

**“I Feel Like I’m Beating the System” – Ideology, Institutions and
Individual Agency in Lee Child’s Jack Reacher Novels.**

Iris Määttä
University of Tampere
School of Modern Languages and Translation Studies
English Philology
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Kovaksikeitetty dekkari on etsiväkirjallisuuden alalaji, joka sai alkunsa 1920- ja 1930-lukujen Yhdysvalloissa. Kovaksikeitetyn dekkarin perinne nojaa vahvasti yksilön, ja etenkin maskuliinisen yksilön, toimijuuden merkityksellisyyteen, ja tämä näkyy esimerkiksi selkeänä rajanvetona, joka tehdään etsivän ja yhteiskunnallisten instituutioiden välille. Instituutiot kuvataan alalajin perinteessä usein korruptoituneina ja toimimattomina rakennelmina, jotka rajaavat ja estävät yksilön henkilökohtaista toimijuutta. Kuitenkin etsivän autonomia on näennäistä, sillä hänen nähdään edelleen toimivan osana yhteiskunnallisia instituutioita ja näin uusintavan yhteiskunnan hegemonista ideologiaa.

Pro gradu -tutkielmani tarkoitus on tutkia instituutioita ja yksilön toimijuutta ja varsinkin näiden välistä jännitettä, ideologisesta näkökulmasta Lee Childin modernia kovaksikeitettyä dekkaria edustavassa Jack Reacher -kirjasarjassa. Pääasiallisena tutkimusmateriaalinani on kolme sarjan teosta: *Killing Floor* (1997), *Echo Burning* (2001) ja *The Enemy* (2004). Vertailen kirjojen ideologisia rakenteita perinteeseen, kartoittaessani niitä Louis Althusserin uusmarxilaisen teorian pohjalta.

Tutkielmani teoreettinen kehys nojaa ranskalaisen uusmarxilaisen teoreetikon, Louis Althusserin (1918-1990), teoriaan ideologian tuottamisesta ja uusintamisesta instituutioiden kautta. Althusser jakaa instituutiot kahteen eri ryhmään, joiden yhteiskunnalliset toimintatavat ja suhde ideologiaan eriävät toisistaan. Hänen mukaansa kunkin yhteiskunnan hegemoninen ideologia tuotetaan *interpellaation* kautta; instituutiot interpelloivat kansan uskomaan omaan yksilöllisyyteensä ja yksilönvapauteensa. Interpellaatio on tärkeä käsite tutkimuksessani, kun tutkin Childin kovaksikeitetyn etsivän yksilöllisen toimijuuden rakentumista ja sen suhdetta instituutioihin. Interpellaation tarkoituksena on tehdä yksilöä yhteiskuntaan sitovat ideologiset rakenteet näkymättömiksi ja luonnollisiksi. Althusserin teorian ohella esittelen kovaksikeitetyn dekkarin perinteen ideologisia rakenteita, joihin sitten analyysissäni vertaan Childin teoksia.

Tutkielmani analyysiosiossa käsittelen kolmen eri instituution (laki, perhe ja armeija) suhdetta yksilön toimijuuteen. Lähestyn kutakin instituutiota vuorollaan analysoiden sekä yksilön toimijuutta korostavaa individualistista näkemystä sekä sitä, miten yksilö onkin selkeästi osa kyseisiä instituutioita, ja näin ollen myös osa hegemonista ideologiaa. Näen, että Childin kirjasarja toisintaa suurelta osin perinteisiä konventioita ja alalajin individualistista ideologiaa. Kirjoissa etsivän maskuliinista yksilön toimijuutta korostetaan ja hänen nähdään erottautuvan yhteiskunnasta ja sen instituutioista. Totean etsivän ohittavan amerikkalaista individualistista ideologiaa mukailevan toimintansa vaikutteet ja niiden kytkeytymisen tiiviisti instituutioihin. Näen althusserilaisen interpellaation esiintyvän sekä päähenkilön toiminnassa että itse teosten rakenteessa – tarkoituksena on erottaa yksilön toimijuus sen mahdollistavista yhteiskunnallisista rakenteista ja ideologiasta.

Avainsanat: kovaksikeitetty dekkari, toimijuus, instituutiot, ideologia, Lee Child

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1. Introduction

To this day, the investigation of the role of individual agency and especially masculine individualism has been present in the analysis of hard-boiled detective fiction. The hard-boiled subgenre rose to the fore as an American subgenre of detective fiction in the 1920s, and its narratives emphasized the agency and autonomy of the individual in a sociopolitical context in which people were forced to question their influence on their own lives as they lost their faith in societal power structures. In America, the First World War and the Great Depression were part of creating surroundings for existential anguish at the beginning of the twentieth century, giving rise to literary movements such as modernism. Hard-boiled detective fiction brought up similar themes to modernism, but in a more popular forum; the anxiety over societal events and the position of the individual are central in both. Some critics consider hard-boiled detective fiction, among other hard-boiled fiction, part of the modernists literary movement. Through magazines called the ‘pulp’, the hard-boiled tough guy narratives reached a wide audience in American society. Priscilla L. Walton and Manina Jones see that hard-boiled detective fiction, among other popular formula fiction, created “a ‘common space’ in which concerns and social issues can be addressed and negotiated by readers who would not necessarily read about them elsewhere”.¹

The aim of this study is to examine individual agency and institutions in hard-boiled detective fiction from an ideological point of view. The traditional hard-boiled detective fiction of the beginning of the twentieth century promoted the importance of masculine individualism and individual agency by depicting the detective’s separation from societal institutions and adoption of a marginal position in society. Institutions such as the law, the family and the political institution are objected to as they are experienced to represent an ideology that aims to diminish the agency of the individual. However, as

¹ Priscilla L. Walton and Manina Jones, *Detective Agency: Women Rewriting the Hard-Boiled Tradition* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1999) 63.

Peter Messent points out, the detective is, in fact, inevitably a crucial part of the institutions he is seen to abhor.² Maureen T. Reddy also points out that even if this separation gives the hard-boiled detective a seemingly marginal status as a critic of the hegemonic ideology, “the detective is not in fact set apart from society but instead embodies its most deeply held but often inchoate beliefs”.³

The main purpose of my thesis is to analyze this significant tension between the representations of individual agency and institutions in Lee Child’s modern hard-boiled detective fiction. I intend to find out the ways in which Child’s Jack Reacher series approaches this ideological tension by analyzing the position of the detective protagonist and three institutions central in the series. I aim to discover in what way Reacher perceives the ideology behind the institutions and what his position towards them is, and whether this hard-boiled protagonist is separated from these institutions typically seen to represent the dominant ideology or whether he is a significant part of them. In the theoretical framework of this thesis, I discuss the ideological background of the tradition of hard-boiled detective fiction, and in my analysis, I will compare the series to the traditional conventions of the hard-boiled detective fiction subgenre.

In my study, I have chosen to approach the institutions of law, family and the army, since they are central to society in general and to the creation and reproduction of ideology. These institutions, especially the law and the family, are also visible in the tradition of hard-boiled detective fiction. In approaching the army, I will link Child’s fiction to the rise of militaristic masculinity in the popular culture of the 1980s and 1990s, which can be connected to the masculinity represented in the hard-boiled fiction of the early twentieth century.

The British-born American author Jim Grant appeared in the densely habited crime fiction scene in 1997 with the first novel of his Jack Reacher series under the pen name Lee Child. The

² Peter Messent, “Introduction: From Private Eye to Police Procedural – the Logic of Contemporary Crime Fiction,” *Criminal Proceedings: The Contemporary American Crime Novel*, ed. Peter Messent (London: Pluto, 1997) 2.

³ Maureen T. Reddy, *Traces, Codes, and Clues: Reading Race in Crime Fiction* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003) 10.

primary research material of this thesis consists of three novels of the series. The series, thus far consisting of fourteen novels, combines conventions from several different yet interrelated literary genres and modes such as thriller, mystery, action and detective fiction. In this thesis, I will link the Jack Reacher series to the continuum of hard-boiled detective fiction, since it employs several conventions central to the hard-boiled subgenre – not least the strong individual agency of the protagonist, Jack Reacher, follows the traditional conventions with his heightened autonomy and individualism. The emphasis on autonomous action and the need for freedom connected to the detective protagonist and his complicated and ambiguous relationships with significant social institutions on the surface level of the series enables me to approach the series as modern hard-boiled detective fiction, making it a suitable object of analysis for this study.

All of the fourteen novels of Lee Child's Jack Reacher series focus on the protagonist and his life as a wanderer in the United States. The series tells a story of a white, heterosexual male, an American with a French mother, who in his thirties explores aimlessly the America he has never been acquainted with, as he has lived in America only few years of his life. Reacher is a former military police officer, who in the first novel of the series has just left the army after thirteen years of service. Differing from the traditional conventions of hard-boiled detective fiction, all of the novels take place in different parts of the United States – Reacher travels across the country ending up investigating crimes in big cities as well as in small-town America.

In Reacher's character, the ideas of the rules of the military and law enforcement create ambiguities with the freedom of civilian life. After leaving the army, Reacher refuses to join society as a working and law-abiding citizen; he works only to sustain his wandering lifestyle and does not have a family or a place to live. Reacher celebrates his new identity and position outside societal institutions, and he enjoys the feeling of "beating the system" (*Killing Floor*, 88) with his lifestyle, yet he continues to live according to the rules and morality he attained in the service. His internal morality and his

commitment to the concept of justice obligate him to investigate crimes he feels society is not able to solve. In his investigations he does not follow the official law or rules of society. Reacher's relentlessly moral approach to life and his need of being separated from society in all ways possible reproduce central conventions of hard-boiled detective fiction.

The novels I chose for this study are the first, *Killing Floor* (1997), the fifth, *Echo Burning* (2001), and the eighth novel, *The Enemy* (2004), of the series.⁴ My primary material consists of these three novels, but I will refer to other novels of the series if necessary for my analysis and to further illustrate my conclusions. In *Killing Floor*, Reacher is introduced for the first time and it is a portrayal of the beginning of his new life outside military service and the 'official' structures of society. The novel is situated in the small town of Margrave, Georgia, where Reacher is searching for the grave of a blues guitarist who was rumoured to have died in Margrave sixty years previously. Reacher is wrongfully arrested of murder the moment he arrives in the town, and in the end is involved in the investigation of a money laundering and counterfeiting scam run from Margrave.

In *Echo Burning*, Reacher is in the heartland of Texas, in the small town of Echo. Reacher is again just passing through when he is picked up by a woman who is in need of help and protection. Behind a case of domestic violence there are a corrupted politician and police force and a dark history concerning brutal treatment of illegal immigrants. *The Enemy* returns to Reacher's past as it depicts the beginning of the year 1990, when Reacher was still in the army. The novel offers some explanation to why Reacher leaves the service later on. The novel is situated in a critical period for the U.S. military, since the army faced a reduction of forces as the Cold War was over. In the novel, repositioned Major Jack Reacher is in the middle of a murder investigation which reveals a considerable conspiracy inside the army.

⁴ In the course of the study, I will refer to these novels with the abbreviations *KF*, *EB* and *TE*.

I chose these three particular novels because they illustrate the contradictory relation between societal institutions and individual agency in the series; the protagonist's strong relations with the law, the army and the family are visible in these novels. The thematics around these institutions are not visible only in these three novels – the institutions are central in the whole series. *Killing Floor*, as the first novel of the series, is a logical choice for the study, as Reacher and his longing for autonomy and individual agency are thoroughly introduced. *Echo Burning* discusses themes such as the family institution and the justification of vigilantism. *The Enemy* is a revealing novel especially concerning the army institution, as it focuses on the strong connection Reacher has with it. However, all of the three novels describe the relationship between Reacher and the three institutions representing the ideological power structures of society.

My research is related to the field Cultural Studies. In particular, I will employ Marxist literary theory, and especially the Neo-Marxist theoretician Louis Althusser's (1918-1990) theory on ideology in order to come to examine the ideological position of individual agency and institutions in Child's fiction. In his theory, presented in the essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1970), Althusser approaches the relationship between institutions, individuals and ideology, and the way ideology is reproduced through individuals and institutions. Althusser sees the autonomy of individuals as a fantasy, created in order to able the dominant ideology to reproduce itself unnoticeably and undisturbed.⁵

In my analysis, I will concentrate on the wider context of ideological structures in Lee Child's Jack Reacher novels. I aim to form a broader view of the series through theoretical and conceptual analysis, instead of decoding every sentence of the novels with in-depth analysis. With the fact that my primary research material consists of three novels instead of one, I intend to achieve a fuller conception of the ideological structures in the series. In introducing the theoretical framework of this thesis, I will

⁵ Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Toward an Investigation," 1970. trans. Ben Brewster. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York: WW. Norton, 2001) 1507.

also explore the generic traditions of hard-boiled detective fiction, and its multidimensional ideological basis. As previously mentioned, even if the main focus of my study is not on comparative analysis since the emphasis is on Child's novels, it is important to contrast it to the tradition of the subgenre.

Reddy sees that hard-boiled detective narratives participate in teaching and reinforcing race, sexuality and gender hierarchies, as they portray truth from a white, heterosexual male perspective according to an individualistic ideology typical to American individualistic tradition.⁶ There have been changes inside the subgenre since the early twentieth century, and the focus of analysis has moved from the fiction of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammet, the forefathers of hard-boiled detective fiction, to the wave of female and ethnic hard-boiled authors rewriting the conventions of the traditional hard-boiled in the 1980s and 1990s. In connection to this shift inside the subgenre, the degree of individual agency of the hard-boiled detective has been analyzed in terms of his/her gender, sexuality and ethnicity. Child's Jack Reacher series is an interesting object of analysis, since it represents recent hard-boiled detective fiction with a white heterosexual male protagonist, thus seemingly relying on the traditional conventions of the subgenre.

The fact that Child's fiction received success with the first novel of the series in 1997, as it won both the Anthony and the Barry Award for best first novel, yet has not received similar interest among literary critics, motivated me to choose his fiction as primary material for my study. I have not found any research on Child, even if he seems to have created a widely popular series and has been called "the best thriller writer of the moment" by the *New York Times* with the publication of the fifth novel of the series, *Echo Burning*, in 2001.

Child's fiction seems to exist in the inconsistent and undefined middle ground between low-brow fiction and 'serious' literature. Even if Child has sold over thirty million novels around the world and the novels appear recurrently on the *New York Times* bestseller list, he is inevitably seen as a writer

⁶ Reddy, 2, 9.

of popular formula fiction, which even today is taken to be inferior to some other types of literature.⁷ It is reported in an interview that Stephen King, the popular horror fiction author, called Child's Jack Reacher "the coolest continuing series character" simultaneously situating his fiction in the category of "manfiction".⁸ This description is suitable for Child's fiction, as he has created a protagonist seeping with masculinity and adventure that resemble the iconic popular action heroes of the 1980s and 1990s, such as Rambo, created by David Morrell, and John McClane of the *Die Hard* movies. I find analyzing the ideology behind these popular fictions interesting and important. Popular culture and especially generic writing, such as hard-boiled detective fiction, is recognized to function as a forum for societal discussions, assertive as well as critical. All in all, I am interested in Child's series because it offers a recent approach to the ideological basis of the hard-boiled subgenre.

In the next chapter of this thesis, which will present the theoretical and conceptual background of my study, I will firstly approach Marxist literary theory and concentrate on Louis Althusser's approach on ideology, and secondly, the ideology of hard-boiled detective fiction. In my analysis, I will approach each of the three institutions in relation to individual agency in three separate chapters. My analysis begins with the law, and the tension between institutionalized law and the concept of the hard-boiled detective's own individual moral code. Then I focus on the family institution, which represents a different type of institution in Althusser's theory, and which is a central institution in the subgenre. The hard-boiled protagonist's separation from the family, deemed a harmful institution for his individual agency, is a conventional staple of the subgenre. In the third and final chapter of my analysis, I will consider the army an ideological institution that promotes masculine individualism through the notion that heroic masculinity is created in the army. This ideological imagery and the values incorporated in it tie the soldiers to the institution and push aside the ideological motivations behind this extremely repressive and hierarchical institution.

⁷ David Duff, *Modern Genre Theory*, ed. David Duff (Harlow: Pearson, 2000) xiii.

⁸ Jeff Ayers, "Lee Child Crafts a Rootless Hero Who Resonates," *Writer* Vol. 123, Issue 1 (Jan 2010) 18.

2. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I will outline my thesis in terms of its theoretical and conceptual framework. This thesis is primarily related to the interdisciplinary field of Cultural Studies, which offers a vast choice of perspectives to the field of literature. The perspective of my analysis is Marxist literary theory and especially Neo-Marxism. In this chapter, I will also deal with genre studies since in my thesis I approach the concept of genre by discussing the traditions of the hard-boiled detective fiction subgenre in terms of ideology.

Cultural Studies is difficult to portray as a unified academic discipline since it approaches a variety of concepts important in a multitude of disciplines.⁹ As an institutionalized discipline, and later an internationally practiced discipline, Cultural Studies is concerned with the research of different forms of power, knowledge, representation, and all the practices involved in the social production of culture. When discussing the field of literature, Ben Highmore defines Cultural Studies as “reading various textual objects and getting them to reflect and refract the cultural material out of which they are made”.¹⁰ Concepts such as ideology, hegemony, and power are key elements in Cultural Studies also in my thesis, because literature can be seen as one forum where the meanings of these concepts are formulated. As for the realm of literature, popular culture and texts are significant objects of inspection in Cultural Studies since they are both important agents and effects of meaning production through representations. Thus, for example, the research on representations of gender, sexuality, race, class and other subordinated groups in popular culture, in relation to more “general” culture, is central in Cultural Studies.

Marxist literary theory has given many concepts, such as ideology and hegemony, to the use of literary criticism. A major critic among Marxist literary theory, whose theories I will use in analyzing

⁹ Chris Barker, *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice* (London: Sage, 2000) 5.

¹⁰ Ben Highmore, *Cityscapes: Cultural Readings in the Material and Symbolic City* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) xii.

the ideological structures in my primary material, is the French Neo-Marxist theoretician, Louis Althusser. Marxist literary theory and Althusser's views on ideology are useful to the purposes of my thesis as they offer certain important viewpoints for investigating the relations between institutions and individuals in society.

Cultural Studies and Marxist literary theory approach literature in relation to the society in which it is produced.¹¹ In this thesis, Marxist literary theory provides the tools for analyzing the subgenre of hard-boiled detective fiction, which has been deemed to reproduce ideological standpoints inherent to the socio-political context of the text. Besides introducing a Marxist approach to analyzing literature, I will look at the construction of the hard-boiled subgenre and the subgenre itself from the point of view of ideology. In subchapter 2.1, I will briefly introduce some basic concepts of Marxist literary theory and Althusser's theory on analyzing societal institutions and individual agency in terms of ideology. In 2.2, I will introduce the concept of *genre* and proceed with analyzing the relationship between literature and ideology in connection with the hard-boiled detective narrative.

2.1 Marxist Literary Theory and Louis Althusser's Approach

In this subchapter, I will examine issues central to the theoretical framework of this thesis. I will briefly introduce the main foci of Marxist literary criticism and proceed with the theories of Althusser, who developed further the concept of ideology and concentrated on the processes of ideology production in society. In Althusser's theories, institutions, and through their involvement in them, individual citizens are central in the social machinery which enables ideologies to exist. One of the main discussions among Marxist literary theory is the ability of art, and in this case literature, to confront ideology without blindly reproducing it. Beside the institution of art, Althusser presents other institutions central to the implementation of ideology in his essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1970). I

¹¹ Patrick Brantlinger, *Crusoe's Footprints: Cultural Studies in Britain and America* (New York: Routledge, 1990) 1.

will focus on the institutions of the law, the army and the family, which are central in the discussion on institutions in traditional hard-boiled detective fiction and in Child's narratives.

Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), the joint founders of the Marxist school of thought, take a specific stance in cultural analysis. With their *Communist Manifesto* in 1848, Marx and Engels announced the advent of Marxism, a school of thought relevant to this day. These German theorists together formed economic theories of society, which revolved around the struggle for power between different social classes and the ownership of the means of production. As its theories have been developed further, Marxism has been a significant force in various fields of study.

Marx and Engels's base-superstructure theory of the construction of society and culture, presented in *The German Ideology* (1845), acts as the focal point of Marxist criticism. People's consciousness was seen to be determined by the material circumstances of their society. The mode and conditions of production in society, ownership and control of capital and property, are called the 'base' of society, which is specific to a certain type of society, for example, the feudal or the capitalist society. This economic base of society produces a 'superstructure', which consists of the social relations between humans, the culture of a specific society. The superstructure is argued to reflect the economic base, and being conditioned by it, according to Terry Eagleton, it consists of,

certain forms of law and politics, a certain kind of state, whose essential function it is to legitimate the power of the social class which owns the means of economic production...it also consists of certain 'definite' forms of social consciousness..., which is what Marxism designates as 'ideology'.¹²

The term ideology, which Eagleton argues to be the forms of social consciousness of society, originally referred positively to the science of ideas, when the French philosopher Destutt de Tracy coined the word at the turn of the 18th and the 19th century.¹³ The Marxist tradition adopted the concept and developed it giving it connotations which range from negative to neutral. David McLellan argues

¹² Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1976) 5.

¹³ Minoru Kitamura, "The Concept of Ideology," *Rethinking Ideology: A Marxist Debate*, ed. Sakari Hänninen and Leena Paldán (Berlin: Argument-Sonderband, 1983) 64-5. The new science of ideas refers to a rational investigation of the sources of ideas and their relation to scientific knowledge.

that the study of ideology was in the hands of the Marxist tradition at least until the 1960s, after which, for instance Max Weber and Emil Durkheim carried on with the non-Marxist tradition of studying ideology.¹⁴

In the beginning, Marx and Engels deemed ideology as the capitalist ideas of the ruling class. Ideology had the function of legitimating the power of the ruling class by making the acts of oppression of the lower classes seem natural and invisible in the capitalist society. As Eagleton notes in *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, the discussion of ideology has since moved away from referring to the characteristics of capitalist societies to refer more generally to “the ideas, values and feelings by which men experience their societies at various times”.¹⁵ The term can be used to refer to the idea of a system of false consciousness, which controls the superstructure, or simply to a belief system of a certain group of people. Therefore, in the latter meaning, ideology can be used to refer, for example, to a feminist ideology as well as capitalist ideology.

Primarily, ideologies are mixtures of different interests, and these interests are inherently political. Thus, political power relations are situated in the center of the concept of ideology. Ideology is the processes which justify and make invisible different power relations, may they be between different classes or genders. As Eagleton also points out, “[i]deological’ is not synonymous with ‘cultural’: it denotes...the points at which our cultural practices are interwoven with political power.”¹⁶

Today, the concept of ideology functions as one of the central terms in Marxist criticism, and it has also moved from the field of Marxism to the use of other fields of study, including literary study. In 1888, Engels commented on the relationship between art and prevailing economic circumstances in his correspondence with an English novelist;¹⁷ he saw literature inhabiting the ideology of its time. Even if

¹⁴ David McLellan, *Ideology* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986) 7.

¹⁵ Eagleton 1976, viii.

¹⁶ Terry Eagleton, *Ideology* (London: Longman, 1994) 11.

¹⁷ Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002) 158.

Marx and Engels did not extensively engage in literary criticism, their followers did,¹⁸ making sure that the idea of culture reflecting the conditions and modes of production of a specific society was transferred to the study of literature. In *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, Eagleton locates the originality of Marxist literary theory in this idea that literature can be analyzed in terms of the historical conditions which produce it.¹⁹ Thus, Chris Barker argues that Marxism is “above all, a form of historical materialism” stressing the material conditions of existence concerning social and cultural formation.²⁰

The analysis of “how texts advance class ideologies and viewpoints”²¹ has been significant in literary criticism, even if many other issues besides class are now included in the discussion of the concept of ideology. The theorists Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser have had a significant influence on Marxist theory as they developed further concepts such as ideology. Terry Eagleton, Catherine Belsey and Fredric Jameson, to name but a few, are prominent critics among Marxist criticism. I use Eagleton’s views often in my thesis, as his work refers to Marxist theory that was influenced by Althusser’s thought.

However, the idea that the mode of production directly determines people’s social consciousness, including literature which is included in the superstructure of society, has long since waned in Cultural Studies as well as in Marxist literary theory.²² Even if Marx and Engels did not equate ideology with the superstructure, thus pointing out that there are also non-ideological elements in culture,²³ they held a strong idea that ideology is inescapable in art, as the soul of the artist is materially conditioned by the false consciousness of ideology.²⁴ This mode of thought is now deemed as ‘vulgar Marxism’, which oversimplifies matters at hand. If simplified, according to Patrick Brantlinger, it tends to rob art, literature and the author of their individual freedom: he notes that

¹⁸ Douglas Kellner, “Marxist Criticism,” *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms*, general ed. Irena R. Makaryk (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1993) 96.

¹⁹ Eagleton 1976, 3.

²⁰ Barker, 12.

²¹ Kellner, 95.

²² Raymond Williams, *Marxismi, kulttuuri ja kirjallisuus*, 1977, trans. Mikko Lehtonen (Tampere: Vastapaino, 1988) 86.

²³ McLellan, 17.

²⁴ Williams, 112.

any attempt to think literature in relation to something external to itself – history, culture, society, reality – undermines its status as an independent, free-standing category, while any attempt to buttress that independence has the paradoxical effect of diminishing or denying its relevance to ‘real life’.²⁵

Hence, analyzing literature with a Marxist perspective can be argued to be a question of balancing between a highly deterministic approach, which believes that people are destined to live and function according to conditions which are out of their reach, and that authors and artists can only portray objects ideologically. The other approach, on the other hand, tends to ignore the socio-political context of a work in order to connect the meaning of art to its individual worth.

In my thesis, I will adopt the approach which complies with Eagleton’s view represented in *Marxism and Literary Criticism* that literary works are “forms of perception, particular ways of seeing the world; and as such they have a relation to that dominant way of seeing the world which is the ‘social mentality’ or ideology of an age”.²⁶ I view literary works as being mixtures of contradictory interests and values; each narrative produces its own mixture of values in terms of ideologies. The construction of these mixtures is in the focus of my analysis, as the main purpose of the thesis is to approach the way institutions and individual agency are depicted as matters of ideology in Child’s novels.

As previously mentioned, the thought of art being a product of social conditions is questioned, as Marxist literary theorists have also had to acknowledge that literary works have challenged the dominant ideologies of their time. Thus, besides experienced as ideological products to some degree as it is produced in ideological surroundings, literature can challenge and make ideologies visible. Eagleton argues that literature acts both as an agent and as effect of ideological struggles, and thus it might provide “the most revealing... access to ideology”.²⁷ This act of challenging or reasserting ideologies can be seen as a personal act of the author or a quality of an entire literary genre. In the next

²⁵ Brantlinger, 70.

²⁶ Eagleton 1976, 6.

