current partner sleeps with her daughter. Hill argues that the man only cheats on the woman because she doesn't give him enough sex, but also that the woman should put up with both her partner and her daughter, since, otherwise, she would be alone (it is implied that this is worse than living with a man who cheated on her with her daughter). Michael Kozoll argued that their police technical advisor agreed that this is one way policemen diffuse situations like this, without thinking of long-term consequences or implications, just to preserve 'the peace' (Gitlin 2000: 287). Thus, the writers' attitude seems to have been that 'anything goes' in the name of 'realism'.

[18] Generally, while 'gang wars' are implicitly recognised as a possibility, they don't seem to break out in the series, which seems more concerned with the threat gang members pose to 'innocents'. There does not seem to be an interest to explore what happens in the gangs and between the gangs, or even gang members falling victim to violence. The violence remains relatively tame if compared to more recent representations of gangs; gang members use guns, but they appear to still be considered relatively expensive, therefore knives seem far more common.

[19] In reference to John Hartley's *Understanding News* (1982: 38-62), Barker argues that due to an implicit social 'arrangement' between news broadcasters and audiences, a certain amount of objectivity and 'truthfulness' is suggested by an aesthetic associated with news:

> A further implication is that such [news and documentary] visual narratives present a world view comparatively free of any of the manipulations of form and content that might be associated with television fiction. From the standpoint of the audience, then, one of the most immediate ways of separating television news and documentary from television fiction is through a knowledge of the visual codes at work in each. Following this line of reasoning, it therefore seems appropriate to conclude that a fictional television series encoded with the strategies of *verité* would have a greater degree of verisimilitude" (Barker 1988: 47, italics in the original)

[20] Butler (as far as legend goes):

> …was also tempted by the producers' [Gregory Hoblit and Steven Bochco] talk of shooting the whole show with hand-held cameras, in black and white, to heighten the grainy, documentary look. He even proposed shooting in the relatively primitive 16mm. But 16 mm. proved impractical, since the labs were not equipped to handle it on a weekly schedule; and no one thought the networks were ready for black and white. Accordingly, Butler began shooting the episodes in the normal 35mm., but with everything hand-held and nervous" (Gitlin 2000: 293).

[21] John T. Caldwell suggests the concept of televisuality in order to describe the intertwining of images and story (Caldwell 1995: 4-72). Much of how 'style' and 'substance' can interact with each other is also discussed in Chapter 5.

[22] As Jonathan Bignell points out the UK Channel 4 DVDs that serve as source material for this discussion feature a significantly shortened version of the scene where Hill and Renko get shot. For a detailed description of the original scene see Bignell 2009: 18-19.

[23] While the investigation is closed in 02/14, the following episodes continue to deal with the psychological ramifications of the seemingly unmotivated murder, in particular, on the victim's friend and fellow public defender Joyce Davenport (Veronica Hamel).

[24] The detective genre on television tends to be a very male-dominated genre, while soaps tend to be associated with female characters, which even led John Fiske to suggest that a narrative structure which offers closure at the end of each episode is easier to relate to for a male viewership whereas the unstable nature of the soap corresponds more with female viewers (Fiske 1987: 179-223). Of course, the 1980s detective genre, in particular, offers a variety of counter-arguments to this claim with series' like *Remington Steele*, *Scarecrow & Mrs. King* and *Cagney and Lacey* while the success of prime time soaps surely was not entirely based on female audiences.

[25] It is important to differentiate here between the police procedural as a sub-genre and the procedural as narrative structure: the procedural narrative structure follows the Golden Age three act narrative, provides closure at the end of each instalment and dictates no particular order in which episodes need to be seen. In newer versions of the procedural like *CSI*, *Monk* (USA, 2002-2009) or *House, M.D.* (Fox, 2004-2012) a small level of flexi-narrative is common, for example regarding the on-going storyline of Monk's (Tony Shalhoub) hunt for his wife's killer.

[26] However, it could be argued that *Six Feet Under*'s underlying structure of following a dead body from the death of a person in the opening scene through to its burial in the end suggests a form of narrative closure that cannot be compared to *Hill Street Blues*. Another aspect Johnson fails to consider is that the later dramas strive towards narrative closure and are structured through season arcs.

[27] In *Dallas*, J.R. Ewing (Larry Hagman) will try over and over again to gain control over the family's company, without loyalty to anyone, Pam's (Victoria Principal) and Bobby's (Patrick Duffy) relationship will face any number of complications, but ultimately prevail, etc. Similarly, in *Dynasty*, Alexis Carrington (Joan Collins) will try to financially ruin her ex-husband Blake (John Forsythe) while also breaking up his marriage with Krystle (Linda Evans).

[28] Of course, a closer look at the prime time soap of the 1980s, which often put the fight for power over huge family corporations at the centre of their narrative and tend to have main characters whose expressed interest it is to financially ruin each other (like the animosity between the Barnes and the Ewing family in *Dallas* or the Carrington's and the Colby's in *Dynasty*) shows how the mixing of the public and the private was not particularly new at the time. This even goes for the detective genre, where, for example, detective Ironside often conducted his business in his home, where he lived with his personal aide and major character Mark Sanger or the 'Mod Squad', who were 'unofficial' detectives to start with.

[29] While soaps may not offer one ideological stable narrative, most characters tend to have an (albeit unstable) narrative function which place them on clear sides of a 'good' vs. 'bad' binary. Yet, these are sometimes already deconstructed, like Fallon Carrington Colby (Pamela Sue Martin) in *Dynasty*, who may be a 'bad' mother and wife for wanting to work in Season 3, but also is clearly situated on the 'good' side of the binary since her attachment is closer to her father (but not her stepmother) than her mother (the ambiguous villainess of the story). Since the stories do not end, in the many years a series goes on characters sometimes change narrative functions and change where they are positioned in a binary.

[30] Though, especially in the early seasons, Hunter is often made to look ridiculous and unable to understand the social realities of the district. One of the most extreme examples of how the text treats Hunter's ideas as comical is shown in the episode "I Never Promised You a Rose, Marvin" (01/12), when he presents his idea for an 'urban tank' to his superiors. The use of a tank on which one colleague even comments "I haven't seen one of those since Korea" shows

Hunter's exaggerated ideas of the district as a battlefield of some kind of urban war which requires war weaponry. The presentation of the 6 million dollar tank in action later in the episode ends with the tank being stolen because Hunter left the keys inside. He reacts to this by launching something resembling a military operation, until Furillo points out to him that the tank has long been found in a river, stripped of all its expensive technology. Hunter's failure is framed as comical, mainly because he seems incapable of understanding the differences between military and police and the construction of an 'other'/enemy in a situation of war and the 'other'/enemy in domestic law enforcement.

[31] Nichols-Pethick argues that "Furillo is often caught between three extremes within his own department: the militarism of Lt Howard Hunter, the sensitive liberalism of Lt. Henry Goldblum and the wishy-washy political opportunism of Chief Daniels" (Nichols-Pethick 2012: 70).

[32] Though Eagleton himself ultimately disagrees with this, it is used here as an accurate summary of postmodern approaches.

[33] However, even though in prime time soaps many of the speech acts are not as explicitly political as in *Hill Street Blues*, Modleski argues that soaps provide the (in Modleski's work female) viewer with a range of perspectives: "By constantly presenting her with the many-sidedness of any question, by never reaching a permanent conclusion, soaps undermine her capacity to form unambiguous judgements" (Modleski 1979: 15). Thus, while Nelson views the various points of view and ideologies as part of a progressive narrative structure that allows an active audience to formulate their own opinions, Modleski judges the same open structure of soap as producing potentially confused viewers who are unable to deal with ideological ambiguity.

[34] Nichols-Pethick explicitly links the "discursive and dialogic elements" (2012: 71) that keep re-occurring with the possibilities opened up by a large ensemble cast. The possibilities of the ensemble cast to express a variety of viewpoints have interesting implications for those detective dramas that involve smaller teams of one or two.

[35] What is referred to in the text as the 'Tibetan method' involves shouting out names and throwing stones at bottles (01/02), while the 'magic' in the series seems to be performed by an invisible agent in the woods surrounding the town of Twin Peaks, possibly somehow connected to 'The White Lodge' and 'The Black Lodge'. The 'magic' also mainly expresses itself through dreams.

[36] In the case of spirit possession in *Twin Peaks*, Judith Butler's idea of identity construction through discourse becomes particularly interesting: In *Gender Trouble* (1990: 1-25), Butler suggests that not only the subject, but also physical desires of the body are discursively constructed. Considering that Leland Palmer's physical desire to rape his daughter is tied up with spirit possession, the question what is subject/self and what is 'other' becomes an intriguing question.

[37] Like Cooper's curious interaction with 'the Waiter' (Hank Worden) in 02/01 after he has been shot, the help of the array of 'otherworldly' characters who come to join him at the 'revelation' of the killer in 02/16, Donna's investigation of Laura's meals-on-wheels route (02/02) or Cooper's entry into the 'red room' in the final episode, as well as the implications of both Mike and BOB possessing human bodies.

[38] One example of this is a scene in the double episode that opens the second season: the policemen establish a chronological narrative of how they believe Laura spent her last night. As the camera slowly pans across the table and the carefully ordered and symmetrically stocked and organized abundance of doughnuts on the table, the signifiers of Laura's violent and chaotic death are blended in with the visual. The story of Laura's night spent taking drugs, tied up, having sex with Leo Johnson and Jaques Renault (Walter Olkewicz), then abducted and murdered ends with the often-repeated image that shows Laura as prom queen,

emphasizing juxtapositions inherent in her character and the disorder that dominates lives in Twin Peaks, despite attempts to create order, like establishing a timeline or symmetrically ordering doughnuts.

[39] As Nicholas Ray summarises in the introduction to *Interrogating The Shield* (2012), the series is loosely based on the so-called Rampart scandal and revelations about corruption in the LAPD's anti-gang unit that emerged in the investigation of officer Rafael Pérez:

> In August 1998, Pérez was arrested for stealing six pounds of cocaine from police evidence lockers. Further investigation revealed more evidence of drug thefts. In September 1999, facing retrial, Pérez cut a deal. In exchange for pleading guilty to stealing cocaine, serving a maximum of five years in jail, and receiving immunity to all other charges short of murder, Pérez agreed to give evidence of further corruption within the Rampart CRASH [Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums, LAPD's city-wide anti-gang programme] division. The information he surrendered, however, was far more extensive than anyone claimed to have expected. In the course of fifty meetings held over nine months, Pérez delivered a lengthy testimony. The transcripts ran to more than four thousand pages. The testimony implicated nearly seventy other officers and involved details of widespread misconduct, including the planting of evidence and framing of suspects, thefts, beatings, narcotic distribution, and the awarding of token prizes to officers who shot gang members" (Ray 2012: 5).

[40] The Strike Team is led by Vic Mackey (Michael Chicklis) and consists of Shane Vendrell (Walton Goggins), Curtis Lemansky (Kenny Johnson) and Ronnie Gardocki (David Rees Snell). Other members temporarily join the team, but are not included in its criminal activity and Curtis Lemansky dies at the end of Season 5, while Shane Vendrell temporarily leaves the team in Season 4 and is pitted against Mackey and Gardocki in the final season after they find out that he murdered Lemansky.

[41] Examples of this are Julien Lowe (Michael Jace) not testifying against Vic Mackey and his team for stealing cocaine, because Vic threatens to reveal the officer's homosexuality; Captain David Aceveda putting his own political career ahead of stopping the Strike Team; Captain Monica Rawling (Glenn Close) putting her policies and her desire to convict Antwon Mitchell (Anthony Anderson) above the safety of her officers patrolling the district or constitutional laws of prisoners; Jon Kavanaugh abandoning his own 'moral code' to catch Vic Mackey, which even leads him to plant evidence; and, most importantly, Vic Mackey's desire to provide legal and financial safety for his team and his family, which takes precedence over any legal (and often moral, as when he kills a team member for providing information to Aceveda in the pilot episode) concerns.

[42] As Gary Needham points out:

> *The Shield* was filmed using a multicamera setup of mobile Steadicam and handheld cameras. This means that a scene was filmed using more than one camera and without fixed static camera setups that would normally involve tripods, dollies, tracks and other equipment. This approach keeps the camera free and in a state of constant mobility. […] *The Shield* […] is marked by a disorienting camera presence that is an effect of the handhelds camera's deliberate lack of steadiness and unpolished appearance (Needham 2012: 37).

[43] For example, in "Bottom Bitch" (03/03), Dutch lets a suspect of a rape go who displays tendencies towards sexual violence. Confused after the interview, the suspect rapes a woman.

[44] The term 'Big Bad' is the language *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (WB, 1997-2003) uses to describe the phenomenon, and it has been widely used within television studies, for example

by Mittell 2006: 33 or Lavery 2010: 46. In *The Shield*, 'Big Bads' on the one hand, are characters within the legal system who investigate the Strike Team for corruption (Captain Aceveda, Claudette Wyms, Jon Kavanaugh, Lanie Kellis [Lucinda Jenney]). Other 'Big Bads' are criminals who not only threaten to expose the Strike Team, but also commit horrendous crimes (like Armadillo Quintero [Danny Pino], Armenian mob boss Margos Dezerian [Kurt Sutter], Antwon Mitchell, Diro Kesakhian [Franka Potente]). Especially in the latter category methods are often morally ambiguous, especially since the knowledge these criminals have about the Strike Team usually means that they get murdered in order not to reveal any information about corruption in the police department.

[45] Nicholas Ray (2012a: 179-184) claims that this structure, the fact that Mackey's employment of torture in most cases leads to 'results' (i.e. some kind of punishment) and criminals are often 'worse' than the Strike Team, means that the text ultimately legitimizes the violence. It is argued here that the text is structured openly enough to pose the question to audiences whether the graphically depicted means justify the ends or not, not necessarily legitimizing it. In fact, it could be argued that the term 'adult' often used by critics to describe 'Quality TV' of the 2000s refers exactly to this phenomenon of texts refusing to provide 'answers' to complicated ethical conundrums and leave the audience to negotiate their own 'moral code'.

[46] Examples of this are the torture scandals and countless human rights violations in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo prisons emerging during the run of *The Shield*, Bush making Waterboarding a legal CIA interrogation technique in 2006, as well as approving the illegal kidnapping of suspects by the CIA, the dispelling of *habeas corpus* (the right to have a judge decide whether or not there is enough evidence to charge somebody with a crime or the right to be charged with a crime and eventually be tried in a court of law), thus abandoning the regulations of the Geneva Conventions (see Pfiffner 2009: 84-194 and *New York Times* Editorial, 28.09.2006), while the president approved the wiretapping of US citizens without a warrant, as outlined by *New York Times* journalists James Risen and Eric Lichtblau in 2005. James P. Pfiffner, allowing for the shock and panic that ensued immediately after 9/11, argues that:

> …in the months immediately after 9/11, the Bush administration had legitimate fears that there might be another attack, and the president felt he had to do everything he could to protect the nation. Thus, extra-constitutional actions at that time were understandable. But after several years, the need to continue to ignore the law regarding wiretaps disappeared (there was time to obtain warrants or amend the law). Holding detainees indefinitely without charge became less tenable, especially since there was no hope for any quick end to the war on terror. As the years passed, the need to use torture in order to discover a 'ticking time bomb' was attenuated, particularly in Iraq, which had no connection to the 9/11 atrocities" (Pfiffner 2009: 5).

# 8.  "Something New Entirely"[1]? – Alternative approaches to detection in *The Wire* and *Dexter*

A problem in categorizing methods of detection into the two categories 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' is that they can easily be understood as a rather limited and limiting binary opposition. This last chapter deals with ways detective dramas have aimed to deconstruct such a binary, acknowledging the different approaches to detection as well as their distinct literary and televisual histories. In the discussion of the deconstruction of the 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' binary, the major question that emerges is whether there can be an 'alternative' method of detection? An 'alternative' method of detection would formulate an ideology to access knowledge significantly different from the previous methods of detection. Such an 'alternative' method may also serve to facilitate ways to explore solutions to dilemmas described in previous chapters: *CSI*'s (and other recent dramas that employ 'rational-scientific' methods of detection) response against postmodernism's 'project of deconstruction' can be seen as a 'return' to loosely modern binaries and seemingly using 'postmodern' aesthetics to visually dramatize this. Meanwhile, *The Shield* (fX, 2002-2008) seems to reject such a 'return', but expresses scepticism towards a lack of 'moral guidelines'. 'Alternative' methods of detection may serve to formulate a different way to access knowledge and pose an opportunity to solve the dilemma both dramas seem to respond to. The existence of a rarely deconstructed binary of 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' method of detection partly has to do with a relatively strict separation of the Golden Age and hard-boiled literary traditions. Both these strands have been combined in various ways regarding character construction or to deconstruct gendered binaries, but rarely to question the binary between methods of detection. For example, Kojak (Telly Salavas) clearly adapts the language and mannerisms

of hard-boiled detectives, but ultimately uses 'rational-scientific' methods to solve crimes. In a similar vein, Columbo (Peter Falk) has much in common with the likes of Hercule Poirot or Miss Marple: like his predecessors, he is an outsider to the society he investigates, being a scruffy-looking detective with strong Brooklyn accent (suggesting a blue-collar background), but unlike them, he ultimately follows his initial instinct or 'hunch' in finding a murderer (despite looking for proof that confirms his 'gut feeling'). Often, the different methods of detection are pitted against each other, as, for example, in the crossover episode between *Magnum, P.I.* (CBS, 1980-1988) and *Murder, She Wrote* (CBS, 1984-1996) described in the introduction of Chapter 7 or in *The X Files* (Fox, 1993-2002) or *Bones* (Fox, 2005- ). Both series feature one 'rational-scientific' detective working with an 'irrational-subjective' detective and at least in the latter series, the tension that arises from such a juxtaposition works to fuel the 'battle of the sexes'-comedy features of the series. While the former one, due to its generic hybridity (detective genre, fantasy and horror) and thematic emphasis on supernatural activity, establishes a clear 'winner', with Mulder (David Duchovny) convincing Scully (Gillian Anderson) of his methods and the world view attached to them, *Bones* seems to suggest that the child the two main characters have together may function as a 'union' of the methods they represent (see Feise 2005: 110-118 and 149-168).[2] Yet, with most characters being scientists working in a high-tech-lab, the 'rational-scientific' method proves more successful. *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990-1991) employed 'irrational-subjective' methods and appears to consciously parody 'rational-scientific' methods as not sufficient to create 'order'.

