Cozies, Capers, and Other Criminal Endeavors

Utilizing Taxonomies of Mystery Fiction to Improve Genre Access

Catherine Oliver

Mystery fiction has long been a genre popular with the reading public, and the development of the Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms (LCGFT) offers new opportunities for catalogers to provide access to this genre. But how does one determine which subgenre terms to use? This paper postulates that by consulting typologies of the mystery constructed by scholars and aficionados of the genre, it is possible to get a sense of how readers imagine the various types of the mystery and what subgenre terms might be useful in helping them find the type of book they desire. A common thread in the typologies considered by the author is the omission and minimizing of subgenres traditionally considered feminine, such as the cozy and the romantic suspense novel. This paper outlines some of the common criticisms and urges taxonomists not to overlook these subgenres.

"You may be wondering why I have asked you all to gather together." Such is the stereotypical end to every whodunit since the first stories in which malefactors, obeying their own version of the Sierra Club saying, take only lives and leave only footprints (and occasionally ashes from their obscure tobaccos). The detective gathers the suspects in the drawing room and leads them on a detailed journey from bafflement to enlightenment, accusing various persons before finally wringing a confession from the guilty party.

The author's goal in writing this paper was to study how the mystery novel has traditionally been treated in the library cataloging practices and scholarly typologies used to create a taxonomy of the genre. This is an exciting time in fiction cataloging. The first list of Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms (LCGFT), a vocabulary that aims to make discovery of materials by genre possible, was recently published, and catalogers have been encouraged to submit new terms as needed. This paper aims to suggest new methods for creating comprehensive and usable genre headings.

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Literature Review

Libraries have not always been hospitable to fiction. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, library access to imaginative literature in the United States was extremely limited; moral and intellectual objections to the novel meant that

most libraries, especially those open to the general public, either forbade it or deliberately limited their collections. The formation of the American public library system fundamentally altered this state of affairs. Ticknor, in his report to the Boston Public Library, specifically recommended that libraries "[follow] the popular taste- unless it should ask for something unhealthy."[1] What that meant in practice was that, in the late nineteenth-century public library, the reading of fiction was tolerated but not encouraged. Very few libraries actually banned imaginative literature outright; however, various shelving and circulation policies were adopted to dissuade patrons from reading novels, or, at any rate, too many novels.[2]

As the nineteenth century neared its end, prejudice against fiction as a literary type began to ebb. Indeed, sixteen percent of the works on the recommended book-purchase list provided by the American Library Association (ALA) in 1893 were fictional titles.[3] Next came battles about what was then termed "light fiction": its worth and its morals. Mystery fiction as a genre was always complicated. For example, Gaboriau's stories about Lecoq of the Sûreté (one of the first fictional police detectives) were condemned in 1882 by the Young Men's Association of Buffalo, but were recommended in the second edition of Perkins's *Best Reading*, published in 1887.[4] ALA included Wilkie Collins on a questionnaire about authors whose works might be subject to challenge on "sensational or immoral grounds," only to discover that all of the responding libraries had Collins's books on their shelves and none had received a complaint.[5] By the twentieth century, librarians had come to terms with the presence of light fiction, including genre fiction, in their libraries (although some still lodged objections against mysteries that glamorized criminals, such as Hornung's *The Amateur Cracksman*); however, there were still attempts to limit the amount of genre fiction purchased.[6] The situation changed after World War I. A new generation of librarians believed in giving the public what it wanted rather than acting as educators and censors, and fiction entered the library en masse.[7] Today, as Haycraft and Symons pointed out in histories of the genre published nearly twenty years apart, the mystery novel is an important part of library collections.[8]

Discoverability of Mysteries in the Catalog

But the question then arises: how is a reader to find all the mysteries that have been purchased? They could be shelved in a separate section, and many libraries, especially public libraries, follow this practice. However, that solution is not very practicable for an academic or research library, where literatures are traditionally placed in the contexts of place, time, and language, and any attempt to unmoor and separate the genre fiction would result in an incomplete picture of each nationality's culture. If physical collocation is not possible, then intellectual collocation, through the catalog, is a library's traditional next step. However, an examination of the history and present of fiction cataloging indicates that there are issues that need to be resolved before mysteries can be truly accessible to patrons. In particular, how the question of access to fiction by genre and subgenre has been handled must be examined.

Fiction has traditionally been cataloged much more austerely than nonfiction in American libraries. For many years, the standard practice was to provide only two access points for an individual work of fiction: title and author, with subject access points allowed only under certain limited circumstances.[9] Genre subject access (the expression of a work's "isness") and topical subject access (the expression of a work's "aboutness") were both lacking; indeed, are still lacking, since the bibliographic records that catalogers create live after they and their standards retire, with the result that even the most modern Library Services Platform (LSP) contains any number of basic records for fictional works.

Indexing Fiction

Over the years, several library theorists advocated for more access points for fiction, particularly for genre access points. The most famous was perhaps Charles Ammi Cutter, who wrote in his *Rules for a Dictionary Catalog*, "It would be convenient to have full lists of the single works in the library in all the various kinds of literature, and when space can be afforded [in the catalog] they ought to be given."[10] He made a clear differentiation between genre and topic: "Under the names of certain subjects we give lists of the authors who have treated of those subjects; under the names of certain kinds of literature we give lists of the authors who have written books in those forms; the cases are parallel."[11] In describing genre, Cutter cited such examples as "Historical fiction," "Sea stories," and "Religious novels;" he made it clear that such specific terms should only be applied to collections of works, not to individual works, because "it would be very difficult to do so and of little use"—he suggested using only Fiction, Poetry, and Drama, subdivided by country of origin, as genre terms.[12]

