

A World of Crime

Police Procedurals

Speaker: Helen Nelson

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Police Procedurals

- Definition
 - A detective story where the main detective is a police detective (or a group of them)
 - Some might exclude stories that are like that where we know "who dunnit" from the start (and the detective may or may not)
 - Some might exclude stories where the cop involved is a "loose cannon" or not exactly running true to life.
 - But I would include all those
 - Some would include the private eye in those too
 - But I would not

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Police Procedurals

- Definition (continued)
 - And they can cross with any or all of the other sub-genres
 - Traditional (no or very limited on screen sex, graphic violence or swearing)
 - Hard boiled (tough guy in this instance cop)
 - Noir (where the protagonist starts in a bad place and things go downhill from there)
 - Woo-woo (ghosts, goblins, werewolves and vampires)
 - Dogs (cats too?)
 - And more...

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Police Procedurals

- So what is the history?
 - There are early examples
 - The Moonstone by Wilkie Collins (1880s), where Sergeant Cuff attempts to uncover who stole the moonstone is often described as the first police procedural
 - But the subgenre didn't really take off till after WWII and at first was quite American
 - Movies and TV had a big influence
 - Drognet
 - The Naked City
 - Elliot Ness

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Police Procedurals

- In fact it was Anthony Boucher (that guy who Bouchercon is named after) who is credited with coining the phrase "police Procedural"
 - He felt the earliest one was a book from 1945 "V as in Victim" by Lawrence Treat
 - But he coined the phrase in 1956

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Police Procedurals

- Ed McBain
 - You may know that was a pen name for Evan Hunter (Blackboard Jungle)
 - But you may not know that he legally adopted THAT name in 1952
 - Born as Salvatore Albert Lombino
 - Also wrote under several other pen names
 - And was a movie writer too – most notably "The Birds"
 - He wrote a couple of series
 - Matthew Hope (a private eye)
 - 87th precinct novels
 - Probably the best known police procedural novels
 - Set in New York City

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Police Procedurals

- Ed McBain (continued)
 - 87th precinct (continued)
 - Very realistic
 - Each novel revolving around that precinct
 - 54 of them! And many novellas and short stories
 - His central character was Steve Carella
 - But many of the novels don't have him as a character at all
 - Really the central character is the 87th precinct
 - There was also a TV show based on these novels in the 1961-1962 season
 - He began each novel with the following:
 - *"The city in these pages is imaginary. The people, the places are all fictitious. Only the police routine is based on established investigatory technique."*

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Police Procedurals

- John Creasey/JJ Maric
 - Over 600 novels under 28 pen names
 - We probably know his police procedurals best under the JJ Maric Pen Name
 - The Commander James Gideon (of Scotland Yard) (21 of them between 1956 and 1976)
 - Also Chief Inspector Roger West (as John Creasey)
 - 43 of them between 1942 and 1978

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Police Procedurals

- Georges Simenon
 - Almost 500 novels!
 - Belgian, living in France and published most often there
 - Already a much published writer, in 1930 Simenon introduced us to Inspector (Commissionaire?) Jules Amedée François Maigret
 - 76 novels, 28 short stories

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Police Procedurals

- Maj Sjöwall and Per Waloo
 - I spoke of them in the first session when I talked about the Scandinavians
 - They are among my favourite mystery authors and definitely the first Scandinavians I read
 - Martin Beck is the detective

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Police Procedurals

- Tony Hillerman
 - Jim Chee, Joe Leaphorn series (sometimes working together, more often apart)
 - 18 Novels featuring these detectives with the Navajo Tribal Police
 - Four corners area of New Mexico and Arizona with some forays into Utah and Colorado (primarily New Mexico)
 - The question was raised a few sessions back about whether Novel settings have inspired folks to travel to an area
 - Novels rich in Cultural detail, in particular the Navajo culture
 - Chee, the younger of the two detectives is staunch believer in Navajo cultural beliefs and practices, while Leaphorn (educated in the residential school system) is far more sceptical
 - The crimes themselves are often very intertwined with Navajo beliefs and culture
 - Pot thieves
 - Skinwalkers

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Police Procedurals

- Chester Himes
 - Life and writing coloured by a childhood experience
 - His older brother, blinded in an explosion, was refused treatment in a "whites only" hospital (under Jim Crow laws)
 - Wrote gut searing accounts of the treatment of Harlem residents at the hands of the police.
 - In 1928 was sentenced to 20 to 25 years in jail for armed robbery
 - His first published work was written and published while he was in prison
 - Continued to write after he was released from prison in 1936
 - His first novel (1945), If He Hollers Let Him Go, is considered an anti-racist protest novel, but it's also a crime novel
 - He had also worked as a screenwriter, but was fired, when it is alleged that Jack Warner said "I don't want no niggers on this lot!"

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Police Procedurals

- Chester Himes (continued)
 - Also Harlem Detective novels featuring Coffin Ed Johnson and Graveyarder Jones both of the NYPD.
 - 9 in total, though the 9th is unfinished.
 - These are not pretty books
 - They are hard hitting profiles of the racism felt by black Americans in Harlem in the 1950s and 1960s.
 - The cops themselves are brutal too – soft on the victims of crime but hard (and brutal at times) on the perpetrators
 - A law unto themselves often using extralegal (illegal?) means to achieve their ends.