*Homicide: Life on the Street* (NBC, 1993-1999) may be an example that comes closest to developing an alternative to a binary of 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective': set in a homicide department, it avoids having to accommodate different forms of policing as *Hill Street Blues* (NBC, 1981-1987) or *The Shield* do (with beat cops and homicide

detectives in the same station). *Homicide* features a number of 'rational-scientific' methods and 'irrational-subjective' methods from the questioning of witnesses and police procedure to violence and even communication with the spirit world (in "A Ghost of a Chance" 01/02, Detective Seargent Kay Howard [Melissa Leo] claims to have spoken to the ghost of a murder victim). Often, characters combine both methods. Most of the time, the aesthetics suggest a chaotic world with rapid and often chaotic editing, for example, between shots with different camera distances, but the same framing, and often unmotivated cuts during highly emotional speeches, heightening their erratic manner.[3] *Homicide* possibly offers the most complex example (until recently) of pitting the 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection against each other, but still seems unable to truly dissolve the binary: often, the different methods seem pitted against each other with one proving to be more useful at times. This is mainly due to the fact that the detectives always work in pairs, and usually conflicts arise between two partners on whether to solve a case 'rational-scientifically' or 'irrational-subjectively', thus one method 'wins' over another.

In contrast to this, this chapter explores ways in which an 'alternative' method of detection can be formulated and the binary between 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection deconstructed. The case studies used to analyse this are *The Wire* (HBO, 2002-2008) and *Dexter* (Showtime, 2006- ), both products of a post-9/11 political environment and an industrial landscape that privileges complex narrative structure and moral ambiguity. It is argued here that *The Wire* attempts to deconstruct the binary by offering a narrative that involves a complex discourse that cannot be entirely grasped either through 'rational-scientific' or through 'irrational-subjective' methods. Meanwhile, *Dexter* shows how the binary of 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' (along with other binaries) seemingly collapse into one. Arguably, both highlight how categories of methods

of detection are insufficient and an 'alternative' method of detection needs to be articulated.

The case study of *The Shield* already discussed the 'Quality TV' landscape of the early 2000s that frames both dramas discussed in this chapter and allows for new ways to explore methods of detection in detective dramas. From a purely economic perspective, *Oz* (HBO, 1997-2003), *The Sopranos* (HBO, 1999-2007) and *Sex and the City* (HBO, 1998-2004) marked a point when premium cable channel HBO found a way to market its original programming to small 'quality demographics': through innovative and complex narrative structures, creative freedom given to its 'auteurs', and making use of the freedom its premium cable status allows in light of the fact that it is not being censored by the FCC for showing nudity, explicit violence, offensive language or 'adult' themes. Ivo Ritzer (2011: 54-89) argues that the breaking of taboos has become a key strategy through which 'Quality TV' drama sets itself apart from 'non-Quality TV' (whatever that may be). HBO's economic success with this strategy encouraged other premium and basic cable channels as well as Network channels to be 'bolder' in their programming and led to much experimentation with narrative (such as *Lost* [ABC, 2004-2010] or *Heroes* [NBC, 2006-2010]) as well as content (for example, in terms of sex, gender and sexuality in *The L Word* [Showtime, 2004-2009], *Queer as Folk* [Showtime, 2000-2005] or *Nip/Tuck* [FX, 2003-2010], or violence as in *24* [Fox, 2001-2010] or *The Sopranos*). Both *The Wire* and *Dexter* with its themes of moral ambiguity can be seen as expressions of this competition to attract audiences through 'quality programming'. This chapter, then, aims to explore how these programmes deconstruct the existing binary between 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection and if they manage to formulate 'alternatives' or whether they 'merely' deconstruct without offering new ways to think about 'truth-finding'.

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**8.1.    *The Wire* (HBO, 2002-2008)**

This case study explores the way *The Wire* attempts to resolve tensions between the modern and postmodern concepts of 'truth-finding' explored in the previous texts. As will emerge, its complex narrative structure and broad narrative scope serve to deconstruct previous notions of binaries between 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection, but it remains to be seen if it actually manages to create an 'alternative' method of detection, 'new' ways to think about 'truth-finding' or a way out of the social dilemmas it describes.

Parts of the tensions between modernity and postmodernity already become obvious in the way the series is talked about as 'high art': *Vice* magazine journalist Jesse Pearson, in hyperbole, is one of the many critics who, along with series creator David Simon himself, draws a comparison to "the grand novels of the late 19th century, when novels actually, regularly, had scope" (2010).[4] As Ted Nannicelli points out, Simon himself, as well as cast and crew seem to make much of the supposed link between the 'high art' of literature with Simon invoking parallels to Greek tragedy (Hornby 2007) or *Moby Dick* (Melville, 1851) in the Season 3 bonus material:[5] an insistence on the series' links with 'high culture' that sets it apart from, what Simon calls, "horseshit police procedurals" (Hornby 2007) could limit any critical analysis regarding the explicitly televisual aspects of *The Wire*'s narrative or its links with a genre that has a history of social realism, innovative narrative and political themes. A danger in emphasizing the 'high culture' aspects too much would neglect how *The Wire* fits comfortably into a broader genre discourse:

> The new logic of which Simon speaks is not necessarily a challenge to the
> 'police drama' as a category, but to the network logic that shapes the forum
> in particular ways, under historically specific conditions […]. The new
> logic allows for a more expansive, comprehensive, and challenging type of
> storytelling, but it does not challenge the baseline of what police dramas
> are about (Nichols-Pethick 2012: 154).

While supposed links to 'high art' or 'low art' do not necessarily influence methods of detection (but point to modern binaries in these extra-textual discourses), in the case of *The Wire*, the narrative structures arguably inform ways to deconstruct binaries and possibly formulate 'alternative' methods of detection. Thus, it is important to explore how the series fits into generic discourses and how its narrative is structured in order to analyse how it views methods of detection.

One thing several critics point to is a perceived 'realism' of the series.[6] While the exploration of 'realism' and its function within the genre cannot be explored in detail here, it is important to re-iterate that the concept often works to invoke a pluralistic, fragmented, disordered and somewhat un-orderable world. *The Wire* develops this depiction of a postmodern society further by, other than *Hill Street Blues*, not only showing a fragmented society (by depicting characters from various social backgrounds in different social contexts), but by formulating a specific political agenda that easily reaches beyond the borders of Baltimore. It does so through a 'narrative web' (see below) that repeats and applies similar arguments to seemingly disparate branches of society, by constructing an underlying 'order' (the same political argument) while avoiding modern binary structures. Thus, the series subverts ideas critics like Baudrillard developed that the proliferation of meaning renders clear political statements impossible (Baudrillard 2000: 41-42). The supposed 'realism' of *The Wire* not only invokes notions of 'irrational-subjective' detection by pointing to the chaos of postmodern society, but by offering one 'ordering' force of political statement and focussing on institutionalised procedures (in other words, 'rational-scientific' detection) it seems to be looking for ways outside this binary to access 'truth'.

*The Wire* manages to deconstruct binaries within the discourses surrounding methods of detection through an innovative narrative structure. Brian G. Rose describes its narrative structure as follows:

> Instead of the individual episode, the basic structural unit would be the series as a whole, permitting vast twelve- or thirteen-part story arcs (with some plot strands buried for weeks at a time), kaleidoscopic character groupings (with a shifting cast of more than thirty players), and a quirky belief that viewers needed to work hard to keep up and make thematic connections that were rarely italicized or foregrounded (Rose 2008: 83).

This season arc structure is not a new feature with soaps employing it for a number of years, for example, with *Dallas* (CBS, 1978-1991) having an entire season that turns out to be a dream, but also in an increasingly refined version from *Buffy, The Vampire Slayer* (CBS, 1997-2003) to *Mad Men* (AMC, 2007- ). The innovative structure of *The Wire* could very well be summarised under what Jason Mittell terms 'narrative complexity':

> At its most basic level, narrative complexity is a redefinition of episodic forms under the influence of serial narration – not necessarily a complete merger of episodic and serial forms, but a shifting balance. Rejecting the need for plot closure within every episode that typifies conventional episodic form, narrative complexity foregrounds ongoing stories across a range of genres. Additionally, narrative complexity moves serial form outside of generic assumptions tied to soap operas – many (although certainly not all) complex programs tell stories serially while rejecting or downplaying the melodramatic style and primary focus on relationships over plots of soap operas, which also distances contemporary programs from the cultural connotations of the denigrated soap genre. While certainly soap opera narration can be quite complex […] narratively complex programming typically foregrounds plot developments far more centrally than soaps, allowing relationship and character drama to emerge from plot development in an emphasis reversed from soap opera (Mittell 2006: 32).

Mittell argues that this is different from flexi-narrative (as defined and explored in Chapter 7), in the way flexi-narrative still offers some narrative closure, with soap and procedural narratives alongside each other. Whereas, more contemporary examples since the early 1990s offer rich diegetic universes, little narrative closure and rely heavily on what he terms 'narrative special effects', meaning moments in the narrative that "push the operational aesthetic to the foreground, calling attention to the constructed nature of the

narration and asking us to marvel at how the writers pulled it off" (ibid: 35). One example of 'narrative special effects' in *The Wire* is a scene from "The Pager" (01/05), in which McNulty (Dominic West) and Bunk Mooreland (Wendell Pierce) investigate a crime scene and the whole dialogue for almost four minutes consists of the two words "Fuck" and "Motherfucker" spoken in a variety of intonations.[7] This effect is repeated with McNulty's 'catchphrase' "What the fuck did I do?" which takes on a variety of meanings depending on context and vocal inflections.[8] Mittell terms this development 'narrative complexity' and, of course, the lines between it and flexi-narrative are fluid, just as flexi-narrative's distinction from soaps is often not very precise (as laid out in the case study on *Hill Street Blues*).[9] Added to this, 'narrative complexity' as a terminology appears very unspecific, not necessarily encompassing and describing the way various narrative threads are brought together in a series like *The Wire*. Thus, drawing on Steven Johnson's idea of 'multithreading' (2005: 65-72), this thesis suggests a terminology that clearly sets the narrative structure (and that of other, mostly American, TV series broadcast around the first decade of the 21st century) apart from other forms of narrative television that can easily be described as complex, such as soap-narrative or flexi-narrative. 'Multithreading' simply describes the way various storylines exist and social networks within the diegesis are constructed alongside each other to form a 'whole' narrative. This thesis suggests the term 'narrative web' to describe this 'whole' narrative that is created through a variety of narrative 'threads'. Where in soap structures like *Hill Street Blues*, 'multithreading' serves to describe the way the:

> …narrative weaves together a collection of distinct strands – sometimes as many as ten, though at least half of the threads involve only a few quick scenes scattered through the episode. […] And the episode has fuzzy borders: picking up one or two threads from previous episodes at the outset, and leaving one or two threads open at the end (Johnson 2005: 67).

As Johnson himself argues in relation to the narrative structure of *The Sopranos*, (at least some) television drama has become increasingly complex since the early 1980s:

> The show doesn't offer a clear distinction between dominant and minor plots; each storyline carries its weight in the mix. The episode also displays a chordal mode of storytelling entirely absent from *Hill Street*: a single scene in *The Sopranos* will often connect to three different threads at the same time, layering one plot atop another. And every single thread in this *Sopranos* episode ["The Legend of Tennessee Moltisanti", 01/08] builds on events from previous episodes, and continues on from the rest of the season and beyond. Almost every sequence in the show connects to information that exists outside the frame of the current episode (ibid: 69-70).

*The Wire* takes this even further: in the 'narrative web' of *The Sopranos*, there is one clearly recognisable 'centre' or 'central character', Tony Soprano (James Gandolfini). As already suggested in the opening credits (Johansson 2006: 31-36), viewers are invited to follow Tony through the narrative and few storylines remain without relation to this 'centre' of the mob family (or the biological family). While it could be argued that in *The Wire*, it is McNulty who leads viewers into the diegesis, he is not a 'centre' to the narrative in the way Tony is to *The Sopranos*. Rather, the 'narrative web' remains almost without centre, the mostly unrelated (or only through common themes) narrative threads and characters remain that way, or only intersect for brief moments.

*The Wire* breaks many genre conventions and several storylines are not rooted in the detective genre at all, with some planted in the gangster genre, and others reflecting the traditions of social realist cinema rather than clearly identifiable television genres. Settings range from City Hall to a number of police stations across the city, to schools, to 'Hamsterdam' – the area Colvin (Robert Wisdom) designates where drug laws are not enforced in Season 3 – to run-down housing projects to the Baltimore harbour to a newsroom. The 'narrative web' of *The Wire* is held together by the broad themes drug trade and institutional power (Nannicelli 2009: 193).[10] Some characters never meet and their relationships with each other are mostly determined by the institutional hierarchies of power they are all subjected to. Nannicelli also points out that the series constantly refers

to narrative threads from past episodes and seasons and offers little 'recaps' of what happened before, thus asking audiences to actively track all narrative threads and remember themselves why, for example, Namond's (Julito McCullum) father Wee-Bey (Hassan Johnson) is in prison in Season 4. The 'narrative web' structure seems intrinsically linked with the TV III era and an increase of storytelling platforms and could even be read as a way to combine multi-platform narratives (as, for example, done through a combination of computer games, graphic novels, TV series, online forums, magazines, novels, films, fan fiction and so on under the same franchise) i.e. narratives that usually run parallel to each other, but possibly have a significant impact on readings of the 'whole' text with narrative threads formed in a variety of media (Allen 2007c: 57-58), into one narrative of a TV series.[11]

This complex narrative structure inevitably influences the way methods of detection are constructed: the 'narrative web' serves to blur lines between various social environments by linking them through common themes. But it also seems to blur lines between 'rational-scientific' surveillance (see Chapter 4) and McNulty's 'irrational-subjective' obsession with catching Avon Barksdale (Wood Harris) and Stringer Bell (Idris Elba). This innovative structure makes it possible to evaluate methods of detection differently: instead of showing one side of the story over the short span of one episode and, as done, for example, in *Columbo* (NBC, 1971-1990), show the complete success of the detective at the end of the episode when the murderer is revealed, *The Wire* often shows what the detectives do not know, and sometimes what they will never find out. Furthermore, the broad scope of the 'narrative web' makes it impossible to draw binaries: not just between police and criminals, but also between methods of detection, making 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' sometimes flow into one and making the distance and the closeness represented by them seem like categories that are not opposed to each other. In

this way, the world depicted through the 'narrative web' is perhaps too complex to allow for the creation of any binaries including that between 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection.

Visually, the 'narrative web' is translated by showing a large number of significantly different environments that imply a specific location on a social scale. For example, CI and drug addict Bubbles (André Royo) and the boys who deal drugs are mostly shown outside on streets lined with run-down, sometimes half demolished buildings (see Fig. 3). If they are inside, it is in poorly furnished squats or, in the case of the children in Season 4, a run-down school building. The Homicide department seems to be located on a large office floor with cubicles. The Major Crimes Unit, leading investigations into drug organizations, mostly using wiretaps and other means of surveillance, is based in a basement with small windows, dark brick walls and cheap run-down furniture (see Fig. 2). In the second season, the operation is moved to a light space with large windows, and though the furniture seems still relatively inexpensive with plastic tops, the space is soon filled with images of the criminals on a cork wall and computers and other technical equipment necessary for surveillance. Possibly, in order to set itself apart from police procedurals like the *CSI* franchise, the visual emphasis is rarely on the technology, except shots that visually mark wiretapped phone calls which show the number of the phones that are called. Some of the technology used appears to be relatively high-tech, but visually, mostly PCs without any extraordinary designs are shown (unlike many recent TV shows that explicitly feature Apple products with distinctive designs such as *Bones* [Fox, 2005- ]). As Jens Schröter points out in his analysis of the Season 1 opening credits, the series emphasises the linkage between human actors and technology, the power to decode lies with the policemen and women, but is facilitated through technology (Schröter 2012: 13-31).[12] In opposition, the various employees of city hall are mostly shown inside large rooms furnished with heavy

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wooden antique furniture, suggesting affluence. It is not necessarily distinctive colour schemes that set the different social environments apart, but mostly the spaces in which they are set. Yet, the aesthetics seem heavily stylized, for example, the low rises in Season 1, with a bright orange couch in the middle of a piece of green in the courtyard (see Fig. 4). Unlike *The Shield*, *The Wire* is shot on high quality film stock, often with highly stylized compositions (see Fig. 1), visually supporting 'social realism' through a *mise-en-scène* that suggests poverty or shortness of funds to renovate public buildings, like patchy paint on walls, broken furniture, mattresses on floors, or outside settings that feature run-down houses, badly maintained patches of green or streets littered with drug vials and needles. The visual style is also dominated by relatively paced editing and a large number of long and medium shots that allow viewers to observe the *mise-en-scène* in detail.



