Discourse Stylistics **and Detective Fiction: a case study.**

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Introduction

Pedagogical stylistics concerns itself with the practice of teaching stylistics in the classroom. The principal aim of such teaching is to make students aware of language use in the texts chosen for study. What characterises pedagogical stylistics is that classroom activities are interactive between the text and the (student) reader, with both the texts and the activities usually chosen by the teacher (see: e.g; (Clark 1996); Clark & Zyngier (2003); Clark & McRae (2004); Simpson 2004). Part of this self-same process of improving students' linguistic sensibilities has to include placing greater emphasis upon the text as action: the mental processing which is such a proactive part of reading and interpretation, and how all these elements – pragmatic and cognitive as well as linguistic – function within quite specific social and cultural contexts.

Stylistics in the classroom, then, concerns itself with the analysis of texts on at least three different levels; firstly, what we can call stylistics (1), is concerned with the formal properties of a text; that is, analysing the words on a page, drawing in the main upon linguistic theory. This includes not only analysis of phonology, vocabulary or lexis, syntax of phrases and clauses, but also analysis of discourse, as in examining, for example, the relationship between sentences, paragraphs and speaking turns. For stylistics, the main focus of analysis is across stretches of text, thereby emphasising language as discourse, and practice in stylistics as a practice in the analysis of written discourse. Secondly, stylistics (2) takes account of the points of contact between a text, other texts and readers, including consideration of the function of a text; that is, its purpose, drawing upon literary, cultural theory and psychological theory in addition to linguistic theory. Thirdly, stylistics (3) is concerned not only with the interaction between the text and its readers, but also the socio-cultural contexts within which reading and writing take place.

Stylistics (1), analysing the formal features of a text has the most developed conceptual vocabulary and frames of reference. In the stylistics classroom, a common language or metalanguage exists for learning activities centred around the metaphorical concept of the stylistician's 'toolbox', and includes the use of 'checklists' of the kind offered by writers of textbooks in stylistics such as Short (1996) and McRae (1997). Stylistics (2) takes us beyond the formal features of a text to the point of contact between a text, other texts and readers. Thanks to research in the field of pragmatics, linguists and stylisticians alike have come to realise that meaning is not stable and absolute, but depends as much upon the processes of interpretation undertaken by a reader or listener, as upon the actual linguistic structures that are used. Stylistics (2) can also consider the point of contact between the text and the reader as an interactive, communicative act. It includes considerations such as the ways in which writers draw attention to other texts, both antecedent and contemporaneous (intertextuality), and studies how readers track texts during the act of processing (e.g., deixis and anaphoric devices). In recent years, stylistics

has begun to draw upon work in cognitive psychology which has expanded stylistic activity (e.g. Stockwell (2002)) into one which recognises the text as an intersubjective phenomenon, involving both the writer's craft and reader's cognition.

Trends of this kind are demonstrated in the increasing attention paid within stylistics to textual features such as, for example, deixis and modality (i.e., the focus on point of view, and speakers' voices), an emphasis which contributes to the development of more richly textured readings. Consequently, those working in the field of stylistics are increasingly coming to recognise the interactive nature of the role played by the reader in engaging with a text, in the activity of analysis and the construction of an interpretation. The text - for stylisticians as well as literary critics - is a multi-faceted object which only comes to life through a receiving consciousness.

Even so, texts and their readers do not exist in isolation, but function with a wider social and cultural context. Account has to be taken of contextual factors such as the cultural background of the reader, the circumstances in which the particular text is read, and so on. Rather than concerning themselves exclusively with finding out 'what a text means', stylisticians have become 'more interested in the systematic ways language is used to create texts which are similar or different from one another, and ... [to] link choices in texts to social and cultural context' (Wareing and Thornborow 1998: 5). The particular concerns, philosophical outlook and general worldview which the reader brings to bear on the text will obviously play a tremendous role in colouring her/his search for meaning in a text, and it is essential that this influence is acknowledged when applying the objective criteria that are deployed through the checklists of linguistic features contained within a text. Such a view shifts the point of focus away from a static view of the text which exists in its own world as a self-sufficient entity, towards one which is much more dynamic, cognitive, intertextual and interpersonal. This is not to say that stylisticians are no longer concerned only with discovering meanings in a text, but that they have begun to take greater account of the relationship between the text and the context in which it is both produced and received.

