

A World of Crime

The Americans

Speaker: Helen Nelson

1

The Americans

- Nancy Drew/Hardy Boys/Tom Swift
- All done by the Stratemeyer Syndicate
 - 109 series beginning with Rover Boys in 1899
 - The Hardy Boys began in 1927 and ended 190 books later in 2004
 - Nancy Drew began in 1930 and ended 175 books later in 2003
- No Carolyn Keene, no Franklin W Dixon
 - Written by many different authors
 - \$125 to \$250 per book (about 3 month salary) in the 30s
 - The syndicate owned the characters and series
- Last Stratemeyer Syndicate was in 1984
 - After that the syndicate was sold to Simon and Schuster
- Lots of similar series NOT done by Stratemeyer
 - Judy Bolton, Cherry Ames, Trixie Beldon, Donna Parker

2

The Americans

- Current YA/Children's authors
 - Chris Grabenstein
 - Angie Thomas
 - Joelle Charbeneau
 - Penny Warner

3


The Americans

- These created readers, and had huge influence on the crime fiction genre
- But of course the genre itself had many other influences
- A few weeks back I talked of Poe, Collins and Doyle and Marian expanded on that when she talked about the British writers.
- I want to look at a different area.
- The Pulp
 - Primarily an American phenomena (though they were in Britain and Germany as well)
 - Popular starting in the late 1800s through to the early 1950s

4

The Americans

- Look at some of these covers:




5

The Americans

- The children of the pulps:
 - 
- Short stories only first published in 1941 (though there was a predecessor in the 30s)
- Still publishing to this day!

6

The Americans

- Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine:
 
- First published in 1955 and continues till now
- Again, short stories
- And for years had a picture of Hitchcock on the cover

7

The Americans

- And of course there was Poe – though he set his mystery stories in Paris
 - 1820 the Sûreté was created in France
 - 1842, a detective branch added to the Metropolitan Police (London)
 - And detectives added later in the US
 - And through Dupin sets patterns that are used to this day
 - The brilliant detective
 - The admiring (though less brilliant) sidekick/narrator
 - Ineffectual local police
 - Numerous clues
 - The puzzle
 - The locked room mystery
 - The final denouement (presented by the somewhat condescending detective)

8

The Americans

- Less well, and slightly later we have
- Anna Kathryn Green
 - 30 to 40 novels
 - The Leavenworth Case (1878)
 - Available on line through the Gutenberg Project and free on Kindle
 - Paper volumes still available too!
 - And one book a year until her death
 - First female detective – Violet Strange
 - First female detective story writer
 - Greatly admired by writers such as Agatha Christie
 - Considered today to be somewhat melodramatic

9

The Americans

- Mary Roberts Rineheart
 - Started writing short stories to help with her family's financial difficulties
 - Became one of the best paid US writers prior to WW1
 - Romantic Suspense
 - The Circular Staircase (1908)
 - "Had I but known"
 - Still available as a book and
 - Free on Kindle and from Gutenberg

10

The Americans

- For years – from Poe, though Christie and others above the mystery genre dealt with the rich and powerful – the upper classes – where at the end order is neatly restored.
- And then we get (in the later part of the 20s/30s – Hard Boiled/Noir)
 - Earl Derr Biggers – The House Without a Key (Charlie Chan) 1926
 - Dashiell Hammett – The Maltese Falcon (1930)
 - James M Cain – The Postman Always Rings Twice (1934)
 - Raymond Chandler – The Big Sleep (1939)
 - Later a session on Noir, which may include these (or books like them)
 - But where does this huge shift come from?
 - Some will suppose its from the real life of the mean streets
 - Prohibition, gangsters
 - A need to tell the real, or more real stories

11

The Americans

- It's a big shift
- And for the first while anyway, an American take on crime fiction
- And, I think, more male dominated than prior to that point (or since)
 - There can't have been none, but can't find female authors of hard boiled from that era
- What is common with the Golden Age though
 - Plot driven rather than character driven