²⁷ Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory* (London: Verso, 1976) 55, 101.

subchapter, I will briefly discuss the claims that certain types of literature, certain literary genres, are more prone to promoting hegemonic ideologies that are deemed oppressive, for instance, in terms of gender, class, race or sexuality. Eagleton notes in *Marxism and Literary Criticism* that some forms of art are argued to be more authentic than others, thus being better able to “transcend the ideological limits of its time, yield us insight into realities which ideology hides from view”.²⁸

A theorist who approaches literature and ideology in a significantly different way from the earlier Marxists was Louis Althusser. He continued the research on the concept of ideology in the 1960s, and in his theories he combined structuralist views with Marxist criticism. Althusser’s theories were prominent mainly in the 1960s and the 1970s, but his work has been “influential in anthropology, sociology, political economy, philosophy, history, and literary theory”²⁹ leaving significant marks on the discussion of ideology. Thus, according to John Storey, Althusser’s theorizations of the concept are extremely important in terms of cultural theory and popular culture.³⁰

Althusser’s theories differed from the economic reductionism dominant among Marxist discussions on ideology:³¹ he discarded the mechanistic determinative view of the base-superstructure and introduced the concept of *social formation*. Althusser offered a more subtle insight into the construction of society as he moved away from considering ideology as ‘false consciousness’, as an obstacle to be removed in order to realize the real conditions of being. Ideology for him is, according to Myra Jehlen, a real non-historical presence in every society,³² and it has different forms in every society, since for Althusser, ideology is not germane only to capitalist societies. According to McLellan, Althusser portrays ideology as “a social cement” which “in contemporary Western capitalist

²⁸ Eagleton 1976, 17-18. See also John Thurston, “Althusser, Louis 1918-1990,” *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms*, general ed. Irena R. Makaryk (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993) 232.

²⁹ Thurston, 230.

³⁰ John Storey, *An Introductory Guide to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* (New York: Harvester Wheat Sheaf, 1993) 110.

³¹ Barker, 74.

³² Myra Jehlen, “Introduction: Beyond Transcendence,” *Ideology and Classic American Literature*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch and Myra Jehlen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 8.

society cements a system of class domination”.³³ Storey notes that the social formation of a society in the Althusserian theory is seen to consist of three practices: the economic, the political and the ideological.³⁴ For instance, art and literature are acknowledged to being relatively autonomous from the economic, but the economic is always determinant in the last instance in capitalist society.³⁵ In other types of societies, some other aspect than the economic could be determinant.

Even if Althusser’s approach to ideology begins with an exploration of its universal aspects, the oppressive functions of ideology in capitalist society must be discussed. Ideology functions as the force that implements institutionalized forms of oppression. The question of the functions of ideology seeks to explain why these exploitative systems of economic and social relations are not overthrown by the ones oppressed by them. These systems of social oppression are sustained in society with the help of different rationalizing processes which make certain controversial, subjective and historically specific values seem natural, universal, inevitable and unchangeable. The Western capitalist society was in Althusser’s focus, and it is also relevant in my thesis because I approach American society, which is considered to be a capitalist society, in my analysis of the American subgenre of hard-boiled detective fiction.

For Althusser, ideology is not the reproduction of social modes of production as such; according to Jehlen, it is to him “the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence”,³⁶ a lived relation which is more unconscious than conscious. Differing from Marx’s ideas on ideology, Jehlen sees Althusser employing ideas used in psychoanalysis for he sees ideological as imaginary, like a dream for Sigmund Freud, being its own reality that is a specific account of the real conditions of existence.³⁷

³³ McLellan, 33.

³⁴ Storey, 110.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 110.

³⁶ Jehlen, 8.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

One central term in Althusser's approach on ideology is hegemony, since the focus is often on hegemonic ideologies. Althusser used Antonio Gramsci's – another Marxist theorist – theory of hegemony in describing the functions of ideology. Hegemony refers to a condition where the situation between distinctive forces and groups of people in society is one of dominance and subordination. Hegemony, at first, was used to refer to the struggle between dominant and subordinate classes, but recently it has been used to refer to “the situation in which the interests of one powerful section of society have been ‘universalized’ as the interests of the society as a whole”.³⁸ Hegemony is not a stable situation once inflicted; hegemony is a temporary settlement which needs to be “constantly rewon and renegotiated”.³⁹ It is surrounded by constant conflict and struggle over social power, and literature can be seen to act as one forum for this struggle. The question of hegemonic masculinity and the process of naturalizing the dominance of masculinity and everything concerning it over femininity have been central issues in the discussion on hegemonic constructions. In my analysis, I will investigate the army institution, and ultimately the Jack Reacher series itself, as part of the cultural process of the formation and reproduction of hegemonic masculinity.

For Althusser, art and literature were not defined as being completely ideological constructions, but they are parts of a structure in which ideology exists and is reproduced. In his essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”, Althusser presents his theory on ideology and the practices which establish and maintain it in society. Through practices inherent in culture in the form of institutions a certain ideology is imposed on society. According to him, in capitalist societies different apparatuses inside society ensure the “reproduction of skills and of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression”.⁴⁰ These unconscious structures are inflicted in the practices of everyday life upon individuals as subjects and as groups. The social conditions and relations necessary for the

³⁸ Storey, 119.

³⁹ Barker, 82.

⁴⁰ Althusser, 1485.

capitalist society to continue are reproduced by ideology through institutions. My intention is to approach this ideological reproduction through institutions and individuals in Child's novels.

Anne Cranny-Francis et al. define institutions as "a set of relationships and/or practices which are expressions of mainstream social values and beliefs".⁴¹ These practices are the core of society and thus ideology is easily imposed through them as 'natural' and inevitable. Althusser calls these institutions *State Apparatuses*. He makes a distinction between institutions and practices which use external force and those which influence through a set of ideas and values, through ideology, in order to promote the political status quo.

The first of Althusser's state apparatuses is the RSA, short for *Repressive State Apparatus*, "those governmental institutions which exercise social control directly, through 'violence' as opposed to indirectly, through ideology".⁴² The police force, law courts, the prisons and the armed forces are the main institutions belonging to the RSA. As mentioned, the RSA acts for the main part in the public domain functioning in the first hand by the means of repression. These institutions have tight regulations and they are able to punish those who act against them. Besides using repression to impose dominance and subordination, the RSA uses ideology to ensure subjection, according to Althusser's "double functioning" principle.⁴³ Althusser argues that "for example, the army and the police also function by ideology both to ensure their own cohesion and reproduction, and in the 'values' they propound externally".⁴⁴ In my thesis, I will approach two institutions belonging to the RSA, the law and the army, and especially the ideologically produced cohesion inside these institutions.

The other institutions Althusser names, belong to the ISAs, the *Ideological State Apparatuses*, which are the institutions generally situated in the private sphere of society. They use primarily ideology and secondarily repression to reproduce the relations of production. The ISAs can be divided

⁴¹ Anne Cranny-Francis et al., *Gender Studies: Terms and Debates* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 13.

⁴² Brantlinger, 92.

⁴³ Althusser, 1490.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 1490.

into three instances: the legal ISA, the political ISA and the cultural ISA. The institutions which belong to the legal ISA are churches/religions, the educational system and the family. The political system of society, trade unions and the communications media are part of the political ISA, as literature, art and sports belong to the cultural ISA. Through these institutions ideology becomes inescapable in the necessary structures of society.⁴⁵

These ISA institutions do not rely only on force to survive; through ideology they instill in individuals the values and habits that make them productive in the different roles necessary in society.⁴⁶ They operate through “implicit consent realized in accepted ‘practices’”.⁴⁷ Repression is used in the ISAs in the form of suitable methods of punishment, expulsion and selection in order to enforce the maintenance of ideological subjection. In this thesis, my focus is primarily on the family ISA, besides the law and the army from the RSA of society. These institutions are central in the novels and in the tradition of the hard-boiled subgenre. By using Althusser’s theory on the implementation of ideology in society, I will be able to analyze the society of the narratives, as both the RSA and the ISAs are present in them. However, I will also approach the discussion of art, and especially literature, as an ISA, as I intend to analyze a certain literary product and its genre in terms of their ideological features.

One of the institutions I will focus on in my thesis is the family institution. Besides the school system, the family is a central ISA where, according to Althusser, the capitalist regime is naturally concealed and covered up shown to be a neutral environment purged of ideology, an essential form of the ruling bourgeois ideology.⁴⁸ The importance of the family institution is easily overlooked as it is also a seemingly neutral, ideology-free environment. But the power of the family in the formulations of culture has to be acknowledged as it, and the human relationships connected to it, serve as the primary defining institution in the lives of inhabitants of a capitalist society. Everyone grows up in a family of

⁴⁵ Brantlinger, 89.

⁴⁶ Vincent B Leitch, “Louis Althusser,” *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York: WW. Norton, 2001) 1477.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 1477.

⁴⁸ Althusser, 1495.

some sort and adopts a set of values and beliefs which (in general terms) can be argued to reinforce the ruling ideology and reproduce individuals as its enforcers. The family is forcefully rejected as a constrictive institution for the individual in traditional hard-boiled detective fiction

The two other institutions in my focus, the law and the army, are part of the RSA. The institutions belonging to the RSA, and especially the law, are central in the world of hard-boiled detective fiction. They are institutions which function mainly by repression, and their function in society is to make the rules and constraints of action and the repercussions of breaking them visible. In the traditional hard-boiled detective fiction, especially the law can be argued to be portrayed typically as negative and as an oppressive institution because it limits the agency of individuals in modern society. I will analyze the position of these institutions in Child's recent hard-boiled narratives, and in the next subchapter I will examine further the position of these institutions in the tradition of the subgenre

The way ideology ultimately ensures the reproduction of social conditions, is by involving individuals as subjects of that ideology. According to Leitch, Althusser saw that through institutions which belong to the state apparatuses, society implements ideological social practices by creating "pliant, obedient citizens who practice dominant values".⁴⁹ Althusser calls the act of subjection of individuals *interpellation*. Ideology "hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects".⁵⁰ The individual is thus given the presumable freedom of action, but is in fact "stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submission".⁵¹ People are made to feel that they are freely choosing what is in fact being imposed upon them.

Interpellation is the main force of ideology; the maintenance of social control through interpellation does not need physical force. Through interpellation, the structures of society function all by themselves almost without any fear of challenges to them. The exploration of the agency of the

⁴⁹ Leitch, 1477.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1504.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 1507.

individual in my thesis is done with an eye on Althusser's theory of individuals as the objects of interpellation and thus as seemingly autonomous agents. Since both the autonomy of the individual and institutional control are central in the subgenre of the hard-boiled detective fiction, the implementation of Althusser's theories to analyze their portrayal is suitable and justifiable. My aim is to find out the ideological surroundings of the portrayal of institutions and the individual in Child's narratives and position them into the continuum of the ideology of the hard-boiled subgenre. In the next subchapter, I will concentrate on the concept of genre and literary genres as ideological harbors and focus on the hard-boiled detective fiction as a subgenre and map out its ideological roots.

As mentioned before, the position of art in terms of ideology is complicated in Marxist literary theory. Even if Althusser takes a pessimistic attitude towards the totality of the ideological subjection of individuals, and somewhat ends up neglecting the possibility of ways of rebelling against dominant ideology, he grants art, including literature, some degree of freedom from its socio-political context. It is not useful to think of texts simply as the products of ideology and as passive reflections of it. According to Douglas Kellner, Althusser positions art between ideology and science, as it has some possibilities of questioning and surpassing ideology while being part of the ISA.⁵² Thus, art is given a relative autonomy from the economic. As Eagleton notes in *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, there has also been the question of the existence of more 'authentic' art which is able to "transcend the ideological limits of its time, yielding us insights into realities which ideology hides from view".⁵³

To use Althusserian theories in analyzing literary works, the question is then how we are able to recognize the ideological and rise above it if our own positions as readers and critics are ideological. Althusser provides us with a process called *symptomatic reading* which means that ideological substance is present in a text as significant silences – in the gaps and absences – as the text is

⁵² Kellner, 98.

⁵³ Eagleton 1976, 17-18.

ideologically limited to say certain things.⁵⁴ Thus by the act of analyzing the limits set to the text or a whole literary genre by ideology, we can become aware and conscious of it. This “double reading” of texts, reading both what is present and what is absent in order to detect the latent text,⁵⁵ is what I am attempting to do in my analysis. Particularly in the second analysis chapter, I will employ this method of reading, and highlight the importance of what is left unsaid besides what actually is said in the text.

As mentioned, Althusser sees ideology being profoundly unconscious in its processes. In literary products, ideology can situate itself in the part which is not visible; it is difficult to recognize it as it only gives symptoms of its existence. Thus, the act of reading these ‘symptoms’ of ideology in a text is needed in order to reach it. Storey notes that Pierre Macherey, a former student of Althusser’s, applies the Althusserian technique of symptomatic reading to cultural texts in his work *A Theory of Literary Production*.⁵⁶ Macherey argues that “the finished literary work (since nothing can be added to it) *reveals* the gaps in ideology”,⁵⁷ and that “[w]e always find, at the edge of the text, the language of ideology, momentarily hidden, but eloquent by its very absence”.⁵⁸ Macherey also argues that “[b]y its nature, ideology is always *elsewhere*, it can never be located; consequently it cannot be totally subdued, diminished or dispelled”.⁵⁹

Criticism on Althusser’s views on ideology has focused on the still quite deterministic view he offers of society which seems to rob people of their autonomy. Even if Althusser tries to move away from structural determinism inherent to Marxist literary theory, his theory, according to McLellan, “offers no room for autonomous action by people and in particular their reflexive understanding of the structure in which they are embedded and the possibility of their doing something about it”.⁶⁰ Barker

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

⁵⁵ Storey, 113.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁵⁷ Pierre Macherey, *Theory of Literary Production*, 1966, trans. Geoffrey Wall (London: Routledge, 1978) 60.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁶⁰ McLellan, 33-34.

also points out that much of Althusser's theories is now regarded as problematic.⁶¹ Althusser's way of thinking of institutions only as sites of hegemonic ideology and thus neglecting the inclusion of any contradictory ideological discourses is to be questioned. If, by definition, everything we witness and everything we express is ideological, it is impossible to form non-ideological views and to deconstruct or even recognize ideology as such.⁶² This is called the Mannheim's paradox, which problematizes any ideological analysis: "if all knowledge is ideological no analysis can rise above the level of its own ideology: it cannot then be fully analytical".⁶³ Although, according to Brantlinger, Althusser sees that "it is possible to know about it [ideology] but not to abolish it".⁶⁴ In my analysis, my purpose is to approach whether ideology is seen to reside in institutions and how the ideological position of the individual is recognized in Child's novels. I will also compare these stances with the conventions of hard-boiled detective fiction presented in the following subchapter.

2.2 Genre Issues and Hard-Boiled Ideology

In this subchapter, I examine more closely the relationship between literature and ideology; I will consider genres social texts. I approach the tradition of hard-boiled detective fiction and see how the ideology of the subgenre could be described. I will try to see if there is a visible connection between the ideology of the genre and the notion of 'Americanness' – does the subgenre portray an American ideology? What is the relation between the hard-boiled narrative and the collective mood of the nation in its background? This chapter focuses mainly on the past narratives of the hard-boiled subgenre; by establishing a tradition to the subgenre, I am able to concentrate in the analysis section of this thesis on situating the recent Jack Reacher narratives in a continuum.

⁶¹ Barker, 79.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 79-80.

⁶³ Jehlen, 12.

⁶⁴ Brantlinger, 89.

Literary critics categorize different types of literary products into separate genres and subgenres in terms of their features. David Duff understands a genre as being “[a] recurring type or category of text, as defined by structural, thematic and/or functional criteria”.⁶⁵ This process of categorization is not as uncomplicated as it would appear, since literary works often combine characteristics from various genres and even create new, unknown conventions. The term *genre* is ambiguous in itself— one of the fascinating things in the concept of genre is the changing value that has been placed into it among genre studies. The term has often been used pejoratively to “denote types of popular fiction in which a high degree of standardization is apparent”; detective fiction as well as historical romances, spy thrillers and science fiction are often included in this category “collectively known as ‘genre fiction’, as distinct from more ‘serious’ highbrow fiction”.⁶⁶

The term ‘formula fiction’ has also been used of genres which are considered to have a rigid set of rules and conventions, certain formulas, which are almost without exception present in every text situated in a certain genre. Duff argues that earlier the use of these terms questioned the possibility of the author to produce an autonomous, unique and original text almost by definition.⁶⁷ The conventions and rigid rules were perhaps seen to force the author to recycle old material instead of inventing new. This argument could be used of literature and art in general, if we go far enough in the discussion of what is unique and original and what has been done before. Today, according to Duff, the term genre has relinquished some of its negative baggage, and is no longer seen as robbing the author of his/her individuality.⁶⁸ This idea of following conventions can be connected to the one presented in the previous subchapter; the idea of the limited autonomy of the author as he or she is being confined to certain modes of expression by ideology. Indeed, genre fiction has been considered a significant harbor of hegemonic ideology.

⁶⁵ Duff, xiii.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, xiii.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

As I noted previously, popular culture, including detective fiction, has been one of the main focuses of Cultural Studies, as it has been described as an “ideological machine which more or less effortlessly reproduces the dominant ideology” and minimizes the adverse reactions from its audience by locking readers into “specific reading positions” in which there is “little space for reader activity or textual contradiction”.⁶⁹ Genre fiction is often regarded as ideological writing, but as it is seen as the literature of the masses in terms of quantity and the values it incorporates, it can be also recognized as an important forum for “symbolic protest”⁷⁰ against hegemonic ideology.

Genre fiction, and popular culture in general, is thus a contradictory mixture of competing values and interests. In terms of analyzing ideology, one of the main functions of the critic could then be to describe the balance in which a specific narrative portrays these contradictory values that reassert or rise against the hegemonic ideology of its time. In my approach, the socio-political context of the text is important in its production and interpretation, and a work of art, be it popular art or not, cannot be solely considered a product of individual talent.

The construction of generic fiction, its limits and possibilities are the focus of constant renegotiation between authors and readers. Derek Longhurst argues that genres are subject to the dynamics of historical change and thus seen as conventions developing in response to the social conditions of society.⁷¹ Eagleton in *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, for instance, agrees with Longhurst, but again it has to be underlined that there is no symmetrical relationship between a literary form and ideological changes, since genres in general evolve partly due to own internal pressures and form conventions which remain unchanged even if their societal context changes.⁷² Richard Slotkin and John G. Cawelti both argue that the widely used and produced conventions among genre fiction reflect

⁶⁹ Storey, 12.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷¹ Derek Longhurst, “Sherlock Holmes: Adventures of an English Gentleman 1887-1894,” *Reading Popular Fiction: Gender, Genre and Narrative Pleasure*, ed. Derek Longhurst (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989) 51-52.

⁷² Eagleton 1976, 24-26.

basic cultural themes; narratives are seen as myths drawn from history.⁷³ My aim in this thesis is to follow this mode of thought, as in this subchapter I attempt to map out some of the myths which the hard-boiled detective fiction taps into, and the socio-political matters these myths are connected with.

Next, I will try to shed some light into the tradition of the hard-boiled and then explore the possibility of the existence of a certain hard-boiled ideology and its relation to the notion of ‘Americanness’. The hard-boiled subgenre of detective fiction presents a strong, significantly American tradition of detective fiction, and has been seen as a response to the ‘classical’ detective fiction, whose tradition is strongly connected to the United Kingdom. The hard-boiled, the descriptively called ‘tough guy’ narrative, appeared in the United States in the 1920s. These narratives had a strong position in popular magazines called ‘pulp’ through which they were brought into general attention. The *Black Mask* magazine, perhaps the most famous of the pulp publications, was founded in 1920, and during its lifespan of 31 years, its authors known as the “Black Mask Boys”⁷⁴ constituted the masters of the subgenre known today as the hard-boiled detective fiction. Even if the rise of the hard-boiled tradition can be situated in the era between the two world wars, the genre has survived to this day.

It is not clear who in fact wrote the first hard-boiled narratives, since the tradition and conventions of the subgenre can be traced back to many different genres in history, but the first significant hard-boiled detective was created, according to Kathleen Gregory Klein, by John Carroll Daly in the *Black Mask* in 1923.⁷⁵ The most significant authors who created detectives and narratives that still are used as reference points in discussions of hard-boiled detective fiction are Dashiell Hammett (1894-1961) and Raymond Chandler (1888-1959). They are seen as the founding fathers and

⁷³ John G. Cawelti, *Mystery, Violence and Popular Culture* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004) 179, Richard Slotkin, “Myth and the Reproduction of History,” *Ideology and Classic American Literature*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch and Myra Jehlen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 70.

⁷⁴ William F. Nolan, *The Black Mask Boys: Masters in the Hard-boiled School of Detective Fiction* (New York: William Morrow, 1985) 13.

⁷⁵ Kathleen Gregory Klein, *The Woman Detective: Gender & Genre* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1988) 122.

the unsurpassed icons of the subgenre. With the detectives Sam Spade and The Continental Op, Hammet can be seen as the creator of the ‘tough guy’ protagonist and the sharp realism and strong values which became staples in the subgenre.⁷⁶ Daly’s *Snarl of the Beast* (1927) and Hammett’s *Red Harvest* (1929) have been argued to be the first examples of hard-boiled detective fiction novels. Raymond Chandler, who joined the Black Mask School after Hammett, brought to the subgenre “a unique ‘poetic realism’” and an element of cynical humour with his iconic detective protagonist, Philip Marlowe.⁷⁷ Mickey Spillane’s protagonist, Mike Hammer, is also one of the iconic characters in the tradition of the hard-boiled.

Hard-boiled detective fiction is regarded as a response to the classical puzzle-narratives of the ‘Golden Age’ detective writers, such as Agatha Christie in the United Kingdom. Hard-boiled detective fiction moved the focus from the problems of the middle class or the English country-gentry to the urban milieu of dark and dangerous big cities in the United States, where the extreme poles of society, the rich and the poor, are represented. One feature of hard-boiled detective fiction that differentiated it from its predecessors and what made it a particularly ‘American’ genre was the claim that the narratives tap into the ‘real’ lives of American people.⁷⁸ Raymond Chandler, in his famous essay “The Simple Art of Murder” (1950), attacks the classic detective narrative for the apparent lack of realism and for its focus on the country community. He argues that “Hammett gave murder back to the kind of people that commit it for reasons, not just to provide a corpse, and with the means at hand, not hard-wrought duelling pistols, curare and tropical fish”.⁷⁹ Chandler also argues strongly in the essay that the hard-boiled subgenre is undeniably realistic in its narration, even if the conventions of the subgenre can be seen to be as highly developed and recognizable as of the classic detective fiction story with its country-house murder plots and predictable motives.

⁷⁶ Nolan, 75.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 224.

⁷⁸ See e.g. Walton and Jones, 124.

⁷⁹ Raymond Chandler, “The Simple Art of Murder,” 1950, *The Simple Art of Murder* (New York: Random House, 1988) 14.

One point worth mentioning, when talking about the link between social context and literature, is the nature of the crime depicted in the subgenre of hard-boiled – it differs significantly from the previous detective stories. Crimes in hard-boiled detective narratives are often murders, threats against the individual in question, whereas the earlier detective narratives tended to focus around threats against a whole community. In his article “Sherlock Holmes: Adventures of An English Gentleman 1887-1894”, Longhurst positions the differences between various detective fiction subgenres to the socio-political contexts of the narratives. For instance, he sees that “crime is a social practice”, and the conventions concerning criminality develop in response to social conditions.⁸⁰ He argues that the attacks on private property in the Victorian Sherlock Holmes stories portray “ideological supports of the sanctity of private property” of the Victorian age.⁸¹ The criminality and crimes in the classic ‘whodunnit’ stories are a threat to the community, above all. The crimes portrayed in hard-boiled detective fiction are seen to be specifically American. The chaos of American society in the 1920s and 1930s, brought on by widely spread corruption and Gangsterism, led the focus from assaults on the community to murder, which, according to Stephen Knight, is said to be “the central crime of modern fiction because of our [modern] period's obsessive individualism”⁸².

Some central conventions emerging from the traditional detective fiction narratives have been abandoned in the hard-boiled subgenre: the goal of regaining communal cohesion; the investigation conducted by an amiable detective of the type of Agatha Christie’s Hercule Poirot or Miss Marple. Certain conventions have become integral to hard-boiled detective fiction, without which the subgenre would change irredeemably. In the centre of it lies the detective, whose whiteness, heterosexuality and masculinity are vital to the narrative and to the success of the detection.⁸³ Whereas the focus in the traditional narratives was on the community, the detective’s individuality becomes integral in the hard-

⁸⁰ Longhurst, 52-53.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁸² Stephen Knight, “A Hard Cheerfulness!: An Introduction to Raymond Chandler,” *American Crime Fiction: Studies in the Genre*, ed. Brian Docherty (Basingstoke. Macmillan, 1988) 84.

⁸³ Reddy, 9.

boiled; the autonomy and heightened individuality assigned to the masculine protagonist are highly idealized. The detective is a solitary tough guy who walks the “mean streets”⁸⁴ of the urban milieu of the American city. The subgenre is deemed as the celebration of masculinity and the autonomous action connected to it, and the masculine qualities of the hard-boiled are visible, for instance, in the narrative’s quick and harsh first-person narration and the language used; the tough talk, cynicism and wisecracks. Violence, physical prowess and hard work, without forgetting the masculine vices of drinking or smoking, are also integral parts of the subgenre. The white man is the norm in the subgenre – women, non-whites and homosexuals, all “the characters who deviate from the admired form of behaviour”⁸⁵ are treated as ‘Others’ and with contempt.

As I noted above, individual agency is extremely important to hard-boiled detective fiction. The concept of agency refers, in general, to the capacity of an individual to act in the world as an agent. Agency is commonly associated with notions of freedom, free will, action, creativity and originality.⁸⁶ When we consider the agency of the hard-boiled detective, one specific dimension of agency must be acknowledged: agency as socially produced and determined, i.e., agency is enabled by “differentially distributed social resources”.⁸⁷ This is extremely important in analysing the agency of the white, heterosexual male protagonist of the hard-boiled detective narrative compared to, for instance, the assumed agency of a black lesbian detective in the same hard-boiled surroundings.

The male protagonist’s solitariness and isolation from other people is a central aspect in the subgenre: he tends to act alone, and with no family or other close relationships the detective seems to be free of social ties. As the primary function of the classic ‘whodunnit’ novels was to restore social cohesion of the community disrupted by crime, hard-boiled stories portray a similar struggle, but regaining social cohesion is often seen unattainable in the hard-boiled world. Differing from the classic

⁸⁴ Chandler, 18.

⁸⁵ Jopi Nyman, *Hard-Boiled Fiction and Dark Romanticism* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998) 110.

⁸⁶ Barker, 236.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 236.

detective novels, the hard-boiled subgenre tends to highlight the importance of individualist agency instead of communal cohesion. The institutions, so precious and valued in classic crime fiction, are now shown to be corrupted and irredeemable.

The family as an institution is also portrayed in a negative light. Traditionally the hard-boiled detective is without a past or a family, and as he detects cases to whose backdrop a dysfunctional family often functions, a family seems to be all but wanted or needed. A spouse and children would only mean hassle. The army, an institution in my focus, is perhaps not a major institution among the staples in the tradition of the subgenre, but what it depicts can be linked to its traditions, as it is one of the main sites of defining masculinity.

In the hard-boiled society, greed for money and power is a corruptive force rampant in society. The crimes committed in the narratives are usually results of social corruption, but they are committed against individuals, thus threatening individual agency in society. The political institution, the police and the law courts are unable to stop injustice from taking place in the world of the hard-boiled. The protagonist is an unfaltering character, as he functions according to his own moral, sometimes outside the legal system. The detective acts separate from the police, and in the tradition of the subgenre, police officers are often depicted as stupid, negligent or corrupted.

My intention is to analyse the way important institutions – the law, the army and the family – are depicted in Child's novels in relation to the tradition of the hard-boiled subgenre. My aim is to situate Child's narratives in the hard-boiled continuum from the 1920s onwards. Later in this thesis, I will examine the rewritings and changes which have happened in the subgenre since the 1920s.

