

Introduction to Crime Fiction

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review

- ▶ decolonizing the mind is a good idea, but...
 - ▶ tradition is a problem, not a solution
 - ▶ Theng'eta is a drink of strife
 - ▶ the Utamaduni Centre is...not nice
- ▶ who will bring to birth a new world?
 - ▶ Karega: kind of preachy
 - ▶ Abdulla: doesn't do much anymore
 - ▶ Munira: pyro
 - ▶ Wanja: ...?
- ▶ whodunit?
 - ▶ capitalism did it, silly
- ▶ what is to be done?
 - ▶ socialism, silly (?)

how to use a critic

- ▶ **motive:** figure out the conversation they're part of
 - ▶ who do they disagree with? how can you tell?
- ▶ **argument:** find the big claims
 - ▶ look for the controversial statements, not the indisputable ones
- ▶ **evidence:** what supports the claims?
 - ▶ which passages/parts of the text matter most?
- ▶ **take a position:** what relation does **your** argument have to theirs?
 - ▶ agreement is a boring relation

exercise exercise

1. Explain what Gikandi and Roos argue.
2. Explain how you responded, and go to the text!
3. Can you put the two together?

Gikandi on impasse

In attempting to write a comprehensive novel on underdevelopment in Kenya, Ngugi was caught in a double-bind: he wanted to produce a radical critique of colonial and postcolonial modernity without repudiating its central doctrines. (Gikandi, 139)

The place of the novel genre in Africa was ambiguous: it was bound up with the culture of colonialism; it was an alienated and alienating genre in the sense that it was at odds with Ngugi's notion of society and culture as collective entities. (143)

Roos critiquing the critique

Ngugi begins with the rather sexist premise that as a woman, Wanjia is the depository of passions and deep mysteries (Gikandi, 157)

- ▶ What would Roos say?

Roos critiquing the critique

Ngugi begins with the rather sexist premise that as a woman, Wanjia is the depository of passions and deep mysteries (Gikandi, 157)

► What would Roos say?

It is precisely with his use of Wanjia as earthy mother, prostitute, and sexual being that he is able to portray a nation that addresses the issues of women as well as those of men. (Roos, 156)

Though Wanjia function as “type,” she resists being “typed.” (167)

Onwards to the 1990s!

“More than simply a detective novel...[Mosley is] a talented author with something vital to say about the distance between the black and white worlds, and with a dramatic way to say it.”—*The New York Times*

Mosley, back cover.

[*Devil*] marks the debut of a talented author with something vital to say about the distance between the black and white worlds, and with a dramatic way to say it.

Herbert Mitgang, “New Black Detective and a Familiar Navajo One,” *New York Times*, August 15, 1990: C12, [ProQuest Historical Newspapers](#).

- What does this blurb tell you about the publishing field the novel appeared in?

I was surprised to see a white man walk into Joppy's bar. It's not just that he was white but he wore an off-white linen suit and shirt with a Panama straw hat and bone shoes over flashing white silk socks. His skin was smooth and pale with just a few freckles. One lock of strawberry-blond hair escaped the band of his hat. He stopped in the doorway, filling it with his large frame, and surveyed the room with pale eyes; not a color I'd ever seen in a man's eyes. When he looked at me I felt a thrill of fear, but that went away quickly because I was used to white people by 1948.

I had spent five years with white men, and women, from Africa to Italy, through Paris, and into the Fatherland itself. I ate with them and slept with them, and I killed enough blue-eyed young men to know that they were just as afraid to die as I was.

- What does this *incipit* tell you about the field the novel appeared in?

next

- ▶ *Devil*, through chap. 10.
- ▶ (the movie is optional, and perhaps you shouldn't ruin the surprise ending by watching it first)