Fig 1: Extremely stylized imagery, in this case through the use of different kinds of mirrors



Fig. 2: The office of the Major Crimes Unit in Season 1



Fig. 3: Run-down urban environments, often outside spaces



Fig. 4: The bright orange couch in the low rises

The drama's 'realism' serves to make its political statement powerful, but many 'realist' aspects also serve to purport notions of a postmodern sense of disorientation: where in *Twin Peaks*, this is generally caused through 'non-realist' aesthetics, *The Wire* manages to achieve this not only through its complex narrative structure, but also through language. Most characters speak in a dialect that seems to be distinctive for Baltimore, and is hard to understand for those unacquainted with it and seems to make the text hard to access for many viewers. It thus serves to establish a sense of 'realism' and disorientation at the same time. This disorientation serves to inform methods of detection as undefinable, unstable and not graspable through a binary of 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective'.

To explain further how this binary is deconstructed, the methods of detection are now analysed in detail: as explored in Chapter 7, complex and innovative narrative structures in the detective genre are often linked with 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection. Yet, in terms of methods of detection, *The Wire* is relatively close to genre predecessors employing 'rational-scientific' detection, especially *Dragnet* (NBC, 1951-1959): the earlier series emphasised and explained police procedure explicitly through Friday's (Jack Webb) voiceover narrative, which guides viewers through the legal requirements of every step of the investigation (as in "The Big Crime," 04/03: "the dress was taken down to Lee Jones of the crime lab for examination, then it was shown to the father of the missing children") and even shows the sentencing in court at the end of each episode. While a series like *CSI* (CBS, 2000- ) focuses on the scientific work involved in a case, such as analysing evidence or the dead body, and *Dragnet* uses a voiceover to explain legal procedure, *The Wire* makes legal procedure a crucial part of the dramatic action, with the characters filling out piles of paperwork and swearing affidavits to be allowed to monitor criminals' beepers, phone calls or computers. In fact, one of the series' main themes is the framing, and often limitation, of detection within an institutional context.[13] Considering that the series offers

an exploration of a number of public institutions and their failure to provide a strategy to fight the 'war against drugs' or provide safety and social security for those harmed by drugs – physically as well as socially – the methods of how police investigate crime remain relatively stable and 'rational-scientific': the way information is gathered is largely through surveillance technology (as the title of the series already suggests) as common to 'rational-scientific' methods of detection since Holmes, CIs, interviewing witnesses, the investigation of crime scenes or following the 'paper trail', i.e. investigations into where the Barksdale organization's money is invested (corrupt politicians, real estate, legitimate businesses). However, the methods become increasingly 'irrational-subjective' as the series goes on, detectives' work is hindered by politics and institutional structures, and the policemen and women become increasingly frustrated that their work does not lead to the desired results. This leads to Hauk's (Dominick Lombardozzi) and Carver's (Seth Gilliam) violence towards suspects and, in Season 3, even reliance on violence and oppression (for example in 03/03 "Dead Soldiers") or, eventually, McNulty's 'invention' of a serial killer in order to channel finances towards his own investigation in Season 5. Of course, this progression is made possible by a narrative structure that allows for a development of characters as well as a long-term exploration of the investigation of what are essentially two cases spread over five seasons and 60 episodes, one investigation into Barksdale's organization and one into Marlo Stanfield (Jamie Hector), who takes over Barksdale's territory after Bell's death and Barksdale's arrest. The complex narrative also allows for the investigative storylines to become marginalized, as, for example in Season 4, when other narrative threads become more relevant and the familiar police characters are spread out over a number of departments, investigating crimes only tentatively linked to the gangs or doing non-investigative police work (like foot patrol). Essentially, the series employs a mix of 'irrational-subjective' and 'rational-scientific' methods of detection: the series seems to constantly negotiate relative merits of the 'closeness' (McNulty's obsessive

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behaviour, coincidence, violence, personal relationships between policemen and women and minor and major criminals or a search for 'heroism' as McMillan puts it [2009: 54-57]) and 'distance' (through police and legal procedure or the physical distance required by surveillance, or even 'standardized' interrogation techniques) the methods of detection require.

*The Wire* may not offer a voiceover like *Dragnet* to explain the legal requirements of police procedure, but shows the individual steps of legal procedure. As the team discusses and explains in "Old Cases" (01/04):

> KIMA [Sonja Sohn]: we could try to clone a couple of pagers and see where that takes us.
> CARVER: Clone what?
> McNULTY: Their pagers. They get beeped, we get beeped. We see who's calling from what number.
> HAUK: If these guys are all that why are they still using pagers? Why not un-ass a few dollars for cell phones?
> LESTER [Clarke Peters]: It's a discipline. You can't bug a pager.
> DANIELS [John Cypher]: But you can't make a call with a pager, either.
> LESTER: You're gonna want a pen-register on all the pay phones in the low-rises (*holds up a picture of D'Angelo [Lawrence Gilliard Jr.] on a pay phone in the low-rises).* And any other phones that link to the pagers.
> DANIELS: What would it take to do the pagers?
> McNULTY: A wiretap affidavit. I think we got enough PC [probable cause] from the hand-to-hands and surveillance. We got most of the exhaustion.
> HAUK: I'm exhausted just listening to this shit.
> LESTER: Good. Exhaustion is a legal requirement for using electronic intercepts. We got to prove nothing else works.
> McNULTY: See, we did the raids, we made the arrests, but nobody flipped. We don't have an informant who takes us anywhere above the street. That's pretty much exhaustion.
> KIMA: All we got left to do now is to follow one of these mopes and to prove to ourselves that we can't do it.
> McNULTY: See, we try to show a judge we can't make the case by following these guys – and we can't, how can we keep on any of these guys when they go into up in those towers?
> KIMA: But you gotta show you tried.

In the next episode, "The Pager" state attorney Rhonda Pearlman (Deidre Lovejoy) explains about the affidavit: "it's the foundation of your case, detective, you lay it in right,

you can build on it. You lay it in wrong, everything on top falls". Kima and McNulty have to swear to Judge Phelan (Peter Gerety) that they have given accurate information. Thus, the series explicitly shows legal procedure where *Dragnet* offers similar information through voiceover.

Generally, the series seems eager to communicate how to build a large-scale case and conduct a long-term investigation: it shows detectives sitting in front of computers monitoring the numbers dialled from wiretapped phones, listening in on conversations, hiding on rooftops to take pictures of those using tapped payphones, or trying to find complicated ways to otherwise observe the actions and understand the structures of criminal organizations as well as the way criminals communicate with each other. They also visit offices to follow a 'paper trail' specifically to monitor where the organization's money is invested to be laundered. This is also the point where *The Wire*'s narrative structure takes full advantage of the possibilities offered by season-length story arcs: throughout its five seasons, the series explores the different aspects that figure into long-term investigations, including limits set by the institutional context, but also the detailed research and long hours of surveillance the various characters invest into building a case. In this regard, team work is also highlighted since every character seems to offer different skills that help investigate different aspects of the case. As such, the team offers a variety of 'rational-scientific' as well as 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection. In this regard, team work functions in a significantly different way from *CSI*: where in *The Wire*, the skills of the individual are what matters most to the collective effort (and success), in *CSI*, it is the individual's ability to follow the procedures as set by the institution and characters seem interchangeable.

Much of the information gathered through surveillance is carefully encoded by criminals and decoded by the policemen and women. The code can be a kind of language used to describe criminal activity or a way to encode phone numbers to mislead possible listeners (even though the criminals seem to go to extraordinary lengths to come up with ways to communicate that cannot be easily traced or wiretapped). While viewers are not necessarily privy to how messages are encoded (since the code is not explained in narrative threads dealing with criminals), as the detectives decode information, they tend to explain the messages and their own methods to other characters and audiences alike. The way this is done is reminiscent of a manner similar to the 'whodunit' detectives unravelling the 'puzzle' of the crime. The text even refers to it as a puzzle, as Pryzbelewski (Jim True-Frost) points out in "The Pager" (01/05): "I like word search puzzles, you know, where you have to find the hidden words. So I thought: I could do the same thing with the numbers", which leads him to decode the number-based code in Season 1. This process of encoding and de-coding is akin to other examples of 'rational-scientific' detection where the analysis of evidence offers signs that are difficult to decode and often need extensive scientific analysis before their meaning can be established. The explanations of thought processes and legal procedure may also be related to *CSI*'s 'show-and-tell' mentality (see Chapter 5). The meaning of the various signs in the language systems used to cover up criminal activity is just as stable and it seems that once the detectives decode and understand these systems, they quickly become just as versed in understanding them as the criminals are: "The series basks in the meaningful details that hardworking detectives are able to glean from tidy strands of evidence, such as turn of phrase or numbers" (Nichols-Pethick 2012: 177).

Despite these similarities, other than the series analysed in Chapter 5, 'rational-scientific' detection in *The Wire* does not appear to create and rely on binary structures: the series'

complexity often refuses to definitely posit any side of this binary as positive or negative. While viewers will be more familiar with some characters than others, most characters, and the ways their actions are determined by institutional context, are depicted in a complex manner that makes any divide into 'good' and 'evil', or 'law-abiding' and 'criminal' impossible. As Kent Jones points out: "On *The Wire* there really is no such thing as 'them'. There is only us." (2008). Even though the method of detection is 'rational-scientific', a method that creates and often relies on binary structures, *The Wire* manages to find a way out of this need through a complex narrative structure. In this way, the method of detection appears to offer little insight into the ideology of the series, or rather, seems to be part of a much bigger argument that is represented by the 'whole' of the 'narrative web'. Quite possibly, this is related to the fact that the series' in-depth critique of institutions already willingly exposes its own ideology as being highly critical of 'the system' and deconstructing any myth of an 'American dream' that promises equal opportunity for all through free market capitalism. Brian G. Rose calls it: "a potent and potentially combustible mix of urban sociology, fiercely argued politics, and, believe it or not, macroeconomics" (Rose 2008: 82). By explicitly formulating its ideology and politics in almost every scene (by showing oppression through 'the system' or frustration with it), the text may relieve the series from creating any binaries, which seems also tied up with HBO's marketing strategy of aiming for small 'quality demographics'. Yet, the audience of the series may even be slightly different than that of most other HBO dramas, since *The Wire* not only asks its audiences to follow a narrative structure arguably more complex than that of *Sex and the City* or *The Sopranos*, but also leaves relatively little room for a variety of reading positions when it comes to its politics.[14] While it is surprising that such a complex text offers so little 'openness', most storylines are connected by the explicitly political ideas that institutions fail to provide for American citizens, especially its

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'weakest' on a number of levels.[15] The thread that holds the 'narrative web' together *is* arguably a political statement.

The most important aspect of 'rational-scientific' detection in *The Wire* is surveillance, which is divided into the monitoring of communication technology like mobile phones, pay phones or beepers and watching and photographing suspects from hidden locations, such as cars, roof tops, vacant buildings, boats, etc. However, due to the 'narrative web' structure, the viewer mostly knows more about the goings on inside Barksdale's gang than the police do. Thus, the methods of detection serve to show *how* the information on Barksdale is gathered rather than to guide the audience through an investigation where they have the same information as the detectives. The gap in the information given to audiences and investigators becomes particularly obvious in "Mission Accomplished" (03/12) after Stringer Bell's death, when McNulty enters his antagonist's apartment and, looking at Bell's copy of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), asks "who the fuck was I chasing?".[16] Even though McNulty follows Bell to his economics class in "Lessons" (01/08) and "Straight and True" (03/05), his utterance makes clear how little he actually knows in comparison to an audience that has long been privy to Bell's application of knowledge from his business class to drug trade. McNulty has no such insights into Bell's and Barksdale's business, him and his colleagues only learn fragments of information and, since neither Bell nor Barksdale use phones that can be wiretapped, they know significantly less about the leaders of the gang than about any of the other gang members.

Thus, even though surveillance is the predominant mode of investigation, it has clear limitations in how much information can actually be gathered through it. However, these limitations are predicated on the criminals constantly acting as if they were under surveillance, even though, most of the time, they do not know if they are being investigated

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or not. This can be read as a parallel to Foucault's Panopticon, since, much like in the Panopticon, criminals are 'disciplined' because they *could* be watched, not because they know that their behaviour *is* being watched (Foucault 1995: 200-228). Yet, the result of this disciplinary gaze is not that criminal activity is given up (which is the original desired result), but rather that criminals circumvent this gaze by adjusting their channels of communication, for example, meeting in open, empty spaces where no microphones can be hidden. As mentioned above, Lester Freamon even invokes the term 'discipline' when discussing how the criminals avoid police surveillance, the reliance on pagers and pay phones in Season 1 or sending someone to buy disposable mobile phones from a number of stores across the state in Season 3. Thus, *The Wire* subverts ideas of the disciplinary gaze by suggesting that the 'discipline' achieved is a flexible, sophisticated way to subvert Foucault's meaning of 'discipline' (i.e. law-abiding) rather than forcing people into submission and obedience to laws and social norms. Foucault describes Jeremy Bentham's ideas for the Panopticon and he identifies two principles at work:

> Bentham laid down the principle that power should be visible and unverifiable. Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied on. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so (Foucault 1995: 201).

Of course, *The Wire* deals with criminals under investigation, and while imprisonment may be the ultimate goal (and the fatalism of the series regarding public institutions does not necessarily suggest that, even if it is the goal, it is a solution to problems of drug trade or organized crime), none of those under surveillance are inmates. Furthermore, while the bearer of the disciplinary gaze, the police, is mostly unverifiable, the detectives strive for invisibility rather than visibility. Where in the Panopticon, the disciplinary gaze cannot be subverted, in the diegesis of *The Wire*, institutional power has to be invisible because, if it is visible, it is too easily subverted. Thus, the series' emphasis on surveillance as a method

of detection in some ways functions as an inversion, or at least a complication, of the disciplinary gaze as outlined in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977 [1995]): institutional power remains invisible, not visible, though, of course, the institution itself is known and visually represented (for example, through police cars or a court building); it has to remain unverifiable, but the nature of the omnipresent disciplinary gaze means that surveillance is always expected and subverted as a preventative measure. Thus, binaries between visibility and invisibility and unverifiability and verifiability are ruptured, and may even collapse completely.

However, the concept of power formulated by Foucault is never just one of oppression or, as Althusser would put it, the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA, Althusser 1994: 92), but also involves an active, thinking and resisting subject.[17] Foucault describes power as power relations:

> …when one speaks *of power,* people immediately think of a political structure, a government, a dominant social class, the master and the slave, and so on. I am not thinking of this at all when I speak of *relations of power*. I mean that in human relationships, whether they involve verbal communication […], or amorous, institutional, or economic relationships, power is always present: I mean a relationship in which one person tries to control the conduct of the other. So I am speaking of relations that exist at different levels, in different forms; these power relations are mobile, they can be modified, they are not fixed once and for all. […] *These power relations are thus mobile, reversible, and unstable* (Foucault 1997: 291-292, my italics).[18]

This may not serve to describe all the varying ways power relations are structured throughout the series, but it serves well to understand the relationship between the criminals and the police. This power battle is sometimes even alluded to in strangely composed conversations between police and criminals, when it is often simply described as 'the game' where battle lines are clearly drawn and personal feelings are dispelled. But while (often temporary) defeats are accepted without emotion (such as Avon Barksdale's arrest in "Sentencing", 01/13), 'the game' is certainly played with 'rational-scientific' as

well as 'irrational-subjective' methods, though 'irrational-subjective' methods are often tied up with instances of resistance against the police as a political institution (and institutional power appears to be, in direct defiance of Foucault, immobile, irreversible and stable, though this appears to be a major point of criticism). Thus, the relationship between those investigating and those investigated seems to be a power relation negotiated as any human relation, while institutions, though populated by individual subjects appear 'inhuman' (as the Greek Gods Simon often invokes as a point of comparison).

In a Foucauldian sense, then, *The Wire* offers a complex deconstruction of power relations through surveillance as a method of detection. Interestingly, the 'rational-scientific' method of detection creates a resisting subject that necessitates either 'irrational-subjective' or 'alternative' methods of detection. By focussing partly on the subversion of surveillance, the series could make an argument for the necessity to re-think methods of detection. Yet, paradoxically, the usefulness of surveillance as method of detection appears to be something the text of *The Wire* never questions, despite the difficulties involved in watching suspects who routinely avoid surveillance technology. This is surprising since *The Wire* critiques institutional structures and limitations, the construction of power, laws, especially regarding the 'war against drugs', and the American legal and punitive system in general. Of course, it is a complex text, but, as Ryan Brooks argues:

> The normalizing function of the narrative of *The Wire* is to produce what its characters call, alternatively, 'good' or 'real' or 'natural police'. […] Even though *The Wire* opposes knowledge to power, it simultaneously creates a world in which knowledge is equated with power. Prosecutorial success demands clear recordings, legally obtained evidence, and hours of surveillance work. The content of this good policing comes into focus when we consider that knowledge-power is not restricted to characters in positions of institutional authority. The rank-and-file detectives most effective at disciplining the drug gang are those who can analyze and articulate – in convincing narratives and bulletin boards of photographic evidence [gathered through surveillance] – the mechanics by which the gang disciplines itself and the territory it controls. This ability to analyze

goes hand in hand with the ability to manipulate, reversing the flows of power (Brooks 2009: 65).

In other words, 'good/real/natural police' are those policemen and women willing and patient enough to discipline through surveillance, but also to analyse the information gathered, which is then used by prosecutors to discipline and convict criminals. Due to the way the narrative naturalises this as 'good' police work, surveillance as method of detection remains unquestioned. As Brooks goes on to argue:

> What makes this mutually reinforcing chain of power and knowledge possible is constant surveillance, the ability of the police to monitor zones of disorder without being monitored themselves. What makes this surveillance possible, in turn, is a flexible attitude toward crime, the patience to wait until the root cause of the crime is exposed before acting to correct it. This attitude is squarely at odds with the political pressures presented in the show […], leading to recurring conflicts that demonstrate the authority of the police is itself subject to disciplinary control (ibid: 65-66).

