

Introduction to Crime Fiction

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Office hours: Wednesdays, 12–1 p.m. or by appointment

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review: structure

- ▶ changing narrators
 - ▶ EN: a fully external tale-teller
 - ▶ EN[“We”]: the voice of Ilmorog
 - ▶ CN[Munira]
- ▶ changing point of view
 - ▶ Munira, Abdulla, Wanja, Karega...

part 1, sjužet possibilities

- ▶ narrators: EN, “we,” Munira...
 - ▶ Chap. 5: Wanja (116–18)
- ▶ points of view: EF, Munira, Wanja, Karega, Abdulla, “us,” ...
- ▶ anachrony: now to twelve years ago to in between to...WAY back
- ▶ genres of narration: police statement, anecdote
 - ▶ “Once upon a time Ant and Louse...” (140)

embedding

- ▶ Wanja's "first narrative" (44–49)
 - ▶ EN1 CF1[Munira] CN2[Wanja]
- ▶ "Ole Masai whipped out the revolver" (165)
 - ▶ EN1 CF1[Abdalla] CF2[Ole Masai]

focalization

Which was true?

For somehow she could not, she realized suddenly as she was about to say something, bring herself to tell him of her involvement with Kimeria, the man who had ruined her life. (155)

- ▶ Who narrates? Who perceives? Why?

focalization

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- ▶ Who narrates? Who perceives? Why?
- ▶ How does this moment change your understanding of the crime at this point?
- ▶ What is the *function* of Wanja's subsequent narrative (155–62)?

focalization shift

Thus history and legend showed that Ilmorog had always been threatened by the twin cruelties of unprepared-for vagaries of nature and the uncontrolled actions of men.

These thoughts mocked at Karega as he was carried along by the grandeur of the people's past, the great cultures that spread from Malindi to Tripoli. He confided: The Earliest Man, father of all men on earth, is thought to have been born in Kenya . . . Lake Turkana . . . and he stood back and expected a gasp of disbelief or a few questions.

'Yes, Muriuki,' he pointed to a child whose hand seemed raised. (134)

enter Sherlock Holmes?

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Crime for him was a kind of jigsaw puzzle, and he believed that there was a law to it – a law of crime – a law of criminal behaviour – and he believed that if you looked hard enough you could see this law operating in even the smallest gestures. He was interested in people; in their behaviour; in their words, gestures, fantasies, gait: but only as a part of this jigsaw puzzle. He had read a lot and was interested in the various professions – law, politics, medicine, teaching – but only as part of his one consuming interest. He was looking for that one image which contained the clue, the law of a particular crime. From there he could work out the exact circumstances, to the minutest details, and he hardly ever failed. (52)

Thus he had served the colonial regime with the same relentless unsparring energy that he did an independent African government, and he would serve as faithfully whatever would follow. He was neutral, and his awesome power over politicians, professionals, businessmen, petty criminals, all that, arose from this neutrality in the service of a law. (52)

what doesn't happen?

But he remembered the two men in a Land Rover and their suggestive hints and menacing faces and their talk of 12/50 and KCO and all that. He suddenly saw the connection between the two men's visit, the ordeal he had undergone, and the gigantic deception being played on a whole people by a few who had made it, often in alliance with foreigners. He was once again stabbed by a different kind of guilt: he had himself actively participated in an oath of national betrayal. He had not shown the courage shown by Ilmorog women, or by the worker who protested, or by all those men and women in the country who were openly criticizing the whole thing at the risk of their lives. Then he thought: but what could he have done? And thus he stilled the inner doubt that would have awakened him to life. He turned to Wanja. He thought of telling her about his own experience, then stopped. (127-28)

next

- ▶ keep reading, through chap. 7 if possible (1–270)