In studying the rise of hard-boiled detective fiction and its abovementioned thematics, it is common to reflect the genre to the socio-political conditions of the time. This approach, widely used in Marxist literary theory, is present in many of the critics' approaches to hard-boiled detective fiction. Jopi Nyman, for instance, argues in his *Hard-Boiled Fiction and Dark Romanticism* that "hard-boiled

fiction is a cultural and historical phenomenon and deserves a cultural reading that does not repeat the critical commonplaces voiced by formalist genre critics and social reductionists”.⁸⁸ Libby Schlagel even argues that detective fiction provides “insight into the soul of society unobtainable from newspaper accounts of daily events”.⁸⁹ It can be argued that detective fiction can be seen as a cultural symptom of the concerns and desires of the public.

The society that gave birth to the subgenre, which noticeably differs from the previous detective fiction narratives, was under a great change. The late 1920s and 1930s was a time of increasing corporatism, economic instability and flux in traditional gender roles. The Great Depression in 1929 and the two world wars, as Cawelti points out in *Mystery, Violence and Popular Culture*, created disillusionment and scepticism in the American people.⁹⁰ There is a visible link between the rise of pulp and hard-boiled detective fiction, and the rise of modernism in the larger sphere of literature. A growing tension and unease with the insecure social situation at the beginning of the twentieth century provided a background for a movement which anticipated a changing world. Hard-boiled detective fiction accommodated themes which are also common in modernist writing; societal problems, alienation, irrationality of warfare and, above all, pessimism. Hard-boiled detective fiction can be seen as one place where modernism entered popular fiction. The problems of dysfunctional war-ridden societies in the midst of financial depression were reflected upon in the hard-boiled narratives, which portrayed individuals struggling in a broken world. According to Walton and Jones, hard-boiled novels of the time worked to reinforce the role of their readers who were affected by the social changes.⁹¹

Especially anxieties over gender have been seen to be the focus of hard-boiled narratives, as they are recognized as promoting the idea of the idealized masculine individual.⁹² The traditional gender roles in American society were seen to be disrupted, because during the First World War and

⁸⁸ Nyman 1998, 10.

⁸⁹ Libby Schlagel, *The Expanding Genre of Detective Fiction* (Ann Arbor: CMI Dissertation Information Service, 1979) 1.

⁹⁰ Cawelti 2004, 188.

⁹¹ Walton and Jones, 49.

⁹² Jopi Nyman, *Men Alone: Masculinity, Individualism and Hard-Boiled Fiction* (Amsterdam: Rudopi, 1997) 12.

the depression men began to lose their position as the sole breadwinners of the family. Women entered the public sphere by joining working life, and the following changes in the organization of work and family structure created anxieties concerning hegemonic masculinity. The rise of hard-boiled fiction and detective fiction, in general, can be associated with the attempt of remasculinization in the 1920s and 1930s. Nyman points out that for example in the United States, President Theodore Roosevelt, and his portrayal as “the hunting president,”⁹³ can be seen as one of the icons of this attempt, since his image was connected to the virtues of the Frontier man. Thus the emphasis on strong masculinity and the ‘othering’ of women in hard-boiled detective fiction can be seen as a reaction to the “decline of the male supreme power and traditional male roles in early twentieth-century America”.⁹⁴ Also the racism which is rampant in the tradition of the subgenre can be seen connected to “the tensions arising from the increasing ethnic diversity”⁹⁵ in the United States of the time, since debates on immigration were extremely visible in the 1910s and 1920s.

The tradition of the hard-boiled detective fiction subgenre shows such a degree of conformity in its conventions that there is a possibility to attempt describing a particular hard-boiled ideology. In my opinion, the hard-boiled detective fiction, and especially its tradition, has a certain ideology which is present in the narratives. In accordance with Knight, I see texts producing certain hegemonies in their ideology constituting of “the inseparable bundle of political, cultural and economic sanctions which maintain a particular social system to the advantage of certain members of the whole community”.⁹⁶

The core of hard-boiled detective fiction is arguably its individualist ideology, and this individualism is masculine, white and heterosexual. As Reddy argues, the consciousness of the subgenre is inherently white.⁹⁷ The tradition of the subgenre is completely masculine, and Cawelti even

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁹⁵ Megan E. Abbott, *The Street Was Mine: White Masculinity in Hardboiled Fiction and Film Noir* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) 94-95.

⁹⁶ Stephen Knight, *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1980) 4.

⁹⁷ Reddy, 9.

argues that hard-boiled detective fiction is “the most antifeminist of mystery genres”.⁹⁸ The criminals in older hard-boiled detective narratives were almost without exception portrayed to have feminine characteristics, and the criminals who represent the greatest threat to the detective and to masculinity are women. Knight sees that “the treatment of women and homosexuals is clearly a way of neutralizing their disturbing force”⁹⁹ in order to protect the masculine hero. Violence also acts as a staple in the subgenre, and it is tightly linked to the promotion of masculinity as well.

The subgenre set out to criticize the dominant ideology of American society of the 1920s and 1930s, represented by growing consumerism and big corporations in big cities. Even if hard-boiled detective fiction is now recurrently viewed as promoting a conservative hegemonic ideology, the traditional hard-boiled detective fiction was a reactionary subgenre in a way,¹⁰⁰ as it attacked American society of its time by representing an alternative, if not a solution, to the conditions which proposed a threat to masculine individuality. The subgenre’s response is culminated in the figure of the cynical detective who abandons the image of the proper working man of the corporate era who supports his family and works for the greater good of the community and the nation. The hard-boiled detective is a marginal figure without a family, autonomous in his actions as he works alone without much money, according to his own moral code against corruption that is both moral and material, and is seen setting against the “new American world of corporate bureaucracy and rampant speculation”.¹⁰¹

My opinion is that the subgenre shows non-conformist attitudes concerning the social situation between the 1920s and 1950s in terms of introducing a seemingly radical character who revolts against society's normative masculinity. However, at best the subgenre can be seen to respond to the cry of the alienated American people with a populist approach to social criticism, which would appeal to the

⁹⁸ Cawelti 2004, 108.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 147.

¹⁰⁰ See e.g. Andrew Pepper, *The Contemporary American Crime Novel: Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Class* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).

¹⁰¹ Leonard Cassuto, *Hard-Boiled Sentimentality: The Secret History of American Crime Stories* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009) 61.

masses.¹⁰² By introducing this non-conformist masculinity, the subgenre in fact ends up supporting an ideology from the past, a remnant which can be recognized to be a view of masculinity that has been dominant in the American context from the times of Frontier literature. The subgenre combined both modern and traditional material in its construction: it looked for solutions to the threatening situations brought on by modern times from the past. This solution to the changed social structure, cultural values and moral codes is a nostalgic one presenting a myth of an autonomous male individual as the cure. Nyman argues that the subgenre sets out to criticize “the transition from the traditional values of American individualist ideology to a world where the importance of the individual diminishes and he becomes one of the masses”.¹⁰³

This individualist ideology, which ultimately can be equated with the ideology of hard-boiled detective fiction, is in my opinion a specific version of individualism whose sources can be seen to lie in a concept of an American ideology. My approach is similar to Reddy’s, in that “[h]ard-boiled ideology is an exaggerated version – but only a very slightly exaggerated version – of mainstream American ideology, particularly as that ideology was propounded in the years between the world wars”.¹⁰⁴ The basis of this national ideology, this ‘Americanness,’ lies deeply in individualism, which is often shown to be a masculine characteristic in and by popular culture. Brian Baker also argues that masculinity is clearly connected with “the ideological imperatives of the American nation-state”.¹⁰⁵

Indeed, hard-boiled detective fiction can be seen to have its roots deep in the American tradition of individualist ideology strengthened, for instance, by literature and the film industry. Besides sharing themes of detection, crime and suspense with the classical detective fiction, the hard-boiled has its roots in several adventure formulas of the 19th century which have been central in creating a sense of a unified American ideology of individualism. Nyman and Leonard Cassuto, for instance, see that hard-

¹⁰² Woody Haut, *Neon Noir: Contemporary American Crime Fiction* (London: Serpent’s Tail, 1999) 5.

¹⁰³ Nyman 1998, 133-134.

¹⁰⁴ Reddy, 9.

¹⁰⁵ Brian Baker, *Masculinity in Fiction and Film: Representing Men in Popular Genres 1945-2000* (London: Continuum, 2006) 66.

boiled detective fiction has its main aesthetic influences in the American sphere; besides the mystery story, the subgenre is connected to the Frontier narratives, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century adventure stories, particularly the Western, and to American naturalism of the late nineteenth century.¹⁰⁶ The archetypal hard-boiled detective combines features from the solitary frontier hero, the gunfighter of the Western and the alienated and cynical male of the naturalist tradition. The hero has often been compared to a modern knight or a cowboy, who acts according to the rules of those worlds in a modern, urban environment.

The traditional American ideology with masculine individualism in its centre is connected with the myth of the American Dream, which to this day defines the consciousness denoted as typically 'American'. This myth has its roots in the frontier literature; in *Mystery, Violence and Popular Culture*, Cawelti sees that America is experienced as a terrain to be conquered, a frontier where men could prosper leaving their pasts behind in order to "father a higher human possibility on a Virgin continent".¹⁰⁷ This experience of the frontier is seen to make the American character.¹⁰⁸ Cynthia S. Hamilton claims that "the shaping of society by frontier conditions had given The United States its unique identity".¹⁰⁹ The character traits valued in the frontier conditions still remain important. The individual's strives for success are seen as the foundation of the United States as a nation-state. According to Hamilton, this means that "the individual is the foundation of society and his interests and rights should have priority over those of the society. Ideally, the individual surrenders as few rights as possible to the domain of societal control".¹¹⁰ The idea that every individual has perfect freedom and absolute responsibility for his or her own protection has shaped the idea of the 'Self-Made Man', integral to the American Dream.

¹⁰⁶ Cassuto, 5, Nyman 1997, 16-17.

¹⁰⁷ Cawelti 2004, 143.

¹⁰⁸ Baker, 127.

¹⁰⁹ Cynthia S. Hamilton, *Western and Hard-Boiled Detective Fiction in America from High Noon to Midnight* (Houndsmills: Macmillan, 1987) 13.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

Hard-boiled detective fiction uses features of the American Dream in its tradition, as it highlights the importance of the autonomous individual over communal relations. However, instead of completely reproducing the myth of the American Dream, hard-boiled detective fiction criticizes and departs from ideas central to the myth in modern American society: material wealth and success, power, fame and social mobility. After the great social problems brought on by the First World War and the Great Depression the validity of the dream was compromised. The American mode of thought which was strongly connected to cultural optimism¹¹¹ was replaced by, as Cawelti argues in *Mystery, Violence and Popular Culture*, “a strain of pessimism and despair”¹¹² in American popular as well as intellectual culture. Other characteristics of the myth were reproduced in the subgenre, therefore, as Nyman points out in *Men Alone*, “the nature of the critique is not so much radical as nostalgic”¹¹³, as in the centre of hard-boiled detective fiction there is the nostalgic figure of the individual male of the frontier.

Hard-boiled detective fiction has continued to be successful to this day, but the subgenre has not remained unchanged. The ideology of the subgenre, connected especially to the tradition created between the 1920s and 1950s, has been questioned by more recent rewritings of the subgenre. In the analysis section of this thesis, I will examine the possible changes the subgenre has faced during time more closely, as I analyze Child’s narratives in relation to the tradition of the subgenre. I will utilize Lewis D. Moore’s division of the hard-boiled subgenre in the discussion of development inside the subgenre; he divides hard-boiled detective fiction into three different periods according to the changing conventions which define the hard-boiled narratives. He positions ‘the Early hard-boiled novel’ between 1927 and 1955, after which follows ‘the Transitional period’ between 1964 and 1977, and finally ‘the Modern period’ from 1979 to present.

¹¹¹ Barbara A. Rader and Howard G. Zettler, *The Sleuth and the Scholar: Origins, Evolution, and Current Trends in Detective Fiction*, ed. Barbara A. Rader and Howard G. Zettler (Westport: Greenwood, 1988) 92.

¹¹² Cawelti 2004, 191.

¹¹³ Nyman 1997, 363.

Moore's approach to hard-boiled detective fiction differs from some other critics in that Moore acknowledges changes in the central conventions of the subgenre, not excluding variations which differ from the Early period.¹¹⁴ His thesis is that "while the genre has undergone many changes it still employs a recognizable form and thematic focus throughout".¹¹⁵ The subgenre is in some degree seen as an arena for the discussion of sexist, racist and heterosexist opinions of its time as its close relation to a specific socio-historical moment is constituted. But the question is to what extent hard-boiled detective fiction subgenre can contain and accommodate change, as some themes and perspectives are deemed irreplaceable to it. It is understandable that, since hegemonic masculinity is central to the tradition of the subgenre, every rewriting exists in negotiation with this and other integral generic conventions.

Rewritings of hard-boiled detective fiction narratives concerning gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality surfaced especially in the 1990s. Societal change in relation to race, gender and sexuality made them current issues and made it easier to produce rewritings of the genre. For example, feminist writers started to write narratives with female protagonists, ethnic writers changed the hero's racial or ethnic background and non-heterosexual writers gave the protagonist a new sexual identity. Besides changes in the identity of the protagonist, the rewritings produce changes in the portrayal of institutions and the agency of the individual. Rewritings of the hard-boiled detective fiction concerning gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality have been studied, as these stories have become more and more popular, by critics such as Andrew Pepper (2000), Stephen Knight (2004), Sally Munt (1994), Maureen T. Reddy (2003) and Stephen F. Soitos (1996) to name but a few.

There are significant benefits in reclaiming the subgenre for women, non-whites and non-heterosexuals as authors, readers and characters, but some critics argue that every rewriting, even if

¹¹⁴ See for example Reddy.

¹¹⁵ Lewis D. Moore, *Cracking the Hard-Boiled Detective: A Critical History from the 1920s to the Present* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2006) 3.

involving a female or gay detective, ends up reproducing the genre's "ideological criminality"¹¹⁶ concerning hegemonic masculinity, whiteness and heterosexuality. It has been claimed that the position of the detective is closely connected to hegemonic institutions such as the law, which necessarily bind the detective to the ruling ideology they intend to fight. Reddy argues that rewritings which end up changing the genre's conventions substantially do not belong to the genre.¹¹⁷ Bethany Ogdon also argues that feminist rewritings of hard-boiled detective fiction are only superficially hard-boiled, since the ideological orientation integral to the genre is not present.¹¹⁸ Other critics claim that the integral thing in every genre is the elasticity of its boundaries that incorporate change through time.¹¹⁹ Andrew Pepper notes that "the aesthetics and politics of individual crime novels differ radically"¹²⁰, thus it is difficult to gather every narrative under the same conventions. In my analysis, I intend to discuss Child's way of "rewriting" certain integral features of hard-boiled detective fiction. I am interested in finding out in what way the Jack Reacher series distances itself from the tradition of the hard-boiled detective fiction subgenre.

¹¹⁶ Gill Plain, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction: Gender, Sexuality and the Body* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002) 11. See also Reddy, 15.

¹¹⁷ Reddy, 15.

¹¹⁸ Bethany Ogdon, "Hard-Boiled Ideology," *Critical Quarterly* Vol. 34, No. 1 (Spring 1992) 71.

¹¹⁹ Pepper, 13.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

3. The Law and the Individual Moral Code

In this chapter, I will begin my analysis of the tension between the institutions and the individual agency of the hard-boiled detective protagonist. My aim is to study the way the official legal system and the detective's approach to law are depicted in the three Jack Reacher novels, and whether they follow the individualist tradition created in the "Early" period of hard-boiled detective fiction. My main focus is to analyze the tension between the contradictory values of the detective's own moral code and of the official law institution.

In 3.1, I will focus on the individualistic tradition of the subgenre; the representations of the importance of the individual moral code and the incorporation of the myth of the vigilante in Child's novels. In 3.2, my attention will be on the other side of the detective's relation to the law; I will approach the detective as being a 'lawman' of society instead of there being a clear separation between the law, part of the Althusserian RSA, and the detective's individual moral code. I will analyze whether the detective's individual moral code is in fact supportive of the societal status quo it is shown to repel.

In Althusser's theories, the law and the entire legal system is part of the Repressive State Apparatus, the RSA, of society. It is an institution which uses force to ensure the ideological subjection of people. The institution formulates rules of the way society should function properly, and its main duty is to control that the rules are obeyed. The institutions belonging to the RSA "ensure subjection to the ruling ideology, or the mastery of its 'practice';"¹²¹ thus, supporting the dominant social system and its ideology. The repression the RSA uses in order to function, includes physical violence, and while functioning secondarily by ideology it is able to ensure the internal cohesion of the subjects that are part of it, its reproduction and the trust "in the 'values' they propound externally".¹²² The police force and the army are known for the tight bond between the individuals who belong to these institutions and

¹²¹ Althusser, 1485.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 1490.

enforce their values. This internal cohesion in these institutions is upheld by the promotion of a specific set of rules and values that define the behavior of the group; these rules of conduct function as the basis of an internal camaraderie in the RSA institutions.

In every society, there is a set of laws which portrays the values and norms of that specific society, and for breaking a law there is a punishment. The institution of law has suitable methods of punishment for those who do not act according to the ideological standards of society. The institution creates a framework for individuals to follow in order to be successful subjects in that society. In Althusser's terms, it discreetly interpellates individuals as subjects; individuals are made to see themselves as free subjects who can affect their lives by their decisions, even if they are made to "submit freely to the commandments of the subject",¹²³ in the creation of which the institution of law is central. I will look at the way the ideological stance of the law is recognized and depicted in these narratives, and how this coincides with the traditional ideology of the hard-boiled subgenre discussed previously. If the law is approached in an Althusserian sense as a RSA in the novels, does Child's series try to separate itself from what the institution represents or is it irredeemably connected with it, when we consider the weight of the generic conventions?

In my analysis, on the one hand, I will focus on the law as a social structure, as an institution enforced by the police and, on the other hand, I will look at the law as connected to an individual sense of morality, of what is right and wrong.

3.1 The Detective as a Vigilante

In this subchapter, I will approach the detective's own moral code in relation to the official law and analyze the detective's superior sense of justice which ultimately seems to justify his actions, often set against the official laws of society. I will argue that Child uses the conventions of the Early period of

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 1508.

the subgenre in that the detective ends up setting himself outside the institutional law, deemed powerless in modern society. In my opinion, the detective protagonist reproduces the vigilante myth by taking the law into his own hands and dispensing his own justice, separate from the official law institution. Before concentrating on the analysis of the vigilante myth in Child's novels, I will explore the individualist tradition of American literature which I recognize to underlie the imagery of the myth. Then I will analyze the reasoning behind Reacher's problematization of the official legal institution. I will argue that Reacher reproduces the view of traditional hard-boiled narratives that the corruption of societal institutions stems from the problematic individualism of modern capitalist ideology.

In the theory section, I made a link between hard-boiled detective fiction and the individualist tradition of America. I approach the ideological influences in the subgenre in a similar fashion as Reddy, when I argue that hard-boiled detective narratives accommodate and reproduce a "mainstream American ideology"¹²⁴ which is individualistic in its motivations. Especially the masculine quest for individual agency, which was central in the American Frontier narratives from the late seventeenth century to the nineteenth century, is linked to the individualist ideology of hard-boiled detective fiction. As Knight points out, the tough detective of the subgenre "was seen as a modern but also traditional American hero, like the earlier Pathfinder or cowboy".¹²⁵

The individual moral code of the hard-boiled detective is a significant generic characteristic which exemplifies a connection both to the individualistic undertone of American literature in general and to the morality promoted in the realm of the Western. The hard-boiled detective protagonist is typically witnessed to act alone without the help of or even outside the official law according to a moral code which is separated from the institution of law. Knight sees that hard-boiled detective fiction brought up the "idea of a lone moral hero cleansing the filth of the modern city"¹²⁶ from the cowboy

¹²⁴ Reddy, 9.

¹²⁵ Stephen Knight, *Crime Fiction 1800-2000: Detection, Death, Diversity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) 111.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 112.

narratives of the Western. I will argue that in the Reacher series, Child reproduces this image of the vigilante and vigilante justice present in the tradition of hard-boiled detective fiction.

The myth of the vigilante is strongly connected with the American tradition of individualism: for Cawelti notes that the hard-boiled hero's "ambiguous relationship to law embodies, among other things, a traditional American notion of individualism", as "the hero acts out the myth that society and its organized processes of law, however necessary, are incapable of bringing about justice".¹²⁷ According to Haut, this emphasis placed on the individualistic moral code of the detective over the importance of institutional law is still current and maintained in modern hard-boiled narratives.¹²⁸

The three novels of the Jack Reacher series in my focus portray this deep belief in the idea of individual morality. Reacher exists in a world where the official law is rarely seen to protect society and individuals in it from crime and injustice. Even if Child does not situate Reacher in a world where the law is absent, it is seen as inefficient and corruptible. In fact, in every novel of the series, Reacher is in contact with the official law, and it seems that this frequency highlights the superiority of Reacher's morality. In the series, Reacher becomes involved with several investigative units inside the legal system of America. He acts as an independent advisor in serious criminal investigations, which the FBI or the CIA are unable to solve by themselves. They are extremely reluctant to include Reacher in the investigations, but his expertise and talent are undeniable and irreplaceable in solving the cases. It is Reacher whose detection solves the crimes in the series; the law and the police are set in the background and their actions are portrayed as insufficient and distracting.

Immediately, at the beginning of the series in *Killing Floor*, it is shown that the law in its present condition is not just. Reacher is wrongfully arrested for murder when he enters the small town of Margrave, Georgia. There are numerous serious crimes in *Killing Floor*, such as several murders including the murder of Reacher's own brother, money laundering and counterfeiting, corruption,

¹²⁷ Cawelti 2004, 175.

¹²⁸ Haut, 7.

smuggling, blackmail and kidnapping. In the course of the novel, Reacher takes up the role of an undercover agent of justice as the police force and the national legal system are incapable and unwilling to catch the perpetrators. In *Echo Burning*, Reacher is needed to act as a bodyguard for Carmen Greer, who is beaten by her husband. Due to the fact that the law refuses to help Carmen and her daughter Ellie May in their despair, Reacher sees it as his moral responsibility to protect them. Even if he feels reluctant to involve himself in a family drama, Reacher is not capable of turning a blind eye to people in need. It is his role to step in situations where the official law fails to do what it is meant to; in *Echo Burning*, Reacher also collects and returns the money a rich farmer owes a poor Mexican immigrant family and solves an old case of brutal killings of Mexican immigrants in the border of Texas. In *The Enemy*, it is shown that, as Reacher operates inside the law as a leader of an investigative team in the military police, the law is an institution which is not redeemable even from the inside. Reacher solves the crimes by following his own moral code, and this means that he often breaks the law during the detection process.

The law is in the centre of the hard-boiled narrative; its unsuccessful role in preventing crime and punishing criminals as an important institution of morality crystallizes many problems in the hard-boiled society. Similarly to the tradition of hard-boiled detective fiction, Reacher makes a clear separation from the official law as he resigns from his career as a military police officer specialized in homicide investigation. Instead of the official law, he relies on a law of his own, his own moral code. Especially in the tradition of the subgenre, the institution of law was portrayed to be a corrupt system of outdated rules, helpless to protect the innocent. The convention has been maintained to this day, as even in the Modern period of hard-boiled detective fiction the law has been portrayed in a negative light. According to Haut, modern narratives continue to present a world where “the guilty often escape punishment”.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ Haut, 7.

It seems that the law itself is not dispensable in Reacher's society; however, it is handicapped by the repercussions of modern ideology. In hard-boiled detective fiction, the official law and the conventional morality of society are portrayed to be easily corruptible by individuals corrupted by capitalistic ideology. The corruptive influence of the growing capitalism was portrayed in the early twentieth-century hard-boiled narratives, as the increasing manipulation in the stock market, the greedy businessmen and their unrelenting chase of wealth and social procession were seen to represent the loss of old values connected to American individualism. Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett often portrayed societies where the rich break the law trying to manipulate circumstances in their own interests, and the ones who want to be rich and influential end up breaking the law. For instance, Hammett's *Red Harvest*, is a story of a town called "Poisonville" by the locals, where Elihu Willson, a local industrialist who has had the town in his control, hires the Op since feeling threatened by several competing gangs he himself had originally invited into his city to resolve a labor dispute. Personville is also controlled by the corrupted chief of police Noonan. *Red Harvest* portrays a bleak image, for at the end of the novel, Elihu Willson is witnessed to restore his power over Personville.

Capitalism represents the inferior side of the myth of the American Dream; in the process of which power is taken from the individual to the hands of big companies of the new corporate America. Capitalistic ideology damages and corrupts the law, among other societal institutions. I see this imagery being repeated in Child's hard-boiled society as well; the law in the series is portrayed in an Althusserian way as part of the structures that enforce the dominant ideology of society; the institutional law is seen to protect the ones in power instead of promoting justice.

The greedy businessman, the epitome of capitalist oppression, is a recurring character in Child's fiction. The criminals and the corrupted police officers are blinded by money and power; and their physical appearance reflects this inner corruption, as they are often depicted as fat, pink, ugly and in poor health. In *Killing Floor*, Chief Morrison, the corrupt chief of the police department, resembles a

Southern oil tycoon; Reacher dislikes him at the moment he meets him: “A fat guy sat at a rosewood desk. Behind him were a couple of big flags.” (9). His corruptness is emphasized by his limping walk and his racist opinions. Also the mayor of Margrave, deeply involved in the counterfeiting scam, is portrayed as a greedy businessman or a politician. His car is extravagant and far too expensive for the mayor of a small American town: “there was a big Cadillac parked right across the entrance. Brand-new, fully loaded. Full of black leather and fake wood. It looked like a Vegas whorehouse....” (152).

Mayor Teale’s physique and demeanor exudes power and wealth, corruption and immorality:

He was in an old-fashioned suit. Bootlace tie with a silver clasp. Looked like a real asshole. Some kind of a politician. The Cadillac driver. He must have been about seventy-five years old and he was limping around, leaning on a thick cane with a huge silver knob at the top.
(152)

Reacher witnesses these corrupt officials of the law and the criminals being “almost matter-of-factly ... untouchable by law, protected by the structures of society”.¹³⁰ He seems to be strongly aware of the weaknesses of the law; in *Echo Burning* he quotes Honoré de Balzac, expressing his own thoughts on the matter: “Laws are spider webs through which the big flies pass and the little ones get caught” (253). Reacher sees that the state of the law represents the corrupt social order, as important people are left unpunished. He also contemplates the condition of modern society by quoting Herbert Marcuse: “Law and order are everywhere the law and order which protect the established hierarchy” (*EB*, 254). A corrupt politician and a judge has people murdered in order to protect his position in *Echo Burning*. In *The Enemy*, Reacher witnesses important military offices, including two-star generals, being involved in a conspiracy to protect their positions in the army. Reacher also discovers a complicated conspiracy inside the law apparatus itself, as he conducts a homicide investigation. Reacher is extremely frustrated, as he realizes that only few individuals besides him are interested in the truth and ready to discard the official statutes of law to discover it.

¹³⁰ Karin Molander Danielsson, *The Dynamic Detective: Special Interest and Seriality in Contemporary Detective Series* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2002) 53.