Thus, the surveillance in *The Wire* is constructed as a long-term project, seeking to accumulate as much knowledge (which in Foucauldian terminology equals power) as possible before charging anyone, but also as the only way to truly destroy criminal organizations. While the method of detection remains unquestioned by the text, the institutional powers that interfere with this project are repeatedly questioned and criticized for bowing to political pressures. Thus, the series formulates a critique of the institutional context of the methods of detection used rather than an 'alternative' means to access knowledge.

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, postmodern philosophy often describes a world where a political project becomes impossible due to the proliferation of meaning. If there is no 'dominant' ideology, but all signs have too many meanings, how can anything be politically subversive or oppositional? Terry Eagleton summarises such arguments as follows:

> In deconstructive theory, the view that interpretation consists in an abyssal spiral of ironies, each ironizing the other to infinity, is commonly coupled with political quietism or reformism. If political practice takes place only within a context of interpretation, and if that context is notoriously ambiguous and unstable, then action itself is likely to be problematic and unpredictable. This case is then used, implicitly or explicitly, to rule out the possibility of radical political programmes of an ambitious kind. For if the complex effects of such practices are impossible to calculate in advance, then the logic of such a radical programme of action is ultimately unmasterable, and may easily get out of hand (Eagleton 1991: 40-41).

Eagleton also argues that while global political action like abolishing world hunger or ending AIDS worldwide may appear naïve in the endless postmodern irony and cynicism, more small-scale political action, like after-school tutoring projects for children from families with little cultural capital, can be realized. Thus, this 'spiral of postmodern ironies' may constitute a proliferation of meaning, but in no way produces meaninglessness. *The Wire* undercuts any ideas that postmodern television (or postmodernity itself) is unable to produce political statements or propose radical projects. Where, overall, the series may not formulate a workable alternative to capitalism and the administrative system (as Žižek 2012 criticizes), it articulates ideas like 'Hamsterdam' (zones where drugs are legalized) or school projects that help socially and economically disadvantaged children with behavioural problems to adapt to 'mainstream' society in Season 4.[19] Possibly, the series is able to do this by focussing on a 'local' project in the easily definable space of Baltimore rather than the global implications of free market capitalism.[20] Thus, *The Wire* is able to describe a situation that – despite its complexity – can still be grasped (other than in the case of more globalized problems).

*The Wire*'s explicit political agenda comments on a number of national policies from the Bush government, such as the allocation of funds to fight drugs and terrorism or the No Child Left Behind act. In line with its focus on regional rather than national politics, *The Wire* shows the effects of policies on individuals, but refuses to go further and comment on

national and international politics of the Bush administration (apart from frequent hints at the consequences of the War on Terror for the Baltimore harbour or the FBI). By mostly staying away from broader contemporary national political debates, the series still seems to give a voice to a left which, at the time was in no way marginalized or voiceless, but nevertheless relatively powerless (or at least perceived itself as such, being governed by a Republican president).

*The Wire*, thus, innovates the representation of methods of detection as constructed and depicted in television mainly through the 'narrative web' structure, which offers a different way to describe 'rational-scientific' methods of detection by offering a complex view of an investigation that denies the creation of binaries. The 'narrative web' structure allows for a complex evaluation of 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection. The series' fatalism regarding institutions' ability to reform ultimately keeps it from formulating a fully thought-out 'alternative' method of detection, just like it is incapable of imagining alternatives for the whole institutional apparatus. Thus, the articulation of power relations between police and criminal becomes part of a critique of a current problem and a desire and necessity for 'alternative' methods of detection that opposes *CSI*'s and maybe even *The Shield*'s desire to go back to a more 'simplistic' 'world order', but seeking for something genuinely 'new' that can deal with the complexity represented in the 'narrative web'.

### 8.2.     *Dexter* (Showtime, 2006- )

*Dexter* is arguably much less straightforward in its ideological agenda than *The Wire*, but also appears to offer a sophisticated critique of 'rational-scientific' methods of detection. Though the series started in 2006, network channel CBS has been airing a censored version

of the series since 2008.[21] Thus, despite drawing in large audiences for Showtime, the series has reached many more viewers since 2008. As Stephanie Green points out:

> *Dexter* might never have been seen in the afterglow of network television if the American screenwriter's strike had not happened. The show was rushed through the final stages of post-production when the strike occurred and was aggressively marketed both in the United States and the United Kingdom. In early 2008, blog writer Ray Ellis commented that the networks used *Dexter* as an attempt to undermine the strike's impact. Edited for mainstream viewing, however, the newer, milder *Dexter* did not placate critical voices (Green 2011: 24).[22]

As this case study argues in more detail later on, *Dexter* (similar to *Twin Peaks*) is an almost a-political text: this is possibly why CBS settled on this text in the middle of a strike in which it saw itself (among others) accused of not valuing its creative talent enough while, at the same time, it increasingly relied on highlighting TV *auteurs* for the purposes of marketing. As will be explained in more detail, the ironic tone of the series makes it impossible to distinguish if a political (often conservative) argument is made or systemic problems highlighted to formulate a fundamental critique: like so many other aspects of *Dexter*, it is easily framed as undermining the strike effort by letting CBS show high-quality drama in spite of the fact that their writers refused to produce any work, and at a cheaper price since Showtime carried the original production costs; but at the same time, the supposed quality of *Dexter*'s writing (and its status of 'Quality TV') clearly highlights the need for creative talent and shows how justified the writer's demands for a percentage in the re-distribution of their products was. *Dexter* always seems to be (at least) two things at once in its relationship with discourses internal as well as external to the genre; most importantly, a series about a man who is both detective and serial killer in one person. This paradox inevitably influences methods of detection, in particular, due to the framing of serial killer Dexter as somehow part of the legal system, even if it is through his paradoxical position of law enforcer and criminal. As such, *Dexter* seems like a perfect

vehicle to deconstruct the binary between 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection.

The paradoxical combination of serial killer and law enforcer/detective in one character is not new. Jim Thompson's *The Killer Inside Me* (1952) is generally considered to be the first serial killer novel, meaning that it is told in the first person from the perspective of the killer: in this novel, it is the Deputy Sheriff of a small Texas town who beats two women to death (as is described in much gory detail) and shoots a man in a complicated money making scheme. Stephen Knight describes the novel as "…structurally, a private-eye story reversed, with a clever, resourceful, self-obsessed criminal acting like an ethically deranged Marlowe" (Knight 2004: 129). *Dexter* is similar to *The Killer Inside Me* in many ways, though while Thompson reversed the structure of the hard-boiled detective novel completely, the TV series seems to embrace the police procedural.[23]

*Dexter* is a generic hybrid between the detective genre and the serial killer genre, joining what unites both: the first-person voiceover narrative in audio-visual media is common to detective films, particularly film noirs, such as *The Maltese Falcon* (Huston, 1941), and TV series drawing partly on noir traditions, such as *Dragnet* (see Chapter 5). Yet, it is also common to those film noirs that depict criminals and lets them narrate the story, such as *Double Indemnity* (Wilder, 1944), *Sunset Boulevard* (Wilder, 1950) or *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (Garnett, 1946), thus, limiting the voiceover in no way to law-abiding citizens, but rather offering an inside view to central, morally ambiguous, characters. Alison Peirse places *Dexter* convincingly in a film noir tradition, stating that:

> Dexter Morgan is the archetypal noir protagonist: solitary, unstable, and dangerous, a city-dweller who solves crimes beyond the remit of the law. As such, parallels can be made between Dexter and the protagonists of hard-boiled fiction and film noir (Peirse 2010: 192).

Consequently, Dexter as serial killer, staking out his victims and bringing them to a brutal and violent death can be linked to an 'irrational-subjective' form of noir detection. Yet, as Peirse moves on to argue:

> While film noir partially descends from the hard-boiled detective novel, thereby having a certain influence on *Dexter*, it can be easily argued that the series also draws from the 'Golden Age' classic detective and/or mystery model […]. However, it can be argued that Dexter's mode of investigation mirrors traditional detective narratives, where the smallest of apparently innocuous clues can lead to the resolution of the case (ibid: 194).

Indeed, Peirse points to a key dichotomy of the TV series here: the combination of the hard-boiled and the Golden Age tradition, and the union of 'rational-scientific' detection and 'irrational-subjective' detection that is more thoroughly developed than in other versions before, since neither one emerges as particularly central to solving crimes, and they seem in no way distinct from each other.


Large parts of the series are set in a police department, thus drawing on the police procedural. Most characters in the ensemble cast are members of the police force, dedicated to catching criminals within an institutional context. The title character himself is also part of the force and part of a communal effort to achieve 'law and order'. His activity as serial killer functions as an extension of this effort and his foster father Harry seems to conceptualize it as such, even though the moral justification merely seems to provide a framework to accommodate Dexter's urge to kill (at least in the first few seasons).[24] The narrative itself is predominantly concerned with the investigation of crimes and criminals, whether they are caught by the police (to face conviction in court) or Dexter (and be murdered). It is argued here that as a case study for the deconstruction of binaries between 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection, *Dexter* has to be considered as a generic hybrid that successfully dissolves genre boundaries as well as combining various methods of detection in one complex character.

Despite the fact that the serial killer/detective dichotomy is not a 'new' invention, Dexter sets itself apart by abiding a code which makes him observe his victims, first, 'making sure' that victims are 'guilty', as Harry's code insists.[25] Dexter is neither 'just' detective nor 'just' criminal, he is a 'rational-scientific' detective who enjoys his work as blood spatter analyst and often provides his colleagues with useful insights into a killer's mind and a serial killer in need of some kind of release which he gets through ritualistic murder. Part of his ritual or *Modus Operandi* is the surveillance of other criminals and finding some kind of proof to 'make sure' they are guilty. Thus, *Dexter* draws on a variety of literary, film and television traditions: apart from the sub-genre of serial killer fiction, the series also draws on a tradition of vigilante heroes, particularly vigilante cops, such as Harry Callahan (Clint Eastwood) from *Dirty Harry* (Siegel, 1971), who feel restricted by the legal system and therefore act outside of the law (as the name of Dexter's foster father, Harry, may suggest). Furthermore, the series draws on traditions provided by 'rational-scientific' detection: Dexter 'makes sure' as the 'Code of Harry' constantly reminds him, mainly through surveillance and the usage of computerized data bases and files as well as equipment for forensic analysis at the disposal of someone who works at a forensics lab for the Miami Metro police department and who maintains many contacts within that department. It often seems like his own psychological disposition also makes it easier for him to 'read' and understand how serial killers express themselves through murders, especially in his dealings with the Ice Truck Killer (who also leaves personalized messages specifically for Dexter) he often describes them as "beautiful" or even "art" ("Dexter", 01/01):

> This knowledge is enhanced by the range of literature on forensic anthropology in his apartment, which suggests that he has a keen personal and academic understanding of murder. He shares his insights with his colleagues, in particular his sister Debra (Jennifer Carpenter), usually packaging them as 'hunches' rather than a qualified judgement based on the study of forensic psychology, though he also often intentionally directs his colleague's attentions elsewhere or intentionally delays an analysis of

evidence or even falsifies results, when it suits his own interests (either because he himself is being chased by the police or because he wants to kill the criminal himself): Dexter is […] simply a man of science. His study of blood-spatter patterns turns crime scenes into art installations at times, and his expert analysis befuddles even the smartest detectives and officers on the squad. He is no novice when it comes to his job, but he further excels in his knowledge of the body. Dexter's technical and practical expertise mimics that of [Hannibal] Lecter, ever so strong in his comprehension of how the body functions (organs, blood flow, the human mind). […] Dexter uses his professional know-how to study a crime scene and throw off the police at the same time (Francis 2010: 180-81).

As such, Dexter may be the ultimate 'rational-scientific' detective: he claims to have no emotions, other than his drive to kill, so prejudice, love for suspects, empathy for victims or anger at criminals cannot – at least in theory – interfere with his investigations. Like justice is supposed to be, he is blind towards race, class, gender, age, sexual orientation and (unlike many juries) he remains unimpressed by tears in the courtroom (for example, in "Crocodile", 01/02) and lies at the police station, but only relies on 'scientific fact'. He follows suspects and watches them from afar, often when they commit a crime, thus affirming suspicions by seeing the crime for himself (without interfering), he searches police databases, analyses forensic evidence from crime scenes, questions witnesses, as his voiceover keeps emphasizing, he 'makes sure'. Even if the criminal is his biological brother, his 'love interest' (as far as this is possible for someone who claims to be without emotion), or his only 'friend', he exercises 'justice'. Of course, this is Dexter, the serial killer described here, so justice takes place outside a court room, no other people (like judges or juries) are asked to confirm Dexter's 'knowledge' and the punishment is a death sentence in all cases. However, as 'rational-scientific' as the title character's methods of detection are when he acts as a serial killer, he is driven by an 'irrational-subjective' urge to kill, his 'Dark Passenger', he often confirms 'hunches', which usually means that he recognises something he supposedly has in common with other killers, and identifies it correctly as the urge to kill ("Dexter", 01/01).[26] As Simon Riches and Craig French summarise:

> … [Each] murder that Dexter commits is carefully planned to the very last detail. Dexter's killings are executed with meticulous care. The murder scenes are cautiously prepared beforehand and, utilizing his forensics expertise and years of experience, Dexter leaves no traces. The bodies are dissected and efficiently disposed of into the sea, as if he is doing no more than taking out the trash. So, although Dexter's *desire* to kill is very much animalistic, in *satisfying the desire*, Dexter is perfectly ratiocinative. There is a second way in which Dexter is an interesting kind of serial killer and a further sense in which his killing is ratiocinative. Throughout the series, Dexter believes his actions to be in some way *justified*. In Dexter's view, his killings are reason based since he adheres to what we will call a code of killing (Riches and French 2010: 117, italics in the original).

It remains open to debate, then, how much Dexter is in need of a moral justification of who he kills and on what grounds he claims "children – I could never do that" ("Dexter", 01/01), but what may be more important is that the moral justification allows for the text to pose the question if killing is always necessarily 'bad' or 'evil' or if there needs to be room for moral ambiguity.

Of course, as Rachel Robison Greene (2011: 53) points out, Dexter's method of detection as a serial killer becomes problematic when considering that the institutional context of the judicial system is meant to challenge assumptions individuals make about someone's guilt. Thus, the challenging of the results of Dexter's deductions is never given and his 'urge' to kill may often get the better of his 'logical deduction' and surveillance, thus, on another level, rendering his method of detection 'irrational-subjective'.[27] Via different sub-generic traditions and (through its status as generic hybrid) of the detective genre and the crime genre (police procedural, 'genius' detective, Golden Age fiction, hard-boiled-novels, serial killer novels) *Dexter* poses a number of different questions about crime, binaries of 'legal' and 'illegal' and, importantly, deconstructs any  difference between 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection.

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Meanwhile, Dexter the detective (or, more accurately, the blood spatter analyst), as a scientist, also often appears to be 'rational-scientific' and provides accurate information to his colleagues, who use this information to find criminals, following police procedure. Also, the legal system and teamwork within the police station provide challenges to Dexter's hypotheses and seek confirmation of conclusions from various angles, such as witness statements, forensic sciences other than blood spatter analyses, and so on. The team work that is often emphasised by the text, for example, through the exchange of ideas between all the members of the unusually large teams, seems to provide some sort of 'rational-scientific' control to keep individual detective's 'hunches' in check, a form of control Dexter lacks in his activity as serial killer. At the same time, though, this control often has negative connotations as 'hunches' viewers know to be right (Debra's suspicions regarding the Ice Truck Killer or Doakes' [Erik King] accusations of Dexter) are dismissed by colleagues, sometimes based on personal animosity or fear to be challenged rather than on 'facts'. Yet, it is often Dexter's appearance of a 'rational-scientific' detective, relying on 'objective' science, that makes it easy for him to have others dismiss any suspicions against him, most importantly with Doakes whose 'irrationality' makes it easy for Dexter to frame him as the Bay Harbor Butcher.

Meanwhile, Dexter often merely creates the appearance of being 'rational-scientific', since he frequently obstructs investigations by withholding evidence. Most of the time, he does this not to protect himself, but because there are a number of criminals he'd rather kill himself than let the legal system take its course. This is curious since, in the first season, Dexter introduces himself as someone who 'evens out' a flawed judicial system's mistakes after these have been made ("Dexter"), but in fact, the 'Code of Harry' seems to require a confirmation of someone's guilt more than a verdict Dexter disagrees with.[28]

Where *The Wire* offers a 'narrative web' structure that denies binaries due to its complexity, offering *too many* entities to form a straightforward binary structure, *Dexter* seems to offer a main character where binaries *collapse* into one. Dexter is 'rational-scientific' *and* 'irrational-subjective' at the same time, a cold scientist without emotion and driven by strong, 'uncivilized' urges. Clinically clean while performing acts of animalistic violence (in his killings as well as in his job when he smashes dummy heads to see how the blood spatter would look), without emotion (and, if he feels an emotion, quick to rationalize it away), but a popular man with an adoring sister and a loving family, signifying 'good' and 'evil' at the same time, all in one person. Where *The Wire*, in line with the world view of detective series featuring 'irrational-subjective' detection, essentially argues that the world is too complex to be grasped through binaries by showing how 'rational-scientific' methods cannot show the whole 'truth', *Dexter* seems to make a similar argument by showing the paradoxes of the individual, essentially arguing that if an individual cannot be grasped through such a binary, how can the whole world be grasped through binaries?