As a genre of popular fiction, detective fiction lends itself to the teaching of many aspects of stylistics; for example, genre, narrative structure, point of view and characterisation. Through the use of these various stylistic features, provides insight into the social, cultural and psychological dimensions of public institutions, most notably, the law and the criminal justice system and the underlying social class and economic structures which support it (Clark & Zyngier: 1998).

The approach taken here is one where stylistic aspects of genre, narrative structure, point of view and characterisation are introduced to undergraduate students encountering stylistics for the first time, and then applied to their analysis of two different novels: *Gaudy Night* by Dorothy L Sayers (1936), featuring the detective Lord Peter Wimsey, and *The Murder Room* by P.D. James (2003), featuring the detective Commander Dalgliesh. This application leads to students drawing some conclusions on any underlying issues of class, race and gender which may arise. The teaching is designed as a four week block of lectures and workshops, designed to help students produce a 2,000 word essay to answer the following topic:

Using Dorothy L. Sayers' 1939 novel *Gaudy Night* and P.D.James' 2003 novel *The Murder Room* as examples, discuss how features of the detective genre have altered, focusing specifically on genre, narrative structure, point of view and characterisation. What does your comparison reveal about any changes in the social structures as they are represented in the two novels?

1 Outline of the case study

Comparing two novels in the way outlined above lends itself to multiple variations across the genre. For example, the same aspects of stylistic analysis could be considered through a comparison of a novel written by two authors from different countries, such as a British and an American writer; by comparing two novels featuring the same protagonist written by the same author, or by comparing a novel which features a female detective with one that features a male detective.

The activities outlined below form part of a second year undergraduate module taken as part of their studies in English at a British university. The module is offered to students who are studying English as a single degree and as a joint with another subject, and is students' first encounter with stylistics. Previous experience has shown that students undertaking a module in stylistics must have a basic understanding of English lexis and grammar, and thus a first year module on English grammar is a normal pre-requisite for the module. It takes place over eleven weeks in a time slot of two consecutive hours, but the programme is so designed that it can also be taught in time slots of one hour at one time in the week plus another hour at another time of the week.

The module is organised into two parts: in the first part, lasting six weeks, students are introduced to a variety of stylistic methods and approaches in a general way. Weekly lectures, seminars and workshops focus on topics such as discourse analysis and particularly coherence and cohesion in prose; critical discourse analysis and specifically transitivity in prose, and cognitive stylistics through a consideration of metaphor in poetry. Students are then given a choice of two case studies on a particular textual topic, of which one is detective fiction. In this way, students apply the stylistic concepts and 'tools' acquired in the first part of the module to their chosen case study whilst also learning about others, which in the case of the case study on detective fiction are genre, narrative structure, point of view and characterisation. .

Each of the following sections represents one of the four weeks given over to the case study, as preparation for answering the question above, with the fifth week being given over to tutorials. In this way, general stylistic methods associated with genre, narrative structure, point of view and characterisation are taught within the context of their application to a particular genre of fiction, and to two specific novels within that genre, separated by time. Each week is organised in a similar way: a lecture followed by a workshop. In the lecture, the students are given an overview of each topic. Following the lecture, there is a one hour workshop where, in pairs or groups, students apply the methods described in the lecture to the two novels. They then draw conclusions as to what their application has to say about representation of the society and times in which the novel was written. This has the pedagogic advantage that students have first to grasp the concepts

outlined in the lecture, and then to apply them to the chosen texts. This means that the students' chances of success with their essay are greatly enhanced by full engagement with the lecture material, subsequent further reading and small group discussion to ascertain if they have understood the stylistic concepts and methods being applied.