Despite Cutter's belief that it would be impracticable to index fictional works by specific genre or topic, there were several calls in the early twentieth century for fiction indices.[13] The most ambitious project was initiated by John Thomson, chief librarian of the Free Library of Philadelphia, in 1901; on his recommendation, a task force was formed to create a sample controlled vocabulary and then to classify the books at the library's Wagner Institute Branch.[14] This classification was published in 1903; the introduction stated that the authors' intent was to "recommend the

formation of a committee to continue the work and to issue, not later than 1905, a classified and annotated list of the best ten thousand novels written in, or translated into, the English language and published prior to 1903."[15] Despite lobbying by Thomson and others, however, ALA decided not to authorize the creation of a union fiction index, citing lack of need.[16]

Thomson's endeavor was criticized at the time from many sides. There were those who argued that the creation of a fiction index was demeaning to fiction because it was an attempt to justify its existence in the library collection by emphasizing its topical aspects.[17] Others claimed that fiction did not require detailed subject cataloging because it was essentially ephemeral.[18] Both sides opposed using cataloger time for subject analysis of fictional works, but for opposite reasons. With concerted opposition from such disparate camps, it is not surprising that for nearly ninety years, fiction was cataloged using only name and title access points.

Most influential in the world of fiction cataloging was undoubtedly the issuance of the *Subject Cataloging Manual: Subject Headings* (henceforward the *Subject Headings Manual*) by LC in 1984. It had its beginnings as the library's internal best practices for its own catalogers, but was published to assist others in following its procedures.[19] In the section on cataloging fiction, H 1790, the *Manual* instructs catalogers not to assign topical subject headings to individual works of fiction, with exceptions made only for biographical fiction, historical fiction (if the historical period was an essential element of the plot), and fiction that concerns animals in general and particular types of animals; individual works of fiction are not to be assigned genre/form subject headings.[20] Collections of fictional works, however, can be assigned topical and genre/form subject headings, both to be taken from the same vocabulary: the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH). To avoid confusion between topical subject headings and genre/form subject headings for collections of works, LC policy is to use the subdivision "History and criticism" after the heading for works about a specific genre.[21] A book comprising several mystery novels would be assigned the heading "Detective and mystery stories," while a book about mystery novels would be assigned "Detective and mystery stories—History and criticism."

Differentiation between topical subject access and genre subject access was not a particularly contentious issue in the card environment; however, the development of the online public access catalog provided new avenues for discovery. LC began trying to determine how to encode genre and form in Machine-Readable Cataloging (MARC) format in the 1970s; the two were originally two separate fields, with genre (which describes material content) in the 655, one of the subject fields, and form (which describes material type) in the 755, an added-entry field. That practice was discontinued by the 1990s, owing to confusion in practice when it came to differentiating the two concepts, and the two were combined into the 655 field.[22] The development of a specified field for genre and form access points in the MARC record meant that they could be indexed separately from topical subjects and thus accessed separately, allowing patrons for the first time to do specific searches for particular types of literature and for works about particular types of literature.

In 1990, the Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS), an ALA division, approved the Cataloging and Classification Section Subject Access Committee's *Guidelines for Subject Access to Individual Works of Fiction, Drama, etc.*[23] When the *Guidelines* were published later that same year, they "[recommended] the provision of four kinds of subject access: form/genre access, access for characters or groups of characters, access for setting, and topical access."[24] The first part of the *Guidelines* comprised the recommendations on form/genre headings, including a thesaurus of form/genre terms to be used in the 655 field; the *Guidelines* placed no restrictions on use of the headings, instructing only to "[a]ssign as many form/genre headings as appropriate."[25]

Reaction to the *Guidelines* was mixed. The OCLC/LC Fiction Project was created by eight libraries to enhance existing bibliographic records with topical and genre subject access points taken from the *Guidelines*.[26] However, there was also criticism. One detractor was librarian Steven Olderr, editor of *Olderr's Fiction Index*, who expressed "hope" that LC would adopt the basic principles of the *Guidelines*, but criticized the genre/form thesaurus proposed.[27] The substance of his criticisms are discussed later in this paper. In 1991, he published his own subject and genre vocabulary for cataloging fiction, *Olderr's Fiction Subject Headings*, which he developed to "supplement and explain the LCSH so that the subject headings therein may be used with works of fiction."[28]

A second edition of the *Guidelines* was published in 2000, with some terms modified and more explicit instructions on assigning headings. The instructions on cataloging fiction were eventually incorporated into the *Subject Headings Manual* in 2001 as "Special Provisions for Increased Subject Access to Fiction" (with the important change that LC recommended assigning "no more than one or two genre headings"), but the thesaurus never seems to have been incorporated into standard cataloging practice.[29] As a result, many catalogers, although they followed the *Subject Headings Manual* instructions on enhanced access to fiction, continued to use LCSH as genre terms and followed the old guidelines on using free-floating subdivisions to make it clear in the catalog display which works were examples of a genre and which were about a genre.