This is reflected in the narrative structure, the aesthetics and the diegetic world of the series, which seems obsessed with creating order and preventing chaos. The title character seems to follow a large number of rules to ensure his 'fitting in' with 'mainstream' society: outside of the 'Code of Harry' which provides guidelines regarding killing without getting caught, this means an innocuous physical appearance (with clothing, hair style, etc. not too 'different' from the requirements of 'mainstream' culture), politeness (as signified through his almost ritualistic offering of doughnuts to his fellow police officers), the mimicking of emotions of those around him (for example, at a funeral in "Popping Cherry" 01/03) or his relationship with girlfriend (later wife) Rita (Julie Benz), which often appears to be merely a necessity for 'fitting in'. Generally, as the opening credits suggest, Dexter's life is

ordered by a number of rituals, including the ritual of murder (Karpovich 2010: 31-40). The storylines of each season deal with a disruption of Dexter's life, through various characters that introduce some sort of change: this disruption is first welcomed (his 'play' with Brian [Christian Camargo], his affair with Lila [Jaime Murray], his friendship with Miguel [Jimmy Smits], his fascination with Arthur [John Lithgow]), but – with the exception of Season 5 – soon turns into a threat which Dexter then has to eliminate to restore order.[29] The first seasons deal with Dexter trying to establish some sort of family unit, with Brian and Lila stirring unwelcome (and usually denied) emotions and Seargent Doakes, a member of the 'work family', threatening to expose Dexter. The later seasons see Dexter accepting his role as patriarchal 'leader' of a family unit, thus involving a shift in Dexter's role within a more 'traditional' family unit through his marriage to Rita and the birth of his son. The disruption is then usually placed onto 'outsiders', meaning neither biological nor social 'family', rather 'friends', neighbours or complete outsiders, like the Trinity Killer. This is curious, insofar as his infant son arguably offers the most severe disruption to his killing as well as his law enforcement, but the family unit appears to be the ultimate form of order which can never be questioned.[30] Yet, this unit causes much stress for Dexter with a sleepless infant, his problems in relating to teenage Astor (Christina Robinson) and his wife (who is quickly tempted to cheat) and it is also easily destroyed when Trinity Killer Arthur murders Rita. Thus, the family seems to function as an always unachievable 'safe haven', a significant part of 'fitting in', but ultimately just as fragile as anything else in the series, more a façade than anything that really exists. Thus, it remains questionable if any kind of order (within family or other institutions) can ever exist in the diegetic universe of *Dexter*.

In line with the content's search for rigid order, something 'rational-scientific' detection supposedly can provide, the narrative follows a flexi-narrative structure, always offering

part narrative closure, part openness, with individual story arcs stretching over one season. Instead of a 'monster of the week' the series offers a 'monster of the season' which disrupts the equilibrium of Dexter's life and is killed in the season finale, offering narrative closure. As David Lavery points out:

> *Dexter* is a flexi-narrative. Like *The X-Files*, it has blended discrete 'monster of the week' (MOW) with an ongoing story arc. In MOW mode, 'the dark avenger' investigates, tracks, and murders this or that enemy of society, be they gigantic Cuban thug, murderous used-car-salesman, or psycho-stalker psychiatrist. Like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* [WB, 1997-2003], however, the series has opted for constructing each season primarily around Dexter's clash with a particular 'Big Bad' (as *Buffy* deemed the Slayer foes): The Ice Truck Killer in Season 1, Lila/Doakes in Season 2, Miguel Prado in Season 3, with none of these conflicts spilling over into subsequent seasons. […] On the other hand, Dexter's master narrative – *The X-Files* deemed it 'mythology' – has essentially been the incremental, over an individual season and the course of the entire series, humanization of Dexter Morgan. Its twin multi-season line tracks his continuing dialogue with his dead father and his education as the right kind of serial killer and his developing relationship with Rita (Lavery 2010: 46-47).[31]

While the comparison with *The X-Files* and *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer* may be debatable due to the different parameters under which a diegetic world is constructed and the 'master narrative' is structured (especially in regards to its need for resolution), Lavery offers ways to conceptualize a number of aspects of *Dexter*'s flexi-narrative.[32] The series usually offers an MOW who Dexter kills in each episode, though, as the storyline progresses, some episodes divert from this as the character is distracted or hindered through other plot developments. But the character's compulsive 'need' to kill at the expense of family and career is mirrored in the narrative's need to provide the spectacle of a murder each week, which in many ways reflects the conventions of the detective genre. In parallel to Dexter's activities, the police team he is part of also usually solve one case per episode (also often diverting as some cases take more than one episode to be solved) and track a 'Big Bad', usually the same one as Dexter, sometimes Dexter himself. This structure is supported by Dexter's voiceover, which leads into the episode and, after offering an ironic commentary throughout the episode, ties the storylines together at the end of each episode, usually with

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somewhat philosophical questions about humanity (since Dexter struggles with questions whether he himself is 'human') and the people surrounding him. As Peirse notes:

> Atypically for a contemporary American television series, Dexter is an extremely introverted lead character who possesses little ability to empathize with people, and lives day to day with the secret that he is a serial killer. […] Dexter is able to project the appearance of normality while inwardly having deviant and murderous thoughts and desires. As such, to counter Dexter's secretive nature, the series makes extensive use of voice-over. The voice-over offers Dexter's real opinion on events taking place around him, an opinion that is always at odds with his outward comments and demeanor (Peirse 2010: 195-196).

Interestingly, *Dexter*'s voiceover is distinctively different to that of noir cinema and other television texts: instead of narrating the action, his voiceover is constant commentary, sometimes narration or explanation (as when searching police data bases or performing scientific texts), but, more importantly, it often is in juxtaposition to what the character says or does on the screen, exposing his true 'feelings' or intentions. Thus, the voiceover becomes another way the text exposes a binary, possibly even makes it collapse: by making viewers privy to the difference between inside thought and outside action and, in many cases, exposing an often malicious intention behind the character's lies, the character suddenly becomes two things in one, his thoughts and his actions (which are often in opposition to each other). As these contradictions become 'surface', it is impossible to differentiate what is 'surface' and what is 'depth'. As such, the voiceover works not to supplement narration (filling in gaps, as in film noir voiceovers), but to deconstruct binaries between action and thought as everything is pushed to the 'surface' of the text.

This is supported on a visual level as well: aesthetically, the series in many ways draws on *Miami Vice*'s (NBC, 1984-1989) 'Sunshine Noir' (Sanders 2010:19) images, with the important difference that a soft pastel colour scheme is replaced by the central juxtaposition laid out in the opening credits: white and red (Karpovich 2010: 37). The main aesthetic commonality with *Miami Vice* is high exposure lighting, emphasizing the

sunshine the city is known for. Often set during daytime, with an artificially blue sky, ocean and swimming pools, palm trees planted in apparently rigidly measured intervals lining the street. Especially in the first season these images are supported by artificially looking dead bodies, with the victims of the Ice Truck Killer drained of blood and cut up into pieces, sometimes even 'served up' to the police wrapped in holiday wrapping paper as 'presents'. As Steven Peacock argues:

> A play on surfaces binds the character of protagonist and program. This is a place of fakery, shallows and hollows. Dexter's hardened psychological masking fuses with *Dexter*'s lacquered outer-world reflections of plastic, glass, water and metal. Both present a façade of cool charm with nothing underneath (Peacock 2010: 49).

Much like most dramas set in Miami, like *Miami Vice*, *Nip/Tuck* (FX, 2003-2010) or *CSI: Miami* (CBS, 2002-2012), *Dexter* takes advantage of the city's art deco architecture combined with its history of high crime rates, social unrest and racial tensions (Sanders 2010: 19-40).[33] In all of these series, glossy designs and aesthetics are contrasted with a 'seedy underbelly' that lies beneath that surface. For example, in *Nip/Tuck* it is represented through the insides of the body during surgeries to enhance the surface. What sets *Dexter* apart, though, is the fact that the aesthetics are rarely disturbed through such gory disorder, and even in the rare occasions blood spatter produces geometrical disorder on the screen, blood spatter analyst Dexter quickly 'orders' it by explaining which events led to such a pattern. Even the spaces where Dexter shows his 'true face', like his various 'kill rooms' or the little space in the air conditioning vent where he keeps his blood slides, do not seem to represent violent disorder. Instead, they blend in easily with the rest of the series' aesthetics of superficiality, even, as Peacock argues, emptiness or hollowness, pointing to the protagonist's shallow interactions with those around him, who seem unaware of how 'fake' their social interactions with their 'friend', brother, husband or stepfather are. The aesthetics of *Dexter* seem to suggest that, rather than 'two sides' of Miami, one light, one

dark, there seems to be only emptiness and surface in the space of the city, the character, possibly the world.

As such, *Dexter* may be read as a representation of a search for meaning in postmodernity's endless spiral of irony: all style without substance, a collapse of all ordering binaries, almost desperately creating visual order when order and disorder, police and criminal, peacefulness and violence, private and public, have long melded into one. *Dexter*, then, is arguably a translation of Baudrillard's concept that suggests a breakdown of boundaries between simulation and reality, making reality a hyperreal aesthetic spectacle, a simulacrum. As Baudrillard states in his analysis of Disneyland: "…in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and simulation" (Baudrillard 1983: 25). The aestheticized diegetic world of *Dexter* clearly highlights this concept of 'reality'. Of course, in the diegesis of the series, this collapse of binaries becomes highly threatening to a number of characters, mainly because characters may appear more 'surface' than 'substance'. Much like Dexter, nobody's exterior and the way they present themselves seems completely in line with 'who they are', seemingly questioning coherent and stable narratives of identity. Thus, the series seems to struggle through its content with what is mostly conceptualized as a formal issue of postmodernity, the relationship between 'style' and 'substance'. This is also in line with Baudrillard who perceives the breakdown of binaries between style and substance and the commodification of style (how does a product construct individual identity rather than what is a product's usefulness as a central question of postmodern identity?) as threatening in the sense that capitalism gains universal power. Ivo Ritzer, analysing transgression and breaking of taboos in contemporary American TV drama (due to the subject matter mostly dramas shown on cable channels, such as HBO, Showtime or AMC), argues that these dramas themselves become commodities (via their distribution through premium cable

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channels or DVD box sets), integrated in 'mainstream' capitalism. Thus, they lose all their transgressive potential, since they are counter-movement and mainstream at the same time (Ritzer 2011: 90-111). Ritzer draws here on Baudrillard's argument that the loss of the real undermines the logic of opposition, since all can always be interpreted from too many perspectives to formulate one definite statement opposing 'dominant' ideology. Where both Ritzer and Baudrillard are very negative about the notion that previously oppositional, subversive statements have become acceptable within a 'dominant' discourse (if such a thing exists), it can also be argued (at the same time opposing and affirming Baudrillard) that the idea that opposition becomes part of the 'mainstream' signifies positive societal 'progression' (at least from a 'left-wing' point of view), though, admittedly, capitalism appears to be a driving force. Where *The Wire* easily subverts the notion that postmodernism excludes clear political statements or positions, *Dexter* appears to struggle with and celebrate the idea of always being a paradox.

Thus, what methods can be used to access 'truth' in a diegetic universe where style and substance, 'good' and 'evil', detective and serial killer have become one? *Dexter*'s collapse of binaries makes it almost impossible to escape the circular logic of Dexter as detective, chasing Dexter the killer who, in turn, tries to evade Dexter, the detective. It also makes it difficult to separate style and substance, since aesthetics, voiceover and characters all work together as one. The rules of police procedure, the institutional context or forensic science do not seem to offer a way out of the confusion created by this collapse, especially since Dexter's constant tampering with and planting of evidence only draws attention to the flaws of a system that makes it so easy to overlook a serial killer in its own ranks. The way the 'Code of Harry' clearly trained Dexter to be a 'corrective' to a flawed judicial system only reinforces the idea that the collapse of binaries between police and criminal can be either a solution or a reflection of the 'lawlessness' and confusion over democracy, legal

justice and national security that ensued after 9/11. Neither 'rational-scientific' nor 'irrational-subjective' methods prove to be viable ways to access 'truth' or order chaos.

Ideologically, this points to a world view which seems to very much emphasise personal codes over communal standards, as represented in the legal system. Where the legal system is fallible, Dexter's 'Code of Harry' 'convicts' and punishes those who have committed a crime. Dexter, as character, in many ways fulfils the function science achieves in *CSI*, a means to unequivocally identify the guilty. Much like *CSI*'s science, Dexter is an objective entity, one that represents order, but in many ways is driven by 'irrational-subjective' urges, perhaps paralleling a reaction of the US against terrorism, guided by fear and revenge. Yet, as Michele Byers points out:

> But unlike *CSI*, *Dexter* isn't earnest. That is, the crucible at the centre of *CSI* as an ideological system is an often humourless belief in science as a route to a truth that will set us free; hence the ubiquitous mantra to follow the evidence, that the evidence doesn't lie, and so on. *Dexter*, by contrast, problematizes the binary structures of good and evil and truth and lies that we are pushed to accept by *CSI*. And it does this, at least in part, by refusing to look at these things earnestly (Byers 2006).

Part of this refusal to take things seriously may be a direct reaction to *CSI*, exposing how fallible science can be by making Dexter, the scientist, a cold-blooded killer who uses the tools science offers him to commit murder and falsify evidence. Of course, there is another, possibly more 'honourable' scientist in the series, but Vince Masuka (C.S. Lee) with his reliance on Dexter and his never-ending recitations of misogynistic jokes is hardly comparable to the scientists of *CSI*. Possibly more importantly, what *CSI* depicts as a system that can correct itself if one scientist becomes corrupt, *Dexter* clearly exposes as a system where the title character does as he pleases since nobody reviews or double-checks his work. This is just one way in which the series seems to react against its contemporary: it also seems to reject *CSI*'s emphasis on the dead body as spectacle, when *Dexter*:

> …downplays the explicit representation of body horror, choosing to reserve graphic display for particular moments of narrative or character significance. The show protects the audience from seeing the full horror of what Dexter actually does by framing the murders so that they are concealed from view. The sounds of his power tools and his victims' screaming, along the occasional glimpse of blood, make it clear what he is doing, but do not risk breaking the identification by having the audience see too much (Abbott and Brown 2011: 212).

Of course, where *CSI* is free to 'indulge' in the spectacle of the dead body since its characters are just as shocked and horrified by the violence as audiences may be, dead bodies in *Dexter* are often his own work, and the character does not react with the revulsion others may feel (as becomes clear from Harry's suicide after he witnesses one of Dexter's gory murders). Yet, the dead bodies not being shown are Dexter's work. Other serial killers' victims are often presented in opulent displays, such as the Doomsday Killer's presentation of bodies as The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, or The Ice Truck Killer's blood-drained victims. As such, Dexter is set apart from the attention-seeking serial killers and seems to seek only 'private' fulfilment in killing. The 'spectacle' of dead bodies is placed onto the 'Big Bads' rather than the text's doubtful hero. Yet, the main character's own complexity hardly allows for a construction of a 'good' and 'evil' binary where (as in *CSI*), the 'bad' people produce the 'spectacular' dead body. Rather, it seems to question both, *CSI*'s insistence on a 'good' and 'bad' binary as well as *The Shield*'s deconstruction of this binary as 'bad' and 'less bad'. Dexter may be 'less bad', but as detective, serial killer, 'justice'-seeker, father, brother or son, he deconstructs the binary.

Instead of focussing on the complex world that turns law enforcement into a mine field of moral ambiguity, like *The Wire*'s diegetic universe, a world too complex to grasp through binaries or 'rational-scientific' methods of detection, *Dexter* seems to fall back on the private as a place where a moral value system can be found. The code may be enforced by a violent serial killer without emotion and the fact that Harry ever devised a code to

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accommodate his foster son's lust for killing is morally questionable at best, but in Dexter's confusing world without binaries, it seems necessary to create clearly understandable rules, rituals and clear priorities and hierarchies: no killer is let go or investigation stopped because of a lack of resources or individual detectives' career concerns, no clue overlooked due to carelessness, if a character like Lila threatens Dexter's and Rita's family unit, Dexter will mercilessly kill her. Where a judge or jury may feel empathy when a ruthless killer begs for mercy, Dexter remains unmoved. Thus, out of the complete deconstruction of grand narratives, a perfectly individualized moral code, possibly even method of detection, emerges.

In regards to implicit or explicit political projects, *Dexter* again, seems to defy any political engagement explicitly through its collapsing binaries and postmodern sensitivities (as already mentioned in relation to the 2008 writer's strike). Another example of this is its depiction of race and gender. Byers argues that the 'justice' presented in *Dexter* is also a gendered and racialized form of 'justice':

> So on *Dexter*, the presence of men and women, and men and women with various claims on white, Latin, and African-American identities – as well as different statuses in terms of class, education and citizenship – creates a mythic space that appears not only tolerant, but both amnesiac to the historical legacies of social hierarchy and blind to their contemporary incarnations. Here it is all about the individual and the code; this is where the buck stops. At times, the series' self-reflexivity seems to look critically at 'race', but whiteness remains inscrutable, especially white masculinity dressed up straight and middle-class (and increasingly so as the *Dexter* seasons move on). Ultimately, the sociopathic vigilante is simply a white, Anglo-Protestant male pumped up to cartoon (hence superheroic) proportions. […] *Dexter* is, on some level, a warning that taking the law into one's own hand – as the Bush government so often demonstrated – is the prerogative and privilege of white masculinity (Byers 2010: 146).