The programme then, is as follows:

Week 1: Lecture: Genre and detective fiction.
       Workshop: Genre in *Gaudy Nights* and *The Murder Room.*

Week 2: Lecture: Narrative structure and detective fiction.
       Workshop: Narrative structure in *Gaudy Nights* and *The Murder Room.*

Week 3: Lecture: Point of view and detective fiction.
       Workshop: Point of view in *Gaudy Nights* and *The Murder Room.*

Week 4: Lecture: Characterisation and detective fiction.
       Workshop: Characterisation in *Gaudy Nights* and *The Murder Room.*

2 Genre

Much of the work undertaken in genre has been concerned with identifying a set of core organisational parameters or features into which texts can then be categorised by type. As Berger (1992) points out, genres studies are important because they aim to provide us with insights about the shaping of our expectations of what we are reading – or watching or listening – will be like. The lecture part of this first session considers genres of popular culture in general and detective fiction in particular. It is not the intention in this section or the ones which follow to reproduce the lectures, but to give some idea of the key points included.

There now exists a body of primary texts in the genre of detective fiction dating back some fifty years or more, from the works of early writers such as Wilkie Collins and Conan Doyle, through to the so-called 'Golden Age' of the inter-war period and the nineteen fifties, exemplified by writers such as Dorothy Sayers and Agatha Christie, to the present day. Asking students to compare texts from different eras shows ways in which the style of the genre may have altered. As a genre of popular fiction, detective fiction on the whole follows a formulaic pattern: A crime is committed, usually murder, and it is the detective's task to discover the murderer and to bring him or her to justice. Detective novels rarely have any form of a sub-plot, as everything focuses upon the end game, that of catching the killer. In the novels, the hero is usually tested in some way, is in conflict with others (often superiors on a police force as well as criminal elements) and has to overcome numerous antagonists to triumph. During the course of all such activity, various social structures support the hero in his work, as indeed they do all the various characters, and various assumptions about the nature of law, order and justice are either assumed or challenged. Consequently and paradoxically, readers always know the probable general outcome of the novel before they even begin to read it, that is, that the question 'who done it?' will be answered. The interest actually lies in the construction of the narrative in that it keeps the reader guessing for as long as possible what the likely answer to the question is going to be.

As a genre, then, detective fiction is self-consciously formulaic, and it is possible to distinguish between different types of formulae. One example is that of Berger (1992), who distinguishes three main formulae in detective fiction summarised here:

1. Classical, which employs heroes or detectives such as Sherlock Holmes or, in the case of *Gaudy Night,* Lord Peter Wimsey and his helpmate, Harriet Vine. These detectives are not members of a police force but, because of their brilliant minds, are used by the police, albeit, in the case of Agatha Christie's Miss Marple, reluctantly. They are 'consulting' detectives, are seldom at any personal risk to themselves and are rarely sexually involved with women.

2. Tough-Guy, which features private investigators such as Sam Spade, Mike Hammer or the female equivalent V.I Warshawski, who may or may not have been previously employed by the police, but who now have an ambivalent relationship with them. They can also be romantically involved and can sometimes put themselves personally at risk in solving a case.

3. Procedural, which produces heroes such as Dick Tracey, Inspector Morse or P.D.James' Inspector Dalgliesh, who belong to a police force and use police resources to track down criminals. There can be a romantic interest featured in the novel, and of the three formulae, these detectives are those who put themselves most personally at risk.

Berger (1992) points out that Todorov (1988) has also identified three different kinds of genres within detective fiction: the 'whodunit', the 'thriller' and the 'suspense' novel. However, Berger (1992: 84) claims that Todorov's category of the suspense novel is a combination of the thriller and whodunit, stating that the suspense novel:

> … keeps the mystery element of the whodunit though it focuses attention to the second story, the investigation, but it does not reduce this investigation to a simple matter of discovering the truth. The reader is interested in both what happened in the past and what is happening in the present.

Todorov's suspense category best fits the detective novel *The Murder Room,* as does Berger's category of the procedural novel, since it features a policeman, Commander Dalgliesh, as the detective who is bound by the procedures and bureaucracies of police work in undertaking his investigation. *Gaudy Night* falls into the Classical category, as its detective and his helpmate are not members of the police force, but are used by the police in helping them to solve the crime, due to their exceptional powers of detection.