In 2010, LC's Policy and Standards Division (PSD)

announced that it was "[planning] to formally separate genre/form terms from LCSH, in both MARC records and in printed products."[30] LC had in fact been working intensively on genre/form terms for a variety of fields, including motion pictures, sound recordings, and cartographic materials, since 2007; however, these new terms were being added to the topical LCSH vocabulary.[31] Now, for the first time, LC was planning to create its own thesaurus of genre/form terms. The PSD also announced in 2010 that this new vocabulary would be called the Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms for Library and Archival Materials (LCGFT).[32]

Genre terms for literature were an area of need identified by the PSD in its initial decision, and subsequently the ALCTS Subject Access Committee Subcommittee on Genre/Form Implementation formed a working group for LCGFT literature terms. The group first met at the 2012 ALA Annual Conference in Anaheim and began with examining the existing LCSH for possible genre/form terms to create a tentative list of terms.[33] In May 2015, LC approved 125 literature genre/form terms for use in cataloging.[34]

A draft of the *Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms Manual* was posted online in January 2016 for review and provided instructions for catalogers on applying the new vocabulary to bibliographic records.[35] As in LCSH and other vocabularies, there are instructions to assign terms "only as they come readily to mind after a superficial review of the material being cataloged."[36] Terms should be as specific as possible (which, for a general resource or a resource containing many disparate resources, may not be that specific); in a break from the *Subject Headings Manual* (but in accordance with the *Guidelines*), catalogers are encouraged to add as many genre/form terms as necessary.[37] Another break from tradition is that catalogers were encouraged to use their judgement as to what genre a work represents, even if the work identifies itself in the title as being of another genre (important if one considers how many mystery novels have as their subtitles simply *A Mystery*).[38] Catalogers with special expertise in poetry are encouraged to use their knowledge to assign the most specific genre/form heading possible; it is not unreasonable to extrapolate that eventually, catalogers with other specific literary knowledge will also be asked to be similarly specific about materials in their fields of interest.[39] The LCGFT can be seen as evidence that the concept of genre access is finally attracting acceptance from the library community.

An examination of these library vocabularies reveals both striking similarities and a multitude of differences. To start with the first and most basic example, in the Free Library of Philadelphia's *Fiction Classification*, the fictional works with topics that corresponded to those in the Dewey Decimal Classification scheme were arranged according to that system, while "to the residue, containing, of course, a great number of the best of all works of fiction, where thought desirable or helpful to readers and students, supplementary headings have been assigned, in the form of a descriptive note."[40] One of the supplementary headings present was "Detective tales"; sixty-eight books were thus classed.[41] Unfortunately, due to format limitations (a printed catalog), each book could only receive one topical or supplementary heading.

Controlled Vocabularies

It is important to remember that the LCSH is not intended as a comprehensive survey of human knowledge, but simply one of published human knowledge, Each heading must be justified by what catalogers term "literary warrant" (i.e., someone has created a work about that topic). However, it should be noted that even if literary warrant for a topic exists, it does not guarantee that a member of the Subject Authority Cooperative Program (SACO) will suggest it as a subject heading.

The LCSH heading for mystery fiction is "Detective and mystery stories." It is one of many terms entered under the broader term "Fiction." Also included as child terms for "Fiction" are "Legal stories," "Spy stories," and "Suspense fiction," all of which LCSH defines as separate genres from mystery fiction, although, as shown below, many theorists of the genre have linked them.

Narrower terms for "Detective and mystery stories" include "Gothic fiction (Literary genre)" and "Noir fiction." Expressing the concept of the "Gothic" in a subject vocabulary is difficult because there once was an ethnic group, the Goths, who created written works. LCSH resolves the potential confusion by assigning works on literature by Goths (the ethnic group) the heading "Gothic literature." "Gothic fiction (Literary genre)" is a child of both "Detective and mystery stories" and "Suspense fiction," yet more proof that LCSH is not a true thesaurus, where each child term can only have one parent term. "Noir fiction" is a child only of "Detective and mystery stories." Note the absence of noir's antonym, cozy, a subgenre characterized by traditional structure, lighthearted perspective, and frequently comic or romantic elements. Other applicable LCSH terms include several terms for formats in which mystery fiction has appeared: "Dime novels," "Penny dreadfuls" (a narrower term for "Gothic fiction [Literary genre]"), and "Pulp literature."

The first edition of the *Guidelines for Subject Access to Individual Works of Fiction, Drama, etc.* includes multiple terms for the various genres of mystery.[42] There is no attempt made to organize them into parent and child terms, and many are marked as related to one another. Again, "Detective and mystery stories" is the preferred term, and related terms include "Ghost stories," "Horror tales," "Romantic suspense novels," and "Spy stories."

"Gothic novels" is not marked as related to "Detective and mystery stories," but is a related term for "Ghost stories," "Love stories," and "Romantic suspense novels." "Legal stories" stands alone, and is not related to any other term, and "Suspense novels" is only a SEE reference for "Adventure stories," "Detective and mystery stories," "Spy stories," and "Romantic suspense novels."

There is a great deal of inconsistency among the *Guidelines*' terms. Why do the preferred terms sometimes refer to stories, sometimes to tales, and at other times to novels? The second thing a cataloger who has experience with LCSH will notice is that the terms as provided often flatly contradict that vocabulary. For example, "Suspense fiction" is not considered a genre of its own, as it is in LCSH, and "Gothic novels" are not related to "Detective and mystery stories" in this vocabulary, whereas in LCSH they are parent and child. "Noir fiction" is not present at all.

Olderr's *Fiction Subject Headings* was influenced by what he saw as the failures of the *Guidelines*. He agreed that new topical and genre subject terms were needed to catalog fiction properly; however, he wanted his headings to correspond and interfile with LCSH to lessen patron confusion.[43] *Olderr's Fiction Subject Headings* was in fact built on the vocabulary he created for his earlier *Mystery Index*, which comingled topical and genre subject terms in its "Subject Index" section.[44] His subject headings, published four years later, are an attempt to create a taxonomy of the mystery.

Olderr's preferred term for the genre as a whole is "Detective and mystery stories," to correspond with LCSH. Surprisingly, given that his earlier work used the term "Mystery" frequently, including in its title, neither "Mysteries" nor "Mystery fiction" is given as a SEE reference. "Detective and mystery stories" is a child term of "Fiction," "Light fiction," "Adventure stories," and "Thrillers." Other genre terms included are "Detective and mystery stories, Genteel" (SEE references include "Cozy mysteries"), "Detective and mystery stories, Hard-boiled," "Detective and mystery stories, Humorous," "Detective and mystery stories, Locked room," "Detective and mystery stories, Police procedural," "Dime novels," "Gothic revival fiction," "Legal stories," "Romantic suspense fiction," "Spy stories," "Suspense fiction," and "Thrillers."