As Byers correctly argues, this becomes increasingly problematic throughout the seasons in depictions of black masculinity and powerful Latina women as well as, in Season 5, an 'adaptation' of rape revenge narratives with difficult implications in terms of female

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empowerment and 'victimhood'.[34] This may go hand in hand with a development Ron Becker observes in the conclusion of a study of gender on television, looking at what he terms 'gay-themed' television throughout the 1990s and early 2000s:

> The national tragedy of 9/11 also seemed to have offered straight, white, mainstream America its own *sense of victimhood*. The young man's anger over what 'they' had done to 'us', for example, not only constructed a unified national community into which his white identity could disappear, but it also created righteous indignation over the injustice of what had happened. During the 1990s such feelings had largely been denied progressive whites, straights, men, and so forth by multiculturalist discourses and political correctness. (Becker 2006: 215, my italics).

Thus, many issues that had been problematized throughout the 1990s, summarised under 'political correctness' (racism, sexism, homophobia, 'white guilt', etc.), have been re-conceptualized with 9/11 and a new 'sense of victimhood' created through it and more recent developments regarding debates surrounding Barack Obama's election and the current recession, which possibly work to make it more extreme.

Of course, as has been argued throughout, this matter is more complex than Byers and Becker outline: for one thing, Becker argues himself that 2003 was a key year for 'gay-themed' television (2006: 1-2).[35] Byers is right to point to the problematic treatment of race in *Dexter* and there certainly is a need for a 'new' discussion of race on contemporary television in general as well as within the genre, but in the case of *Dexter*, it could be argued that his problematic status as serial killer and detective already establishes *and* questions his prerogative as straight, white, middle-class, male law-enforcer at the same time. Of course, this also may be the point where the collapsing of binaries into one character becomes highly problematic, since there is a risk to 'gloss over' issues of race, class, gender, heteronormativity and other categories that define social privilege. Ewan Kirkland, for example, argues that 'whiteness' is often conceptualized as 'invisible', because of its status as 'always assumed' racial category:

> There is a similar invisibility to Dexter. Even in multiracial Miami, the white man whose ethnicity has been largely overlooked within discussion of racial identity cannot be seen. When stalking his victims, Dexter has the uncanny ability to move unnoticed by his quarry. […] As a white man, someone who has been historically regarded as above suspicion, Dexter projects a prima facie blamelessness. More than being simply beyond scrutiny, Dexter seems at times to be literally invisible (Kirkland 2011: 212-213).

The whiteness and invisibility is sometimes even highlighted by the visuals as the last images of the opening credits show him in white clothes almost 'blending in' with the white walls behind him. Thus, it can be argued that while showing problematic images of race, *Dexter* also highlights these problematic images. As Baudrillard argues, this problem of any event being more than one thing at once is inherent in the proliferation of meaning of postmodernism:

> Is any given bombing in Italy the work of leftist extremists, or of extreme right-wing provocation, or staged by centrists to bring every terrorist extreme into disrepute and to shore up its own failing power, or again, is it a police inspired scenario in order to appeal to public security? (Baudrillard 1983: 31)

Following the same logic: was 9/11 orchestrated by Al Qaeda terrorists or the Bush administration? Is Dexter 'good' or 'evil'? Is its depiction of racial, gendered privilege racist and sexist or does it highlight racism and sexism still prevalent in US society? And if any binary of 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection collapses, does anything 'new' emerge? When Dexter describes himself as "something new entirely" ("Let's Give the Boy a Hand", 01/04), does this also include his methods of detection?[36]

Highlighting the paradoxes of unstable identity and postmodern society where the proliferation of meaning denies any 'stable' signs, Dexter's 'alternative' method of detection seems to be a highly individualized code that negotiates the needs of the community (as represented through the institution of the police) and the individual (as

represented through Dexter's urge to kill). *Dexter* poses a problem of being political and a-political at the same time: it fulfils the criteria of HBO-influenced contemporary 'Quality TV' with a multi-racial cast, powerful female characters, supposedly subversive swearing, nudity and depictions of sex, and moral ambiguity. Yet, while it may have been possible to argue for a subversive political potential in *Oz*, *Sex and the City* or *Battlestar Galactica* (Sci-Fi, 2004-2009), sometimes regarding identity politics, sometimes regarding contemporary politics, *Dexter* emphasises surface so much that it implicitly seems to pose the question if these markers of supposed transgression have become merely surface themselves. In the case of *Dexter*, any transgression becomes highlighted further through the censorship imposed on the series before being shown on CBS.

Arguably, then, *Dexter* implicitly displays a version of post-structuralism, understood here as a way postmodernism treats signs, which, while highly aesthetically stylized, is not present as something where such a messy slippage between signifier and signified is expected. In fact, on first sight, it bears little resemblance to *Twin Peaks*, which could reasonably be expected to be its main reference point in regards to postmodern detective series (see Chapter 7). If anything, visually, *Dexter*'s neat and clean whites and reds are the opposite of *Twin Peaks*' nature oriented colour scheme, which seems to suggest some kind of 'natural' disorder. Where *Twin Peaks* quickly offers a subversion of genre conventions, surrealist elements, and an often overplayed, 'quirky' version of irony, *Dexter* presents itself as relatively straightforward generic hybrid, pushing the somewhat predictable irony that emerges from this hybridity (serial killer genre and detective genre) to the foreground. It offers the 'markers' of contemporary 'Quality TV' with recognisable faces (particularly Michael C. Hall, known from *Six Feet Under* [HBO, 2001-2005]), swearing, violence, nudity, glossy aesthetics and a dark sense of humour. Along with this, a multiracial cast and several women in a position of power (LaGuerta [Lauren Vélez] and Debra) are

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presented to us as markers of liberal 'political correctness'. It is only when these concepts of what can be termed 'surface politics' are questioned further when it emerges that there seems to be little political statement behind this. *Dexter* seems to function as an almost escapist text that relies on 'surface politics' rather than 'risk' a political stance.[37] Possibly, its ability to formulate a political stance has already been lost in postmodernity. The only way to re-construct any grand narratives or methods of detection now are through the unstable, paradox, maybe even schizophrenic subject.

### 8.3.    <u>Conclusion</u>

This chapter analysed two very different texts, with almost opposite takes on methods of detection, the reflection of genre, narrative structure, binaries, political engagement or ideological outlook. As different as both series are, they mark an interesting view on methods of detection by disrupting any idea of a binary opposition of 'rational-scientific' or 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection, as represented in texts like *Bones* or *Homicide*. *The Wire* and *Dexter* deconstruct any such binary in distinctively different ways, one by giving detailed explanation of how criminal justice is part of an entire system of institutions, all flawed, none offering safety or security for American citizens. *The Wire* portrays a world as complex as few diegetic TV universes are, making it impossible to impose binaries. Meanwhile, *Dexter* makes binaries just as impossible by having them collapse into one: it is not 'detective' vs. 'criminal' anymore, but 'detective' *and* 'criminal' in one; there is little 'public' vs. 'private' sphere, this binary is frequently disrupted (through the semi-incestuous relationship between Brian and Deb or Dexter and Deb, or Dexter's activity as killer, which is neither fully allocated in his 'public' life as detective nor his 'private' life with his family); there barely is a discernible difference between 'surface' and 'depth'.

Ideologically, both series also seem to reflect different world views with *The Wire*'s explicitly political or at least ideological mandate and *Dexter*'s tendency towards a more a-political outlook. Aesthetically, they also differ greatly with different stylistic emphases, with the former series offering 'social realism' and the latter insisting on an almost heightened artificiality. In terms of narrative, where *The Wire* offers innovation, *Dexter* remains with a relatively 'traditional' flexi-narrative season-arc structure. Yet, both dramas stay clearly within a genre tradition, though both draw on several sub-genres of detective fiction. Most importantly for this thesis, both series show in their own ways how to conceptualize, analyse and question methods of detection while not only dissolving a binary between 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective', but highlighting their flaws and strengths.

In terms of methods of detection, the binary between 'rational-scientific' detection and 'irrational-subjective' detection is deconstructed in different ways in *The Wire* and *Dexter*: The former series deconstructs by emphasizing complexity of a seemingly postmodern world, while simultaneously (and paradoxically) undercutting the notion that depicting complexity equates the impossibility of political statement. The latter series collapses all binaries in one, no stable meaning can ever be attained; everything is one and the other at the same time, showing just how impossible political statement is in light of the instability of meanings. Yet, if 'rational-scientific' detection represents a desire to return to Enlightenment, ideas of 'truth' and 'stable' meanings and 'irrational-subjective' detection represents the fatalism and pessimism of the later stages of modernism and either celebration or critique of the postmodern proliferation of meaning, how can *The Wire* and *Dexter* be positioned? Do they actually offer any kind of alternative regarding ideology, 'truth', the legal system and 'morality' in a postmodern, post-9/11 world? *The Wire*'s political project may produce a way to deal with a postmodern world, but cannot escape

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the logic of the proliferation of meaning: it may be part of a political discourse, but ultimately stands parallel with more conservative political arguments. Thus, while it may offer a political statement, it is still part of a complex discourse surrounding issues such as poverty and social disadvantage, without actually developing a solution that is practical for subjects across political spectrums. *Dexter*, on the other hand, emphasises a merging of style and 'substance', but in many ways, just supports Baudrillard's pessimistic arguments that all is simulation and arguably does not manage to formulate an 'alternative' way to grasp the complexity of the world.

Yet, while *Dexter* and *The Wire* clearly problematize issues of thinking and detecting crime and finding 'truth', both ultimately criticize without offering a true 'alternative' to access and attain 'truth' in a postmodern world beyond modern or postmodern ways of thinking. Both series seem to develop different ways of dealing with the proliferation of meaning in a complex contemporary society: *The Wire* focuses on the microcosm of Baltimore to undercut notions that un-ironic political statements are impossible in a postmodern world. Yet, while making a serious political statement, the series also depicts fatalism, implying that the 'system' is incapable of change and any attempt to reform it must end with the downfall of the ambiguous 'hero'. Meanwhile, *Dexter* continues the struggle with postmodern aesthetics and 'ideology' (if that can exist) that *Hill Street Blues*, *Twin Peaks* and *The Shield* have fought before. Yet, where *Twin Peaks* seems to deconstruct all grand narratives and *The Shield* points to the inherent problem in such a project (expressing, perhaps, at least a desire for a coherent moral system), while *CSI* appears to offer a way to re-construct this grand narrative, *Dexter* seems to represent an attempt to develop an alternative: the series clearly reflecting a struggle to get comfortable with the constant paradoxes and proliferation of meaning in postmodern western societies, always accompanied by a voiceover that narrates the search for a stable subject.

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In summary, the deconstruction of binaries in both series seems to represent the confusion of a postmodern world. In the context of 9/11 and the War on Terror, which seems to request answers to so many questions regarding justice (legal and moral), 'truth', democracy, national security, torture, etc., neither series seems to formulate any coherent ideas, seemingly always pointing to the postmodern condition which makes any 'truth' ungraspable, in spite of wiretaps and 'rational-scientific' methods of detection. In many ways, the two series are deconstructing another binary (maybe the only one *Twin Peaks* left standing), another grand narrative, that of 'rational-scientific' vs. 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection, causing even more confusion. Yet, maybe similar to the way *The Shield* seems to express a desire to re-construct a moral code after *Twin Peaks* had deconstructed such a thing, *The Wire*'s fatalism and *Dexter*'s radical collapse of binaries can actually serve to explain a complex, postmodern world in its last consequences and eventually lead the way to finding methods to grasp this chaos.

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[1] Quoted from *Dexter* episode "Let's Give the Boy a Hand" 01/04.

[2] In "The Prisoner in the Pipe" (07/07) Bones gives birth in a barn since there is "no room at the inn", following a discussion between Bones and Booth about religion, in which he is positioned as devout catholic whereas she offers a distanced anthropological analysis of the social functions of religion and deconstructs Catholicism as 'fiction'. While the series is clearly ironic about the timing and place of how she gives birth, it may also suggest that the child signifying the union of the couple can also function as a way her 'rational-scientific' approach can be united with his 'irrational-subjective' world view.

[3] As Bignell summarises:

> The [pilot] episode's unconventional style is evident in the scene from the first episode when Munch [Richard Belzer] is interviewing a suspect in a hospital room. Throughout, the scene is segmented by a large number of cuts where the camera position changes, but continuity of dialogue and action are maintained. There is no master shot from where the camera offers a whole view of the space and to which it could return to confirm the parameters of this space. The camera repeatedly 'crosses the line', breaking the 180-degree rule which conventionally requires that the camera positions are always on one side of an invisible line connecting two speakers filmed in shot/reverse-shot. The camera usually favours the person speaking, but set-up shifts without any obvious reason so that by

the end of the scene we have viewed the action from various points around a roughly circular perimeter surrounding the performers. This draws attention to the visual style of the sequence, but not to serve a marked interpretative narrative system (Bignell 2009: 35).

Nichols-Pethick argues that:

> …[the] important point to keep in mind is that *Homicide* does not work from *inside* the genre […]. In other words, it offers up a critical examination of its own conventions as well as the conventions of documentary filmmaking. My point here is that [the aesthetic strategies employed by series are] not simply an exercise in pastiche, but rather an effort to complicate the assumptions that surround all representational conventions and, in doing so, perhaps stretch the boundaries of the genre, especially with regard to realism and verisimilitude" (Nichols-Pethick 2012: 84).

4 In an online article from 2011, Jason Mittell explores the series as a 'visual novel' and invokes the multi-perspective narrative of *War and Peace* (1869) as a reference point, "a vast narrative containing fifteen 'books,' each subdivided into at least a dozen chapters and released serially over five years" (Mittell 2011). As Mittell also points out, it is interesting that out of the vast literary comparisons Simon himself draws, the comparison with this famously serialized novel with a broad variety in characters and settings is usually omitted.

5 As Simon points out:

> Another reason the show may feel different than a lot of television: our model is not quite so Shakespearean as other high-end HBO fare. *The Sopranos* and *Deadwood*—two shows that I do admire—offer a good deal of *Macbeth* or *Richard III* or *Hamlet* in their focus on the angst and machinations of the central characters (Tony Soprano, Al Swearengen). Much of our modern theater seems rooted in the Shakespearean discovery of the modern mind. We're stealing instead from an earlier, less-traveled construct—the Greeks—lifting our thematic stance wholesale from Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides to create doomed and fated protagonists who confront a rigged game and their own mortality. The modern mind— particularly those of us in the West—finds such fatalism ancient and discomfiting, I think. We are a pretty self-actualized, self-worshipping crowd of postmoderns and the idea that for all of our wherewithal and discretionary income and leisure, we're still fated by indifferent gods, feels to us antiquated and superstitious. We don't accept our gods on such terms anymore; by and large, with the exception of the fundamentalists among us, we don't even grant Yahweh himself that kind of unbridled, interventionist authority" (Hornby 2007).

Frank Kelleter (2012: 40-60) provides an interesting analysis of the problems with academic criticism on *The Wire*, which also debates how commonly criticism seems to regurgitate Simon's statements about the series and readings made in popular journalism, often taking it as an accurate depiction of reality rather than recognizing the codes and conventions of 'realism' it provides.

6The understanding of 'realism' adapted by the series is also linked with a specific literary tradition Raymond Williams allocates in 18th century drama:

> First, there is a conscious movement towards social extension. There is a crucial argument in the early period of bourgeois tragedy about the need to extend the actions of tragedy from persons of rank, to whom by convention and precept tragedy had hitherto largely been confined to – as it was put –

'your equals, our equals'. This movement of social extension – 'let not your equals move your pity less' – is a key factor in what we can now identify as a realist intention. Then, second, there is a movement towards the siting of actions in the present, to making action contemporary. It is remarkable that in most preceding drama it seemed almost a constituent of the dramatic form that it was set either in the historical or in a legendary past, and the emphasis on the actions of the contemporary world is the second defining feature of this new bourgeois realism. And the third, which is perhaps in the end the most important, is that there is an emphasis on secular action, in the quite precise sense that elements of a metaphysical or a religious order directly or indirectly frame, or in stronger cases determine, the human actions within the earlier plays. This dimension is dropped, and in its place human action is played through in specifically human terms – exclusively human terms" (Williams 1990: 228-229).

As John Fiske summarises: "Williams is able to add a fourth characteristic of realism, that it consciously interprets this experience from a particular political point of view, normally from the left" (Fiske 1987: 22). Williams' definition, as Fiske points out, is here understood as a definition of 'social realism' (as opposed to other forms of 'realism'). As Fiske argues, television offers a variety of 'realisms' from 'documentary realism' to 'emotional realism' to a culturally specific 'British social realism' (Fiske 1987: 21-47). Of course, arguing from a specifically British background with reference to largely British cultural products from the 19th and 20th century (such as Dickens' novels), his emphasis on a conscious class system is unsurprising. With reference to late capitalist America, it may be more appropriate to argue that in contemporary 'social realism' the focus is on a socially and economically disadvantaged (through factors such as race, class, gender, etc.) group. This social group is described here as 'working class', relying on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of class or, as he puts it, *milieu*. Bourdieu views class as defined through markers of 'taste', education, manners and generally 'cultural capital' in addition to financial standing. He also describes this class-specific behaviour (mannerisms, language, etc.) as *habitus* (Bourdieu 2010: 255-502). In *The Wire*, clashes of class-specific *habitus* are frequently shown, for example when D'Angelo Barksdale does not understand how to behave in an expensive restaurant ("The Pager" 01/05) or Colvin takes a group of ill-adjusted youths to a similar restaurant as a form of a 'social experiment' to see how they cope with the frustration of not knowing what 'social rules' apply ("Know Your Place", 04/09). The scope of this research, unfortunately, leaves little room to discuss the way discourses of 'realism' are linked to the genre and notions of 'quality' within it.