As noted above, Child's detective is obedient to an inner code of his own; instead of being represented as official of the institutionalized law of society, he acts accordingly to a personal morality. This morality, the ideal of justice, is corrupted and disintegrated in the law institution of modern capitalist society. Reacher, among other hard-boiled detectives, is a suitable hero of the individualist tradition acting out the laws, which are witnessed, according to Cawelti in *Mystery, Violence and Popular Culture*, as "a set of rules controlling the actions of individuals who are the source of morality and justice as well as injustice".¹³¹

This portrayal of the failure of the 'official' law to punish and prevent crimes was seen as part of the socially radical discourse conducted by the traditional subgenre:¹³² by setting himself outside the dominant social order and by criticizing the official law, the detective and the subgenre as a whole engage in social criticism. I argue that the criticism of capitalist ideology in the subgenre does not abolish the fact that the individualistic ideology it promotes is a representative of the hegemonic ideology in America. By returning to the values of masculine individualism, hard-boiled narratives support the hegemonic structures of society instead of rebelling against them. Accordingly, despite this moral attitude taken towards the law, it can be argued that the detective is, as Pepper notes, "a crucial part of the machinery by which social control is maintained and existing hierarchies, policed".¹³³ I will approach this side of the subgenre's relationship to the law in the next subchapter.

Reacher has left the army after thirteen years of service, and after leaving the army and his position as a military police officer, Reacher sees himself to be freed from the limitations of official law that constrict the police. As Cawelti argues, in traditional hard-boiled detective narratives, "the police represent symbolically the limitations, inadequacies and subtle corruption of the institutions of

¹³¹ Cawelti 2004, 175.

¹³² Pepper, 12.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 14.

law and order”.¹³⁴ Accordingly, Reacher sees that the police are confined by the bureaucracy, rules and restrictions they deem necessary in finding justice. Police officers are not systematically portrayed as corrupt or criminal in the series, but they are inevitably tied down by these restrictions inside the institution which do not serve justice. In *Killing Floor*, Reacher befriends Roscoe, who is the one of two uncorrupted police officers in Margrave. He sees that Roscoe is unable to function in a similar manner as he is, because she is bound to follow the law: “But she was a police officer. She was sworn to uphold all kinds of laws. Laws that were designed to get in my way.” (173). Being out of the system, an outsider without any ties to the community, Reacher is able to be the hero needed to execute justice properly:

On the other hand, I had no laws to worry about, no inhibitions, no distractions. I wouldn’t have to think about Miranda, probable cause, constitutional rights. I wouldn’t have to think about reasonable doubt or rules of evidence. No appeal to any higher authority for these guys. Was that fair? You bet your ass. These were bad people. (*KF*, 170)

In this excerpt, Reacher rejects the necessary statutes of law that are designed to protect the processes of justice. He experiences them as hindrances and resolves to a personal sense of justice, which is seemingly infallible.

I have now depicted Reacher as a vigilante, a character who takes on the position to protect the innocent as the official law fails. Cawelti sees in *Mystery, Violence and Popular Culture* that since the official law is seen to be handicapped and powerless, the detective “must himself become the law”¹³⁵ and fight against injustice. In *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, Cawelti also points out this intense moral stance that

lies behind the façade of toughness and cynicism accounts for many of the characteristic differences in method between the hard-boiled and classical detectives, for the hard-boiled detective, a case is not merely a problem; it can become a crusade.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ John G. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976) 153.

¹³⁵ Cawelti 2004, 163.

¹³⁶ Cawelti 1976, 151.

What is it then that makes the hard-boiled detective someone who can take the law into his own hands, to be the vigilante described by Cawelti in *Mystery, Violence and Popular Culture*?¹³⁷ According to him, the hero is able to function thus because “[a]gainst the lurid background of a savage and corrupt society, the hero’s code stands out as a beacon of disinterested morality”.¹³⁸

Following the myth of the vigilante, Reacher goes against the official law. In the name of justice, the hard-boiled detectives break the official laws of society, and their “scant regard for the law”¹³⁹ is a central ingredient in the subgenre. Reacher also inhabits this ‘liminal’ space between the law and crime, as he readily commits things transcending both the law and the conventional morality of society. Reacher condones vigilantism also with others; even when being in the military police in *The Enemy* he accepts severe violence towards a wife beater to whom the ‘official’ law cannot do anything (263). According to Cawelti, “[t]his narrative pattern, a protagonist placed in a situation where some form of violence or criminality becomes a moral necessity, is one of the basic archetype of American literature”, and that the “belief that in their crusade to bring peace and law to America and the world, a certain degree of violence and crime was only permissible but also morally necessary”.¹⁴⁰

In fact, the detective’s use of violence has been a significant convention in the subgenre to this day. In his article, “Myths of Violence in American Popular Culture”, Cawelti lists several myths which appear especially in American literature justifying the use of violence in certain contexts. The use of these myths partly makes the hard-boiled detective’s violence seem morally justified. First, the “lex talionis” or the “eye for an eye” myth uses violence as a form of retaliation, and “the circumstances can be manipulated to insure a moral and poetic equivalence between the criminal act and the hero’s vengeance”.¹⁴¹ According to Cawelti, among hard-boiled detective fiction authors, Mickey Spillane has been known for using the “eye for an eye” myth to justify his protagonist’s use of

¹³⁷ Cawelti 2004, 183.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 187.

¹³⁹ Haut, 44.

¹⁴⁰ Cawelti 2004, 160, 156.

¹⁴¹ John G. Cawelti, “Myths of Violence in American Popular Culture,” *Critical Inquiry* 1 (1975) 530.

violence.¹⁴² This myth is also used in the creation of Reacher's character, as Reacher seems to convince himself and others that all his violent acts are the results of the violence of someone else; if someone does something first he cannot answer for his own reactions. The myth of "crime does not pay" is also a central ingredient in the justification of the hard-boiled hero's violence against criminals, as it "provides an obvious moral justification for the killing of gangsters and murderers";¹⁴³ it is as if the criminals know exactly what they are involved in. As already discussed, the myth of the vigilante, central in nineteenth-century stories of violence,¹⁴⁴ is also one of the defining myths in the hard-boiled detective narrative. The individual moral code of the hard-boiled detective received its own place beside this myth, as "the myth of the hard-boiled hero and his code" describes the situation where violent actions are sanctioned by an individual sense of integrity that transcends the conventions of society.¹⁴⁵ Cawelti also mentions the myths of "equality through violence" and "regeneration through violence", which describe the purifying and regeneration aspects of the hero's violence in society.

Reacher's use of violence follows the conventions of the Early period hard-boiled detective fiction in its excessive use in the detection process. Reacher is extremely violent; in *Killing Floor*, he leaves behind a great number of dead bodies, as the name of the novel suitably refers to the place in an abattoir where animals are killed. Also in *Echo Burning*, Reacher is able to punish the criminals he encounters by killing them, as he is not part of the official law anymore as he is in *The Enemy*, and thus seemingly not obligated to follow the rules of the institution.

Reacher is intelligent and educated, but his strength and ability to function as a hard-boiled hero relies ultimately on his physical attributes; he is big, strong and skilled; "There had been a time when he could break bones by squeezing with his hand. It was more about blind determination than sheer strength." (*EB*, 51). What the traditional hard-boiled detective has in experience gained on the tough

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 530.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 531.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 533.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 535.

streets filled with crime and corruption, Reacher substitutes it by his extreme physical training and military experience. Reacher seems to be aware of his physical strength and skills:

I had told them I had been a military policeman. Maybe they believed me, maybe they didn't. Maybe it didn't mean much to them either way. But it should. A military policeman deals with military lawbreakers. Those lawbreakers are service guys. Highly trained in weapons, sabotage, unarmed combat... Not just killers. Trained killers. Extremely well trained, at huge public expense. So the military policeman is trained even better... ." (KF, 42)

Cawelti suggests that the detective uses violence "since he is only an individual ... his only possible means of securing justice is counterviolence".¹⁴⁶ The vigilantism of the detective becomes justified as he *reacts* to violence with violence. If threatened, Reacher seems to be taken over by an animalistic instinct, and it is as if the personal moral code is an unstoppable power that is released on the ones who threaten it: "Attacking me was like pushing open a forbidden door. His risk. If he didn't like it, he shouldn't have pushed open the damn door" (KF, 94). Reacher's response to offences against his personal moral code is extreme and often the solution is violent; Reacher often decides that somebody deserves to die for their crimes. In *Killing Floor*, when Reacher's accomplices are kidnapped and threatened, he plans a violent revenge: "I smiled at him. Kliner was a dead man. He was as dead as a man who has just jumped off a high building. He hadn't hit the ground yet. But he'd jumped." (350-1).

Cawelti sees in *Mystery, Violence and Popular Culture* that it is common in the myth of the vigilante that "the hero's family or friends become victims of an act of criminal violence that the law is unable to revenge".¹⁴⁷ Accordingly, Reacher's vigilantism is often justified by a personal attack of the criminals; Reacher also experiences the attacks against his loved ones as personal attacks against him. In *Killing Floor*, he feels responsible for the revenge of the death of his brother Joe:

They had pushed open the forbidden door. They had made a second fatal mistake. Now they were dead men. I was going to hunt them down and smile at them as they died.... This was about Joe's memory. (178).

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 532.

¹⁴⁷ Cawelti 2004, 163.

In the hard-boiled detective's heroic code there is a strong emphasis on the concept of honor,¹⁴⁸ and it is a personal honor that is threatened by the criminals as they threaten Reacher or his loved ones.

Moore argues in *Cracking the Hard-Boiled Detective* that inside the subgenre there has occurred "a profound change in the practice of violence",¹⁴⁹ and "a lack of exuberance in the detective's reliance on violence"¹⁵⁰ is clearly visible in the Modern period, as thought has become more central instead of violence in the detection process. However, Reacher relies specifically on violence to punish criminals, thus returning to the conventions of traditional hard-boiled detective fiction. In Child's hard-boiled world, and in Reacher's reasoning, it seems that after committing a crime deemed punishable, the criminal is beyond retribution and deserves whatever violence comes to him, even if Reacher does not engage in any in-depth discussions on the necessity or significance of capital punishment.

Criminals are irredeemable to Reacher; stripped from their human rights, they do not have the chance or right to repent or even to live. Most of the criminals in the series are henchmen who are not given a background. As Cawelti points out, the criminals "may be partly justified in their ignoring the law, but their aggression threatens the community or harms the innocent ...".¹⁵¹ In the lines of the 'crime does not pay' myth, death is a suitable punishment in Reacher's world. If a person has committed a crime despicable in Reacher's eyes, he believes he has the right to kill them without a question. The courts of law cannot be trusted with the judgment.

In the novels, Reacher's use of violence is encountered and discussed, but not questioned. According to Cawelti, the morality of the vigilante's actions is rarely attempted to justify or explain in words,¹⁵² but the rightfulness of the actions is proved as the hero is willing to die in their course. When

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹⁴⁹ Moore 2006, 184.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹⁵¹ Cawelti 2004, 176.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 183.

Reacher has to explain his lack of emotion after killing the criminals, on several occasions he compares criminals to cockroaches over whose death one has no reason to feel guilty;

I'd killed one guy and blinded another. Now I'd have to confront my feelings. But I didn't feel much at all. Nothing in fact. No guilt, no remorse. None at all. I felt like I'd chased two roaches around that bathroom and stomped on them. But at least a roach is a rational, reasonable, evolved sort of a creature. (*KF*, 94)

She glanced sideways. "You comparing those people to cockroaches?"

He shook his head. "Not really. I like cockroaches better. They're just little packets of DNA scuttling around, doing what they have to do. Walker and his buddies didn't *have* to do what they did. They had a choice. They could have been upstanding human beings. But they chose not to be. Then they chose to mess with me, which was the final straw, and they got what they got. So I'm not going to lose any sleep over it. I'm not even going to give it another thought. (*EB*, 389-390)

It is surprising that not even a thought is given to that someone could perhaps be let to live. When people "choose to mess with him", meaning committing serious crimes, they receive what they deserve. Thus, Reacher differs from the stereotypical Modern period hard-boiled detective, described by Moore, as he goes back to the Early period's almost Social Darwinist thought in his actions.¹⁵³ The violent vigilante of the hard-boiled narrative and its popularity to this day, according to Edward M. Wheat, "reveals in our political culture and impatience with law and due process, a hunger for instant (and violent) justice".¹⁵⁴

In *Cracking the Hard-Boiled Detective*, Moore also argues referring to Carroll John Daly's hard-boiled protagonist of the Early period of hard-boiled detective fiction that even if violence is a significant convention of the subgenre, "[v]ery few modern hard-boiled detectives repeat Race Williams' boast that he only shoots those who deserve it".¹⁵⁵ However, Reacher is adamant that this is exactly what he does, or at least he would like to believe that this is the case; his belief in the morality

¹⁵³ Moore 2006, 55. Social Darwinism refers to the incorporation of the ideas of natural selection, formulated by Charles Darwin who explained evolution with natural selection, in the realm of social and cultural evolution. In Social Darwinism the idea of the "survival of the fittest" in the competition between individuals for limited resources is employed on societal level. Social Darwinism is commonly used to refer to the ideology of the eugenics movement at the end of the 19th century.

¹⁵⁴ Edward M. Wheat, "The Post-Modern Detective: The Aesthetic Politics of Dashiell Hammett's 'Continental Op'," *The Midwest Quarterly* (Spring 1995) 237.

¹⁵⁵ Moore 2006, 20.

of his actions is extreme and unscathed. In *Echo Burning*, a connection is made between Reacher's morality and the morality present in narratives of the Western. Reacher hears about the gravestone inscription and obituary of a Wild West gunfighter called Clay Allison: "There is a nice headstone, with 'Robert Clay Allison 1840-1887' on it, I've seen it. And an inscription. The inscription says, 'He never killed a man that did not need killing.'" (23). And the obituary says "Certain it is that many of his stern deeds were for the right as he understood that right to be." (28). Reacher identifies with this 'Wild West mentality' and feels that it is an obituary and a gravestone he would also like to have.

There is a great sense that the end justifies the means in Reacher's actions; breaking the law and especially the use of violence are ultimately justified because the result is desired. It is desired by Reacher and the society of the novels as a whole. Reacher is ready to do whatever it takes to protect the innocent. In *Echo Burning*, in order to save Carmen from jail, Reacher is ready to make a mockery of the American legal system by giving a false testimony in court if needed, only on the basis of his instincts. The lawyer who helps him solve the case confronts Reacher, but Reacher trusts his instincts: "You comfortable with saying stuff like that? 'If the ends justify the means, I am. And I think they do here. ...'" (245).

Hamilton sees that eventually the detective's moral code "separates him from the bully, and his self-restraint justifies the violent acts he performs".¹⁵⁶ Cawelti also points out that

The hard-boiled hero's acts do not derive from an unrestrained delight in violence or from willingness to use violence for personal ends of wealth and power. This is the immoral mode of criminal and outlaw. The hard-boiled hero's violence must be accomplished in such a way as to prove the validity and propriety of this personal code.¹⁵⁷

The detective is thus able to bend the rules of official society and use violence justifiably to destroy the criminal. The superior morality of the hero separates him from the criminal who uses society to his own individualistic means. The criminals hurt the community by their immoral actions, and the community

¹⁵⁶ Hamilton, 41.

¹⁵⁷ Cawelti 2004, 168.

must be protected by the hard-boiled detective hero and his individual moral code, which seems to represent the essence of justice in the hard-boiled world, as it is lost in the official institutions.

Reacher, complying with the generic hard-boiled hero, escapes punishment for his actions, since they are done for the right reasons. The fact that Reacher and the traditional hard-boiled detective are accountable almost to no-one, according Haut, “makes one aware of the fantasy element in private-eye fiction”.¹⁵⁸ It is clear that Reacher would not be caught, as he knows how to bend the rules of the system. At the end of the three novels, Reacher is able to disappear from the scene:

I wouldn't be convicted. There was no risk of that. There was no evidence hanging around. I'd been careful every step of the way. And I knew how to bullshit. They could talk to me until I grew a long white beard and they wouldn't get anything from me. (*KF*, 405)

In the series, the ability to do the right thing is presented as an inherited characteristic which comes from within. Reacher remembers a scene that reoccurred often: his mother putting her hand on Reacher's shoulders and foretelling the path Reacher chooses in life,

She was a small woman, fascinated by the way her baby had grown into a giant. “You've got the strength of two normal boys,” she said. ...”What are you going to do with this strength?” she asked me. I didn't answer. I never did. “You're going to do the right thing,” she said. (*TE*, 100-101)

It is as if doing the “right thing” is a calling for Reacher; he is not a paid employee in the traditional sense as he sets to unravel situations in the novels. Cawelti notes in *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance* that in order to do the right thing, “the private detective is forced to take over the basic moral functions of exposure, protection, judgment, and execution”.¹⁵⁹ In his relationship with the law, Reacher performs these functions all at the same time, as he sentences the criminals according to his own moral standards, which in the end happen to coincide with the individualistic sense of justice present in American literature, hunts them down and, more often than not, kills them himself.

In this discussion, the justification of the vigilante justice in hard-boiled detective fiction is linked with the idea that there is a universal sense of justice being corrupted in the official institution of

¹⁵⁸ Haut, 99.

¹⁵⁹ Cawelti 1976, 152.

law. Child's detective protagonist is there to patch the holes in the official law. Even if he is far from perfect, it can be argued that in the background of his unfaltering morality there is the idea of the proper order of things.

I see that the Jack Reacher series follows to a great degree the tradition of hard-boiled detective fiction by emphasizing the importance of individual agency over the significance of the official law institution. Reacher seems to follow almost blindly an innate sense of morality, which he does not actively connect to the official law or to the ideological essence in American culture. He seems to see his reaction against the official law as an act of rebelling against dominant ideology. It is as if he saw the law as a repressive state apparatus, along the lines of Althusser's theories, but he fails to recognize the ideology that also resides in his individual moral code. The detective's personal sense of morality rises above the institutionalized law, and this morality justifies his vigilante attacks against the official law as the result is deemed to be for the good of the community. In the next subchapter, I will discuss whether the possible reasons behind the detective's agency, his actions as a judge and the executor, could be that he is in fact performing in accordance to the hegemonic ideology recognized to exist behind the official legal institution.

3.2 The Detective as a Lawman of Society

In the previous subchapter, I discussed the significance of the hard-boiled detective's individual moral code as one of the defining features of the subgenre and of its take on morality. I argued that the protagonist's vigilantism and violation against the official law are justified and condoned by the individualist tradition of America. I will analyze this further and argue that it might be because the hero's individual morality does not in fact go against the inner sense of justice in the community; the criminal must be punished by any means necessary.

In this subchapter, my aim is to analyze whether the hard-boiled detective's individual sense of morality, which has been argued to overrule the importance of the official legal institution, is, in fact, deeply connected to it and produced by it, in an Althusserian sense. The fact that the glorified individual sense of morality happens to coincide with the needs of the community is part of the hard-boiled detective's ambiguous relationship with law and society as a whole.

Many critics have argued that the detective who tries so hard to separate himself from the official law, which in its present state cannot prevent injustice, is in fact enforcing the law, not breaking it down, as a significant part of the institution.¹⁶⁰ In what follows, I will argue that Reacher's individual moral code is, in fact, connected to the official law; Reacher's connection to the law is perhaps even more evident than witnessed in traditional hard-boiled narratives. I will question the hard-boiled detective's traditionally assumed role as a liminal character who rebels against the official law of society. First, I will analyze Reacher's connection with the law as his background in law enforcement seems to continue to define his actions even outside the official institution. I argue that Reacher shares the motivation and goals of the official law. Reacher refrains from questioning the ideology behind the law, as he results in using forms of repression himself which define the law as a part of the Althusserian RSA. I will employ Althusser's concept of *interpellation*, as I analyze the relationship between the detective's individual moral code and the morality of the institutionalized law. I will conclude that Reacher's quest for individual agency, manifesting in the form of the value imposed on the personal moral code of the detective, is a fantasy created by the interpellation of society.

As discussed in the previous subchapter, similar to the traditional hard-boiled detectives, Reacher makes a serious effort to distance himself from the official legal institution and even sets himself against it; he has quit his job as a military police officer and often breaks the law deliberately,

¹⁶⁰ For example Pepper (14) tries to exemplify the balance between the detective's outsider position in the dominant social order and the role in the institutions that maintain control and existing hierarchies.

choosing to ignore the rules that are, in his opinion, inhibiting the course of justice. Hamilton argues that with his individualistic ethic, which clashes with the laws of society, the detective aspires for a lawless society.¹⁶¹ Walton and Jones also see that “the detective represents an alternative form of justice”;¹⁶² it is seen that the detective executes his own “personal vision of justice”.¹⁶³ These critics see that the detective’s individual moral code is ultimately outside the institutional legal institution of society. I will argue against this view of a separate individual moral code by imploring Althusser’s term of interpellation. My interpretation is that the detective’s superior individualist moral views are the result of ideological subjection. The human need of a sense of individual agency is created and promoted by the ideological structures of institutions.

In order to analyze whether Reacher or the traditional hard-boiled detective are really as reactive and radical towards the existing social institutions as they seem at the first glance, we must look closer at the detective’s relationship with them. Messent notes that the hard-boiled detective might appear a detached and an objective figure in the margins of society, but, in fact, is bound by the ideological constraints of its time and genre; hence, the assumed ability of the hero to “stand free of the normal social bonds and restraints”¹⁶⁴ should to be questioned. Instead of aiming for a society without any laws, it can be argued that Reacher is guided by an already existing morality that lies in the core of Western society. However, can we argue that Reacher and his personal code exist only as figures of the state in disguise? As I employ Althusser’s theory on the implementation of ideology, which centers around the interpellation of people to believe in their freedom from ideology, I analyze whether Reacher, among other hard-boiled detectives, is a victim of the interpellation of the legal RSA; does he suffer from delusional fantasies of subjectivity and individual power?

¹⁶¹ Hamilton, 10.

¹⁶² Walton and Jones, 190.

¹⁶³ Hamilton, 29.

¹⁶⁴ Messent, 7.

Reacher is a former military police officer, a homicide investigator, thus undeniably connected to the official institution of law. Reacher's background in law enforcement is not uncommon in the tradition of hard-boiled detective fiction, as several protagonists have some connection to the police; some are retired police officers or even currently working police officers, who usually have trouble following the official procedures. Most hard-boiled protagonists are detectives of some sort; they are usually licensed private detectives, who still have some connections to the police. Reacher is not a licensed private detective, and instead of being able to give an impression of autonomy and exceptional individual agency completely outside of the official law, he is strongly affiliated with the institution and its pursuits. In *Echo Burning*, Reacher acknowledges that he uses his unconventional appearances in his policing: "Alice didn't look like a cop. Neither did Reacher, which was a mistaken impression he'd traded on for years." (278). It is implied in this excerpt that it is a mistaken impression that Reacher is not a police officer – he just does not look like one.

Reacher even admits that he has always wanted to be a police officer. Even if Reacher has made himself a career in the military, he has been able to fulfill his dreams of joining the law enforcement. In the novel *Persuader*, Reacher explains his career decisions in a way that sheds some light to his approach to the law as an institution: "'Because I always wanted to be a cop,' I said. 'But I was predestined for the military. Family background, no choice at all. So I became a military cop.'" (463). The career of a police officer was Reacher's dream, and I argue that this dream is not completely abandoned, even if he has resigned from his position in the army.

In Reacher's case, it is clear that the hard-boiled protagonist does not always separate himself from the official law more than superficially; as he still feels connected to the law and the police, Reacher respects their hard work and misses the authority he used to have. In *The Enemy*, it becomes clear that Reacher was a self-confessed "army top-cop", an elite military police officer who had the right to arrest anyone in the military. In *The Enemy*, Reacher is still a working military police officer,

an explicit insider in the institution. When he is deputized at the end of *Echo Burning*, Reacher seems to relish on the power the deputy's badge symbolizes: "Reacher opened his palm to show off the chromium star. *The badge flip*. Not quite good as flashing a United States Army Criminal Investigation Division credential, but it had an effect..." (318). The badge of a deputy sheriff represents the power of the law and its influence; it grants Reacher admission to places he otherwise lacks.

When Reacher is on his way to confront the person thought responsible for the trouble in *The Enemy*, the reader is shown the power he has as a part of the official law: "My special unit badge got us past it. It would get us past any U.S. Army checkpoint anywhere except the inner ring of the Pentagon" (305). Again the badge represents the power of the law, and even force in an Althusserian sense, as the holder of the badge has the right to use repression against anyone who breaks the values incorporated in the ideology the badge symbolizes. When he confronts "the nation's most powerful soldier" (*TE*, 404), the Chief of Staff, Reacher is treated with respect: "'You're a special unit investigator,' he said. 'By statute the 110th has extraordinary powers. You are authorized to arrest any soldier anywhere, including me, here in my office, if you so choose...'" (*TE*, 408). The Chief of Staff acknowledges Reacher's power and influential position inside the army, and it is not power which can be derived directly from the concept of the individual moral code of the hard-boiled character. Due to his moral code, Reacher is undeniably more capable of conducting his investigation both outside of the army and inside, but without the respect and power he has gained inside the official law institution and the army, Reacher would be crippled to some extent; he would have to derive his self-confidence from somewhere else.

In the previous subchapter, I argued that due to the powerlessness of the law as an institution, Reacher abandons the institution and relies on his individual moral code in order to ensure that "the right thing" is done. The hard-boiled narrative operates often with the myth that in order to better societal institutions, one must step outside their influence in order to do that. As Cawelti notes in

Mystery, Violence and Popular Fiction: “[t]hus, the hero appears in rather paradoxical position of the one who acts outside the law in order, supposedly, to more fully uphold it by bringing a just retribution to those criminals that society is unable to expose and punish”.¹⁶⁵ Even if, in order to fit the description of a hard-boiled hero, Reacher has left the army and his work as an official of the law, he constantly uses his position as a former military officer to his advantage, as he does not have a network of official private detectives behind him. It becomes clear in the novels I analyzed that without his reputation and former contacts in the army, and especially in the military police, Reacher would not be able to conduct his investigations with similar success. His reputation as an honest and relentless detective enables him to ask for favors from his former colleagues. In *The Enemy*, Reacher is helped by his colleagues all around the world as he has a warrant on his name made by his corrupt commanding officer. Reacher would not be able to operate as well as he is without the help of his fellow MPs. In *Killing Floor*, since his service record is impeccable and impressive, his past makes it possible for him to be included in the investigations. However, his past in law enforcement acts also as an obligation. In *Echo Burning*, Reacher’s background acts as a reason for Carmen to insist that Reacher would help her:

“A former cop, been in the army, no ties anywhere, you couldn’t be better. ... Help for help’s sake. No mercenary aspect to it. And your background is perfect. It obligates you.”

He stared at her. “No, it doesn’t.”