12

The Americans

- Ross MacDonald
 - Canadian/American Kenneth Millar
 - The Lew Archer Novels starting with The Moving Target in 1949
 - 17 more ending with The Blue Hammer in 1976
 - 4 other non-series novels between 1947 and 1960 – the earliest 2 under his own name
 - 3 short story collections
- John D. MacDonald
 - 18 Travis McGee novels starting in 1964 with The Deep Blue Goodbye
 - Through to The Lonely Silver Rain in 1985
 - 42 other novels between 1950 and 1986
 - 3 SciFi Novels
 - 5 works of non-fiction
 - Almost 500 short stories over several genres

13

The Americans

- Margaret Millar
 - 27 Novels from 1941 The Invisible Worm
 - To 1986 Spider Webs
 - Character Driven, psychological suspense
 - No long term series
- Craig Rice
 - Hard boiled detective meets screwball comedy
 - 18 Novels between 1939 and 1957
 - 7 more published after her death, and all or in part written or completed by others

14

The Americans

- Patricia Highsmith
 - Started as a comic book script writer
 - 22 Novels starting with Strangers on a Train (1950)
 - Ending with Small g: A Summer Idyll published after her death in 1995
 - Also The Talented Mr. Ripley (1955), plus 4 more
 - 1 children's book
 - 9 short story collections (including 1 published after her death)
 - 1 book on writing suspense fiction

15

The Americans

- Donald Westlake
 - Also 19 pseudonyms the best known is Richard Stark
 - About 100 or so books, including soft porn between 1956 and 1964
 - Using the Stratemeyer method – pseudonyms were shared among several authors
 - Using the Stark name he wrote about Parker a professional thief
 - And using his own name the humorous Dortmunder series
- Lawrence Sanders
 - At least 9 pseudonyms,
 - 18 Matt Scudder novels (a 19th a month ago), 11 Bernie Rhodenbarr
 - About 80 other Novels and 10 Short story collections
 - Along with Donald Westlake wrote soft porn in the 50s and early 60s

16

The Americans

- Bill Pronzini
 - 46 novels in the "nameless detective" series
 - 48 other novels and 11 short story collections
 - Assembled 99 anthologies
 - First novel in 1971 and still going
- George Pelecanos
 - A generation (or two) younger than the previous 3
 - 20 novels (4 Series) and still going
 - Starting with A Firing Offense in 1992
 - Writer/producer on TV series "The Wire"

17

The Americans

- In the courtroom
- Earl Stanley Gardner
 - Part of the foundation (first published in 1921)
 - First Perry Mason in 1933
- Grisham
 - Starting with A Time to Kill in 1989
 - And continuing for 39 more books + 4 short story collections
 - Many movies (starting with The Firm)
 - Active supporter of the Innocence Project

18

The Americans

- In the courtroom
- Lisa Scottoline
 - 33 novels (including the one to be released in April)
 - Starting with Final Appeal in 1994
 - 10 Non-fiction works including the humorous "Why My Next Husband Will be a Dog"
- Kate Wilhelm
 - Writer of both Sci-Fi and Crime Novels plus some poetry and non-fiction
 - 16 Sci Fi Novels and many, Novellas, Short Stories and collections
 - 30 Crime Novels, including 14 legal thrillers
 - First novel (a crime novel) More Bitter Than Death 1962
 - Last Mirror Mirror in 2017

19

The Americans

- Before Sara Paretsky, before Sue Grafton...
- Marcia Muller
 - 49 novels
 - 16 anthologies and collections
 - Starting with her first Marcia McCone, Edwin of the Iron Shoes in 1977
 - The most recent is The Breakers published last summer

20

The Americans

- Sue Grafton
 - 2 novels in 1967 and 1973
 - Script writing
 - Then Starting with A if for Alibi, (1982) 24 more Kinsey Milhone novels
 - There will be no "Z"
- Sara Paretsky
 - 21 novels starting with Indemnity Only in 1982
 - Her most recent (2018) Shell Game
 - 2 short story collections
 - Editor of 3 anthologies
 - 3 non-fiction books
 - Considered the founding mother of Sisters In Crime

21

The Americans

- Michael Connelly
 - 33 Novels, featuring Harry Bosch, Micky Haller, Renee Ballard with mostly Bosch as the lead character but often some of the others
 - Starting with The Black Echo in 1992
 - After 4 novels was able to quit his day job to write full time
- Dennis Lehane
 - 14 novels starting with A Drink Before the War (1994)
 - Most recently Since We Fell (2017)
 - 2 series
 - Writing for movies and TV (another writer for The Wire)