An examination of Olderr's headings makes evident his background in mystery scholarship; this is by far the most detailed library vocabulary and identifies subgenres that the "official" thesauri ignore. Amusingly, of the possible subgenres, "noir," present in LCSH, is the one Olderr misses. The hierarchy presented here, however, is unusual. Olderr does not see the subgenres as child terms of "Detective and mystery stories"; rather, he collocates them using vocabulary only, identifying broader terms for each subgenre that have their bases in the subgenre's characteristics (e.g., "Humorous fiction" for "Detective and mystery stories, Humorous"). He also perceives most of the "mystery" genres as being child terms of "Thrillers," rather than seeing them as being related terms. In Olderr's view of the mystery, all types are subgenres of the thriller, and all are equal under it.

The second edition of the *Guidelines* changed the vocabulary somewhat dramatically; various terms became better correlated with LCSH, while others moved farther apart.[45] "Detective and mystery stories" became "Mystery fiction," breaking from LCSH completely; in contrast, the term "Noir fiction" had become a child term of "Mystery fiction," to correspond with LCSH. Cozies and hard-boiled mysteries were still absent, however. "Legal stories" acquired a useful SEE term, "Courtroom fiction." "Gothic fiction" and "Romantic suspense fiction" became more encompassing, although neither has a link to "Mystery fiction." "Mystery fiction" lost its related terms: terms such as "Spy stories" and "Suspense fiction," which were SEE ALSO terms for "Detective and mystery stories" in the previous edition, are no longer connected to "Mystery fiction." However, "Spy stories" is still a SEE ALSO term for "Romantic suspense fiction."

The LCGFT that have been approved as of July 2020 include "Detective and mystery fiction" (with "Cozy mysteries," "Forensic fiction," and "Noir fiction" as narrower terms), "Gothic fiction" (not a child term of "Detective and mystery fiction"), "Legal fiction (Literature)" (presumably an offshoot of the LCSH "Legal stories"), "Spy fiction" (to correspond with the LCSH "Spy stories"), and a new term, "Thrillers (Fiction)," with "Suspense fiction" as a SEE reference.[46] None of these terms (except for the children of "Detective and mystery fiction") are marked as related. The Manual instructs catalogers to "[e]stablish a new term for definable and identifiable genres and forms for resources being cataloged, even if the library has a single instance of the genre or form," so the opportunity is present for the proposal (if not necessarily approval) of a number of literary genres and subgenres.[47]

Method

To identify some of these subgenres for the mystery, the author proposed to study existing taxonomies and typologies of the genre. Many scholars have written about the potential for improved access to fiction offered by analyzing scholarly works to find appropriate terminology, but their arguments pertained to the cataloging of individual works of fiction.[48] To the best of the author's knowledge, there are no published papers that explore the possibilities offered by the study of scholarly works about a genre to define potential terms for better access. This idea is in opposition to the traditional

theory of subject analysis, in which one begins with the work in hand and then seeks potential terms from an approved list of sources. The author has instead begun with an approved list of sources (reputed works about the mystery genre) and is seeking therein terms to use for potential future items. However, given the unusual nature of genre analysis as opposed to subject analysis, this process may reveal interesting points of access into the literature, as suggested by some of those who know the genre best, and would thus be most likely to use our catalogs and indices: the scholars themselves.

No one has yet devised a true classification of the mystery story to compare with the one of science fiction created by Croghan in his *Science Fiction and the Universe of Knowledge: The Structure of an Aesthetic Form*; his classification scheme accommodates both science fiction and fantasy works and critical literature about science fiction and fantasy works by using faceted classification numbers, with fictional works themselves organized by theme.[49] Burgess, in his *Mystery and Detective Fiction in the Library of Congress Classification Scheme*, lists LCSH and LCCN ranges currently used for mystery fiction and for the authors of mystery fiction, but does not propound any new cataloging possibilities.[50] The closest thing to a "taxonomy" of mystery fiction yet devised is that on the endpapers of Barzun and Taylor's *Catalogue of Crime*; while clearly more a jocular amuse-bouche than a serious analysis, it is still instructive to peruse for its view of the structure of the genre.[51]

Barzun and Taylor divide the crime story "phylum" into genus Detective and genus Mystery. Genus Detective is then subdivided by Species (everything from "short short [1925]" to "very long [1860]"); Varieties ("Normal," "Inverted," "Police routine," "Autobiographical," and "Acroidal"); Habitat ("Village," "Open country [moor preferred]," "Underworld [Los Angeles]"); and Temper ("Omniscient," "Humorous," "Private eye," "Official"). Genus Mystery is a bit simpler and includes the Species "Acclimated;" "Neurotic" (divided further into "Stabilized" ["'suspense,'" "Gothic," "Rebecca"] and "Aggravated" ["HIBK," "EIRF"]); and "Supernatural." Varieties of Mystery include "Chase," "Napoleon of Crime," "Mysterious East," "Domestic," "Commercial," and "International."[52]

Many of these types are quite useful in characterizing crime fiction. Length, setting, and tone are frequent considerations when selecting a mystery, and the varieties of mystery stories suggested sound familiar. Perhaps most striking is the authors' open disregard for the "women's genres" of the time, all of which are condemned as "neurotic"—although the standard-issue Gothic is seen as less dangerously ill than the female-centered story of detection then dubbed the "Had-I-But-Known" school. Barzun and Taylor were far from alone in this attitude.