It is interesting to note that the Classical category is becoming less and less employed in contemporary detective fiction. The detective who forms this category (e.g. Lord Peter Wimsey) usually has his own inherited income which is not gained through employment, is a member of the English upper class or even, in Wimsey's case, a member of the aristocracy, and who thus has the leisure and the financial means with which to pursue detection in ways which the police may not be able to resort to. By contrast, being a member of the police force is to be employed in an occupation deemed at the time to be largely working class, and where brilliance of mind was not necessarily a prerequisite. The implication is, that the police in general lack the standard of education that Lord Wimsey had enjoyed, which is why they need him.

The economic and class divisions of the kind exemplified by Wimsey and the police evident in the 1930s are nowhere near so marked today, where the status of the police has become more that of a white collar middle-class profession, especially in its upper ranks. By the time we arrive at 2003 and *The Murder Room,* Commander Dalgliesh is a figure who has earnt the respect of a Lord Peter Wimsey, and whose 'brilliant mind' is further exemplified by the fact that he is a published poet. The disinterested amateur is more likely, in late twentieth and early twenty-first century fiction, either to be employed in some capacity which allows for a certain degree of autonomy, such as the law and universities, (and if they have any kind of independent income, for that to be more modest, such as Amanda Cross' Kate Fansler), or to be self-employed as for example a writer, or to be employed in an occupation that serves the police alongside other institutions, such as forensic medical examiner Kay Scarpetta.

2.1 Workshop

In this section, students were put into pairs and given twenty minutes to answer a set of questions, followed by a general feedback and discussion session. The questions set were designed to elucidate whether or not students had absorbed and understood the main points of the lecture, and working in pairs allows them to talk through for themselves their understanding of what they have heard. Giving responses in a feedback session further reinforces what students have (or have not) learnt, and provides the lecturer with the opportunity to explain further any points which remain unclear or which need further explanation.

The questions given were:
a. Define what is meant by a popular culture genre.
b. Identify the three main formulas of the detective fiction genre.
c. Place the two novels *Gaudy Night* and *The Murder Room* into the appropriate category. Give two reasons for each novel as to why you have placed them as you have.
d. Discuss differing features of the two formulas and what they illustrate about the society in which the action takes place.

The objectives and strengths of the questions asked is that the first two questions follow the content of the lecture, whilst the third and fourth ask the students to apply general categories of genre to two specific novels. The fourth question also invites students to consider the relationship between a formula and the society represented in each novel.

3 Narrative structure

Much of the work undertaken in narrative structure has been concerned with identifying a set of core organisational parameters or functions that can then be applied to a narrative. The most famous and influential of these is Propp's well known morphology of folk tales, in which he identified 31 narrative functions undertaken by 7 basic character types. Berger (2005) gives a simplified version of Propp's initial situation and 31 functions. Simpson (2004:72) offers a clear overview of Propp's morphology, applying it to a contemporary, well-known tale, that of the film version of J.K.Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone.* The point to be made here is that not all narratives realise all 31 functions, nor do they occur in a chronological sequence. What the identification of features shows is that many of the archetypical patterns that inform fairy tales exist in certain genres of contemporary narrative. The success with which the Proppian model can accommodate all narrative genres has yet to be proven, but those such as western,

romance, science fiction or detective fiction are all obvious candidates for scrutiny.

One other model of narrative is the one developed by the American sociolinguist William Labov, who identifies six core recurrent features that underpin a fully formed narrative, each of which considers narrative question, narrative function and linguistic forms. Simpson (2004:15) gives a useful overview of this model. Applying these two models to the two detective novels provides students with the opportunity to discover for themselves how such structures operate and any problems encountered with applying general frameworks to specific instances.