[7] Of course, this scene also points to the HBO branding strategy, since the channel's liberal attitude towards swear words that are heavily censored on network television, is often mentioned and constructed as part of the creative freedom given to writers on HBO dramas. As Ritzer (2011: 90-111) argues, the breaking of taboos in contemporary 'Quality TV' is intrinsically linked with a capitalist function and therefore is ultimately part of a dominant or 'mainstream' discourse, despite appearing 'transgressive' or even subversive.

[8] Apart from narrative functions, these instances are also intrinsically interlinked with the actor's performances who, in what is termed here as the 'Fuck-Motherfucker-scene' and in the various inflections of McNulty's 'catchphrase' manage to convey a lot of meaning through very little, somewhat meaningless dialogue.

[9] It is important to note that Mittell analyses a long-term 'evolution' of narrative structure while this analysis looks specifically at *The Wire*, which, at the time of writing, constitutes the (temporary) 'end' of this 'evolutionary chain' (to stick with the analogy). Thus, maybe the term 'narrative web' is more appropriate for *The Wire*, whereas Mittell's 'narrative

complexity' may serve well to describe the historical development. As Nannicelli puts it: "*The Wire* represents the more radical end of what Mittell has in mind" (2009: 192).

[10] Even though a thematic connection between storylines seems a relatively familiar concept from prime time soaps, the 'narrative web' differs from soap narratives and flexi-narrative for a number of reasons: in soaps, the connection between a number of storylines is always clear, for example, most characters in *Dynasty* (ABC, 1981-1989) are related to each other through blood or marriage, setting, characters, conflicts and storylines are repetitive, in an avoidance of narrative closure characters or actors leave and are 'replaced' by new characters and actors who fulfil a similar (or the same) narrative function (see Propp 1972 [1928]: 31-66). As outlined in the case study on *Hill Street Blues*, flexi-narrative is less reliant on repetition of storylines, in rare cases even thematic emphases, and offers at least partial narrative closure, meaning that some storylines are resolved immediately, some are resolved after several episodes and some are never resolved at all. There is more variety in characters and their functions, often the cast is of similar size as those of soaps and despite minor repetition like catchphrases or storylines like Esterhaus' complicated love life, Fay's appearances at the station and Frank Furillo's and Joyce Davenport's moments of fragile domesticity in *Hill Street Blues*, which almost have a structuring function. However, all storylines are connected, often through setting and genre conventions, like a police station or a hospital (as in *St. Elsewhere* [NBC, 1982-1988] or *ER* [NBC, 1994-2009]).

[11] The advantage of the 'narrative web' as a way to think about narrative structure is that it can easily accommodate these multi-media additions to the text, as a number of online and video games based on – and sometimes extending – the storyline of *Lost* or the 'webisodes' for *Battlestar Galactica*. Where *The Wire* offers this kind of complexity within the narrative structure of its own text, other series may use extra-textual narrative media (going beyond the idea of secondary or tertiary texts). This also feeds into Mittell's comparison of *The Wire*'s narrative structure with that of video games in a 2011 article:

> We might imagine the show as a televisual adaptation of Will Wright's landmark game *SimCity* (1989): an array of systems are dramatized, each with changing variables that ripple across the larger simulation model in unpredictable and often counterintuitive ways. *SimCity* functions as a 'God game' at a macrolevel of control over the microdescisions of urban existence. But *The Wire* dramatizes its institutions more through the actions of characters in relation to the institution, blending the urban scope of SimCity with the personal focus typifying *The Sims* (2000), Wright's most popular iteration of the simulation game genre (Mittell 2011).

While there may be a number of problems with such a comparison (such as players in control of the game), there are parallels in the way supposedly distinct, stand-alone narratives intersect and players or viewers have to  work to create one overarching narrative that combines all the narrative threads to one 'narrative web'.

[12] Original quote (as paraphrased in the main text):

> Die menschlichen Akteure sind nicht verzichtbar, denn sie allein haben (noch?) die Fähigkeit zu semantischen Unterscheidungen, um (mit viel Geduld) aus dem unaufhörlichen Gerede der Verdächtigen die entscheidenden Informationen herauszufiltern. Doch nur durch die Einbindung der nicht-menschlichen Akteure, der medientechnischen Apparaturen, gelingt dies (Schröter 2012: 27-29).

My translation:

> The human actors are not expendable, because only those (still?) have the ability to make semantic distinctions, to (with much patience) filter the deciding information from the unstoppable stream of talk by suspects. But

only through the inclusion of non-human actors, the media-technical apparatuses, is this possible.

[13] The detailed description of police procedure and hindrance of investigations through departmental regulations and political interests of those associated with the institution of the police is already the main theme of David Simon's factual account of the work lives of Baltimore homicide detectives *Homicide. A Year on the Killing Streets* (1991).

[14] As Frank Kelleter argues:

> The series takes care to distance itself visually, atmospherically, and by other means from shows such as *The Sopranos* or *Deadwood* [HBO, 2004-2006], even as it profits from institutional and artistic associations with these 'complex' series. Thus, in text and paratext *The Wire* repeatedly claims that it does not compete with other quality productions on American television, including HBO's own, but rather transcends the medium of commercial television altogether (Kelleter 2012: 36).

[15] Though the series' profound critique of institutions could suggest an ideology that supports 'small government' as proposed by neo-liberal economists, one of the deciding group within the Republican party, *The Wire* makes an argument that the weakest in American society should be taken care of, but are let down by the state (most strikingly children whose parents seem ill-equipped to take care of them, but also those working in institutions who are disappointed whenever they expect support from the institutions they work for).

[16] Of course, this scene offers a variety of interpretive layers, starting with its title "Mission Accomplished", which can be read as a reference to a speech by Bush in 2003 in which he appeared in front of a banner with these words, which was generally perceived as a premature declaration of the end of war action in Iraq, similar to the way Bell's death does not end the war on drugs. Another layer is the reference to Adam Smith's book written at the beginning of the Industrial revolution, arguing for free market capitalism and still often invoked in arguments surrounding neo-liberal ideas of economics. In this scene, the reference could be read as a critique since the (legal) aggressive corporate culture of free market capitalism at least partly brought about Bell's demise as he was on the one hand ruthlessly obeying its rules, but on the other hand rendered impotent by underestimating the corruption predominant in free market capitalism. Furthermore, the book can be read as a marker of Bell's intellectualism, which could turn him more into a 'white collar criminal' (which he is on many levels) than a drug-dealing thug.

[17] Of course, much of Foucault's writing consciously contradicts Althusser, but this thesis argues that at least Althusser's idea of ISAs can be productively combined with Foucault's theories of power.

[18]This thesis only focuses on methods of detection, though a closer analysis of power relations regarding institutional powers in relation to Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses (Althusser 1994: 92) and Foucault could prove useful.

[19] Frederic Jameson argues that the series includes a number of what he terms 'Utopian' fantasies, like Frank Sobotka's (Chris Bauer) dream of a re-construction of the Baltimore harbour or Pryzbylewski's dream of improving education (Jameson 2011: 371-372). Jameson views these Utopian dreams as glimpses of possibilities for the future, but, due to the power structures depicted in the series, none of these Utopian dreams can ever become a reality within the diegesis. As Slavoj Žižek, in a paper he presented at Birkbeck University, argues:

> The tragedy of these Utopian dimensions: family, friendship, whatever, is that, precisely, they are fully part of the system, making the system function, but that what *The Wire* really tries to do, at its most radical, is to answer that question, in a situation like that of Baltimore […] – it's a very

naïve question, I think there is absolutely no reason to make fun of it: Can
we do anything? What can we do to resist? (Žižek 2012).

Without trying to engage into this argument about the structures of postmodern society, this debate can easily be translated to whether or not *The Wire* manages to formulate alternative ways of detection. It certainly combines 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' over the course of the series, but is it really formulating an alternative – 'radical' or not?

[20] Yet, as Jonathan Bignell points out in his analysis of *Homicide*, based on David Simon's book on the city's homicide department, Baltimore is also:

> …an American city with a distinct sense of place. Positioned between New
> York and Washington DC, Baltimore lacks the cosmopolitan glamour of
> the former and the political profile of the latter, and its economic health as
> a centre of heavy industry was severely affected by the recessions of the
> 1980s (Bignell 2009: 31).

Thus, Baltimore as space can also be viewed as symbolizing the disadvantages of free market capitalism.

[21] Since CBS is a network channel, it has to comply with FCC regulations regarding swearing, nudity and violence, meaning that episodes need to be re-edited (since, like much contemporary 'Quality TV' the series features a lot of explicit sex scenes, violence, nudity and swearing, meaning that some characters' speech patterns are altered significantly). Furthermore, since, unlike Showtime, CBS is financed through advertising, episodes need to be re-edited to accommodate commercial breaks. Meanwhile, cable channel Showtime is financed through subscriptions, not advertising, allowing it to show episodes without commercial breaks and due to de-regulation of US cable television, there is no obligation to comply with FCC regulations (Ritzer 2011: 54-65).

[22] This thesis refers to the uncut version as shown on UK TV and published on DVD in the UK throughout.

[23] Yet, the *Dexter* novels by Jeff Lindsay stay strongly within the tradition of *The Killer Inside Me*, for example, by alluding to a link between sexual release and killing – in the case of Jim Thompson's novel, this is done through a clear linkage between a sexual fetish, Lou Ford's *Modus Operandi* (MO) and childhood experiences pertaining to his father's reactions to his sexuality; in the *Dexter* novels, the language used to describe Dexter's urge to kill and the release he feels during his killing ritual and afterwards are very similar to language used to describe sexual release. At least the first season of the TV series also complicates Dexter's sex life and links his sexual encounters with Rita (Julie Benz) with his urge to kill, this is later repeated in Season 5 in his sexual encounters with Lumen (Julia Stiles) after killing together. Furthermore, Dexter's urge to kill is linked by the TV series and novels to his childhood experiences regarding his mother's death and his ritual and the code he operates on are shaped by his foster father Harry (James Remar).

[24] Of course, 'justice' becomes a particularly difficult term in relation to *Dexter*: what is meant here with this term is a kind of moral urge to 'balance' the wrong Dexter's victims have done, to seek revenge for their actions. This thesis argues that, while aware of moral rules and guidelines as articulated by Harry's code, the character of Dexter only has and intellectual understanding of 'right' and 'wrong', thus is not driven by an urge for 'justice', but an urge to kill, which, combined with his intellectual understanding of morality provides his MO.

[25] Lou Ford in *The Killer Inside Me*, places himself clearly outside the law as soon as he starts an affair with a prostitute he was supposed to drive out of town, he uses police brutality without being provoked and there is no need for him to solve an actual crime during the course of the novel, he only needs to plant incriminating evidence against others. In other

words, Lou Ford is clearly a criminal using his position as Deputy Sheriff (which he gained through nepotism, rather than hard work) as a cover to keep him from being suspected.

[26] In this regard, *Dexter* is possibly most easily compared to *Columbo*, another 'irrational' detective who follows 'hunches' and then gathers 'rational-scientific' proof to confirm them. Yet, Dexter seems to have more information to base his 'hunches' on, often found in police data bases that provide him with information that his victims have killed before.

[27] While critics like Daniel P. Malloy (2011: 149) and Rachel Robison-Greene argue that Dexter often relies on luck and "happens to kill guilty people most of the time, but, given his investigative techniques, he could just as easily have killed innocent people. Sure, he does the occasional DNA test or background check, but he's much more likely to carry carving tools than fingerprint powder and luminal along with him on his little outings" (Robison-Greene 2011: 53), his process of deduction is logical and rational within the limits of fiction.

[28] Yet, overall, no matter which way we choose to look at *Dexter* and its definition of 'justice', as Dennis Eick argues, guilty criminals do not 'get away with it' and in its own way, the series is pre-occupied with a restoration of 'law and order' (Eick 2008: 156).

[29] Season 5 introduces a change in this structure since Rita's death in the final episode of Season 4 introduces an extreme change in the 'order' of Dexter's personal life and Season 5 mostly deals with the way the title character tries to establish some new kind of equilibrium that 'orders' his family life.

[30] Of course, in large parts, the series becomes only morally acceptable because Dexter would never be violent towards children, so the mere suggestion that he would cause any damage to his son is something the series does not even hint at.

[31] Though often treated like it, possibly due to its roots in discourses surrounding *Star Trek* (NBC, 1966-1969) and its various re-boots and spin-offs, the MOW structure, especially in its incarnations in the 1990s, does not imply narrative closure at the end of each episode. While the narrative openness of the soap in *The X-Files* became more pronounced in its second season, the early episodes already suggest larger mysteries (with the Smoking Man [William B. Davis] introduced in the pilot and Deep Throat [Jerry Hardin] in 'Deep Throat', 01/02), thus a flexi-narrative structure. In addition, the series' subject matter, dealing with 'unexplained phenomena', already necessitates a lack of solution to most mysteries investigated in each episode.

[32] Where *The X-Files* has yet to offer a resolution for its 'master narrative', and the series was proceeded by three films which were meant to shed some light on the mysteries laid out by the series' overarching storyline, *Dexter*'s 'master narratives' are either told through flashbacks and later 'hallucinations' that show Harry's education of Dexter and later the title characters conversations with his dead father (in many ways a reference to Michael C. Hall's role in *Six Feet Under* [HBO, 2001-2005]), or in the case of Dexter's relationship with his family are structured in a way that somewhat unstable resolutions are usually found at the end of each season (at the end of Season 4 even the somewhat extreme solution to his marital problems: Rita's death).

[33] Relating to *Miami Vice*, Bignell points out that the visuals also express the tension between surface and substance that lie at the centre of the narrative:

> In *Miami Vice*, what is introduced is more often a problem of deceptive appearance that the narrative may not find the right means to 'read'. Episode narratives are explicitly concerned with applying the law and dispensing justice, which is articulated as a problem of correctly recognising the good guys and the bad guys" (Bignell 2009: 23).

[34] As Carol Clover argues in *Men, Women and Chainsaws* (1992: 114-165), rape-revenge films often include moments of female empowerment and Season 5 clearly constructs her revenge as empowering for Lumen, but the fact that a straight, white male 'teaches' her how

to avenge her torturers, frames the entire experience according to his 'needs' and preferences and both end up killing together rather than her deciding the parameters of what ultimately should be her revenge (and she stops killing after her torturers are all dead, thus the story arc of the series is clearly framed by her fight and achievement of 'justice' rather than his), is problematic in regards to unquestioned male privilege.

[35] And it can be argued that the first years after 9/11 brought some of the most explicit and interesting depictions of homosexuality on US television with *Six Feet Under* (HBO, 2001-2005) and the American version of *Queer as Folk* (Showtime, 2000-2005), but also texts like *The Shield* and *The Wire*. The former text features a closeted policeman who struggles with his homosexuality and his Christian faith, the latter one features a homosexual African American gangster Omar Little.

[36] Quite possibly, this is another aspect of the 'style over substance' debate *Dexter* seems to relate to: instead of offering one straight-forward position, either like *The Wire* by offering an explicit political argument or like *CSI* through omissions and the use of binaries. *Dexter* seems to always affirm and question at the same time: where his code seems to affirm death penalty unequivocally, his killings are clearly illegal, which poses a central dilemma within the narrative; where he performs a white, straight, middle-class masculinity, it is always made clear that this is just performance, often fake. Even though some may construe his code as 'moral', Dexter himself follows it as a guideline to 'fit in' and seems to have no real concept of 'justice', remorse or 'morals'; in the interest of 'fitting in' series creators made a conscious choice to make Dexter a straight, white, middle-class, heterosexual man, which, as already discussed, comes with a number of implications. However, the series often draws attention to how difficult is to be anything else in what is clearly a racist, sexist, classist society (the issue of heteronormativity is mostly evaded): irrational, angry, black man Doakes gets framed for Dexter's crimes ("The British Invasion", 02/12), Dexter punishes both, the neurotic pyromaniac Lila (02/12) and the out-of-control (because he'd rather follow his own rules than Dexter's code) Latino man Miguel Prado ("I Had A Dream" 03/11), powerful women like Ellen Wolf (Anne Ramsey) either get murdered by men like Miguel Prado (interestingly enough it is a Latino man who feels threatened by Ellen's power, in "The Damage a Man Can Do", 03/08) or treated as either stupid (LaGuerta [Lauren Vélez] in Season 1) or paying a very high price (i.e. no or a highly dysfunctional personal life), as LaGuerta in later seasons and Debra. The text clearly highlights how impossible it is for 'others' to 'fit in', thus problematizing Dexter's heterosexuality, whiteness, middle-class-ness and masculinity. Thus, even the narrative of Season 5 draws out how impossible it would be for Lumen, a woman without friends, family or social status in Miami to kill her torturers herself without being detected if Dexter didn't help her to 'fit in'.

[37] It can be argued that Dexter is by no means the only 'Quality TV' series that relies on 'surface politics': in many ways, *True Blood* is doing something very similar by carrying all political allegory on its surface but denying any definite interpretation. It may be worth exploring in detail how, after a highly politicized phase of 'Quality TV' produced by HBO and other cable and network channels in the US, there currently seems to be a range of series that deny political interpretation.