“You were a soldier,” she said. “And a *policeman*. It’s perfect. You’re *supposed* to help people. That’s what cops *do*.”...”That’s what cops are *for*. It’s like their fundamental duty. And an army cop is even better. You said it yourself, you do what is necessary.” (28)

Reacher is willing to work with the police, and he is often included, even if reluctantly, in the criminal investigations of the local police or other legal officials. It seems that Reacher’s insider knowledge of the law protects him when he decides to break the law; he is able to avoid punishment by not getting caught, and the uncorrupt officials of the law with whom he affiliates end up covering his deeds. Reacher is tolerated and left alone by the officials of the law, and all of the ‘good’ uncorrupted police officers Reacher works with during the process of the investigations come to admit the

¹⁶⁵ Cawelti 2004, 187-188.

powerlessness of the institution. In *Echo Burning*, Reacher receives help from a young lawyer who does pro bono work in Texas. She is a firm believer in following the due processes of the law, but she soon realizes that without Reacher's help and illegal activities, the innocent are overrun by the negligent rich; Reacher acts as a debt collector in order to help a poor Mexican immigrant family to get their money back from a rich landowner. Alice, the lawyer, knows it is illegal but she turns a blind eye on Reacher's plans, as she knows that the farmer has no intention of paying and there is no official route to use instead. In the three novels, Reacher always has a contact person inside the legal system, who helps him when others disapprove of his actions. It seems that Reacher does not, in fact, oppose the law as an institution, but it as an institution vulnerable to corrupting forces.

Reacher reproduces the vigilantism inherent in the Early period, but in my opinion the goals of his actions would remain the same if he were still part of the official law institution. I argue that Reacher seems to object only to the constrictive nature of the institution of law, and that inherently the goals of his individual moral code and the official institution are analogous. Even if Reacher's goals and motivations would not correspond with the law in real life, it can be argued that Reacher promotes a black-and-white image of realizing justice, which he sees should be the basis of the official legal institution as well. In *Echo Burning*, when he is deputized, Reacher verbalizes the connection he makes between individual morality and the law enforcement;

“This is my thing,” he said. “This is what I’m built for. The thrill of the chase. I am an investigator, Alice. Always was, always will be. I’m a *hunter*. And when Walker gave me that badge my head started working.” (316)

In the excerpt, Reacher incorporates the idea of being an independent “hunter” who is after the “thrill” with being a police officer acting inside the official law.

In my opinion, even if Reacher shows his contempt towards lazy and incompetent country police officers and highly trained FBI and CIA agents who have lost their touch with reality as they have to battle against the endless bureaucracy of the work, Reacher shares the noble moral mission he

feels the police force has. As mentioned in the previous subchapter, Reacher's desire to do the right thing drives him onward on his quest for justice. In the novels, Reacher can see this taking place also inside the official legal institution:

"Why do you want to be a cop in the first place?"

I shrugged. "It's just the way I am. Cops put things right."

"What things?"

"They look after people. They make sure the little guy is OK."

"That's it? The little guy?"

"No," I said. "Not really. I don't really care about the little guy. I just hate the big guy. I hate big smug people who think they can get away with things."

"You produce the right results for the wrong reasons, then."

I nodded. "But I try to do the right thing. I think the reasons don't really matter. Whatever, I like to see the right thing done." (*Persuader*, 464)

Reacher appears to think that the basic idea of police work is helping the little guy by catching the big guy; even if this is not the case in reality, Reacher sees the injustice in society resulting from the negligence of the ones in power. This thought, the distrust in the greedy individual immersed in capitalistic ideology, reflects the individualistic background of hard-boiled detective fiction.

In the previous subchapter, I analyzed the significance of morally justified violence in the individual moral code of the hard-boiled detective hero. The detective uses counterviolence to purify the corrupted morality of society, and the murderous criminal is eliminated. But instead of reading violence as a reactionary way of striving for a new order, violence is one of the most significant ways of repression used in the RSA. In Althusser's theory, violent repression is used by the official institution of law to secure the ideological submission of the people; different punishments from incarceration to the death sentence are reserved for those who break the law. Reacher does not separate himself from repressive violence; instead, he strengthens its importance in creating a just society. His means of enforcing justice is ultimately the same as in the official institution of law. Reacher fails to articulate the type of society he is after and the way societal reforms could take place. His solution is to silence the ones who break against his perception of what is right.

According to the view that emphasizes the separation of the detective's moral motivations, Reacher's acts of violence are, as mentioned in the previous subchapter, justified since his individual morality is ultimately above the official regulations of society that do not sanction vigilante violence. The repressive violence of the detective can also be seen to represent the core of the official legal institution; it reflects hegemonic ideological imagery instead of being at odds with it. Reacher is in the role of an undercover police officer, and this role needs to be hidden from the reader as well. In my opinion, Reacher and the traditional hard-boiled detective can be seen as creations of society, whose role is to console and meet the public's needs in a time of insecurity and distrust towards official institutions. The public's hunger for instant justice is met with the hard-boiled detective's violent execution of justice, which in the end exists inside the society it is thought to criticize.

The issue whether Reacher is questioning the existence of the institutional law or supporting it, is complicated. Klein argues that the hard-boiled detectives end up supporting the existing system as they turn the captured criminals over to the official law at the end of the narratives.¹⁶⁶ If they follow the traditional hard-boiled conventions and hand over the criminals to the oppressive racist, sexist and heteronormative institution of law, female and non-white detectives cannot be radical and act against the ideology of the subgenre.¹⁶⁷ Reacher is not consistent in his actions concerning this aspect of the law; he is witnessed killing criminals for their crimes as well as handing them over to the law. However, this does not automatically mean that the detective's own moral code takes the place of the official law; I see Reacher's morality embodying the deeply held values of the official law. Reacher has assumed the morality of the law, the wish of always doing 'the right thing', in his profession as a military police officer, and he has never discarded this mentality. It seems that if there is not an uncorrupted official of the law at hand, Reacher is given the right to judge and execute the criminals by

¹⁶⁶ Klein, 201.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 201.

himself; he acts as a representative of the law. His actions are not questioned and there is no reason why he should be punished for what he has done to the criminals.

Messent argues that hard-boiled detective fiction ends up interrogating the existing social order, not affecting it,¹⁶⁸ and law itself is not questioned. Reacher is not striving for a lawless society or even for a significant change in the institution of law; he has a cynical attitude toward the execution of the law, but he is not replacing the official law with a strong individual code: in my opinion, they are not opposites of each other. The core of the official law of society in the novels is fundamentally the concept of the individual sense of morality. Reacher is at the same time an individual who incorporates the values deemed important in the novels, and a representative of the law. Cawelti argues that in accordance to the traditional American notion of individualism, in the hard-boiled world “[s]ociety and law exist not as a fountainhead of what is just, but as a set of rules controlling the action of individuals who are the true source of morality and justice as well as injustice.”¹⁶⁹ Since individuals are as much the source of evil as morality, laws are needed to protect the formation of communities of individuals.

Reacher does not offer any clear vision for change or fruitful criticism of the law, and he refrains from questioning the underlying ideology of society and its institutions out loud; racism, sexism or heteronormativity are not condoned by Reacher personally but they are not actively fought against. He seems to be happy if he manages to make a difference in the lives of the people who live in the small communities he enters in the novels. Even when Reacher argues that law and order exist to protect the established hierarchy, he laconically notes that: “‘That stinks.’ ‘Of course it does,’ he said. ‘But that’s the way it is.’” (*EB*, 254). His logic is fatalistic, and he seems to abandon all sorts of planning and premeditation: “life was built out of freak chances, however much people wasted time speculating about how things might have been different, if this and if that.” (*Die Trying*, 65). Reacher is not accepting the role of a messiah who would redeem America from capitalistic corruption. Instead, he

¹⁶⁸ Messent, 9.

¹⁶⁹ Cawelti 2004, 175.

acts as a hero who “solves the problem over two or three days, and then rides off to the sunset”.¹⁷⁰ Reacher’s position as an autonomous individual, an ideal for masculine individual agency representing the true morality, is constructed and questionable – it is an interpellated position of agency.

Even if Reacher is not officially part of the law institution anymore, his mission is to fill the spaces left by the handicapped law. According to Messent, the function of the hard-boiled detective is, instead of questioning the legal institution and creating a new one, “serving the interests of law and the status quo in solving the individual crime and repairing the rent in the social fabric that has occurred”.¹⁷¹ Reacher’s services are required to reinstate the original meaning of the law. He works in co-operation with the law, and his actions are protected by the institution even if they are contradictory with the official regulations. Child has said in an interview that the origins of Reacher as a character “go back to the kind of old-fashioned hero that has existed for thousands of years. You can trace him from the Zane Grey Westerns back through the medieval chivalric epics and the great Norse sagas, to the Odyssey.”¹⁷² Reacher is like an old-school remnant brought alive to take care of the things the modern law enforcement cannot handle.

Reacher’s existence as a lone avenger for justice is not contradicted in the novels and it seems to be the only reason for his existence, since without his hero role, Reacher’s hobo lifestyle could be considered unjustified. Reacher is obligated to do ‘the right thing’, and it controls his life at the expense of other central aspects of life. For instance, Reacher is ultimately unable to settle down in one place, “even though maybe there’s a good reason to” (*KF*, 274), since his services are needed elsewhere. An excuse is given in the form of Reacher’s need to be free and autonomous from the constraints of society, but it is in the end there to keep him executing his sense of justice where it is needed. Reacher exists in a continuum of an American image of frontier justice, whose take on morality is old but still current in the modern American society.

¹⁷⁰ Ayers, 18.

¹⁷¹ Messent, 9.

¹⁷² Ayers, 18.

In the analysis of Reacher's relationship with the law, I concluded that Reacher is still connected to the institutional law, even if he has left his position in law enforcement. In the novels, Reacher fails to investigate or question the ideological influences of the institutions, which he, on the one hand, thanks for his experience and, on the other hand, from which he tries to distance himself. The seemingly strong individual agency and autonomous quest for justice, conventional to traditional hard-boiled detective fiction, is emphasized as the detective is portrayed being outside of the institutional law. The mystification of the relationship between the detective and the official law remains, even if Reacher's connection with the law is more visible. The fact that Reacher sees himself being a police officer, he uses his background to his advantage, his methods and goals are analogous with the workings of the official law and that the uncorrupted police officers in the novels seem to silently accept Reacher's actions all signify that his heightened individual agency is a fantasy of agency, the result of interpellation.

On a smaller level, the detective himself acts as an ideal for individual agency. In an Althusserian sense, Reacher can be considered a victim of interpellation as he tries to convince himself of being a more independent agent in society with regards to the official law than he really is. On some levels, Reacher's quest for individual agency seems pathologic and desperate as it defines his whole life. Reacher's nomadic lifestyle is compulsive; for instance his incapability of staying put in one place longer than a couple of days, as well as his habit of not using his real name as not to leave any traces of him reflects his want of being "invisible" (*KF*, 88). Reacher refers with this invisibility to the experience of being outside the influence and authority of institutions. His lifestyle makes him feel that he is "beating the system" (*KF*, 88), thus maintaining his sense of individual agency. The detective's position can be even considered being a self-deluding one, as he thinks he acts from an individualistic and autonomous perspective, without seeing his subordination to larger forms of social monitoring.

Instead of being an autonomous subject being in control of his life, the detective reasserts the dominant ideology, which uses the fantasy of individual agency as its central means of ideological subjection.

In Althusser's theory, literature among other arts is seen as an instrument of interpellating subjects. The heightened autonomy of the individual promoted in hard-boiled detective fiction could be considered a fantasy of agency for readers who feel they are lacking power to control their lives in modern society. The narratives reproduce the basic individual fantasy of autonomy in a society where the lives of individuals are determined to some degree by the contradictory needs of existing inside institutions and of being outside of their demands. Through the hero protagonist, hard-boiled detective fiction functions as a means of interpellating the readers by promoting an ultimate image of individual agency and autonomy outside societal control and ideological influences. For instance, Highmore argues that this was one of the functions of the subgenre at the beginning of the twentieth century.¹⁷³ Cawelti points out in *Mystery, Violence and Popular Culture* that the whole subgenre of detective fiction bases itself on the self-contradictory fantasy of reaffirmation between individualism and justice; that the individual code just happens to coincide with the needs of the community.¹⁷⁴ Society's institutions are portrayed as corrupted and useless in modern situations, and as individual agency is supposedly the key to exorcising the evil in society, it ends up serving the interests of that community.

In the next analysis chapter, I will continue the discussion of the relationship between institutions and individual agency in the Jack Reacher series. I will approach an institution central in the socialization process and ideological subjection of people; studying the family institution broadens the scope of the tension between individual and institutional agency, as it differs from the law quite notably in its functions as an Althusserian State Apparatus.

¹⁷³ Highmore, 114.

¹⁷⁴ Cawelti 2004, 176.

4. The Family and the Eternal Bachelor

The main focus of this chapter is on the tension between individual agency and the family institution. By employing Althusser's approach on institutions as ideological constructions, I will analyze how the contradictory values of masculine individualism and the family are represented in the Reacher series. Are family relationships incompatible with the hard-boiled detective's strong sense of autonomy? In the analysis, I will discuss Child's fiction also in connection with the tradition of the subgenre; to what degree the ideological stance towards the family institution and the significance of individual agency in Child's narratives coincides with the ideology of the hard-boiled subgenre discussed in the theory section of this thesis.

In 4.1, my aim is to analyze the ways in which the family institution and its ideology are questioned in favor of individual agency. The focus of the subchapter is on the individualistic tradition of the subgenre and its representation in Child's novels. In 4.2, I will approach the ways the narratives are, on the other hand, upholding the family institution. My attention will be on the strain of sentimentalism and family-centeredness argued to underlie the tough individualistic shell of hard-boiled detective fiction.¹⁷⁵

Before proceeding into the analysis itself, it is important to clarify what I refer to when speaking of family. In the novels, I will look at families and family-like communities, including family members, spouses, sexual relationships, children, friends and home as a symbolic feeling of belonging as well as a specific location in the form of a house or town. I will employ Althusser's theory on institutions reproducing the ideological structures of society, and in view of Althusser's theories, the institution of the family is part of the legal ISA as an Ideological State Apparatus. The family ISA functions as a significant machine of ideological production as it is central in the act of socialization of individuals producing and justifying the norms of a specific society. The institution of family functions

¹⁷⁵ Cassuto, 7.

in the private sphere of society and by the implementation of values and norms it produces productive and ideologically co-operative citizens for society.

4.1 The Male Detective – No Strings Attached

In this subchapter, I will begin the discussion of the family as an institution promoting a certain ideology. First, I will approach the values connected to the family as an Althusserian Ideological State Apparatus in hard-boiled detective fiction; how the family is represented in Child, and whether it differs from the tradition of the subgenre. Then, I will analyze the type of individual agency that is adopted in Child's narratives in relation to the family institution. I will argue that Child reproduces the ideological conventions of the early hard-boiled detective fiction, as his protagonist decisively tries to escape the ideological subjection of the institution of family which is deemed harmful for his autonomy.

I will attempt to find out why the family is a 'dangerous' institution in the subgenre; what is it that makes it a harmful institution, and is it beyond return? I will argue that a contradictory approach to the family institution is still visible in modern hard-boiled detective fiction, as in Child's hard-boiled narratives the family as an institution can be seen, on the one hand, to represent a disruptive power since it exists inside a capitalist society and is used to promote a capitalist ideology; on the other hand, families and family members can be seen to be important enough to be rescued from the hands of corruption that threatens the institution. The family is also a significant institution in the process of reproducing commonly accepted gender roles and ideals.

The family is an institution whose influence and ideological power is easily overlooked in society. People in every society grow up among a certain idea of what family is and what it should be. The family is a significant Ideological State Apparatus, an ISA, which, according to Althusser, promotes dominant ideology by being part of the socialization process of people. As people grow up in

a family of some sort, they are subjected to the belief and value systems of a specific society. Unlike in the RSA, in which the law exists, the ISAs do not use repression as the main means of subjection; the ISAs function more subtly through the incorporation of values and beliefs. These beliefs and values dominant in society, these invisible and seemingly neutral formulations of culture, represent the dominant ideology of society. For Althusser, ideology was not necessarily a negative thing, as he saw it as a variable part of every society. Hence, the family institution is not to be approached as an institution which automatically reproduces values that confine and repress people; it can be said to represent the values of society in which it exists.

In the context of traditional hard-boiled detective fiction, the family ideology is constructed strongly around the concept of the nuclear family, and ultimately its decline; in the subgenre, the families are not sites of love and nurture. The basis of nuclear family is a union between a man and a woman and the love it needs to stay intact. Children are also a significant part of the institution and its purpose of reproducing the dominant ideology to the next generation. Child continues with the conventions of the Early period of hard-boiled detective fiction, as the ideological discussion around the family institution continue to revolve around conservative heterosexual nuclear family formed around marriage. The families visible in the three novels of my primary material are all heterosexual unions; the two homosexual relationships depicted (in *Echo Burning* and *The Enemy*) are relationships where the two partners do not even live together.

In the discussion of the ideological basis of hard-boiled detective fiction earlier in the thesis, it became evident that the subgenre can more easily be seen to promote an individualistic ideology instead of shared communal effort to serve the community, which characterized classical detective fiction. In the world of the traditional hard-boiled, the institutions of family and family-like communities, which are central structures of society, are portrayed as corrupted and thus deceitful. Only by being an independent and autonomous individual does a person has a chance of survival in the

harsh urban surroundings of the hard-boiled world. From the beginning, the unfaltering centre of the hard-boiled narrative has been the lone hero, a character which reproduces the imagery of the Western myth of masculinity.¹⁷⁶ This masculine image of the detective is defined by his autonomy and freedom of action, and the detective's separation from the institution of family is a defining convention of the traditional hard-boiled.

In the classic hard-boiled narrative of the Early period, the home and family of the protagonist had never been essential.¹⁷⁷ In his study *Cracking the Hard-Boiled Detective*, Moore attempts to map out the central aspects of the hard-boiled subgenre which have been subject to significant change in a certain time period. He reports some notable changes also in the portrayal of the institution of family.¹⁷⁸ The detectives rarely have families or they are just left unmentioned in the background. Even if the typical first-person narration of the hard-boiled narratives creates intimacy between the reader and the detective-narrator, as Moore points out, the detective has the control and little is revealed of the protagonist's family background.¹⁷⁹ The detective is shown to be voluntarily alone in the urban world – there is a “self-imposed distance”¹⁸⁰ regarding family matters. The detective protagonists in Chandler's or Hammett's narratives are consistently approached by possible love interests which could lead to the formation of a family, but the detectives seem to be intentionally avoiding these situations. As Knight notes in the article “A Hard Cheerfulness!: An Introduction to Raymond Chandler,” Chandler's Marlowe could never have been imagined getting married, having children and being part of a nuclear family.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁶ See Cawelti 2004, 143.

¹⁷⁷ Highmore, 102.

¹⁷⁸ Moore 2006, 3.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁸⁰ Lewis D. Moore, “Lies and Deceit: The Family in the Hard-Boiled Detective Novel,” *Clues: A Journal Of Detection* (2000) 67.

¹⁸¹ Knight 1988, 86.

According to Moore, there is a change in the depiction and significance of the private life of the detective in the Transitional and Modern period.¹⁸² This development offers a wider emotional life to the detective, and he argues that since the Transitional period “the role of family and children, if not marriage, has deepened”.¹⁸³ In his article, “Lies and Deceit: The Family in the Hard-Boiled Detective Novel”, Moore argues that the detective of the 1970s and 1980s was often divorced and struggling with the aftermath of failed family relations, but moving towards the Modern period, the detective becomes a more active participant in family matters as he is often witnessed being in an active relationship.¹⁸⁴ Child’s Jack Reacher series is a product of the Modern period of hard-boiled detective fiction, and I will approach its position in the hard-boiled continuum of family matters.

It can be argued that female and ethnic authors writing hard-boiled detective fiction have had a role in changing the conventions of the subgenre concerning family matters, and especially female authors surrounded their protagonists’ with close-knit families or family-like communities. Female and ethnic detectives and authors emerged in the Modern period, and in the narratives certain contact and interaction between the detectives and their communities became a convention.¹⁸⁵ According to Karin Molander Danielsson, for instance “the community building function”¹⁸⁶ of ethnic authors is widely acknowledged by critics. Later on, according to Moore, since the detectives were less alienated than in the Early period,¹⁸⁷ marriage and children came into the picture even in the white hard-boiled, even if relationships were mainly dysfunctional ones. Moore argues that “all of this adds to the drama in the modern hard-boiled detective series but radically alters the narrative structures and conventions”.¹⁸⁸

In Child’s series, the influence of the Modern period is visible, as Reacher’s family background is present in the narratives and it clearly affects his life. First of all, Reacher is, according to the

¹⁸² Moore 2006, 15.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 238.

¹⁸⁴ Moore 2000, 67.

¹⁸⁵ See Moore 2006, 179, Stephen F. Soitos, *The Blues Detective: A Study of African American Detective Fiction* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1996) 31.

¹⁸⁶ Molander Danielsson, 16.

¹⁸⁷ Moore 2006, 10.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

conventions of the Modern period, given a family background; it is stated early on that he comes from an army family with a mother, father and an older brother. The surroundings for this family life were not stable, but he grew up in a loving nuclear family. Reacher does not remain a rootless character like Hammett's *The Continental Op*, whose real name and family past are never mentioned.

Reacher was an 'army brat' who grew up in American army bases all around the world and he fondly remembers his childhood as an American living abroad. His father was a tough career Marine in the U.S. Army and his French mother took care of the household and the children as they led a very inconsistent life. Reacher acknowledges the effect his father has had on his life, as he followed in his footsteps in his career choice. Reacher respects his mother greatly and also acknowledges the work she has done as an officer's wife; "A military wife and mother has a pretty hard time, and some handle it, and some don't. She always had. Wherever we had lived had been home. She had seen to that." (*TE*, 95). Therefore, it is certain that Reacher feels he has had a home and a family. Reacher followed his father's footsteps in the military service, but instead of forming a family of his own, Reacher moves toward the isolated life of the traditional hard-boiled protagonist: "I was in the army all my life, which is very *unsettled*, and I grew to like the feeling." (*EB*, 19).

Reacher willingly and almost with pride reveals his unstable background as a child: "Thirty-six years old and I'd never lived in a house. Lots of service accommodations and a terrible bare dormitory on the Hudson when I was up at the Point. That's where I'd lived" (*KF*, 122). Reacher's childhood offered no stable relationships outside his family: "Our friends kept just disappearing. Some unit would get shipped out somewhere and a bunch of kids would be gone." (*KF*, 112) He admits that his childhood was "Not much of a childhood, but it was the only childhood I was ever going to get." (*KF*, 113).

There is a contradiction in Reacher's relation to family life. Despite Reacher's family background, which as articulated refers to the development in the Modern period, as a hard-boiled

detective, Jack Reacher is also significantly influenced by the tradition of the Early period. In the end his contact with his family is most of the time marginal – “My parents were both dead. I had a brother whom I never saw. So I had no family. No idea whether I wanted one. Maybe, maybe not.” (*KF*, 69). In the first novel of the series, *Killing Floor*, Reacher’s brother is killed. It is extremely hard to see Reacher settling down with someone or even in one place.

The romantization of autonomous masculinity and isolation visible in the tradition of the hard-boiled, like Nyman argues in *Hard-Boiled Fiction and Dark Romanticism*,¹⁸⁹ is repeated in the Reacher narratives.¹⁹⁰ Reacher’s outsider position is glorified throughout the series. Reacher has chosen a life as a wanderer, and the time he has spent abroad makes him look at America from a tourist’s point of view. From the beginning of his life, Reacher has had to familiarize himself to being on the move, and the army life has left its trace in Reacher; it is even hinted that his nomadic way of life is not completely normal:

At the age of six and a half, he had lived exactly like a fugitive. He had at every age, right from birth to yesterday. He had moved from one service base to another, all around the world, often with no notice at all. ... It hadn’t done him any harm. Or maybe it had. (*EB*, 169).

Reacher’s role as the rootless wanderer can be linked to the traditional hard-boiled detective fiction which drew from the socio-political context of the time; the position of the wanderer was romanticized especially in the United States in the interwar period (1928-1934). According to James McFarlane, the wanderer rose, especially in modernist writing, from being the reject of society to being in a unique place of seeing things as they really are¹⁹¹ – thus, for instance being able to see America and the effects of greedy capitalism without the hindrance created by involvement in societal institutions. However, even if Reacher’s restlessness defines him and it acts as a central theme in every novel of the series, I

¹⁸⁹ Nyman 1998, 20.

¹⁹⁰ It can be argued that the male quest for freedom is a common theme in American literature in general. The thematics of leaving one’s old life behind in order to find freedom and success, connected with Frontier literature, has been central in American literature.

¹⁹¹ James McFarlane, *Modernism: 1890-1930*, ed. Malcom Bradbury and James McFarlane (Sussex: Harvester, 1978) 82.

will argue later on that he also carries the ideology connected to the concept of nuclear family with him.

By following the traditional role of the isolated hard-boiled detective, Reacher abandons the chance of being part of a family; it can be argued that he willfully neglects the whole institution. Reacher cannot stay around even if there is a chance of developing a relationship with someone. In *Killing Floor*, Reacher compares his life to old blues songs which tell the story of never staying put;

It is a song for people who can't stay around. Even though maybe there is a good reason to. People like me. I'd been around Margrave practically a week. Longest I'd ever stayed anywhere voluntarily. I should stay forever. With Roscoe, because she was good for me. (277)

In almost every novel, Reacher is in a sexual relationship with someone and sometimes even entertains the thought of staying put, but a voice inside his head, “a hobo gene”, whispers to him convincing him that he must move on. He does not try to understand his innate quest for ultimate individual agency, which he shares with the traditional hard-boiled detective; it is as if he has no other choice but to follow this animalistic instinct. According to Abbott, “the tough guy’s discomfort with traditional roles or bourgeois values of home, family, and friends is fundamental to his self-concept”,¹⁹² and thus is left unquestioned.

The early hard-boiled detectives were ultimately solitary figures. Why is the family such a dangerous and threatening institution in the hard-boiled narrative? It can be argued that the family institution and the values it incorporates were shunned upon as the family (women, children and even sexual relationships) was seen to threaten the individual agency of the hard-boiled protagonist and of individual in general.

As I mentioned in the theoretical framework when discussing the socio-political context behind the subgenre, the hard-boiled narrative can be interpreted as a rebellious reaction against the reformation of traditional masculinities and social organization of the post-WWI era. The approach of

¹⁹² Abbott, 3.

the subgenre was reactionist and nostalgic at the same time, as it relied on and tried to revive the ‘tough’ masculinity of the American tradition back into the realm of the social and domestic.¹⁹³ It was a reaction against the domestic family man, the breadwinner husband of the dominant social ideology that began to emerge after WWI. Suddenly the American man was seen to be emasculated in the pressures of being the breadwinner in a time of unstable economy. Hard-boiled detective fiction created a narrative where men were set free from the constraints of family life, as it had turned into a threatening institution from an institution of masculine influence. I see that the family institution that coincides with the ideology of masculine agency of the hard-boiled would be a traditional, patriarchal institution; and this seemed to be under threat at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The former imagery of the wanderer detective can be interpreted as a fantasy of masculine autonomy, a fantasy of leaving the dominant institution of the hegemonic ideology behind, as, according to Abbott, the hard-boiled detective positioned itself against the “consumerist, nuclear family-focused” America of the post-WWI period by taking a less socially acceptable position of “an unmarried, childless loner with no social ties, no community responsibilities”.¹⁹⁴ In Althusser’s theories this fantasy of agency, the individual’s need to feel free from ideological constraints is central in the relationship between societal institutions and individuals. The fantasy of being an autonomous subject is promoted by societal institutions themselves, as they interpellate people to believe in their seeming autonomy.

I interpret the strict separation of the traditional hard-boiled detective from the family institution to result from the institution’s inability to sustain the imagery of masculine individualism, as the unstable economy stripped the men from their role as the undisputable head of the family. Nyman sees that this position in the traditional hard-boiled is nostalgic in its masculine individuality, as “hard-

¹⁹³ Baker, 31.