Narrative structure of this kind concentrates upon the internal workings of individual narratives, and as such, out of the four categories of genre, narrative structure, point of view and characterisation, has the least to say overtly about the social organisation through which its narrative structure is realised. These are much more implicit, making implicit assumptions about the roles of various protagonists. For example, in Propp's morphology, the hero and villain are almost always male, driving the action on in the world beyond the domestic, whereas the heroine remains at home, waiting passively to be rescued or for news of the villain's capture. Such a structure is predicated upon certain social and cultural norms and patterns of behaviour. Equally, the first part of Labov's narrative question: '*Who or what are involved in the story*, and when and where did it take place?' begs the further question of 'Why'? For example, in 1936 it is Harriet Vine who undertakes a major role in the investigation, but she constantly defers to Peter Wimsey, who is a Lord in more ways than one, and whose behaviour is consistent with the expectations women have of a social class of the time. In the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries, there has been an increase in female protagonists within detective fiction, often acting in the most 'unfeminine' ways, which has paralleled the changing roles of women in the modern world.

1.3.1 Workshop
In pairs, students were given twenty minutes to answer the following questions, followed by a general feedback and discussion session:
a. Define what is meant by narrative structure.
b. Apply Propp's functions to each of the two novels.
c. Apply Labov's features to each of the two novels.
d. Discuss which of the two applications you found to be the most successful.
e. Identify any social structures which underlie or are assumed by the narrative structure.

As with the previous workshop, the first question was designed to elucidate that the students had understood general points about narrative made in the lecture. This understanding was further tested by the next four questions which asked them to apply what they had learnt to the two novels in question. The final question asked the students to relate what was happening in the novel to the social organisations through which the narrative is realised.

4 Point of view
Much has been written about point of view in stylistics (e.g. Fowler 1986; Simpson 1993), and this session focuses upon outlining models of point of view which can then be applied to the novels. The term 'point of view' can be used in a variety of ways: firstly, it can be used literally to refer to a visual perspective, that is, the angle of vision from which a scene is presented; secondly,

it can be used metaphorically to refer to the ideological framework and presupposition of a text, as for example from a male or female perspective; and thirdly, it can be used to as a term to distinguish between the different types of relation of the teller to the tale in any narrative. The first and simplest distinction to be made is between a first person narration and a third person narration. Both novels are written in a third person narrative form, and in both *Gaudy Night* and *The Murder Room,* the protagonist is a part of the action. Commander Adam Dalgliesh solves a murder case in *The Murder Room,* whilst detective fiction writer Harriet Vane solves, with the aid of Lord Peter Wimsey, curious incidents in *Gaudy Night.* One advantage of a third person narration is that it allows the thoughts of other characters, not just those of the main protagonist, to be voiced.

In addition to acting as an open window upon a story, third person narration also allows access to character's thought and feelings. The omniscient storyteller, in both novels, provides the reader with much information about how the characters feel and how particular sentences reveal these feelings. As both novels under consideration are written in the third person, then various aspects of third person narration can be introduced in this section, such as the contrasting positions made possible through it of the internal versus the external, and restricted knowledge versus unrestricted knowledge. Montgomery et al (2000), and Simpson (2004) particularly, provide good starting points here. Restricted knowledge plays an important part in creating suspense in detective fiction, since this adds to the feeling of a 'puzzle' which, as more and more knowledge is revealed, leads to its solution.

Introducing distinctions between first and third person point of view leads on to consideration of how it is insufficient in itself to account for different points of view. This has led to a refining of the notion by introducing the idea of focalization, which refers to the relationship between who experiences and what is experienced (see Fowler, 1986; Simpson, 1993). An alternative model here is that known as the Fowler-Upensky model, discussed at length in Simpson (2004). This model identifies four components or planes of point of view: point of view on the ideological, temporal, spatial and psychological planes.

In detective fiction, the main point of view from which the narrative is told is from that of the detection, and rarely from the point of view of the villain. A general shift in point of view within detective fiction of the two periods represented by *Gaudy Night* and *The Murder Room* has been that of the detective. Once different points of view have been identified in each of the two novels, then comparisons can be made between them. In earlier detective fiction featuring detectives such as Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot and Peter Wimsey, point of view has tended more towards the external, with any internal view usually expressed through dialogue and as a result of being questioned by their partners, Watson, Hastings or Vine. The detectives keep their thoughts and feelings close to their chests, and usually only reveal them when they are certain of the facts. In contemporary detective fiction, there has been a shift more towards an internal point of view on the part of the detective, who, through the use of interior musings as well as through dialogue, the modern detective expresses uncertainty and doubt of a kind rarely expressed by the likes of Holmes, Poirot and Wimsey.