# 9. <u>Conclusion</u>

The introduction to this thesis outlines my original interest in the genre and methods of detection as linked to the War on Terror (and legal concerns associated with it) and post-9/11 detective drama. As this thesis has shown, it can hardly be maintained that the tension between 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection within a broader television landscape is in any way limited to this time period when public discourse seemed to be so focussed on how to investigate and punish terrorists. Of course, the industry's interest in increasingly complex narratives and heightened moral ambiguity as well as a proliferation of technologies that can be used to broadcast and extend the experience of watching a television series in a TV III environment (as explained in Chapter 2) may have served to increase the amount of texts available to viewers. This media landscape may have led to a more pronounced tension between dramas such as *CSI* (CBS, 200- ) and *24* (Fox, 2001-2010) than was previously the case with, for example, the 1980s and 1990s predominantly (but not exclusively) producing dramas featuring 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection and the 1970s detectives often employing 'rational-scientific' methods of detection. The conditions of television production in the early 2000s possibly also brought about the changing television landscape in which the binary of 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection is deconstructed in a way that can help to start thinking about 'alternative' methods to access 'truth'. Yet, the tension associated with 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection has dominated the genre since the first hard-boiled novels were produced.

While any genre analysis is necessarily generalising, this thesis has explored the broad ideological implications of different methods of detection. In particular, this was done through an association of methods of detection with ideologies of 'truth-finding' that can

be broadly linked with modern discourses rooted in the Enlightenment and modernist discourses that were carried into postmodernity and developed further. The various case studies explored in this thesis have shown how concepts of 'truth-finding' are linked with specific epochal philosophies and ideologies. 'Rational-scientific' methods stem from modern discourses that are rooted in or an extension of Enlightenment thought patterns that rely on the development of scientific methodologies to establish one 'objective' 'truth'. The modern discourses that express this sort of enthusiasm tend to be optimistic towards scientific and technological developments and their integration into law enforcement. This also tends to involve a positive attitude towards the use of various kinds of surveillance equipment and record-keeping as part of the methods of detection, often privileging the 'safety' of citizens over democratic rights to privacy. Yet, 'safety' and 'protection' appear to be important factors within 'rational-scientific' detection as the kind of 'objective truth' promised already enforces the sense that some sort of 'salvation' is offered. The necessity for such safety is strongly related to a world view expressed in texts that employ 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection.

If 'rational-scientific' detection is rooted in Enlightenment and modern discourses, 'irrational-subjective' methods are linked with modernist discourses that can be understood as a counter-reaction to the optimism purported by the kind of modernism enthusiastic about scientific and technological 'progress'. Those developments in the later stages of modernism are sceptical towards this kind of 'progress', partly due to the way technology was put to use in the First World War. What first seems like a relatively conservative ideology that views alienation as a result of technological 'progress' also introduces a world view that allows for no graspable 'ordering' forces in society: where 'rational-scientific' methodologies with their promise of an 'objective truth' also offer clear-cut ways to 'order' such chaotic and seemingly inexplicable phenomena as violent crime,

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'irrational-subjective' methods appear to offer only coincidence and subjective knowledge as ways to access an always ambiguous 'truth'. This discourse later developed into postmodern concepts of pluralistic and individualistic societies where 'truth' is best accessed through somewhat 'subjective' knowledge (through personal relationships, physical experience of pain, grief, dreams, and so on). In the course of this, grand narratives and binary structures that were previously viewed as unquestioned 'truths' about the world are deconstructed as ideologically biased, culturally constructed and artificial. As a result of this broad 'project of deconstruction', disorienting and somewhat confused world views emerged, governed by ambiguity. As with the previous pessimistic modern discourses, this is also accompanied by different aesthetic movements that aim to deconstruct ideas of 'high' and 'low' culture and reflect the disorientation related to the 'project of deconstruction' (as impossible as any idea of a unified project is).

What emerges particularly strongly in dramas of the early 2000s is scepticism towards postmodernity's 'project of deconstruction' and its dis-orienting effects. Yet, this never implies a complete rejection of postmodernity. In some cases, postmodern aesthetics are used to express modern sentiments regarding 'order' and an optimistic view of technological and scientific 'progress'. Postmodern aesthetics are employed to visually develop 'rational-scientific' methods of detection and construct modern (and implicitly conservative, sometimes outright reactionary) binaries and re-construct grand narratives (often of science). In dramas that use 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection, what emerges is – after a celebration of pluralistic, fragmented societies in previous decades – a strong sense of 'loss' of moral guidelines. In other words, where *Twin Peaks* somewhat uncritically accepts the absence of 'judgement' for a man who sexually abused and murdered his daughter, *The Shield* (fX, 2002-2008) seems to be decidedly less comfortable with its inability to provide any sort of (legal) punishment. But where a drama like *CSI*

offers binaries as a solution to postmodern disorder, *The Shield* seems to be rejecting this solution by focussing on corrupt cops who frequently subvert this kind of 'order' (for example, by planting evidence) and ultimately declaring it impossible. Thus, it expresses scepticism towards the 'project of deconstruction', but fails to provide alternatives or solutions to the problem.

The last chapter dealt with ways 'alternative' methods of detection may be provided and new avenues of thought to offer different ways to access and attain 'truth', maybe as a next step after everything has been deconstructed. *The Wire* and *Dexter* do much to deconstruct binaries between 'rational-scientific' and 'irrational-subjective' methods of detection, *The Wire* by showing a world too complex to divide into binaries, *Dexter* by having all possible binaries collapse into one. Thus, both dramas heavily emphasise the necessity to re-think methods, but neither one appears completely capable to provide 'alternative' methods of detection. Yet, what becomes obvious is an implicit acknowledgement of the necessity to provide different ways to think about methods to access and attain 'truth'. This is interpreted here as a possible beginning of a new stage within postmodernism that may possibly provide ways to re-think modern binaries (maybe by finding a way in the future to resolve the uncomfortable dichotomy between postmodern aesthetics and modern 'order' purported by *CSI* and other contemporary dramas) or to provide entirely different ways to think about 'truth-finding'.

This development may also be related to changes in other 'branches' of society and culture, for example, long-term impacts the Arab Spring or the financial crash of 2008 will bring with them. As has been done throughout this thesis, methods of detection and the way they reflect philosophical discourses regarding 'truth-finding', need to be linked to socio-political developments in society. In the case of this thesis, due to its focus on

American drama, this means American society and politics. In this regard, it is tempting to view the proliferation of dramas using 'rational-scientific' methods of detection as a reaction to national crisis, and largely, this thesis views the 'security' and 'order' provided by these methods as a reaction to threatening disorder and national trauma. This escapist fantasy of 'safety' is not only provided through the promise of 'objective truth', but also by the illusion that a 'return' to an 'ordered' past (that never existed) is possible while embracing the technology of the present and future. The cynicism postmodernism is often accused of stems from its disbelief in such a grand narrative of the past, but while it acknowledges the multiple 'truths' about past and present, it tends to offer little 'security', thus seems to emerge mostly in times of relative stability (like the prosperous 1980s or after the elimination of a long-term adversary, as in the 1990s). Yet, these broad statements are not universally applicable. In particular, in a TV III environment with ever-increasing numbers of ways to watch, record or censor television drama, a series like *CSI* seems to elicit as many 'copies' as counter-reactions in regards to methods of detection as well as where aesthetics or narrative structures are concerned. The methods of detection and the way popular texts conceptualize ways to access and attain knowledge are always also linked to the specific moment in history they are produced in and the social and political developments these are associated with. However, these contexts are complex (just as discourses of 'past' and 'present' always are) and equations like 'national trauma = rational-scientific methods of detection' and 'relative political stability = irrational-subjective methods of detection' are bound to be simplistic views of genre, industrial and political history.

This thesis has argued throughout for methods of detection as a way to access the magnitude of texts included in the term detective genre. It has shown how the loose concepts of 'rational-scientific', 'irrational-subjective' and 'alternative' methods of

detection can help to grasp, conceptualize and access the genre. It has linked these methods of detection to internal genre discourses regarding the visualisation of clues and how to gain knowledge, to narrative structures and a chronological development of genre. It has also established a relationship with discourses external to the genre pertaining to socio-political tendencies in American society and a broader epochal-philosophical discourse relating to methodologies to access 'truth' through modern and postmodern frameworks.

The large amount of case studies analysed in this thesis from different periods offers a broad overview of how detective dramas can function within wider cultural discourses, but considering the large amount of texts that are included in the genre definition, this analysis had to exclude a variety of television dramas as central to the genre as *Peter Gunn* (NBC, 1958-1961), *Kojak* (CBS, 1973-1978), *Magnum, P.I.* (CBS, 1980-1988), *Remington Steele* (NBC, 1982-1987), *Miami Vice* (NBC, 1984-1989), *NYPD Blue* (ABC, 1993-2005) or *24* (Fox, 2001-2010). One of the main problems of genre analysis is that it can never include all texts and is necessarily somewhat generalising. However, this thesis has identified and analysed some of the broad tendencies of the genre and the concept of methods of detection can be easily applied to all texts that feature investigative processes. Furthermore, accessing genre through methods of detection necessarily means the silencing of a number of discourses, such as broader implications and functions of 'realism', the construction of 'quality' within the genre (seemingly measured through a text's relationship with concepts of film noir and 'realism'), the genre's relationship with surveillance culture and surveillance technology, or even how any kind of 'truth' is defined by individual texts. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the decision of what discourses can be included and which ones have to be excluded can seem somewhat arbitrary in discourse analysis that draws on Foucauldian concepts of discourse. However, the exclusion of discourses has been necessitated in this analysis through the focus on methods of detection,

thus excluding discourses that do not have a bearing on this specific feature. Furthermore, this thesis has only covered dramas that were first broadcast before 2008, a year that marked a change in American politics with the election of Barack Obama as president. This end of the Bush era not only saw a re-naming of the War on Terror into Overseas Contingency Operations, it also saw a change in political rhetoric and a shift in the power balance between the Republican and the Democratic Party. 2008 also marked a shift in the focus of American political debates away from terrorism (and, to a certain extent, foreign politics) to more domestic concerns, particularly the financial crisis. This marked difference in the political discourse on terrorism and issues of how to catch and punish a criminal necessarily influence the way methods of detection are depicted in *Hawaii Five-0* (CBS, 2010- ) and *NCIS: Los Angeles* (CBS, 2009- ), which, interestingly, in a post-Bush environment, diverts from the methods of detection depicted in *NCIS* (CBS, 2003- ). A more detailed analysis of the *CSI* franchise may also reveal a (subtle) shift in the representation of science with the start of the Obama era. Yet, while these issues pose interesting questions for further research, the scope of this project does not allow for such a discussion here.

Another aspect that may need to be considered elsewhere is how applicable the distinction into 'rational-scientific', 'irrational-subjective' and 'alternative' methods of detection is in other national contexts. While it can be easily argued that detective narratives in all Western cultures stem from the same Golden Age and hard-boiled tradition (after all, the stories were translated into many different languages), there may be other aspects that come to bear on discourses surrounding methods of detection that are specific to national traditions. Furthermore, other ways to formulate an 'alternative' method of detection may be easier accomplished in the context of non-English-speaking traditions. Within the British context, the distinction into 'rational-scientific', 'irrational-subjective' and

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'alternative' methods of detection can be quite easily applied. Dramas such as *Luther* (BBC, 2010- ) or *The Bletchley Circle* (ITV, 2012- ) stand out as examples that may offer a different view on the deconstruction of the 'rational-scientific'/'irrational-subjective' binary that may help in developing a clearer idea of an 'alternative' method of detection. However, such an analysis, giving consideration to nationally specific television history, industrial landscape and contemporary socio-political concerns cannot be offered here.

What has been shown throughout this thesis is how the analysis of methods of detection can help to position the genre within wider socio-political and ideological contexts that help unravel the genre's function within society. While the detective genre links in with a number of discourses that had to be neglected here, this thesis has shown how methods of detection can serve as a representation of ideologies of 'truth-finding' that help understand the individual texts' links with contemporary socio-political and cultural concerns.

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### 10.1.3. <u>TV</u>

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*24* (2001-2010), USA: Fox

*Battlestar Galactica* (2004-2009), USA: Sci-Fi

*Bones* (2005-), USA: Fox

*Buffy, the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003), USA: WB

*Cagney & Lacey* (1981-1988), USA: CBS

*Columbo* (1971-1990), USA: NBC

*Charlie's Angels* (1976-1981), USA: ABC

*COPS* (1989- ), USA: Fox

*Criminal Minds* (2005- ), USA: CBS

*Crossing Jordan* (2001-2007), USA: NBC

*CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (2000-), USA: CBS

*CSI: Miami* (2002-2012), USA: CBS

*CSI: NY* (2004-2013), USA: CBS

*Deadwood* (2004-2006), USA: HBO

*Desperate Housewives* (2004- ), USA: ABC

*Diagnosis Murder* (1993-2001), USA: CBS

*Dallas* (1978-1991), USA: CBS

*Dragnet* (1951-1959), USA: NBC

*Dragnet* (1967-1970), USA: NBC

*Dexter* (2006- ), USA: Showtime

*Dynasty* (1981-1989), USA: ABC

*Edge of Darkness* (1985), UK: BBC

*ER* (NBC, 1994-2009)

*Eureka* (2006- ), USA: NBC

*Happy Days* (1974-1984), USA: ABC

*Hart to Hart* (1979-1984), USA: ABC

*Hawaii Five-0* (1968-1980), USA: CBS

*Hawaii Five-0* (2010- ), USA: CBS

*Hill Street Blues* (1981-1987), USA: NBC

*Homeland* (2011- ), USA: Showtime

*Homicide: Life on the Street* (1993-1999), USA: NBC

*House, M.D.* (2004-2012), USA: Fox

*I Love Lucy* (1951-1957), USA: CBS

*Ironside* (1967-1975), USA: NBC

*Knight Rider* (1982-1986), USA: NBC

*Kojak* (1973-1978), USA: CBS

*Law & Order* (1990-2010), USA: NBC

*Lie to Me* (2009-2011), USA: Fox

*Life* (2007-2009), USA: NBC

*Lost* (2004-2010), USA: ABC

*Luther* (2010- ), UK: BBC

*Max Headroom* (1987-1989), USA: ABC

*McCloud* (1970-1977), USA: NBC

*McMillan & Wife* (1971-1977), USA: NBC

*Mad Men* (2007- ), USA: AMC

*Magnum, P.I.* (1980-1988), USA: CBS

*Miami Vice* (1984-1989), USA: NBC

*Mission: Impossible* (1966-1973), USA: CBS

*Monk* (2002-2009), USA: USA Network

*Moonlighting* (1985-1989), USA: ABC

*Mrs Columbo* (1979-1980), USA: NBC

*Murder, She Wrote* (1984-1996), USA: CBS

*NCIS: Los Angeles* (2009- ), USA: CBS

*NCIS* (2003-), USA: CBS

*Nip/Tuck* (2003-2010), USA: FX

*Numb3rs* (2005-2010), USA: CBS

*NYPD Blue* (1993-2005), USA: ABC

*Oz* (1997-2003), USA: HBO

*Perry Mason* (1957-1966), USA: CBS

*Peter Gunn* (1958-1961), USA: NBC

*Prime Suspect* (1991-2003), UK: ITV, ITV1

*Psych* (2006- ), USA: USA Network

*Remington Steele* (1982-1987), USA: NBC

*Riptide* (1984-1986), USA: NBC.

*Queer as Folk* (2000-2005), USA: Showtime.

*Quincy M.E.* (1976-1983), USA: NBC

*Scarecrow and Mrs. King* (1983-1987), USA: CBS

*Screenwipe* (2006), UK: BBC

*Sex and the City* (1998-2004), USA: HBO

*Sherlock* (2010- ), UK: BBC

*Simon & Simon* (1981-1989), USA: CBS

*Six Feet Under* (2001-2005), USA: HBO

*South Park* (1997- ), USA: Comedy Central

*Starsky and Hutch* (1975-1979), USA: ABC

*St. Elsewhere* (1982-1988), USA: NBC

*Star Trek* (1966-1969), USA: NBC

*State of Play* (2003), UK: BBC

*Survivor* (2000- ), USA: CBS

*The A-Team* (1983-1987), USA, NBC

*The Bletchley Circle* (2012- ), UK: ITV1

*The Big Bang Theory* (2007- ), USA: CBS

*The Equalizer* (1985-1989), USA: CBS

*The Inspector Lynley Mysteries* (2001- ), UK: BBC.

*The Killing* (Forbrydelsen, 2007- ), DK: DR

*The Killing* (2011- ), USA: AMC

*The L Word* (2004-2009), USA: Showtime

*The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* (1964-1968), USA: NBC.

*The Mentalist* (2008-), USA: CBS

*The Mod Squad* (1968-1973), USA: ABC

*The Philco Television Playhouse* (1948-1955), USA: NBC

*The Rockford Files* (1974-1980), USA: NBC

*The Shield* (2002-2008), USA: fX Network

*The Simpsons* (1989- ), USA: Fox

*The Sopranos* (1999-2007), USA: HBO

*The Streets of San Francisco* (1972-1977), USA: ABC

*The Untouchables* (1959-1963), USA: CBS

*The Walking Dead* (2010- ), USA: AMC.

*The West Wing* (1999-2006), USA: NBC

*The Wire* (2002-2008), USA: HBO

*The Wonder Years* (1988-1993), USA: ABC

*The X-Files* (1993-2002), USA: Fox

*thirtysomething* (1987-1989), USA: ABC

*T.J. Hooker* (1982-1986), USA: ABC

*True Blood* (2008- ), USA: HBO

*Twin Peaks* (1990-1991), USA: ABC

*Will & Grace* (1998-2006), USA: NBC

*Wallander* (2008), UK and Germany: BBC, ARD)


### 10.1.4. <u>Radio</u>

*Dragnet* (1949-1957), USA: NBC

*The Adventures of the Thin Man* (1941-1942, 1944, 1948.1949), USA: NBC

*The Adventures of the Thin Man* (1943-1947), USA: CBS

*The Fat Man* (1946-1951), USA: ABC


### 10.1.5. <u>Video Games</u>

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