¹⁹⁴ Abbott, 15.

boiled narratives can be seen to construct their version of romance in a sentimental way, expounding an ideology of an all-male world dominated by masculine values and combining it with nostalgia”.¹⁹⁵

Reacher reproduces this quest for a life without responsibilities that would limit his freedom. He feels no desire to join society as a worker or a husband or a father, for that matter. After feeling caged in the army, Reacher enjoys his new found freedom, as in the army he “was always where someone else told him to be” (*TE*, 464); “Being out felt great. Felt like freedom. Like all my life I’d had a slight headache. Not noticing until it was gone.” (*KF*, 20). Family life would represent similar repression and deprivation to Reacher, and he manages to keep relationships and responsibilities from forming by constantly moving from one place to another. Identification with this feeling is an important part of the pleasure of hard-boiled detective fiction – it represents the fantasy of leaving the strenuous responsibilities of modern life behind, and Reacher acts out the readers’ possible fantasy of being responsible only for themselves, of not being tied down.

Reacher enjoys the solitariness and anonymity of being on the road, the feeling that he is “invisible” (*KF*, 88). Reacher does whatever he can to ensure this invisibility; he carries no identification (only after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 it becomes necessary for him to do so), no luggage, only a roll of cash. His way of traveling is by road, walking, taking the bus or train to end up anywhere where there is a cheap motel: “That way there is no paper trail. No credit card transactions, no passenger manifests, nothing. Nobody could trace me. I never tell anybody my name. If I stay in a hotel, I pay cash and give a made-up name.” (*KF*, 88). A relationship and a family, belonging to the family institution, would make him a visible part of society. Reacher seems to be ultimately running away from the socially approved life that society has reserved for him.

Killing Floor and *Echo Burning* are stories about a drifter who is accidentally involved in serious matters. Only *The Enemy* is constructed differently from the other novels, as it goes back in

¹⁹⁵ Nyman 1998, 18.

time to tell the story why Reacher left the army. Themes such as mobility, movement and access within a city are central in the tradition, and also “the ability to move, often unnoticed, through the city, ... are the skills that mark the classic detective of urban noir”.¹⁹⁶ The city is the hard-boiled detective’s home turf; it can be interpreted being the closest thing he has to a home beside an empty apartment. Differing from the traditional hard-boiled protagonists, Reacher’s freedom of movement is not limited to one city as he travels around the United States and even abroad without any trouble. Reacher has neither house nor office, and the significance of movement as a sign of power is emphasized. The description of Reacher’s way of life is, in my opinion, a conscious act of romanticizing autonomous masculinity, masculine independence.

The relationships and sexuality in the Jack Reacher novels only seem to serve the function of being a testimony of the protagonist’s undeniable masculinity and heterosexuality. He is attractive and virile, and in every novel, women inevitably fall for him. He does not avoid women or relationships, but they can never be permanent, because the relationships would ultimately tie him down. In the Early period, settling down would result in radical diminishing of the detective’s individual agency; and also when the modern detectives have personal relationships, they are visibly troubled by them.

A contrary tradition is visible in hard-boiled detective fiction series written by female and ethnic authors; the female and ethnic detective protagonists were depicted having tight relationships with their families, may they be constructed by friends or blood-relatives. For instance, a social network and friends, who are considered to form a family, are significant in Sara Paretsky’s female hard-boiled detective fiction series with V.I. Warshawski. Walter Mosley’s popular protagonist Ezekiel ‘Easy’ Rawlins, acts as an example of the significant presence of family relations in African-American hard-boiled detective fiction. Easy has problems with women, but he dreams of love and romantic relationship and of family life. In the series he adopts two children and tries to succeed as a father.

¹⁹⁶ Highmore, 93.

In the Reacher series, the male quest of freedom is portrayed as something innate and integral in the masculine nature. In Child's novels, the women are bound tightly to the family ISA, thus forming an unverballed threat to the protagonist who tries to escape the ideology it promotes. The women Reacher meets are deeply rooted in their communities: they have relatives, friends, homes and jobs which they do not even consider abandoning. None of the women are as free to be on the move as Reacher is; they do not even want to be. It is as if the need to be free is only a male quality. In *Killing Floor*, Reacher is willing to leave town with Roscoe, but he recognizes the reasons behind her reluctance of leaving Margrave: "She'd liked Margrave. Her family had toiled there for generations. She was rooted. She'd liked her job. Enjoyed the sense of contribution." (264). Women can also be argued to represent threats as they try to lure the detective into "paterfamilias",¹⁹⁷ to staying put and submerging into the family institution.

Child himself has said that in creating a detective he wanted to avoid a character that was "on this downward spiral of dysfunctional characters",¹⁹⁸ which is clearly present in modern detective fiction. Thus, he aimed to create "a straightforward, uncomplicated, untroubled hero mentally and physically capable, not uptight – functional in every way".¹⁹⁹ Perhaps some of this was thought to be accomplished by separating the protagonist from a family or a family-like community. The question whether there could be someone who shared Reacher's dream of constantly moving around is never raised. Thus, at the end of every novel Reacher leaves the scene of action, leaving behind a possibility of a relationship besides the physical place, and his autonomy seems to be guaranteed.

Besides threatening the individual agency of the masculine detective, family relationships are dangerous to individuals in general. Stories of dysfunctional families are common in the hard-boiled even today. Even if the family is not traditionally considered an essential ingredient in the hard-boiled

¹⁹⁷ Abbott, 123.

¹⁹⁸ Dick Donahue, "Lee Child: Late to the Crime Scene," *Publishers Weekly* (May 2004) 44.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

subgenre, the plots have always been infested with families in crises.²⁰⁰ The detective is simultaneously separated from the institutions, since he has no family of his own and does not aspire to get one, and connected to it as his detection is on family matters. The degradation of society he witnesses functions as justification for his separation from it.

In the three novels which are in the focus of my analysis, the family and the breakdown of families act as central themes. In *Killing Floor*, Reacher loses one of his family members, as his brother is murdered. The corrupted center of the plot is the Kliner family, run by a cruel patriarch with the help of his sadistic son. The mother of this family is dying inside, because of this unhealthy family environment, which should be filled with love and care. Reacher describes her appearance:

She looked like some kind of rare orchid starved of light and sustenance. But I didn't agree with him that she looked sick. ... I thought she was suffering from something else. Something I'd seen once or twice before. I thought she was suffering from sheer terror. (98)

Reacher's use of the words 'light' and 'sustenance' refer to the loving environment of the ideal family. It is significant that the mother of the family is not witnessed to act against her husband and stepson – she seems helpless and unable to fend for herself in the family surroundings. The Kliner family has bought the whole city of Margrave with counterfeit money. The police force, the mayor and most of the businesses are bought and paid for and thus under the control of the Kliner family. The conspiracy and the murders committed in order to protect the family business are the result of greed.

In *Echo Burning*, Reacher also finds himself in the middle of a family drama in Texas; in the inner plot, there is a woman wanting desperately to get away from domestic abuse that is ruining her and her daughter's lives. Reacher agrees to help the woman who only wants to protect her daughter from the Greer family. Carmen Greer describes the family she married into as "An old Texas family. Been there since Texas was first stolen. Maybe they were there to steal some of it themselves" (*EB*,

²⁰⁰ Cassuto, 82.

37). The Greer family is very dysfunctional: Carmen, who is of a Mexican descent, married into the family and she and her daughter have had to endure racism, belittling and violence.

The matriarch of the family, Rusty Greer, tries to hold on to the vanishing fortunes of the family and is even ready to abandon her granddaughter because she is half-Mexican, an act Reacher sees despicable: “my grandmother would have died before she let her grandchildren get taken away. Literally.” (*EB*, 319). The basic family bonds of love and nurture are again dismantled and replaced with greed, and the toxicity is transferred from one generation to another; Rusty dotes on her two sons, who both have grown up to be sadistic bullies. Rusty’s son Sloop, the abusive husband of Carmen, is in jail because of blatant tax evasion. Sloop has also murdered Mexican immigrants just for the fun of it when he was young.

The Enemy is also a story of a family-like community, the army, which begins to unravel as the individuals, the ‘family members’ begin to ignore the values of the family and give in to greed. The novel goes back in time to the significant period when Reacher loses his faith in the army he admired. In *Killing Floor*, Reacher describes his relationship to his army family: “Your family was your unit. The men on the bases were taught total loyalty to their units. It was the most fundamental thing in their lives.” (112). Reacher emphasizes the importance of unconditional loyalty in both of his families. At the beginning of *The Enemy*, Reacher thinks he will be in the army for the rest of his life and he cannot imagine life outside the service. But the different competing forces inside the army reveal that also this family can be corrupted by greed: “Both of my families were disappearing from under me, one because of simple relentless chronology and the other because of its reliable old values seemed suddenly to be evaporating.” (155).

Indeed, dysfunctional families infested with greed form the inner plots in the Reacher novels. I argue that, by extension, in the series the corruption of the whole society is symbolized by the corruption of the family and the individuals in it. The family ISA is corrupted; people dependent on

each other are corrupted by those who only look after their own interests. Greed and selfishness are active forces in the realm of the family institution, and by setting himself apart from it, the detective might remain uncorrupted. In traditional hard-boiled detective fiction, the plots were usually constructed by the outer and the inner plot; the inner plot often revolved around the problems caused by missing family members of influential families, and the corruption of the modern society formed the outer plot. Knight sees that the balance between the inner and the outer plot fell towards the seemingly “lesser and irrelevant issues”²⁰¹, the personal issues. He also points out that as the tradition of the subgenre moved away from Hammett’s fiction, “the socio-political perceptions about contemporary disorder came to act as only the background to the genuinely felt personal threats”.²⁰² And those personal threats were often related to the family institution.

Reacher moves through the small towns and the big cities in America, and it becomes clear that the deterioration of the family is not only a symptom of the condition of urban America. According to Haut, the subgenre has stayed an urban genre to this day, and the narratives often address the social contradictions and conditions of a decaying urban society.²⁰³ In Child’s hard-boiled world, families are not threatened only in the big cities, but the deterioration of the institution is also a matter in the small communities previously thought to be untouched by the corruptive influences.

What is it then that threatens the family institution, making it harmful to the individual? Reacher is needed to solve crimes of greed; all the crimes are the result of greed of power, may it be in the form of money or influence, and it destroys the innocence in relationships, the main idea of the family communities. It can be argued that the family represents a good institution at heart in traditional hard-boiled detective fiction, but it is corrupted by the values propounded by hegemonic ideology of modern society. Capitalism and the materialistic greed it endorses represent the ideology that strengthened in the first half of the twentieth century. In the depiction of dysfunctional families and

²⁰¹ Knight 1980, 153.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 154.

²⁰³ Haut, 3.

family ties, the narratives suggest that the family institution is at great risk of contamination by a ‘wrong’ sort of individuality inherent in capitalism. If contaminated, the family as an ISA can create and promote a dysfunctional and dangerous ideology. In *The Big Sleep*, Chandler’s detective Philip Marlowe expresses his disgust of the rich and the negative influence money has on families: “A pretty, spoiled and not very bright little girl who had gone very, very wrong, and nobody was doing anything about it. To hell with the rich. They made me sick.” (70). This criticism of capitalism presents a visible contradiction in Child’s narratives as well as in the traditional hard-boiled, as in both, presented by Nyman in *Men Alone*, despite the fact that “individualism as valid strategy is heavily criticized – the autonomous individual is glorified and shown to deserve power and prestige.”²⁰⁴ Hamilton sees this as “a philosophical ‘Catch-22’: competitive individualism is bad because it is divisive, but collective action is impossible because individuals are competitive”²⁰⁵, which is inherent also in the reasoning of Child’s hard-boiled detective.

The reaction inside the hard-boiled detective fiction subgenre was against the bourgeoisification of American society in the interwar period and later. It was a template for the growth of the myth of the American Dream, which the hard-boiled narratives criticized. The detectives refused to have families, and by working when they wanted and sometimes working even without much pay they refused to be part of the capitalist society to some degree. Reacher joins this criticism of the myth of the American Dream of gaining happiness through wealth, success and family. He also rejects property as it “functions as emblem of [corrupt] power and badge of success”²⁰⁶ in modern consumerist Western life. As Nyman notes, “[a]lthough the detective is supposed to defend his society, he does not wish to identify with its values.”²⁰⁷ Even if Reacher supports and holds on to the core of the American Dream,

²⁰⁴ Nyman 1997, 206.

²⁰⁵ Hamilton, 32.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁰⁷ Nyman 1997, 233.

individualism, he attacks Western capitalism by refusing to succumb to the modern religion of materialism, even if he does not realize this comprehensively himself.

Indeed, Reacher's fantasy of total freedom and having no strings attached has to do with concrete possessions. Reacher has never owned anything special, and it seems to be a constant worry that he is tied down by the material as well as by relationships with other people. The fact that he carries nothing with him, besides a folding toothbrush, is another way of guaranteeing his mobility. Reacher throws away his clothes when they get dirty and buys new cheap ones, and this stresses his alienation from the values of modern Western society. It links Reacher to the tradition of the subgenre as, according to Cawelti, the hero's alienation from the community he operates in is a staple which characterizes the Early period.²⁰⁸ In *Tripwire*, Reacher inherits a house, but even the thought of owning something that would tie him to society is excruciating, so he decides to sell it.

Working is another thing Reacher does not want to commit to; he admits needing some money to support his vagabond lifestyle, but besides doing some odd jobs here and there he does not work. Even his detection is not a case of being employed to do something; the cases are usually just there waiting for somebody like him to take over and solve them. Reacher himself does not admit to any noble socialist rebellion against capitalism, instead, he experiences some results of capitalism only as something that limit his personal agency. According to Abbott, traditionally there seems to exist only two options within the structure of male whiteness in terms of the American Dream: "first hobo freedom,...second, the normative father/husband/business man role"²⁰⁹, and Reacher follows the choice of role made in the traditional hard-boiled detective fiction.

In my opinion, in the traditional hard-boiled detective narrative, the institution of family represented one of the main institutions where the coercive power of ideology in relation to individuals is visible. When considering it as one of Althusser's ISAs, it is clearly one of the fundamental forums

²⁰⁸ Cawelti 2004, 185.

²⁰⁹ Abbott, 123.

for the ideological construction of ideology. Hard-boiled detective fiction has to this day treated the institution of family as the harbor of contemporary ideology. Even if, Molander Danielsson argues, “even the most hardboiled detective today usually inhabits a world where he or she has social ties and subscribes to a social order”²¹⁰, the family still remains one of the most dangerous institutions to people in Child’s novels. The destructive power of modern capitalist ideology is witnessed as it destroys the family institution.

4.2 Domesticity and the Sentimental Detective

In this subchapter, I will approach the contradiction between the portrayal of the family institution and individual agency from a different point of view than in the previous subchapter. I will focus on the ways Child’s hard-boiled narratives are, in fact, upholding the family institution instead of emphasizing the importance of masculine agency *separate* from the family. I will discuss Leonard Cassuto’s argument that hard-boiled detective narratives are, in fact, deeply connected with the domestic ideology of the nineteenth-century sentimentalism. I will argue that Child’s detective fiction portrays the importance of family and family values instead of deeming the institution irredeemably corrupt and insubstantial in the modern world. The detective protagonist’s separation from the family institution is not as conclusive as depicted also in traditional hard-boiled detective fiction; Cassuto argues that the hard-boiled detective exists in fundamental connection with the family institution.

Althusser’s theories, and especially the argument that the link to the ideological is possible to perceive by focusing on what is not present, what is set aside, acts as a starting point of this discussion. Cassuto has also employed the act of “double reading” when analyzing the position of the family

²¹⁰ Molander Danielsson, 42-3.

institution in hard-boiled detective fiction. I will argue that Reacher's refusal of family ties and the negation of the meaning of family act as proof of his connection to the institution and its values.

I will begin the discussion by introducing the domestic ideology of sentimental literature of the nineteenth century. Then, my focus is on the family institution being an inherently good institution which is valued highly under the surface of the tough hard-boiled veneer of Child's narratives. I will argue in my analysis that the values propounded by the family are indeed considered important by the hard-boiled individual, as the protagonist's individualism is used to protect the institution and further its values, even if the protagonist's separation from the institution in the name of promoting masculine individualism is considered a defining convention in the subgenre.

I will also discuss the tension between the representation of the importance of individual agency and the importance of the family present under the surface of the narratives by looking at the tension as the result of Althusserian interpellation of subjects in society. It can be approached as a question whether the individual agency of the hard-boiled protagonist is only a superficial fantasy created by ideology in order to secure the subjection of the people in society. I will argue that Child's series reproduces the ideological conventions of the early hard-boiled detective fiction also in connection with the family-centeredness visible in the subgenre.

Sentimentalism in literature is connected with the sentimental philosophy which arose in France in the eighteenth century. William M. Reddy situates the flowering of sentimentalism in France in 1700-1789.²¹¹ Sentimentalism went against the reason-oriented ideology that had dominated the European sphere and focused instead on humanism and the human emotional life moving away from the absolute belief in reason. Sentimentalism presented, according to Reddy,

a new optimism about human nature ... an optimism based in part on new confidence in the power of human reason, in part on the belief that certain natural sentiments, sentiments that

²¹¹ William M. Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Port Chester: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 141.

everyone was capable of feeling, were the foundation of virtue and could serve as the basis for political reform.²¹²

Human life is valued in sentimental literature, and it “celebrates the reliable and nourishing social ties that result when people extend their sympathy to others around them”.²¹³ Sentimentalist fiction emphasized the importance of the family institution in society; it embodied a “domestic ideology”²¹⁴ supporting the importance of conventional family ties. The emphasis in sentimental fiction is ultimately on the private sphere of human life. As W. M. Reddy notes, sentimental literature with its focus on the domestic life offered an emotional refuge for people in the form of a loving family and friendship.²¹⁵ Sentimental narratives of the period were often stories of love and caring in the family.

In the previous discussion, the Reacher series was argued to emphasize individualistic agency and alienation from community by rejecting the family. But even if the conclusion was that the rejection of the family institution is not complete, as the values it propounds were seen to be important, the individual agency of the masculine individual was seen to form the basis of the subgenre. The hard-boiled narratives were seen to portray a world where the family institution is taken over by the corruptive capitalist ideology, thus making the institution corrupt. I also stated in the previous subchapter that most critics have seen the strong separation from the family in the hard-boiled as an argument against the capitalistic Western society which robs the individual from one’s agency.²¹⁶ However, the seemingly marginal status adopted by the detective does not, in fact, set him apart from society as he ends up purging the excessive individualist threat against community.²¹⁷

Cassuto argues that crime fiction and the subgenre of hard-boiled are, in fact, “really about the pleasures and challenges to the community”.²¹⁸ He presents an approach to hard-boiled detective fiction

²¹² *Ibid.*, 145.

²¹³ Cassuto, 7.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

²¹⁵ W. M. Reddy, 149.

²¹⁶ See e.g. Nyman 1997.

²¹⁷ Reddy, 10, Cawelti 2004, 176.

²¹⁸ Cassuto, 3.

that differs notably from other critics' view on the subject; contrary to linking the subgenre only to the nostalgia and fantasy of masculine autonomy, Cassuto claims that hard-boiled detective fiction shares central values with the sentimental fiction of the nineteenth century, and that sentimental fiction "continues to influence the plots and characters of today's crime fiction in the United States and worldwide".²¹⁹ He notes that under the individualistic shell of hard-boiled detective fiction there is a sentimental family story which promotes a domestic ideology seen traditionally in the sentimental fiction of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.²²⁰ Cassuto points out that hard-boiled detective fiction has a specific engagement with domestic sentimentalism; a shared set of beliefs and values connect these narratives, and in fact "inside every crime story [there] is a sentimental narrative that's trying to come out".²²¹

How can hard-boiled detective fiction be suddenly interpreted as a genre of sentimental family narratives, since it has been deemed a romantic and sentimental story told "according to the requirements of the individualist tradition"?²²² As mentioned earlier, Nyman, for instance, acknowledges in *Hard-Boiled Fiction and Dark Romanticism* the subgenre's sentimentality, but connects it exclusively with nostalgia for the "all-male world... [and] masculine values"²²³ of the individualism of the American Dream. Cassuto instead approaches the ideology of hard-boiled detective fiction by focusing on what has been left out; he approaches the significant "loud silences"²²⁴ in the narratives. This act of reading between the lines and looking at what is under the evident surface in order to form an opinion of the ideological forces behind a story is similar to Althusser's act of "double reading" of texts.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

²²² Nyman 1998, 9.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 18.

²²⁴ Cassuto, 82.

According to Althusser, the significant silences of the text are an important source of ideological knowledge. Cassuto also argues that “sentimental stories also begin with the challenge to what they represent” and thus, “one might trace the origin of sentimentalism to its opposite”.²²⁵ Therefore, the detective’s refusal of family ties can be a symptom of longing for those ties.²²⁶ According to Cassuto, Chandler’s Philip Marlowe, who epitomizes the alienated hard-boiled detective, is “the genre’s most eloquently anti-sentimental sentimentalist”.²²⁷

It can be argued that the traditional hard-boiled narrative and Child’s modern hard-boiled fiction, in fact, maintain the family institution and its ideology; the thematics of the hard-boiled reflects the domestic ideology of sentimentalist literature. Cassuto points out that there is tenderness inside the hard-boiled subgenre which “arises from a particular set of beliefs about domesticity”.²²⁸ Hence the image of the corruptive force of the family and the images of corrupt families in the subgenre can be analyzed as representations of longing for those significant ties to be restored. The family institution is thus an institution to be protected and sought after. This idea was approached also in the previous subchapter, but now the masculine individualism is seen to serve the family institution.

The themes of sentimentalist fiction are repeated in the Jack Reacher novels; bad parenthood and complex family ties represent the central problems of sentimentalist fiction. These themes were previously in this thesis interpreted as symbolizing the unreliable and corrupt nature of the family institution, as it represented a threat to individual agency. However, according to Cassuto’s view of the underlying domestic ideology, these unstable family ties and the detective’s separation from these relations can be seen to represent a deep need for a unified family institution. The deterioration of the

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

family institution is shown to be the greatest threat to society in sentimental narratives.²²⁹ The detective is thus seen to turn his back on the dysfunctional family in the search of the family ideal.

Family ties are under great threat in the Jack Reacher series. In fact, it can be argued that the worst sin of the criminals in the three novels is that with their actions they set out to destroy family ties. These family stories seem to be a minor theme at first, but they are ultimately in the centre of action. A threat to Reacher's or someone else's family is the ultimate origin of the chain of events, and acts as the most important motivation for the following action. In *Killing Floor*, Reacher sets out to eliminate a large scale money laundering and counterfeiting scam only in order to rescue families from falling apart. The worst result of the actions of the Kliner family, which threatens the community by criminal activity, is shown to be ultimately that they willingly set to destroy families. Reacher feels he must get involved as the Hubble family, Roscoe's relationship with the community of Margrave, the two old brothers who run a barbershop, and his own brother and Joe's girlfriend are at risk. Reacher feels obligated to help people he does not know, when the sanctity of the family is at stake.

Paul Hubble's family, which underlines the emphasis on the importance of the nuclear family with its father, mother and two children, is threatened, and Reacher takes the responsibility of retaliation in his hands, since he has nothing to lose. Hubble asks what Reacher would do if his family was threatened, and it is clear to Reacher:

What would I do? If someone threatened me like that, they would die. I'd rip them apart. Either as they spoke, or days or months or years later. I would hunt them down and rip them apart. But Hubble couldn't do that. He had a family. Three hostages waiting to be taken. Three hostages taken. Taken as soon as the threat was made. (72)

Thus, it is pronounced that in order to protect the family institution, Reacher has to be without a family of his own. In *Killing Floor*, Reacher feels obligated to protect the Hubbles, but the final straw is his brother's death:

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 107.

What was I going to do about Joe? My answer came very easily. I knew it would. I knew it had been waiting there since I first stood next to Joe's broken body in the morgue. It was a very simple answer. I was going to stand up for him. I was going to finish his business. Whatever it was. Whatever it took. (125)

After this, any attack on Reacher is an attack on Joe, for whom Reacher has to avenge: the brotherly tie obligates him. As the Kliners murder Joe's girlfriend Molly Beth Gordon as well, it is evident that they will destroy all uncorrupted family ties if they are not stopped.

In *Echo Burning*, Reacher again sets out to rescue a family tie from an already corrupted family. The Greer family, which is already dysfunctional itself, is going to destroy the mother-daughter bond between Carmen and Mary Ellen. Also in *The Enemy*, Reacher makes his sentimental values clear as he as a police officer in the military, condones a serious beating given to a wife beater by a soldier. Retaliation on behalf of one's family is accepted: "Am I in trouble?" he said. 'Not with me,' I said. 'You're my kind of guy...'" (263).

According to Cassuto, the sympathetic ties that are idealized in the domestic ideology "begin at home, with the mother-child bond standing as the archetypal and exalted example of selfless love and sacrifice".²³⁰ This bond between the mother and child is visible also in Child's narratives. In *Echo Burning*, Carmen embodies the ideal of the self-sacrificing mother, as she is ready to fight to death for her angelic daughter Ellie. Reacher feels obligated to help her keep her child as soon as he witnesses the bond between them in real life. Even if the three Jack Reacher novels end in Reacher leaving the scene of action, it in some way feels a forced development due to traditional conventions of the subgenre. It seems like just a moment before Reacher leaves, the story receives a happy, sentimental family end – for all except Reacher. At the end of the novels, the sacred family bonds between parents and children are restored. For example, at the end of *Killing Floor*, Roscoe and Paul Hubble's wife and children who were held captives are rescued and the families are brought back together in a sentimental scene, as the Kliners' warehouse is in flames in the background:

²³⁰ Cassuto, 7.

...[W]e untangled ourselves and fell out of the car. Stumbled out. Hugged and kissed and cried, staggering about in the dirt at the side of the old county road. The four Hubbles clung together. Roscoe and Finlay and I clung together....Roscoe was huddled in my arms. I was watching the fire, a mile away....We all turned to watch the inferno and the explosions. Seven of us, in a ragged line on the road. (398)

In this scene, the positive sentimental actions, such as hugging, kissing and huddling are set against the violent acts of explosions and burning. The head of the Kliner family, the main criminal of the story, corrupted by greed, is seen to burn in the inferno with his counterfeit money.