As with the activities of the two previous weeks, the lecture was followed by a workshop

based upon discussion questions which gave students the opportunity to apply the ideas introduced in the lecture to the two novels under study. Unlike the previous two weeks, however, the questions given were more time-consuming, and the activity was thus organised a different way, as given below.

4.1 Workshop

Students were divided into two groups, with the first group starting with Question a) and the second group with Question b). In pairs, students were given twenty minutes to work on the questions, followed by a general feedback and discussion session. The workshop was a starting point, and the students were encouraged to continue the work they had begun in this session beyond the workshop. Here are the questions that can be asked:

a. Re-write the opening paragraph of *Gaudy Night* as a first person narrative. How does this alter the narrative?
b. Choose a two passages of two paragraphs or equivalent from both novels and analyse them in terms of: a) the Fowler-Upensky model for point of view (Simpson 2004) and b) focalisation (Montgomery 2000).
c. From your analysis, is there any evidence to support the argument that there has been a change in its representation?
d. How can you account for such a change?

Asking students to undertake re-writing tasks of the kind given in Question a) above has often proved a successful way of illustrating to students the concept of 'point of view' in narration, and how it affects the telling of the narrative. Equally, applying different models as Question b). asks to specific sections of text allows students to ascertain for themselves how theoretical models work in practice. As with the previous two workshops, Questions c) and d) invite students, in addition to the more formal stylistic work, to consider their study within a wider social context to look for explanations of change.

5 Characterisation

One of the most recent influences upon stylistic method has been work drawn from cognitive science, including psychology and linguistics (see: Stockwell 2003). Culpepper (2001) applies models drawn from social psychology supplemented by ideas from cognitive linguistics to notions of characterisation. Referring specifically to drama, and plays by Shakespeare in particular, he argues that far from perceiving characters as if they were real people existing in the real world, inferring characters from dialogue, or indeed any text, relies in part on the cognitive structures and inferential mechanisms that the audience or the reader has already developed for real-life people. Consequently, the measure of success in characterisation is not how 'life-like' such characterisation is, but how closely the characterisation resembles our own understanding of the particular character being portrayed. Thus, when reading fiction from the past, our understanding of particular characters relies not only on our actual experience, but also upon our reading of literature from the period under discussion and the inferences we have made from them.

Lord Peter Wimsey (in *Gaudy Night*) is not a police detective, but a private citizen who

has a knack for solving murders. As such, he follows in the tradition of detectives such as Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes. His assistant Harriet Vine acts in much the same way as Watson does to Holmes. She is a detective novel writer and although she does not appear to have the detective skills Wimsey possesses for solving a murder, she does participate in the investigation based on her own logical mind. She receives help from Lord Peter Wimsey, but it can be said that she does most of the investigation herself. In more contemporary detective fiction, such as that written by Sara Paretsky, Kathy Reichs and Linda Fairstein, the female detective is very much to the fore in ways in which it was impossible for characters such as Harriet Vine to be.

In addition to character traits of individual people can be added traits of place and time. P.D. James is very accurate in describing the scenes and historical background of her characters. The character of Tally Clutton (in *The Murder Room*), for example, is amplified by detailed information about her history as well as her daily routines as a cleaning lady in the Dupayne Museum, where the murder takes place. Tally is the person who discovers the dead body in the car and is an important witness for Commander Dalgliesh. Consequently, we are provided with a certain amount of information about her character, in fact more than others, because she stands out as important in the story.