Barzun and Taylor may have been unique in their structured evaluation of the genre, but in the secondary literature regarding mystery fiction, authors have often suggested their own classifications as a means of evaluating the genre (although they have rarely deemed their creations "taxonomies"). These vary from simple dichotomies to tightly-defined categories to lengthy overlapping lists of terms. The author will attempt to "classify" the classifications by identifying and examining the criteria used by each author to divide the genre into subgenres. It should be noted that some authors do not just avoid but actually protest classifying the mystery, notably Stewart, who described the process as "fascinating and futile."[53]

Analysis

The discussion will begin with what the author refers to as the *detective story-crime story dichotomy*. The earliest example in the critical literature is perhaps Freeman's article, "The Art of the Detective Story," in which he makes it quite clear that the detective story and the crime story have different aims. The crime story, he claims, is one in which the crime itself "[forms] the actual theme, and the quality aimed at is horror—crude and pungent sensationalism."[54] Its counterpart, the detective story, has as its "distinctive quality" the fact that "the satisfaction that it offers to the reader is primarily an intellectual satisfaction."[55] Freeman thus (in rather emotive terms) lays out the difference between the two: emotion and intellect, action and logic. His view was echoed in the first published book-length history of the genre, *Masters of Mystery* by Thomson, in which the story of crime is divided into "puzzle" and "sensation," with the "logical detective story . . . [recognizing] a technique."[56] This is still a common lens through which to view the mystery. In her appreciation of the genre, *Talking About Detective Fiction*, James outlined the difference between the detective story and crime fiction: the detective story has "a highly organized structure and recognized conventions," with "logical deduction" and "essential fairness" being among its main characteristics.[57]

There have been dissenters from this concept of "detective story" and "crime story" as polar opposites. In his history of the genre, *Bloody Murder*, Symons argued that rather than constituting two distinct subgenres, the "detective story" and the "crime novel" are indeed one; his position was that the detective story evolved into the crime novel as writers and readers grew bored with tales of pure detection.[58] In fact, he deplores the "rigid classifications" of crime fiction that "simply don't work in practice."[59] However, he does allow that "detective stories and crime novels are of a different strain from spy stories and thrillers," which in his view are stories of adventure rather than puzzle but still belong in the realm of "sensational literature."[60]

Symons's typology of the mystery can be conceptualized as a *taxonomy of logic*. In such a classification,

subgenres are determined based upon where they fall on the axis between logic as the essential driver of the story and action as the essential driver of the story. Seen through this lens, the detective story is the apotheosis of logic (so much that Symons argues a true one would be unreadable), while the thriller is action, in the case of the worst thrillers, action devoid of any logic (Sapper's Bulldog Drummond tales are "absurd, but undeniably have their ration of excitement").[61] The spy story, which in Symons's opinion contains more detection than the average thriller, and the crime novel, which has a greater emphasis on action or at least on emotion, would be located at midpoints along this axis.[62]

Other authors too have put forth versions of the taxonomy of logic. Wells, in her work *The Technique of the Mystery Story*, an early text on the writing of detective fiction, divides the mystery into three categories: the ghost story, the puzzle story, and the detective story.[63] In her view, although all deal with "the principle of Question and Answer," there are key differences: the ghost story takes place in a world in which there is no logic and even death has no hold; the puzzle story portrays a world in which there is a logical basis for actions, but no one to unravel the skeins of that logic; and the third, the detective story, shows a world based on logic in which a logician can triumph.[64] Murch, in her history of detective fiction, likewise separated the genre into the mystery story, in which strange happenings occur without any exercise of logic (much like Wells's puzzle story), the crime story, in which the crime itself holds the reader's attention, and the detective story, in which the goal is "to make [the reader] think."[65]

One of the central assumptions of these classifications is that the "detective story" is somehow self-evidently distinct from all other types of crime fiction, distinguishable by its logic and its artificiality. The noted mystery writer and reviewer Boucher, however, disagreed. In his essay, "What Kind of Mystery Novel Appeals Today?," Boucher wrote, "[P]ublishers, reviewers, and, above all, readers have never been especially conscious of this demarcation between the 'pure' detective story and other types of mystery-suspense novel."[66] He proposed his own set of types: the puzzle (in which the emphasis is on the mystery's intellectual aspect); the whodunit (similar to the puzzle, but with more focus on emotion and less on logic, although it should still adhere to the classic fair-play rules); the hard-boiled novel ("occasionally a puzzle, usually a whodunit, but primarily an adventure story of the violent physical exploits of a vigorous superhero"); the pursuit novel ("in which the question is not 'why?' or 'who?' but 'what will happen next?' or 'how will he get out of this?'"); and the novel "which [happens] to concern a crime."[67]

This typology, which (as seen from Boucher's descriptions) is not meant to be neatly categorized, proves when analyzed to be primarily about how much attention is given to "game" versus "character." The puzzle is entirely game, with shadow or stock characters, while the whodunit is a game but featuring characters about whom we are supposed to care (to a certain extent, anyway). A hard-boiled novel is a game in which we are meant to admire and cheer on one primary character as he battles his way towards a solution, usually without too much damage to himself but while still risking harm; while a pursuit novel would be a game in which we find ourselves identifying and empathizing with a suffering main character, thus blunting the purely intellectual pleasure of the puzzle experience. Finally, a novel would be a work purely of character with no game element.