This sentimental scene is repeated in *Echo Burning*, as Reacher rescues Carmen's daughter Ellie from the kidnappers. Reacher, unfamiliar with children, is suddenly at home in a situation he would have been uncomfortable with before. Reacher briefly takes on the role of a surrogate father for the fatherless child: "They went in and out to the bathroom. Talked a little. Tried to identify the trees, listened to the buzz of the insects, looked for clouds in the sky." (409), after which the readers are presented with a mother-daughter reunion. At the end of the novel, the mother-child bond is restored, as Carmen is released from jail:

She had the door open before the car stopped moving and she came out and skipped around the hood and Ellie ran to her and jumped into her arms. They staggered around together in the sunlight. There was shrieking and crying and laughter all at the same time. (409-410)

Reacher's own mother is also seen to represent this ideal of the sentimental woman, the housewife. *The Enemy* goes back to the time when Reacher's mother was still alive. His French mother was the matriarch of the family who took care of them in tough circumstances. In the novel, Reacher and Joe visit her in France as they learn that she is dying of cancer. Even if Reacher has, according to the tradition of alienation, highlighted earlier his unsettled childhood in the army by telling about having to change schools every few months and that he has never lived in a proper house, at the same time he acknowledges his mother's importance in creating them a home in his childhood:

The way she took charge spooled us all backward in time. Joe and I shrank back to skinny kids and she bloomed into the matriarch she once had been. A military wife and mother has a pretty hard time, and some handle it, and some don't. She always had. Wherever we had lived had been home. She had seen to that. (95)

It turns out in the novel that his mother has had even more of an influence in the way Reacher turned out, as he finds out after her death that she was in the French resistance movement during WW2:

I felt like a guy who suddenly finds out he was adopted. You're not the man I thought you were. All my life I had assumed I was what I was because of my father, the career Marine. Now I felt different genes stirring. My father hadn't killed the enemy at the age of thirteen. But my mother had. (361)

Reacher notices his mother's influence also as he remembers the ritualistic scene of his childhood, where his mother puts her hand on Reacher's shoulders and gives advice on how to lead his life:

She was a small woman, fascinated by the way her baby had grown into a giant. "You've got the strength of two normal boys," she said. ..."What are you going to do with this strength?" she asked me. I didn't answer. I never did. "You're going to do the right thing," she said. (100-101)

Reacher is obligated to follow in his mother's footsteps, who "had stepped up and done what was necessary" (*TE*, 361), and to follow her advice. This scene underlines Child's use of "images of idealized domesticity"²³¹ which tie his hard-boiled narratives to the domestic ideology of the sentimentalist novels.

The traditional gender roles of the conventional hard-boiled subgenre link it to the sentimental fiction of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. According to Cassuto, both of the literary modes reacted to the change in the public and private spheres of society.²³² The roles reserved for women were often situated only in the private sphere of life, the home. The sentimental narrative uses the imagery of the domesticated woman, as it is "middle-class and white in its outlook and mainly rural in its views of community as small and personal".²³³ In reaction to the masculine disappointment resulting from the changes in women's situation at the beginning of the twentieth century, the imagery of domesticated women is used in traditional hard-boiled fiction to refer to the ideal situation where men have ultimate agency as women are tied to the realm of the domestic.

²³¹ Cassuto, 15.

²³² *Ibid.*, 11.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 7.

The Reacher series, as a representative of the modern hard-boiled, does not use unambiguously these traditional gender roles. The quixotic pursuit of fixing broken families, or at least demolishing their disruptive constructions, is in the end done by the man alone. It is interesting that all the women Reacher has deeper feelings for are daughters of important and strong men. Even if the gender roles in the Reacher narratives differ significantly from the tradition of the subgenre,²³⁴ as the women are strong and independent themselves, they are nevertheless categorized as daughters of their fathers. The women Reacher is sexually interested in function in the public sphere, for instance as police officers, lawyers and soldiers in the army.

However, there are women who are defined by their families as well. In *The Enemy*, a female sergeant who acts as Reacher's secretary is not even given a name as she is referred to as "the sergeant with the baby son" (127). The sergeant feels the pressures of the changing army from a different point of view than Reacher: she is a single-mother who is dependent on the job in order to support her child. The women are bound tightly by and to the family ISA. The women in Reacher's life, his mother who dies in *The Enemy*, his sexual partners, and the women he rescues from capitalistic greed, are deeply rooted in their communities; thus they end up representing the domestic sphere of life. In *Killing Floor*, after Reacher has destroyed the corrupted Kliner family, Roscoe is left to rebuild the community. At the end of the novels, Reacher is able to leave the disintegrated community and family behind, as the women are left behind. In *Echo Burning*, Carmen is tied to the Greer family by her daughter, and she cannot leave her daughter behind to escape violence or leave with her since it would be considered a kidnap. Reacher demolishes the dysfunctional family and gives Carmen and her daughter, who share an almost symbiotic relationship, freedom to move on.

With a closer look into the series we see the importance family relations in fact hold. The narratives introduce families which are broken and corrupted to the point of no return, and they are

²³⁴ The women in the Early period of hard-boiled detective fiction were usually situated in two categories; they were representatives of the 'femme fatale', whose sexuality and deviousness posed a great threat to the male detective, and the 'damsel in distress', whose role was to be an unthreatening victim waiting to be rescued.

shown to have a great influence on families that are still intact. By protecting these families at risk, Reacher shares the sentimental narratives' "quixotic pursuit of a family ideal",²³⁵ instead of focusing on the quest of masculine individualism separate from the family, which is traditionally seen to form the core of hard-boiled detective fiction. With these narratives of personal involvement, the professional detachment of the hard-boiled detective is not reachable, because personal involvement prevents the protagonist from being autonomous and free as the stereotypical hard-boiled detective.

In the whole series, Jack Reacher seems to fight against the "sentimental shadow"²³⁶ present in the subgenre. In order to keep in line with the conventions of the subgenre, Reacher superficially represents the ultimate loner who abandons all family ties. But, as Messent points out, the hard-boiled protagonist's "sense of alienation is a falsification of the actual nature of her or his social role and position",²³⁷ since he or she is actually functioning for the better of the community and in connection with it. For instance, Reacher acts as a catalyst for the necessary actions needed in order to destroy the corrupted individual, the criminal who epitomizes the ills of capitalist society.

Reacher is thus deeply involved in the community, even if the fact that he is, similar to Marlowe,²³⁸ fighting to keep his distance. According to the conventions of the subgenre, Reacher struggles between competitive self-interest and sympathy for other human beings; even if the traditional hard-boiled detective's tried to distance themselves from the family, they were prone to investigate crimes that disrupted family ties. He tries to convince himself of the motives of his action: "I don't really care about the little guy. I just hate the big guy. I hate big smug people who think they can get away with things" (*Persuader*, 463). However, ultimately his actions are reactions to the sufferings of other people and he has a genuine concern about the 'little guy' who is trampled by the 'big guy'; since he believes that "They need a story. An explanation. The who, the where, the why.

²³⁵ Cassuto, 83.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 56.

²³⁷ Messent, 2.

²³⁸ Cassuto, 14.

Everyone needs to know what happened to them. They shouldn't be allowed to just go, quietly. Someone needs to stand up for them" (*One Shot*, 190). Even if Reacher cannot completely be referred to as a "domestic detective", who for example is married with children, which has become more and more common in hard-boiled detective fiction since it appeared in the 1930s, he is part of the "sentimental men who actively and violently guard the community."²³⁹

In Althusserian terms, the significant tension that seems to define the attitude of hard-boiled narratives to individual agency and societal institutions could refer to the functions of interpellation in society. The dominant ideology makes individuals believe in their own individual agency and benefits from this individualistic ideology, since it hides the fact that the individuals are inherently connected with these institutions and the values they propound. The hard-boiled protagonist's almost desperate attempt to hold on to his individual agency is only an illusion, a fantasy created by and to the individuals who feel their agency is threatened by institutions? Could it be that the influence of the family institution is able to sneak into the narratives of the subgenre resulting in the influences of domestic ideology visible under the surface?

It can be said that hard-boiled detective fiction analyzes "the coercive power of the institution in relation to individuals",²⁴⁰ without specifically ending up criticizing or promoting the dominant ideology. This is accurate with the institution of family as well. Even if Reacher continuously underlines his high degree of freedom, which is seen to arise from his voluntary separation from family relations, society and material possessions, the aim in the stories is to purify and reunite the institution and its values broken by change in public and private world.²⁴¹ To some degree, the role of the individual separate from the family institution is to bring the family members together. This follows the controversial thought that in order to protect the community, or even to see what the problem actually

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

²⁴⁰ Reddy, 14.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

is, one has to set oneself outside of the community. It can be argued that Reacher is only able to act in favor of the family institution because he is superficially outside it, without a family of his own.

I will continue my analysis in the next chapter, where I will focus on the ideological subjection reproduced through interpellation inside the institutions. I will again approach an institution which is part of the RSA of society; the army is another institution besides the law with which Reacher has a strong connection.

5. The Army and the Lone Wolf

In this chapter, I will continue my analysis on institutions and individual agency with the institution of army, which is one of the strategic institutions in the Jack Reacher series. This specific institution is an interesting subject for analysis in connection to its ideological significance in reproducing and defining masculinity in the Western world. My main focus is to analyze the tension between the contradictory values of the detective's individual agency and the army. The army is a product of ideology and it is a pivotal institution in reproducing hegemonic ideology in society. My attention is on how the army is depicted in the novels; to what degree the ideological basis of the army is connected to the individual agency promoted in the tradition of hard-boiled detective fiction. As the army is not typically regarded as a place of emphasizing individual agency, I will analyze whether the army represents an institution which diminishes the agency of the individual in the novels, and whether the protagonist aims to separate himself from the institution in order to protect his autonomy.

I will argue that the army propounds contradictory values in Child's novels; on one hand, it can be argued that the army promotes masculine individualism and, on the other hand, it can be seen to diminish individuals as parts of men working together in a repressive institution towards the ideological status quo of the state. In 5.1, I will again start the discussion with focusing on the individualistic tradition of the subgenre, and the ways the army institution in the Reacher series promotes masculine individualism and thus differs from the general portrayal of institutions in hard-boiled detective fiction. In 5.2, I will approach the army as promoting the subjection of individuals to the ideological status quo instead of individual agency. I will argue that in the Reacher series the army is regarded as promoting an ideal of heroic and autonomous masculinity, and that this imagery of individual agency functions as a persuasive ideological tactic, as a method of interpellation in Althusser's terms, to ensure the ideological subjection of people to the preservation of the hegemonic ideology, against which the hard-boiled detective's individuality ultimately is set.

In Althusser's theory, the army is part of the Repressive State Apparatus, the RSA, of society. As mentioned previously, the institutions belonging to the RSA function to ensure the reproduction and continuity of ideological practices,²⁴² thus, they support the dominant social system and its ideology. The army is an institution, similarly to the law, which uses force to ensure the ideological subjection of people. The institution is directly under the realm of the state, and it represents the ideology of that state at a specific time; the army reflects the societal values and it uses significant measures to protect them, for it is a site of institutionalized violence and control.

Even if the army functions mainly by physical repression, ideology has a significant role in ensuring the internal cohesion inside the institution; the individuals forming the institution are made to internalize certain values which help them overlook the actual goals of the institution (which in this context are argued to be repressive towards individuals). The internal ideological cohesion in the army can be seen as a result of interpellation; Althusser argues that the institutions belonging to the RSA of society use ideology, in the form of important values, to make individuals believe in their individual agency, their position as free subjects, out of the reach of ideology. The process of interpellation is central in studying the internal structures of institutions inside the RSA. I will argue that in the case of the army, this subjection of individuals, the interpellation, creates the illusion that the army is a place for the individual to promote and perform his masculinity. As previously mentioned, the army is a significant institution in the process of creating hegemonic masculinity in society, and it ties the forms of masculine behavior closely to the use of violence and physical performance.

I will analyze whether the institution can be approached in an Althusserian sense as a RSA in the novels, and whether the series recognizes the contradictory nature of the army. I will look at the way the ideological stance of the army is recognized and depicted in these narratives, and how this coincides with the traditional ideology of the hard-boiled subgenre discussed previously.

²⁴² Althusser, 1485.

5.1 The Lone Warrior

In this subchapter, I will analyze the ways individual agency and masculine autonomy are portrayed and reproduced in terms of the army institution. I will argue that the army, instead of representing a threatening institution for Jack Reacher, is mainly a space for the creation and acting out of masculine individuality.

In most of the novels in the series, Reacher is not officially in the army anymore. Thus, on the one hand and following the tradition of the subgenre, Reacher, in fact, separates himself from the army as he cannot function as an autonomous male inside the institution. However, I will argue that that separation is ultimately superficial, and that in the end Reacher does not reject the values of the army as they are portrayed promoting certain individualistic ideology.

First, I will approach the concept of hegemonic masculinity and its relationship with hard-boiled detective fiction. I will analyze the type of hegemonic masculinity hard-boiled detective fiction and Child's Jack Reacher series promote. Then, I will discuss the army as a masculine place and as an agent in the production of masculinity and masculine individualism in general and in the series in question.

As discussed earlier, the importance of masculine individual agency in Western and especially American cultural imagery is significant. It can be argued that hard-boiled detective fiction can among other literary genres be considered an indicator of the state of masculinity, as it developed in an era of a crisis in masculinity. I have argued in this thesis that the Jack Reacher series underlines the importance of masculine individualism; it is done by following the conventions of traditional hard-boiled detective fiction. The masculine individual agency of the detective protagonist is emphasized by reproducing the separation (even if artificial) between the detective and societal institutions, which are experienced to limit individual agency at that time. I will now argue that in the Reacher novels the army represents

values which are incorporated in the construction of masculine individualism; hence explaining the fact that Reacher is still deeply connected to the army institution.

In current research there is a general agreement that gender is socially constructed and distinct from the biological term sex.²⁴³ When the construction of masculinity or femininity is analyzed, we need to realize that masculinity and femininity, which are socially produced and structured, are not created and recreated only in opposition to each other. Instead of there being one *masculinity*, there are many different *masculinities* in society, which are “in complex relations of domination over and subordination to each other”.²⁴⁴ As Tosh points out, “[t]he gender structure of society comprises unequal power relations between men and women, and between different categories of men”.²⁴⁵ The relations between different masculinities are often, according to Connell, relations of hierarchy and domination: in every society there is generally one form of masculinity which is dominant and this *hegemonic masculinity* is “the centre of the system of gendered power”²⁴⁶ in society.

Hegemonic masculinity represents the exemplary form of masculinity of a certain historical period in certain society; “[a]t any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted”.²⁴⁷ The diversity in masculinities and relations between the different masculinities are not stable, as masculinities are created in specific historical circumstances. For instance, I situate traditional hard-boiled detective fiction, as well as Child’s Jack Reacher series, in specific contexts of change in hegemonic masculinity.

Connell sees that especially popular culture and mass media take up and enforce the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity, as they tend to focus on stories of exemplary masculinities.²⁴⁸

As a literary genre, hard-boiled detective fiction with its aggressive portrayal of masculine

²⁴³ Judith Butler, a significant feminist thinker and philosopher, denies in her famous work, *Gender Trouble* (1990), the existence of natural gender and even argues that also the category of sex is socially constructed and not ‘natural’ or inherent.

²⁴⁴ R.W. Connell, *The Men and the Boys* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000) 69.

²⁴⁵ John Tosh, “Hegemonic Masculinity and the History of Gender,” *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*, ed. Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004) 42.

²⁴⁶ Connell 2000, 216-217.

²⁴⁷ R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995) 77.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 214.

individualism is a forum for the creation and promotion of one form of hegemonic masculinity. The rise of hard-boiled detective fiction in the 1920s represents a change in the hegemonic masculinity of the period. As mentioned earlier, traditional hard-boiled narratives can be seen to respond to the period's 'crisis in masculinity' by promoting a tough form of masculinity also present in the masculinity of the frontier narratives and the Westerns. According to Baker, the tough hegemonic masculinity was seen to be in decline in the age of consumerism,²⁴⁹ and hard-boiled masculinity was a response to the family-centered masculine ideal that was defined by male social obligations. The hard-boiled narratives faced this development by emphasizing masculine individual agency, which focused on the male's lack of social ties which were thought to limit individual agency.

Reacher is a former military police officer of the U.S. army, and his army background is a central ingredient in his detection and in his hard-boiled masculinity, which ultimately is constructed around masculine individualism. The army, its corruption as an institution or it as a scene of action, cannot be considered significant in the tradition of hard-boiled detective fiction, unlike the other two societal institutions approached in this study, but I link the army to the tough hegemonic masculinity promoted at the beginning of the twentieth century. I see that the army institution reproduces a type of masculinity similar to the ideal masculinity in the tradition of hard-boiled detective fiction.

After the First World War, idealized masculinity was connected to the characteristics of a soldier; characteristics such as skill, strength, endurance and reliability came to characterize the ideal man. According to George L. Mosse, WWI tied militarism and masculinity more closely together than ever before, and the birth of modern masculinity can be seen to reside in the glorification and idealization of the soldier.²⁵⁰ Tosh notes that at that time the soldier "was idealized through a variety of

²⁴⁹ Baker, 65.

²⁵⁰ George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) 110.

cultural mediums, including adventure fiction, military journalism, and uniformed youth movements”.²⁵¹

Militarism and masculinity were tied together in the definition of hegemonic masculinity again in the late twentieth century. Baker sees that there was a similar crisis in masculinity in the 1990s, which was in direct connection with the crisis in the post-world war period.²⁵² Walton and Jones argue that there was a change in the political climate which arose in part from the result of the Vietnam War, the loss of faith in the government after the Watergate scandal and the economic decline that started in the 1970s.²⁵³ The liberal views of the 1960s and 1970s gave way to a more individualistic trend in masculinity. For instance, the effect of the hippie movement and the sexual revolution in the 1960s on gender roles were pivotal; the sexual revolution grew out of mid-century perceptions that gender roles were determined by nature, rather than culture. This development allowed more freedom in the definition of masculinity, as well as femininity. In reaction to this more liberal period in history, a more individualistic politics were promoted by the conservative governments, and “a powerful model of individual agency (directed and motivated by the ‘free’ market entrepreneurial capitalist system)”²⁵⁴ started to dominate political discussion.

Even if especially the Vietnam War produced narratives of the negative effects of war on the nation and its people in popular culture of the 1980s and 1990s, also the rise of militarism in the period was clearly visible as stories of extreme masculine agency and individualism inside the army. There was a noticeable presence of a tough militaristic type of masculinity. The army was not always depicted as a constrictive institution to the individual, but a productive one. I will argue that popular narratives of the time promote masculine individuality by tapping into the cultural imagery of the army as a place for constructing masculine individualism.

²⁵¹ Tosh, 49.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 123.

²⁵³ Walton and Jones, 189.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 189.

I see that Child's *Reacher* series exists in this continuum of hegemonic masculinity as it shares features with the "new cults of masculinity in the United States"²⁵⁵ of the period, mentioned by Connell in *Masculinities*. The hegemonic masculinity represented in the series, the first novel of which was published in 1997, follows the trend of the action hero masculinity visible, for instance, in the popular movies produced at that time such as the *Rambo* movies (the first *Rambo* movie appeared in 1982), the *Die Hard* movies (the first *Die Hard* movie appeared in 1988) and movies starring actors such as Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jean-Claude Van Damme. These movies reflect the changing gender ideals, as they present a raw and primal masculinity that centers on physical performance, endurance and strength.²⁵⁶ Even if the portrayal of the heroic soldier might have changed to more naturalistic in style, I see that this idealization of the soldier has continued in popular culture, especially in films, to this day.

As Connell points out in *Masculinities*, societal institutions are integral in the maintenance of hegemonic structures, including hegemonic masculinity;²⁵⁷ the army is still one of the most important institutions in the production and reproduction of hegemonic masculinity in general. The army takes part in defining desirable masculinity, and since hegemonic masculinity represents "what men ought to be"²⁵⁸ not what they actually are, the concept of hegemonic masculinity is potentially problematic for most men. The army can be seen as a racist, sexist and heteronormative institution, whose ideas of the right type of masculinity can be seen to be restrictive towards men. Even if hegemonic masculinity is commonly recognized in society, it is not necessarily the most common form of masculinity. Connell points out that

²⁵⁵ Connell 1995, 84.

²⁵⁶ The connection between the *Rambo* movies and Child's *Reacher* series becomes even more visible as the twelfth novel of the series, *Nothing to Lose* (2008), makes significant intertextual references to the first *Rambo* movie, *First Blood* (1982), in its plot and themes.

²⁵⁷ Connell 1995, 16.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 70.

[L]arge numbers of men and boys have a divided, tense, or oppositional relationship to hegemonic masculinity. This is an important fact of life though it is often concealed by the enormous attention focusing (e.g. the media) on hegemonic masculinity.²⁵⁹

The army creates pressures for men to meet certain physical and mental standards depicted as natural and unideological; the ability to commit violent acts in the name of one's country requires both.

The army is the central influence in Reacher's life and his masculinity. Reacher is only superficially separated from the army institution, as his existence and detection seem to be defined by his military training and experience. Reacher is a former army officer who has served thirteen years in the U.S. army after growing up in army bases all around the world.²⁶⁰ At the beginning of the series, in *Killing Floor*, Reacher has just left the army and his divided attitude towards the army becomes visible; on the one hand, he feels that the army tied him down: "To understand the traveling blues you need to be locked down somewhere. In a cell. Or in the army." (23), and, on the other, it seems to function as the basis of his autonomy. Reacher is able to conduct his investigations successfully because of his experience; "long experience had taught him" (*KF*, 3), and this experience is gained explicitly in the army, since Reacher has done nothing else than lived in the institution. In the next subchapter, I will approach the matter of the strength of interpellation in connection with having grown up inside an institution such as the army.

After leaving the army and being officially outside the system, he continues to live his life according to the rules of the army, as if programmed. He repeats and follows these rules like mantras in the novels: "I never volunteer for anything...Soldier's basic rule." (*KF*, 20); "Sleep when you can, so you won't need to when you can't." (*EB*, 123); "Hope for the best, plan for the worst. That was his guiding principle." (*EB*, 64). Even if Reacher in *Echo Burning* sees the time after leaving army "as a triumph of disengagement" (249), his actions create contrast; the fact that Reacher was in the army

²⁵⁹ Connell 2000, 217.

²⁶⁰ The fact that the U.S. is a significant global military power becomes visible, as Reacher has spent almost all of his life abroad, all around the world.

plays a central part in his detection and other than being constantly on the move he does nothing to actually separate himself from his previous life.

In the series, Reacher leads an irregular life wandering from one town to another and from one motel to another, thus he continues the lifestyle he was accustomed to in the army:

Reacher went right to bed, even though it was still early. *Sleep when you can, so you won't need to when you can't.* That was his rule. He had never worked regular hours. To him, there was no real difference between a Tuesday and a Sunday, or a Monday and a Friday, or night and day. He was happy to sleep twelve hours, and then work the next thirty-six. (*EB*, 123)

In the novels, Reacher always ends up explaining his behavior by telling his life story, which tends to be the story of his army career: “So as always he just told the story and answered the awkward questions and let her think whatever she wanted.” (*EB*, 248). When asked where he comes from, Reacher answers: “I come from a place called Military.” (*KF*, 16). This sentence is significant since it can be interpreted as referring to the army as a place of origin, a replacement for a city or a country, as well as a value-laden institution which in this context refers to a specific upbringing.

The series ties the army closely together with the concept of masculinity, as Reacher's masculinity, which is at the same time shown to be incorruptible and omnipotent, is constructed on his army background. For Reacher the army represents the place where he grew up to be a man; he has learned everything he knows in the army. Connell points out that the army has been to this day an inherently “masculinized institution”,²⁶¹ where boys become men as they learn how to kill and to protect their countries. Traditionally, and in countries where military service is compulsory, the army has been regarded as the place where boys become men as they leave their families to gain structure and independence in their lives. Even if the army is far from an institution which could essentially be interpreted as promoting individual agency and masculine individualism (as the army is basically a body of disciplined men working together) the idea of adopting the discipline and the rules of the army entails the idea of growth, of becoming an autonomous agent.

²⁶¹ Connell 2000, 215.

The army Reacher identifies with is an army that functions according to the principles of individual agency. His masculinity is inherently connected with the idea of ‘heroic masculinity’ of the soldier male, which is incorporated in the ideology of the army. According to Mosse, the army and especially war “enable the best of men to fight not so much for a higher ideal as for the discovery of their true nature as warriors”.²⁶² In my opinion, Reacher functions as a soldier in the civilian world, as he sees his responsibility is to protect the innocent and his country. In Reacher’s army the soldier does what is needed. In *The Enemy*, Reacher faces a changing atmosphere in the army as his work is hindered with a growing amount of bureaucracy, rules and restrictions, which in his mind have nothing to do with the army. In *Echo Burning*, he reminisces his life in the army: “Different rules, different situations. It was a world of its own. It was very regulated, but it was kind of lawless. Kind of rough and uncivilized” (22). Reacher had liked being part of an army which consisted of “A million people trained first and foremost to do what needed doing. The rules came afterward” (*EB*, 22), but when the freedom to ‘do what is needed’ is limited, Reacher leaves the army to do the same on his own, acting according to rules of the army.

The idea of heroic masculinity and of gaining it in battle against the enemy is still connected with the army, even if, as Connell points out in *Masculinities*, “the techniques of industrialized war have almost nothing to do with the conventions of individual heroism”.²⁶³ Reacher seems to lose his faith in the army as an institution when the fantasy of heroic action in the frontlines is denied. It can be argued that Reacher agrees that “the soldier is free because he can look death in the face”;²⁶⁴ he abandons his official rank in the army, because he feels that the institution is being directed to a more bureaucratic direction instead of a more active one.

In *The Enemy*, it is clear that the reason Reacher leaves the army is because the U.S. army faced a reduction of forces at the beginning of the 1990s as the Cold War was over. In *Die Trying*, Reacher

²⁶² Mosse, 110.

²⁶³ Connell 1995, 214.

²⁶⁴ Mosse, 111.

explains his separation from the army: “Like if they didn’t need the biggest and the best, they didn’t need me. Didn’t want to be part of something small and second rate.” (114). In *The Enemy*, the Chief of Staff ponders the situation the army, and arguably Reacher as well, is in:

“We are in a unique situation now. We’re like a heavyweight boxer who’s trained for years for a shot at the world title, and then we wake up one morning and find our intended opponent has dropped dead.” (405)

Everything is changing in the army and Reacher refuses to change with it. My argument is that Reacher sees that he can no longer act out the role of the warrior who redeems his masculinity in the frontlines and continues his work in the civilian world in the frontlines of civilian crime – equipped with the skills and methods of a highly trained military police officer catching offenders who are also extremely highly trained. Reacher’s position as a military police officer is an important one in securing the cohesion inside the army, which helps to ensure the success in the frontlines of battle.

Reacher was a member of an elite military police unit, a self-confessed “army top-cop” (*TE*, 161), the army’s “go-to guy” (*Persuader*, 32) in complicated criminal cases. Outside the army, in the civilian world, Reacher is still, first and foremost, a multitalented professional, with “Long years of training written in his DNA.” (*The Hard Way*, 443). Reacher’s superior skills are made clear; “And I can shoot. I won competitions for pistol shooting in the army. Couple of years, I was best there was” (*EB*, 143). His skills attained in the army still define his approach to situations, and as previously mentioned, the army has taught him a specific “attitude” (*KF*, 63):

He has never counted on anything at all except surprise and unpredictability. There was a portion of his brain developed way out of all proportion, like a grotesquely over trained muscle ... No shock, no surprise, no gasping freezing fear or panic. No pausing, no hesitation, no inhibitions. (*Tripwire*, 70)

Reacher’s way of functioning in the world is contrasted with the “civilians”, with whom he never seems to identify himself. ‘Civilians’ react to death and chaos with shock and disbelief, but Reacher deals with them professionally and self-confidently: “Three against one, both times, but they were three amateurs against Jack Reacher, and he felt comfortable enough with those odds.” (*Die Trying*, 65); “He

wasn't surprised. Surprise was strictly for amateurs, and Reacher was a professional." (*The Hard Way*, 443).