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Police Procedurals

- Some General points
 - Plot to character
 - Fleshing out the detectives lives
 - Hillerman and Chee for instance already have stories of and from their personal lives intertwined with the mysteries they are solving
 - And more and more the detective as lone wolf or loose cannon or even crooked him (or her) self.
 - Stories that purists might not consider true police procedurals
 - You'll notice that most of the above are men, not so in the more modern police procedurals

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Police Procedurals

- Peter May
 - 26 mystery and crime novels
 - At least 9 of those are police procedurals
 - The Lewis Trilogy
 - Set in the Lewis Islands off of the Coast of Scotland
 - The China Thrillers
 - Set in Modern Day China
 - Noted for their accurate depiction of Chinese police procedure
 - Though the main Chinese detective is definitely of the lone wolf school of detection
 - May has been accorded membership in the Chinese crime writers (the only Western Writer to have been invited to join)

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Police Procedurals

- Peter James
 - 15 Roy Grace Novels – all with the word "Dead" in the title
 - All set in Brighton (in the UK)
 - Sold 19 million copies world wide

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Police Procedurals

- PD James and Ruth Rendell
 - Who can forget Adam Dalgliesh (James) or Chief Inspector Wexford (Rendell)?
- 14 Dalgliesh novels
 - Dalgliesh is an aristocrat and a poet as well as a police detective
- 24 Wexford novels
 - Wexford is intelligent an sensitive

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Police Procedurals

- Jo Nesbo
 - I mentioned Jo Nesbo in the intro session as well.
 - I mention him again because I still find myself wondering how it is that such a violent series comes out of one of the least violent countries in the world.
 - Norway has 1/3 the number of murders that Canada has
 - And Canada has less than 1/4 the number in the US
 - But Harry Hole, Nesbo's protagonist IS a detective with the Oslo police
 - And a classic example of the loose cannon, lone wolf type of detective!

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Police Procedurals

- Michael Connelly
 - I mentioned Michael Connelly in the last session.
 - Three main characters/series
 - Lincoln Lawyer (half brother to Harry Bosch) (5)
 - Harry Bosch (LAPD) (22)
 - Renee Ballard (LAPD and Bosch's daughter)(1)
 - And he often puts the characters in each other's books!

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Police Procedurals

- Karen Slaughter
 - Grand County Series (6 books)
 - Elements of Police Procedural from 3 points of view, 2 detectives and a coroner
 - And their entangled relations (the coroner and one of the cops were married)
 - Will Trent (11 books)
 - Set in Atlanta with Georgia Bureau of Investigation Detective Will Trent and his partner Faith Mitchell

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Police Procedurals

- Derick B Miller
 - American by Day
 - A Norwegian Detective works with (and not so with) an American Sheriff in upstate New York (the Watertown, Adirondacks area)
 - The clash of cultures both police and more generally makes a great story
 - And a lot of humour

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Police Procedurals

- LR Wright
 - 9 Karl Alberg Mysteries
 - 2 Edwina Henderson
 - All set on the Sunshine Coast of British Columbia
 - Both detectives with the RCMP
 - Winner of many awards including the Edgar for The Suspect her first mystery (1985)
 - All of them low key and not violent
 - In The Suspect, we know from the get go that 80 year old George Wilcox has killed Carlyle Burke (85)
 - But Karl Alberg doesn't know that, and neither he nor we know why

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Police Procedurals

- Barbara Fradkin
 - Inspector Green of the Ottawa Police
 - 10 novels in this series
 - Again something of a Maverick detective
 - According to Wikipedia Fradkin herself describes Green as:
 - "the impetuous, exasperating Ottawa Police Inspector Michael Green, whose passion for justice and love of the hunt often conflicts with family, friends and police protocol."

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Police Procedurals

- Peter Robinson
 - Born in the UK, but has lived in Canadas since he moved here to study in 1974
 - Books (most of them) are set in the UK in the Yorkshire Dales
 - DCI Banks was formerly with the "Met" but left for the dales for a quieter life
 - With the number of cases he has to solve, he isn't getting it!
 - There are 26 books now in the series

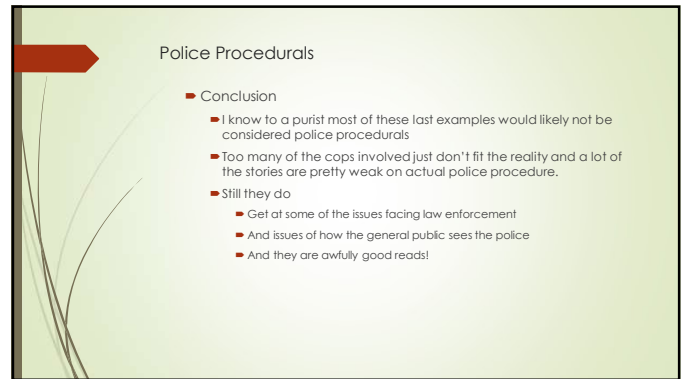
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Police Procedurals

- 10 others
 - Martin Cruz Smith
 - Elizabeth George
 - Maureen Jennings
 - Eric Wright
 - Val McDermid
 - Tana French
 - Ian Rankin
 - James Lee Burke
 - Tess Gerritson
 - J.A. Jance

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Police Procedurals

- Conclusion
 - I know to a purist most of these last examples would likely not be considered police procedurals
 - Too many of the cops involved just don't fit the reality and a lot of the stories are pretty weak on actual police procedure.
 - Still they do
 - Get at some of the issues facing law enforcement
 - And issues of how the general public sees the police
 - And they are awfully good reads!

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