Boucher's classification can be read as a *taxonomy of appeal*, in which the chief characteristic of each subgenre is the attraction it has for a prospective reader, rather than attempting to chart each genre on some abstract "intellect versus sensation" chart. Rodell, in her textbook of the genre, also attempts to analyze what draws readers to the form. She identifies the horror story (appealing purely to emotion), the detective story (appealing purely to logic), the adventure-mystery, of which the spy novel is an example, which "combines the appeals of the horror and the detective novels," and the mystery novel, where the focus is on the human element and the appeal is to the reader's empathy and understanding.[68] In a way, the last can also be seen as a fusion of detection and horror: analysis is married to emotion, not to excite the reader but to arouse sympathies. Rodell stresses that very few books fit neatly into these classifications; indeed, most books combine elements of all, although one type is usually strongest.[69] Other taxonomies of appeal have been advanced by Queen in *Queen's Quorum*, who in their history of the detective short story classify detective stories as "whodunits" (the earliest form, in which the question the reader wants to see answered is who committed the crime); "howdunits" (which Queen identify as beginning with the scientific sleuths whose chains of esoteric reasoning were their claims to fame—the reader wants to know how the crime is going to be solved); and "whydunits" (the then-novel psychological mystery, in which a reader's main concern is the human motivations behind the criminal actions).[70] In his bibliography, *Who Done It?*, Hagen adopts Queen's typology, modifying it slightly so that the howdunit referred not to a story where the question was how the crime was to be solved, but one where the reader wanted to know how it had been committed in the first place—the "locked-room" or "impossible-crime" mystery.[71]

Closely related to the taxonomy of appeal is the *taxonomy of tone*. Barzun and Taylor touch on this briefly in their taxonomy, but two reader's guides in particular focus on it as a primary criterion of categorization. In the *Reader's Advisory Guide to Mystery*, Charles et al. define four main tones for the mystery: cozy, soft-boiled, hard-boiled, and noir; while in *Make Mine a Mystery*, by Niebuhr, the

tones are soft-boiled (a term he prefers over cozy), traditional, hard-boiled, and historical.[72] The two classifications are very similar in their definitions of the first three terms (although the discrepancies in vocabulary are confusing), but Niebuhr's choice of "historical" instead of the natural progression to "noir" prevents them from being identical. It is probably not an accident that both authors who focus on tone as a primary classification are reference librarians, since, as Charles points out, discerning a patron's comfort level with graphic sex and violence is a key part of reader's advisory and having a descriptive vocabulary can assist in this process.[73]

Both authors also feature, overlaying their taxonomies of tone, *taxonomies of investigator*. These taxonomies attempt to define the genre by the nature of the person or organization doing the sleuthing. Niebuhr divides his sleuths into amateur, public, and private detectives and then into sub-subgenres; Charles uses the same three categories (and some of the same sub-subgenres), but includes also the historical sleuth (thus handling under investigator the same point that Niebuhr did under tone).

An earlier attempt to classify the genre by sleuth was made by Haycraft, in his history *Murder for Pleasure*. In Haycraft's perspective on the mystery, a "proper detective" is essential; he is the "most difficult and most important integer."[74] What's more, he is a he—Haycraft calls on the author to "avoid women and boys" as protagonists when possible.[75] Among Haycraft's classifications are the police detective, the amateur detective, the gentleman policeman, the consulting specialist, the retired professional, and the agency operative; each of these, according to him, represents a particular viewpoint on the detection of crime and shapes the story he headlines.[76] Haycraft was not the first to attempt a sleuth taxonomy; that would be Wodehouse, who, in an article originally published in *Punch* in 1929, describes some of the types of investigator favored by the writers of his day. Wodehouse was not particularly fond of any of the amateur detective types, although he stated a preference for the "curt, hawk-faced, amateur investigators" over the eccentric and prim "dry detective," the scientific wizard "dull detective," and his least favorite, the "effervescent detective." "Violence to the person cannot dampen Tony's spirits, provided it is to some other person. Viewing the body brings out all that is gayest and sprightliest in him."[77] Wodehouse recommends the police detective as protagonist, pointing out the advantages of having fingerprint departments and cordons at one's disposal.[78]

Finally, there are *taxonomies of gender*, which focus on the subgenres as gendered entities and analyze them on that basis. In his study of the mystery, *Foul & Fair Play*, Roth argues that the mystery genre is inherently a masculine one: "[m]y controlling assumption is that gender is genre and genre is male."[79] He divides the mystery into three categories of analytic (that is, the traditional detective story), hard-boiled, and spy thriller; what differentiates his taxonomy from the taxonomy of logic (which it outwardly resembles) is his emphasis on the maleness of each of these genres. While allowing that the detective story has been written by women and often features female characters, Roth argues that "analytic detective fiction has *officially* [emphasis Roth's] forbidden women to enter its pages as sexual presence," while his views on the hard-boiled story ("written against women") and the spy thriller ("women are…avoided") are even stronger.[80] In Roth's opinion, the mystery is itself so gendered that all subgenres fall in line.

Stasio takes a different approach. In her paper "A Sweep Through the Subgenres," she states that there are four female-dominated subgenres: the village mystery; the historical mystery; the puzzle mystery; and the suspense mystery, all of which are now considered, per Stasio, "old-fashioned and stodgy."[81] The village mystery, according to her, is most analogous to what other authors have termed the cozy, a term that Stasio finds condescending: "you will actually find those patronizing quotation marks used to denigrate village mysteries- the 'cozy mystery,' the 'teacup mystery,' the cottage mystery' are probably familiar terminology."[82] She believed that such terms denigrate this type of mystery by reducing it to a pastoral anachronism, ignoring its power. Furthermore, she argued that the historical mystery is overmuch associated with women and romance and that the puzzle mystery, which she considers a female genre because of its logic and its strong female heritage, is "dying out."[83] Lastly, she considers the domestic suspense novel (a term under which she gathers the Gothic, the romantic suspense, and the suspense novels focused on women's sphere written by such authors as Fremlin and Highsmith), emphasizing the emotional and intellectual qualities of these books.[84] In Stasio's overview, the mystery itself is not an overtly gendered field; however, female subgenres do exist and those are more likely to die out and to be undervalued by critics and the public alike.