However, despite the similarities between the two novels, it is evident that changes have occurred when one looks at the background information provided by the omniscient storyteller about the detective himself. In *Gaudy Night,* virtually no information or insight is given about Lord Peter Wimsey's personal life, either by the character or the narrator, which remains a complete mystery. Just as with other detective heroes of the time, such as Agatha Christie's Poirot, the reader is not privy to their inner thoughts and feelings. However, in *The Murder Room,* the reader learns a good deal about the life of the detective, aside from his work. We learn more about how he represents himself amongst people, whether he is married or in a relationship, and even the way colleagues feel about him. In *The Murder Room,* Adam Dalgliesh is investigating a crime but the reader, through the omniscient narration, also gets to know his thoughts and feelings about his relationship with his girlfriend Emma. This is not what we experience in *Gaudy Night.* In this novel, we learn that Harriet Vane is dating detective Peter Wimsey from Harriet herself, but we do not get to know Wimsey's inner thoughts and feelings on this relationship. For Wimsey there only seems to be a professional life. As Clark and Zyngier (1998:148) state, in contemporary crime fiction '...private life is as important as public role … as readers we are privy to the main protagonists' uncertainties, anxieties and fears as they move towards solving the riddle of a crime…'.

In *Gaudy Night* and *The Murder Room* we deal with two female writers who both choose a male as their detective character. Both novels are very similar in their social settings and the kinds of characters they portray: both are set against upper middle class backgrounds featuring white, upper middle class protagonists, with supporting roles played by more working class characters. However, we do see a distinction between the characters. Whereas we know little of Wimsey, and even less about his inner thoughts and feelings, the same cannot be said of Dalgliesh, with whom we share the uncertainties, anxieties and fears as the story moves along to the solving of the crime. He also shows qualities, especially when it comes to dealing with people, such as sensitivity and

empathy. By contrast, *Gaudy Night*'s detective Wimsey has no room for human failing and suffering.

The biggest change in the genre then, evident in the two novels, is not so much with narrative structure, but in point of view and characterisation, with a shift from a focus on the act of the detective solving a murder to a focus on the processes, including the thoughts, feelings and uncertainties of the detective, that accompany the solution. This can include challenges to established concepts of justice. Changes in the genre, point of view and characterisation also reflect changes and current trends in our social order, which now allow, for example, for female 'tough-guy' protagonists of a kind which were simply unthinkable in Harriet Vane's time, or for the creation of a sensitive, upper class or even aristocratic procedural detective such as Commander Dalgliesh.

5.1 Workshop

This workshop followed a pattern similar to that of weeks 1 and 2. In pairs, students were given twenty minutes to answer the following questions, followed by a general feedback and discussion session:

a. List six characteristics of a) Peter Wimsey, b) Harriet Vine, c) Commander Dalgleish and d) a supporting character of your choice (e.g. Tally Clutton) Write out the line or part of line evidencing each one.

b. Compare the lists for Wimsey and Dalgliesh. How are they the same, how different?

c. Compare the lists for Wimsey and Dalgliesh with that for Vine. How are they the same, how different?

d. Compare the lists for Wimsey, Dalgliesh and Vine with that of your supporting character. How are they the same, how different?

e. Based upon your lists and comparisons, can you make any conclusions about representations of race, class and gender in the two novels?

As with the other workshops, this one provided students with the opportunity to consider aspects of character within the two novels in more detail. Questions a) to d) consider different characters in the two novels, which leads onto discussions of power and authority. In each of the two novels, the most powerful figure is the detective, who is male, with the females playing a subordinate, supporting role. Question e) invites students to consider the characters against a wider socio-cultural context, which again raises issues of power, authority and control by the fact that both detectives are white, upper middle class or aristocratic males, typifying a patriarchal social order which is monolithic in terms of race and divided by social class.

6 Conclusion

The methods and practices described above provide students with a framework through which students learn concepts, practices and methods associated with discourse stylistics by applying them to two novels written in a specific genre, that of detective fiction. General points about stylistic method and analysis are made in lectures which the students then applied in workshops and discussions, leading to their written assignment on the two detective fiction novels. The approach taken introduced students to the stylistic analysis of texts on all three levels of the structural, psychological and the sociocultural outlined in the introduction above: they learnt about the structural aspects of stylistics concerned with the recognizably formal and linguistic properties of a text; they also took account of psychological aspects which refer to the points of contact between a text, other texts and the way readers/listeners process them and in addition, they also considered the sociocultural and historical dimension of stylistics analysis. By choosing novels from a specific genre from two different periods of time, and through their analysis of formal properties and psychological aspects of the text, students are then in a position to take account of the social and cultural changes that have taken place in the last sixty years or so as they are represented in the two novels.

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