22

The Americans

- Robert Crais
 - Began as a screen writer for Hill Street Blues, Cagney & Lacey and Miami Vice
 - First novel The Monkey's Raincoat (1987)
 - Most recently The Wanted (2017)
- John Lescroart
 - 27 Novels starting with Son of Holmes (1986)
 - Most recent Poison (2018)
 - Most popular series is Dismas Hardy series (16 of them)

23

The Americans

- The modern cozy
- Lilian Jackson Braun
 - 30 The Cat Who... novels
 - 3 between 1966 and 1968
 - Then a gap until 1986 when she picked them up again
- Rita Mae Brown/Sneaky Pie Brown
 - Feminist novelists (Rubyfruit Jungle 1973) turned mystery writer
 - Now has 41 mysteries starting with Wish You Were Here (1990)
 - The 41st will be published in June of this year – Whiskers in the Dark
 - Many of her mysteries are told from the perspective of the animals (cats, dogs, horses) populating them.

24

The Americans

- The modern cozy
- Donna Andrews
 - 29 Mysteries, 25 in the Meg Lanslow series, 4 in the Turing Hopper
 - Meg Lanslow started as a blacksmith
 - Turing Hopper is a sentient AI being
- Diane Mott Davidson
 - 18 Food themed mysteries
 - Catering to Nobody 1990
 - The Whole Enchilada 2013 is the last one I can find
 - Each book contains recipes!
 - And there's a cookbook too.

25

The Americans

- Laura Lippman
 - Former Newspaper reporter
 - 22 novels, starting with Baltimore Blues(1997)
 - Most recently Sunburn 2018
- Karen Slaughter
 - 25 novels (2 series and several stand-alones)
 - Starting with Blindsight(2001)
 - Most recent: Pieces of Her(2018)
 - And coming this year The Last Widow

26

The Americans

- Megan Abbott
 - 9 Novels (all stand-alone)
 - Starting with Die A Little (2005)
 - Most recent (2018)
 - 1 non-fiction work
 - Writer for series The Deuce

27

The Americans

- Lee Child
 - Pen name for James D. Grant
 - 24 Jack Reacher Novels
 - Starting with Killing Floor in 1997
 - Most recent the soon to be published Blue Moon
 - He refers to his novels as "revenge" novels
- Tony Hillerman
 - 18 Joe Leaphorn and Jim Chee Novels
 - Starting with The Blessing Way (1970)
 - Ending with The Shape Shifter (2006)
 - 4 other non-series novels
 - 7 non-fiction works
 - His series characters are used in 4 novels written since 2013 by his daughter Anne Hillerman

28

The Americans

- Kristine Kathryn Rusch
 - Best known for her Sci-Fi and Fantasy work
 - But 15 novels in her Retrieval Artist series (mysteries set in space)
 - Starting with The Disappeared (2002) and most recently with Masterminds (2015)
 - 8 Smokey Dalton mysteries as Kris Nelscott
 - A Dangerous Road (2000) to Street Justice (2015)
- Charlaine Harris
 - Think the series True Blood
 - 47 titles in multiple series
 - A lot of short stories and novellas in the same series
 - Vampires, Zombies, werewolves, waitresses and cleaning ladies

29

The Americans

- Six newbies you should read
 - Gail Massey
 - Kellye Garrett
 - Joe Ide
 - Bill Beverly
 - A.J. Finn
 - Kristin Lepionka

30



The slide features a light green background with a dark green arrow pointing right at the top left. The title "The Americans" is centered at the top. Below it, a bulleted list is titled "The community".

The Americans

- The community
 - Bouchercon - 1970
 - Thrillerfest - 2006
 - Malice Domestic - 1989
 - Left Coast Crime - 1991
 - Sisters in Crime - founded 1986
 - MWA - 1945

31



The slide features a light green background with a dark green arrow pointing right at the top left. The title "The Americans" is centered at the top. Below it, a bulleted list is titled "The Awards".

The Americans

- The Awards
 - Edgar - 1946 (starting with best first by an American author)
 - Anthony - 1986 ("B is for Burglar first best novel)
 - Agathas - 1988
 - Leftie - since 1996

32