Consideration of the Roth and Stasio arguments leads one to examine the evidence of gender in the other works analyzed in this paper. One notable aspect of all these subject vocabularies and taxonomies is the extent to which certain subgenres are negated, minimized, or confused. These tend to be those subgenres traditionally read as feminized: the cozy and the Gothic/romantic suspense. Their absences or incomplete presences in our classifications of mystery fiction make discovery and scholarship more difficult than is necessary.

How are these subgenres feminized? Much of the time it is, as Stasio argues, by use of coded terminology. We have seen certain subgenres named as "cozy" (LCGFT), "genteel" (Olderr in his *Fiction Subject Headings*), "soft-boiled" (Niebuhr), and even "neurotic" (Barzun and Taylor). These

are adjectives that are feminized in contemporary discourse, and all carry certain negative connotations. Some authors argue directly that there are male and female subgenres, and that these subgenres are destined to be forever in conflict, taking their places in an undisguised battle of the sexes: "What else is the difference between Christie's Orient Express and Chandler's mean streets but a clash between a traditional female sensibility and its male counterpart?...[t]he hard-boiled animus towards the traditional mystery would seem to go hand-in-hand with a violent distrust of the feminine."[85] Even more directly, in a piece in Winn's guide to the genre, *Murder Ink*, authors Stasio and Hummler depict the conflict between cozy fans and hard-boiled aficionados as a heterosexual couple sparring over the breakfast table.[86]

Not only is this subgenre conflict portrayed as a battle, it has also been described as a battle with a winner. In his overview of genre history, after making the argument that the private-eye works of Hammett and Chandler brought realism and characterization to the mystery, Cassiday states, "Hammett and Chandler had kept the detective and thrown out the fripperies of the old-manse murder and the had-I-but-known school."[87] He later explains the tremendous success of Spillane as follows: "[M]illions of men…had lived for years [during World War II] in mud and filth, next to blood and death, hoping to survive. They were not interested in the unrealities of country homes and terrified maidens. They wanted blood and sex."[88]

Leaving aside the fact that the private-eye genre in print and on film is often as stylized as the body-in-the-library-no-footprints-in-the-snow cozy, and that just as very few people actually plan "impossible crimes," so too do very few people routinely machine-gun Soviet agents as they torture naked brunettes, this reading of male subgenres as "real" and female subgenres as "false" is a very revealing one. Cassiday describes a crime-fiction history where masculine books (hard-boiled) and feminine books (cozy, romantic suspense), which he describes as "two diametrically opposed types of literature…both labeled as detective novels," coexist not-so-peaceably together until the masculine books begin to dominate thanks to "millions of [men's]" lack of interest in the problems of "terrified maidens."[89] This version of events essentially erases female readers from the narrative as it argues that one gender's lies are truer than another gender's lies.

It is important to note that while these genres tend to be read as gendered, that is not a universal truism. Men have written cozies (Alexander McCall Smith, currently a best-selling cozy novelist, for example), and great noir has been written by women, most famously Highsmith's series about sociopath par excellence Tom Ripley.[90] Even the most stereotypically female genres have had their male fans. In *Northanger Abbey*, Henry Tilney tells Catherine Morland that, contrary to her beliefs about masculine reading habits, he loves a good Gothic novel; Henry "[has] read all Mrs. Radcliffe's works, and most of them with great pleasure" and that "when [he] had once begun [*The Mysteries of Udolpho*], [he] could not lay [it] down again.[91] Many years after Henry Tilney, the most popular author in the battlefield libraries set up by ALA for servicemen during World War I was in fact Mary Roberts Rinehart, queen of romantic suspense and founder of the Had-I-But-Known school (about which more later).[92]

The question arises: how do we define these feminized subgenres? First, let us look at the cozy mystery, most descriptions of which follow one of three patterns. Olderr, in his scope note for "Detective and mystery stories, Genteel," describes the subgenre as "characterized by an absence of explicit violence, sex, or language" —it is a negative subgenre, defined by what it lacks.[93] The LCGFT "Cozy mysteries" (which was not adopted until November 18, 2019) has the scope note "Mystery fiction that features amateur sleuths, socially intimate settings, and a lighthearted tone," while in the *Oxford Companion to Crime and Mystery Writing*, the cozy is described by Oleksiw as "defined by its light tone, element of fun, and closed world;" this is the cozy as the happy subgenre, as represented in series about the bakery/knitting shop/library where community is key, women are valued, and there is at least one available man.[94] The third viewpoint, advanced most vividly in Auden's essay "The Guilty Vicarage," is of the cozy as ordered and moral universe, in which "the job of detective is to restore the state of grace in which the aesthetic and the ethical are as one."[95] Part of the difficulty of defining the cozy is the need to manage all three expectations at once.

