The uncocked gun? representations of masculinity in contemporary crime fiction

Abstract
This thesis examines the representation of masculinity in the work of three contemporary male crime writers – George Pelecanos, Henning Mankell and Ian Rankin. It considers whether or not the feminist movement, and the resultant deconstruction of gendered identity, has had an impact on the work of male authors. As the topic of masculinity becomes increasingly visible both within sociological discourse and popular culture, have male writers sought to critically engage with their own gender roles or are they more concerned with propagating hegemonic norms? Crime fiction has a history of accommodating revisionist, feminist projects but is there similar space in the genre for male writers to create viable, non-phallic detective heroes? By focusing on writers of three different nationalities – Pelecanos is American, Mankell is Swedish and Rankin is from the UK – the thesis examines the interaction between masculinity and national identity, and compares the extent to which American, Swedish and British masculinity can be viewed as being ‘in crisis’. Chapter I provides a theoretical outline, discussing the academic approach to Men’s Studies, before addressing the specific issue of the representation of gender within the crime fiction genre. Chapters II, III and IV focus on a close reading of the texts of Pelecanos, Mankell and Rankin, respectively.
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