The second "feminized" subgenre is the Gothic. What is a Gothic, and how does it relate to the romantic suspense novel and the 'Had-I-But-Known' novel, with which it is often conflated? In a piece for *Murderess Ink*, Tracy states that the word "'Gothic' as a critical term [is] spectacularly unmanageable."[96] Westlake, in contrast, simplifies it to its extreme: "A Gothic is a story about a girl who gets a house."[97] The genre broadly known as Gothic fiction has a long tradition dating back to Walpole, Radcliffe, and other eighteenth-century purveyors of supernatural dread. The question is, what relationship do these modern Gothics have to the classic tradition? Slung claims that the modern Gothic novel is a direct descendant of *The Castle of Otranto*, with romantic suspense as a later iteration of the same basic theme.[98] Whitney, however, argued that the term "Gothic" was a marketing ploy designed to frame a new genre, romantic suspense, as an old one; according to her, romantic suspense novels did not become a publishing phenomenon until "1960, [when] one softcover editor, starting a romantic suspense series, called his books 'gothics' and lightning struck;" Whitney contends that she still

prefers the term "romantic suspense" as a descriptor for her books.[99]

Another term that frequently comes up in discussions of the Gothic/romantic suspense genre from a historical standpoint is the "Had-I-But-Known" novel. This is one of those rare subgenre terms that was invented not by writers or fans but critics: one particular critic, the poet Ogden Nash. In a poem entitled "Don't Guess, Let Me Tell You," Nash opines that, "The H.I.B.K. being a device to which too many detective-story writers are prone/Namely, the Had I But Known."[100] The expression caught on, and it is difficult to find a critical work about the mystery that has anything positive to say about this type of romantic-suspense novel, which, as the term implies, features a female narrator/sleuth who recalls a mystery she has solved while lamenting the fact that it happened, that she did not solve it sooner, and that she was not at the time aware of the importance of certain pieces of evidence that later proved vital. "Had I but known then what I know now, I would never have gone to that house/asked that question/concealed that piece of embroidery…" Haycraft devoted two pages and a lengthy footnote to excoriating the school, and Barzun and Taylor, while condemning the entire subgenre as neurotic, saw the Had-I-But-Known as "aggravated," while the Gothic/romantic suspense was "stabilized" —that is, the Gothic/romantic suspense is at least controlled and docile, while the Had-I-But-Known is extreme.[101]

Why all this venom? It cannot be mere irritation at the cliché of the protagonist reflecting on past adventures; for that is essentially how Ambler's *The Mask of Dimitrios* (one of Haycraft's "Cornerstones") begins. Had-I-But-Known protagonists do not share their discoveries promptly with the police, but neither does the main character in Milne's *The Red House Mystery* (another of Haycraft's "Cornerstones"). They vary wildly in the quality of their writing, but that is true of all mysteries. In her essay, Maio makes the case that the Had-I-But-Known is a "Gothic-detective hybrid" featuring logical reasoning but with no certainty of a logical universe.[102] Unlike her sister in the Gothic mansion, the Had-I-But-Known heroine is active rather than passive in meeting her demons; to quote Maio, "romantic suspense is a celebration of women's submissiveness instead of women's strength," while the Had-I-But-Known heroine is, by her very title, a survivor.[103] The Had-I-But-Known may have been a little too prescient for the times. To sum up with Tracy on how to distinguish the subgenres:

> [T]here is a last-ditch test for genre: ask yourself what the heroine will find behind the black curtain (in the secret passage/in the trunk/in the attic). A waxwork body in a state of waxwork putrefaction, with waxwork worms? This is a Gothic find, manufactured in days of yore as a reminder of human mortality and doing its job once again. A costume worn earlier by a pseudo-phantom? The damsel has confirmed her own sensible conclusions and can move three squares nearer the happy ending. A yellowing snapshot of the villain as butler? O God, Had She But Known![104]

As noted, the crime-genre is a varied and capacious one, which holds the adventures of policemen as varied as Roderick Alleyn and Virgil Tibbs, which accommodates private detectives as dissimilar as Sam Spade and Hercule Poirot, and which features amateur detectives as archetypical as Miss Marple and as unusual as Donna Andrews' Turing Hopper, a sentient computer program. Fighting the forces of law are likeable rogues (Allen's Colonel Clay in *An African Millionaire*), likeable burglars (Block's Bernie Rhodenbarr), likeable getaway drivers (Westlake's Stan Murch), likeable secret policemen (Akunin's Erast Fandorin), and even likeable murderers, as well as other deeply unlikeable human beings. Given the immense diversity of the genre, it makes sense to consider broadening the view of possible subgenre terms to ensure that all mystery buffs are able to find the books that best fit their reading desires.

MacLeod's novel *Rest You Merry* is an example. It features a murder in a locked room (of a librarian, of course) that takes place over Christmas in the home of a college professor and is written by one of the foremost practitioners of the cozy in the 1980s. There are so many subgenre terms one could assign to this work, based on the taxonomies above. Howdunits or locked-room mysteries? Cozies? Humorous mysteries? Amateur detectives? Women's mysteries? Or—to use terms from other lists that the author has seen—academic mysteries? Bibliomysteries? Christmas mysteries?

Conclusion

Most mysteries conclude with the answer to the question "Who done it?," and as the author has learned, the answer is, "A great many thinkers and writers, working individually and together." There is still work to be done on improving access to all library resources. "Who will do it?" The author hopes that the answer is the library community, the literary community, and the community of readers who contribute to our work through tagging and annotating. As a certain famous mystery novel taught us, we are much more likely to get away with murder when we work in groups.

The author recommends that catalogers with time and interest follow that example (in an allegorical sense) by studying critical analyses of the literary genres they most frequently analyze to see how scholars in those areas have defined the most common subgenres. As was demonstrated

above, these scholars are not immune to the prejudices of their societies, so attention should be paid to racist, sexist, and other biases displayed so these are not mirrored in the controlled vocabularies catalogers use. Catalogers should also be proactive about assigning genre headings to works to improve access and be proactive about submitting new genre headings to the LCGFT. "Locked-room mysteries," which is a popular mystery subgenre that is easy to identify (frequently highlighted on jacket or back-of-book copy) and has been the subject of critical exploration (Adey's bibliography of locked-room mysteries is a good resource for finding those already published for retroactive catalog enhancement), is a good candidate.[105] The potential for assisting patrons in finding new and exciting crimes (and other fictional works) is unlimited.

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