In the series, professionalism is ultimately connected to the army. Traditionally professionalism has been tightly connected to masculinity; as Nyman points out, "professionalism is a form of mastery and masculine power and control, too".²⁶⁵ The traditional division between masculine public life and feminine private, domestic life has tied the concept of professionalism to the characteristics of men. The army is still today an extremely masculine institution, as the majority of the soldiers around the world are men. Stephen M. Whitehead sees that "the arenas that constitute the public sphere contain both rites of passage for males and validations of masculinity, heterosexuality and brotherhood".²⁶⁶ Even if there are some female soldiers in the Reacher narratives, the violent culture of the army seems to be ultimately masculine; the female soldiers are seen to excel in skills traditionally considered masculine, but they are restricted into functioning in a masculine world. As Whitehead argues: "it is clear that while women are not necessarily always formally excluded from professional sites, they are, in very many instances, subjected to pressures to conform to, and accept as 'proper', masculine values and ways of being".²⁶⁷

The army is still today seen as a place where boys turn into men, and from WWI and even earlier, war has been seen as the restorer of true manliness; in war the soldier is "free from social imperatives" and can "recapture their individuality".²⁶⁸ Even for Reacher, war seems to represent the state where the core skills of masculinity are ultimately received. Reacher undermines his own career as a soldier since he has not fought in an actual war, as for instance, his father had. Reacher also belittles the significance of the medals he has received: "I won all of the good stuff purely by accident and none of it means very much to me." (*TE*, 84), and he seems to appreciate more the scars he has

²⁶⁵ Nyman 1997, 122.

²⁶⁶ Stephen M. Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities: Key Themes and New Directions* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002) 120.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 137.

²⁶⁸ Mosse, 110.

received from actual battles and fights. Reacher bears a crude scar in his abdomen as a remainder from a military mission in Beirut, where he was injured as someone's jawbone hit him in the stomach; "Reacher ran his finger over the lumpy skin. The stitches looked like a plan of the ties at a busy railroad yard." (*Die Trying*, 112). In Beirut, Reacher was also awarded a Silver Star for his heroism as he pulled soldiers out of a bunker while injured.

Reacher has not participated in a war, but he has killed people in the army in special missions and in the course of his dangerous job as a military police officer. At the beginning of the first chapter in *Killing Floor*, it is made clear that Reacher is capable of killing: "I hadn't killed anybody. Not in their town, and not for a long time, anyway." (5). In *Echo Burning*, as Carmen wants Reacher to kill her husband for her, Reacher admits that he has killed before, at the same time referring to violence as the fundamental definer of the army:

"Have you killed people, Reacher? In the army?"
 He nodded again. "Some."
 "That's what the army is all about, fundamentally, isn't it?" she said.
 "I guess so," he said. "Fundamentally." (22)

In *Die Trying* (1998), Reacher is asked how he feels after he has killed a criminal, who had kidnapped him and tried to rape a woman:

"You feel OK?" she asked him. "You killed a man."
 He was quiet for a long moment.
 "He wasn't the first," he said. "And I just decided he won't be the last." (165)

It is implied that killing and violence are natural to Reacher and to his role as a soldier.

Reacher is violent and his masculinity is, on the whole, extremely physical. Reacher meets the ideal of the "soldier male", who, according to Nyman, is able to control his own body as well as others.²⁶⁹ Connell points out that hard-boiled characters employed the physical characteristics of the soldier male ideal; fights and the endurance of pain are central identity building factors with hard-

²⁶⁹ Nyman 1997, 99.

boiled characters.²⁷⁰ This is true also with Reacher, since his masculinity seems to be built around his bodily performance as a strong and skilled man. The centrality of the male body to masculine formations is significant in the army institution as well as in hard-boiled detective fiction. In both forums, the ability to endure violence acts as a test of masculinity. According to Tosh, “[p]hysical strength and practical competence are standard components”²⁷¹ of hegemonic masculinity, and these traits are often shown through violence. Connell argues that masculinity is constituted through bodily performance. Highmore also states that “the body is a site of ideology, not just pure biology”.²⁷²

Reacher’s body is similar to the idealized masculine body of the action hero in the 1980s and 1990s: “He was burned a deep brown by the sun and he was in the best shape of his life. Like a condom crammed with walnuts, is what some girl had said.” (*Tripwire*, 10). Reacher uses his skilled and trained body as a weapon against the criminals. Even if Reacher normally does not carry a gun, there is no doubt whether Reacher wins the fights he is in: “Soon as he was neutralized, it was two against one. And I’d never had a problem with those kinds of odds.” (*KF*, 82). Reacher is able to control his body, and he turns his fear into aggression: “He felt the aggression building up inside. He used it and controlled it like he had learned to. He used the adrenaline flow to ease the stiffness in his legs. He let it pump him up.” (*EB*, 148). Reacher is extremely confident and aware of his abilities and it is the army that is mainly responsible for this: “Serene self-confidence works wonders, in a situation like that. And he felt confident. It was confidence born of experience. It was a long, long time since he’d lost a two-on-one bar fight.” (*EB*, 155). Reacher is strong, confident, lethal, attractive, skilled, trained, aggressive and violent, and he reproduces the characteristics of the traditional hard-boiled detective, which, according to Munt, is “characterized by action, violence, colloquialism and an ethically Manichean ‘quest’”²⁷³

²⁷⁰ Connell 1995, 96, 116.

²⁷¹ Tosh, 47.

²⁷² Highmore, 190.

²⁷³ Munt, 2.

Violence is a significant part of the corporeal masculine role performance and,²⁷⁴ as Connell notes in *Masculinities*, “[v]iolence on the largest possible scale is the purpose of the military; and no arena has been more important for the definition of hegemonic masculinity in European/American culture”.²⁷⁵ The army is a site of the physical. Reacher is a man trained by this institution of “state-sponsored violence”,²⁷⁶ where the use of violence is legitimized. It seems that Reacher’s ‘personal’ violence, as he acts outside the jurisdiction of the official army, is legitimized because of his strong mental, and not yet broken, connection to the army.

In the portrayal of Reacher’s violent actions, the state-sponsored violence of the army is connected to the legitimization of violence in connection with the hero’s own moral code, which was discussed in the first analysis chapter. However, I argue that Reacher’s violence is legitimized also by his connection to the official law, and similarly by his connection with the army. In the series, Reacher kills a large number of criminals, but shows no sympathy or regret, as if the people he kills are only enemies in a war over whose deaths a soldier is not obligated to feel guilty:

He was calm. Just another night of business as usual in his long and spectacularly violent life. He was used to it, literally. And the remorse gene was missing from his DNA. Entirely. It just wasn’t there. Where some men might have retrospectively agonized over justification, he spent his energy figuring out where best to hide the bodies.
(*The Hard Way*, 475)

As Connell notes in *The Men and the Boys*, “[t]he bodily capacity to commit violence becomes, for many boys and young men, part of their sense of masculinity and a willingness to put their bodies on the line of violence remains as a test of hegemonic masculinity”.²⁷⁷ It can be argued that being outside the army actually enables Reacher to act out his masculinity connected to violence in a more comprehensive way, as the modern U.S. army might not provide him with possibilities to show off his endurance and skills as the civil world of the novels does. Reacher’s violent acts, his inability to feel

²⁷⁴ Judith Butler approaches the idea of performance in the construction of gender in her book *Gender Trouble*. Butler sees that gender is not *being*, but *performative*, as gender is learned through corporeal acts and gestures in everyday situations.

²⁷⁵ Connell 1995, 213.

²⁷⁶ Whitehead, 37.

²⁷⁷ Connell 2000, 218.

remorse and his unquestioned sense of right and wrong as he commits these violent acts that resemble blood baths could easily label him as a sociopath. However, the unbreakable bond he has with the army and its legitimized violence and the fact that he helps protect the “little guy” justify his acts.

My conclusion is that the Reacher narratives rely on the army institution as a positive institution for the individual; they reproduce the imagery that links masculinity and the military together. Especially masculine individual agency and autonomy is seen to form inside the army institution. This approach to masculinity exists inside the shift in hegemonic masculinity of the 1980s and 1990s, visible especially in popular culture of the time as an increase in militarism. Reacher is a masculine character to the extreme, as his appearance, strength and skills are those of an action hero. This change also explains why the army is such a significant institution in Child’s hard-boiled detective narratives, as the army was not a significantly visible in the tradition of the subgenre. Jack Reacher is a hard-boiled character who only formally leaves the army behind, at the same time his life being determined by the army rules he grew into.

In the following subchapter, I will connect Reacher’s soldier identity to the ideology of the army institution.

5.2 The Detective as a Soldier

In the previous subchapter, I argued that the novels of Child’s Jack Reacher series follow the expansion of militarism in the popular culture of the 1980s and 1990s, which connects individual agency tightly with the army. After the liberal politics in the 1960s and 1970s, the imagery of hegemonic masculinity changed into denoting a tougher masculinity. The army was taken to portray an almost ultimately masculine place, a platform for the growth of masculine individuality. The series employs this imagery of heroic masculinity in the lone warrior protagonist. Reacher, officially separated from the army

institution, is still seen as part of the army, acting as an individual warrior, and a professional in the civilian world with a special mission inherited from the army.

My intention in this subchapter is to approach the contradiction inside the imagery of masculine individualism existing in the army; I will analyze whether being part of a mass institution in the Repressive State Apparatus corresponds with the idea of individual agency of the soldiers. I will argue that yet again the hard-boiled protagonist's involvement in the reproduction of the hegemonic ideology of society is overlooked, since Reacher is part of an institution which exists inevitably to promote and protect the nation-state which commands the army. Without questioning the motives of the army and the ideology behind it Reacher seems to be susceptible to the act of interpellation done inside the institution.

First, I will approach the function of heroic masculinity in the interpellation of the army as part of the RSA. My intention is to analyze Reacher's position in this subjection to the hegemonic ideology. Second, I will discuss the ideology of the army institution and the way it is recognized and promoted by Reacher.

According to Althusser, the army functions mainly by repression. However, ideology and ideological practices have a significant function inside the institution; certain values, incorporated especially in the imagery of the heroic soldier male, are promoted in the army in order to tie the soldiers closely to the institution. As Connell points out, "the imagery of masculine heroism is not culturally irrelevant. Something has to glue the army together and keep the men in line, or at least enough in line for the organization to produce its violent effects."²⁷⁸ In modern Western thinking, the thought of sacrificing yourself for your country for a noble cause in war has suffered inflation, and in order to avoid making the soldier feel like an insignificant piece in the machinery of war, the ideal of the army and war as ultimate places for the construction of strong and autonomous masculinity is

²⁷⁸ Connell 1995, 214.

promoted. As Baker notes, “the masculine subjectivity of the soldier is predicated, ironically in the suppression of individuality in favor of obedience to the needs of the group”.²⁷⁹

The army incorporates and reproduces a masculinity, which incorporates physicality and competence as its central features, and the army is depicted as the perfect place for acquiring such masculine competence; the pressure for men to live up to this image of ‘what men should be’ increases the popularity of army service. The army institution focuses on such values which promote the masculine qualities of soldiers. The army, and the ideology it interpellates subjects with, is constructed of values such as pride in your country, fighting for what you believe in, protecting the innocent and the weak, comradeship among soldiers, honor, respect and fairness. The process of internalizing these values acts as Althusserian interpellation; as the subject adopts these values he focuses on the importance of the individual soldier in the army ignoring the motivation behind the incorporation of these values. The strict hierarchy and discipline of the institution assure the lack of individual action, even if its ideology supports the individuals’ longing for autonomy.

In my opinion, the Jack Reacher series acts both as a method and as evidence of interpellation, because as a literary product it presents a glorified picture of the individual agency of the soldier male and fails to question the nature of that agency, even if the protagonist is shown to separate himself from the army. The series joins other products of popular fiction in depicting the army as a site of masculine adventure. At the same time, the series tells a story of a victim of interpellation; as a protagonist with a conflicting relationship to the army institution, Reacher leaves the army because he sees it has abandoned the traditional values he connects with the army. However, instead of actually abandoning the army institution, Reacher continues to function according to the values of the army he sees important also in the civilian world. I will argue that Reacher follows the heroic masculinity imagery

²⁷⁹ Baker, 30.

connected to the army without questioning it. In my opinion, Reacher does not contradict the set of beliefs he has grown up with in the army and fails to recognize the ideology inside the army institution.

Reacher can be seen as a product of the interpellation of the army situated in a hard-boiled narrative. The army has been a significant institution in his socialization process; he has grown up inside the army, and with his father being a marine, his brother and all the other children around him being army kids, Reacher has internalized to the values positioned inside the institution. Reacher has grown up in the army; he has lived and breathed the army mentality from the day he was born. Reacher makes it clear that he was predestined for the army; in *Echo Burning*, he compares his background to Alice Aaron, who herself is from a family of lawyers:

Then she responded in turn with an autobiography of her own. It was more or less like his, in an oblique way. He was the son of a soldier, she was the daughter of a lawyer. She had never really considered straying away from the family trade, just like he hadn't. All her life she had seen people talk the talk and walk the walk... . (248-9)

He recognizes the army as the place where he comes from (*KF*, 16), and treats the institution as his other family (*TE*, 155). In *Killing Floor*, Reacher reminisces the tight bond between his family members, formed by the influence of the loyalty visible in the army:

But we had the thing that army families have. Your family was your unit. The men on the bases were taught total loyalty to their units. It was the most fundamental thing in their lives. The boys copied them. They translated that same intense loyalty onto their families. So time to time you might hate your brother, but you didn't let anybody mess with him. That was what we had, Joe and I. We had that unconditional loyalty. (112-3).

Reacher has also internalized this unconditional loyalty to the army, as he has been too close to the institution to realize the ideology in its background. According to Althusser's theories, the subjected individual does not possess a free will, as the subjection to the ideology is the result of structural factors in society.²⁸⁰

Through intense army training, Reacher has been programmed to this image of the perfect soldier; it is as if normal human feelings and emotions are trained out of him: "There was a portion of

²⁸⁰ Leitch, 1477.

his brain developed way out of all proportion, like a grotesquely over trained muscle ... No shock, no surprise, no gasping freezing fear or panic. No pausing, no hesitation, no inhibitions.” (*Tripwire*, 70).

Reacher has internalized the army mentality, the “attitude” of a soldier. Reacher connects the training he has received to the experienced soldiers who have gained their experience in war:

People who had survived things I had only read about in books. They taught me methods, details, skills. Most of all they thought me attitude. They taught me that inhibitions would kill me. Hit early. Hit hard. Kill with the first blow. Get your retaliation in first. (*KF*, 63)

Reacher is undoubtedly part of the army and remains as its agent even after resigning from the service. At the beginning of *The Enemy*, Reacher cannot even visualize a life outside the army (51), even if his frustration towards the institution is growing. The need to be free from social ties and restrictions connects Reacher to the conventions of the traditional hard-boiled detective fiction subgenre, but it can be argued that, as Reacher rejects only the visible connection to the army, he maintains his position as a soldier of the U.S. army.

Reacher does not reject his past in the army; on the contrary, he uses it in his detection. Even outside the service, Reacher’s rank, reputation and knowledge acquired in the army act as a recommendation and as a badge ensuring his admission to places where other civilians are not allowed and information to which his access would otherwise be denied. It seems that Reacher has only taken off his uniform; however, he is identified as a soldier even without it. His manner, appearance and scarred body reveal – one could say even betray – his occupation; for instance, in *Die Trying* the daughter of a military officer identifies Reacher:

“It’s pretty obvious,” she said. “My dad was in the army. I’ve lived on bases all my life. Everybody I ever saw was in the army, right up until I was eighteen years old. I know what soldiers look like. I know how they act. I was pretty sure you were one. ... “ (112)

After leaving the army, Reacher has the opportunity to do something else, but he decides to refrain from work as long as he can; he is not creating a new identity to replace the one of a soldier. In many of the novels, Reacher becomes an insider in the criminal investigations because of his military

status; his former occupation as a military police officer and his immaculate service record enables him to become an advisor of some sorts to the cases working alongside with other officials. His service record is faxed over from the Pentagon archives, and it tends to expel all suspicions. In *Killing Floor*, Finlay, the detective who is investigating a series of cruel murders, and who suspects Reacher at first changes his mind after seeing Reacher's record, and surprisingly decides to include him in the investigation:

[A] long fax was in from the Pentagon about my service record. Thirteen years of my life, reduced to a few curling fax papers. It felt like somebody else's life now, but it backed my story. Finlay had been impressed by it. (92)

Reacher's situation between the civilian and the professional worlds enables him to use the good sides from both worlds; he still has the mentality and the skills of a soldier without the restrictions created by the structure of the institution. In *Without Fail*, Reacher is even sought after to execute a mission for the Secret Service in order to protect the future vice president of the United States from assassination. His experience is needed, and he is seen as a perfect weapon, because he does not ask for much if the mission does not question his sense of morality that correlates with the one incorporated in the army. It can be argued that he feels obligated to help because he still is a soldier in the U.S. army.

Even when Reacher could be able to approach the army from a distance, he ultimately does not question the ideology behind the army. After his service he stays clear from politics, and even if he would be in a position to criticize the American politics and the army he decides to refrain from any substantial social commentary. Even if one of the hard-boiled detective's goals has been to affect the societal institutions by setting himself outside them, Reacher is not articulating any ideological issues in the army he wants to influence. Reacher follows the current events taking place in the U.S. and internationally, but he does not comment on the matters. Being out of the army Reacher follows the newspapers with disdain; the papers are "full of shit" (*KF*, 22) about presidential campaigns and presidents he "didn't vote for last time and wasn't going to vote for this time." (*KF*, 1). Reacher is

frustrated about politics and the cuts made in the army; “I stopped reading, because it was just making me angrier” (*KF*, 23), but he does not have suggestions for changing the way of things.

Before the events of *Killing Floor*, Reacher had resigned from the army since he felt it was not the institution he believes in anymore. *The Enemy* is a flashback to the events that caused Reacher to lose his faith in the military institution. However, Reacher’s criticism against the army is directed at “the bad apples” inside the system and the increasing bureaucracy, which in Reacher’s opinion complicates and hinders the ability of the army to do what is needed – and not towards its violent actions or questionable goals. When Reacher counters unsurpassable issues inside the army institution, he labels them as issues brought on by rogue individuals. Reacher believes in individual action, and his reaction to corruption in the army is a personal separation from the institution instead of researching the fault from the institution itself. Reacher believes in the system and the values it represents and symbolizes. In *The Enemy*, he kills the man who he feels to be responsible for the course of the events which conclude in his separation from the army. It is the bad, corrupted individuals who “ruin it [the army] for him” (459). Following the individualism present in American cultural imagery, for instance visible in the myth of the American Dream, Reacher does not see any reason to blame the ideology that underlies the institutions, as the individual is alone responsible for his actions; for his or her success as well as demise.

In the novels, Reacher points out several issues which make actions of the military controversial and questionable, but his reaction is neutral: “He shrugged, like he was saying, *Hey, the army, what can you do?*” (*TE*, 307). It is as if the army can remain obscure in its intentions in Reacher’s opinion. In *The Enemy*, Reacher talks about the confusing and somewhat controversial military actions he has been involved in, as he meets his brother:

“You were in Panama,” he said. “Operation Just Cause, right?”

“Operation Just Because,” I said. “That’s what we called it.”

“Just because what?”

“Just because we could. Just because we all had to have something to do. Just because we’ve got a new Commander-in-chief who wants to look tough.” (80).

Here again, Reacher sees that the pride and selfishness of an individual, of “the new Commander-in-chief”, is the reason for the negative things in the military; the soldiers are the ones who have to act out the commands. Reacher is not blind to the motivations behind the actions of the army, but he sees it results from the individual, not the system itself. His criticism and disapproval of the army is only hinted at and visible in the word play concerning the army’s motivations.

Reacher tries to ignore the few “bad apples” (*TE*, 459) in the army and to concentrate on protecting what is good in the institution. It is not the soldier’s position to question his superiors. Reacher sees that it is his duty to protect the army from outsiders as well as “the bad apples” who corrupt it from the inside. In *The Enemy*, it becomes evident that Reacher is willing to protect the army by deception; Reacher verbalizes to his colleague, lieutenant Summer, what their duty as soldiers is:

“Then they should be reassured. You promised them a cover-up.”

There was something prim in her voice. Like she was suggesting I shouldn’t have promised them any such thing. “We protect the army, Summer,” I said. “Like family. That’s what we’re for.” (75)

Reacher demonstrates his “unconditioned loyalty” to the army also as he kills the officer who organized the conspiracy inside the army in *The Enemy*.

Reacher has great respect towards the army, or at least towards the traditional values of the institution. These values play an important part in the workings of the army; such things as comradeship, loyalty and doing the right thing are central in Reacher’s life even in the civilian world. For Reacher, being in the army is belonging to a band of brothers where the members protect and stand up for each other. When a member of the Delta Forces is brutally murdered in *The Enemy*, all the members of his unit are ready to revenge his death (*TE*, 140). However, Reacher is an outsider in the army, as he is an MP, whom nobody likes. Reacher admits that his “Military Police’s crossed flintlock

pistols” on his lapels are “not the most popular sight” (*TE*, 52) among soldiers. This semi-outsider position with insider knowledge suits the convention of hard-boiled detective fiction. Even if it is part of a hard-boiled detective’s essence to not to rely on anybody or anything else but himself, Reacher feels some kind of a comradeship with his fellow soldiers and especially his fellow military police officers: “Because if one MP won’t help another, who the hell will.” (*The Hard Way*, 163).

As Baker points out, the role of “the war time-buddy relationship between men”²⁸¹ is significant in the maintenance of internal cohesion in the army. Tosh also sees that “[t]he shared danger of death and the mutual dependence of soldiers in moments of peril explain why fraternal comradeship – the love of soldiers – has been such a pronounced feature of most armies”;²⁸² Fighting together in a war or even living together experiencing the excruciating day-to-day routines in the army bind the soldiers together. The big scar in Reacher’s abdomen, which he received on a special mission in Beirut, symbolizes his heroic actions and loyalty to his fellow soldiers. As mentioned earlier, besides the Purple Heart medal for the injury in battle, Reacher received the Silver Star medal, which is the third-highest medal for valor in the U.S. army, as he saved other soldiers while injured. In the eleventh Jack Reacher novel, *Bad Luck and Trouble*, Reacher is brought together with his colleagues from a special investigations unit he commanded in the army. In the novel, someone is killing the members of the unit one by one, and Reacher is going to revenge their deaths, as the catchphrase of the unit, “You do not *mess* with the special investigators” (28), obligates him.

Reacher’s involvement in the ideological processes of the army, which ensure the individuals’ subjection to its values, is also visible in his respect for the army uniform. The uniform has value to Reacher; it represents the values of the army. In Reacher’s eyes, one can be a disgrace to one’s uniform, even if it is a uniform that someone once wore (*The Hard Way*, 255). In this actual case the person is accused of having abandoned two of his fellow soldiers in a battle. The code of honor in the

²⁸¹ Baker, 3.

²⁸² Tosh, 55.

army is strong especially between soldiers; as mentioned previously, it can be argued that the strong connection and the feeling of being responsible for one's fellow soldiers is an important factor in the creation of a unified army of soldiers. Reacher sees that a soldier is always a representative of the army, even after leaving the service. It is also important to Reacher that he received an honorable discharge from the army; it stands for a character recommendation: "Did you get an honorable discharge?" ... 'Yes,' I said. 'Of course.'" (*KF*, 20).

The respect and loyalty among soldiers is visible also in Reacher's respect for U.S. army veterans; Reacher compares his own accomplishment to the veterans' and feels his contribution to the army, hence to his country, to be insignificant. Reacher has a mentor, his long time commanding officer Leon Garber, whom he admires deeply along with his own father. Leon Garber's influence is visible in Reacher's personality, and he becomes to represent the good values of the army; Garber dies in the third novel of the series, *Tripwire*, but his legacy lives on in Reacher. Reacher describes Garber as follows:

A short, squat, tough man. A wide smile he always used whether he was happy or annoyed or in danger. A brave man, physically and mentally. A great leader. Honest as the day was long, fair, perceptive. (*Tripwire*, 56)

Reacher feels a deep connection with people with military backgrounds. Reacher considers himself obligated not to let the army oppress and abandon individual soldiers who have given everything to serve their country in the army. Reacher sees that it is his duty to clear the reputation of individual soldiers who are in the risk of losing their reputation because of politics. In the ninth novel of the series, *One Shot*, Reacher feels obligated to clear the name of a soldier who is falsely accused of killing several people. The man is a victim of an elaborate conspiracy, and even if Reacher had been the one who wanted him incarcerated for a similar crime in the past, he is willing to clear his name as he learns that he is, in fact, innocent. In *Tripwire*, Reacher sets out to restore the reputation of old Vietnam veterans; he assumes the role of a representative of their rights:

I'm a representative. I'm here to represent a lot of people. Like Victor Truman Hobie. He was a hero, but because of you he was written off as a deserter and a murderer. His folks have been in agony, thirty long years. I represent them. And I represent Gunston and Zabinski, too. They were both MP lieutenants, both twenty-four years old. I was an MP lieutenant when I was twenty-four. They were killed because of what you did wrong. That's why you're going to answer to me, Allen. Because I'm them. Scum like you gets people like me killed. (*Tripwire*, 385)

It can be argued that by the phrase "people like me", Reacher means ordinary soldiers who do what they are taught to do, who serve their country. Here the needs of the group are before the needs of the individual. Soldiers are expected to act according to the values of the group without questioning the ideology behind them; as the values in the surface are those that support the individual agency of the soldier whereas the deeper ideology of the army is left unrevealed and unanalyzed.

It is curious that almost all of the women Reacher falls in love with are in some way connected to the army. His loved ones are either soldiers themselves or the daughters of great soldiers or of otherwise important men. Reacher rekindles his love with Leon Garber's daughter, Jodie, in *Tripwire*; and in *Die Trying* the object of his affections is an FBI agent who is also the daughter of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "the most important military man in America" (118). Reacher admires the values of the army and is attracted to women who represent them.

The respect for army experience is also perceptible in the traditional hard-boiled detective fiction. Even if the army institution is not a central institution in the hard-boiled detective fiction subgenre, there are multiple protagonists who have military backgrounds and are military veterans. For instance, H.C. McNeile's Bulldog Drummond is a WWI veteran, Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer is a WWII veteran and John D. MacDonald's Travis McGee fought in the Korean War. An army background gives credibility to the hard-boiled detective in many ways; it is proof of the person's physical and mental abilities as well as functions as a suitable reason for the existentialist anxiety visible in the subgenre.

Even if Reacher tries to distance himself from politics concerning national affairs and the U.S. army, he ultimately protects the state by protecting the army. Even if nationalistic issues or patriotism are not central themes in Child's novels, they are in the background as stories of threats to American society; in the novels, there is always a bigger plot of national importance behind the personal level. Subtle references are made to American culture and the United States as a nation; for example, Reacher uses the names of the presidents and vice-presidents as aliases in the motels he stays.

In *Killing Floor*, Reacher stops a money laundering and counterfeiting scam that threatens the reputation of the dollar in the global market, thus threatening the stability and influence of America as a nation. In *Echo Burning*, the larger plot behind the more personal crime Reacher first focuses on has to do with illegal immigrants and the restoration of the reputation of the U.S. as the provider of equal opportunities for every individual who is willing to work hard. Thus, Reacher is protecting the myth of the American Dream. *The Enemy* is, as discussed earlier, ultimately a story of the plague of greedy individuals who are only after their own best interest ignoring the good of the entire institution and the state. Reacher believes in traditional values that are incorporated in the core of the nation, and sees that they are the basis of the army institution, as well. As John Horne argues, the army is an agent in "the initiation of men into the sense of nationhood".²⁸³ The soldiers are there to learn to protect their country and fight in the name of their country, as well as learn how to be men. Hamilton sees that traditional hard-boiled detective fiction promotes an ideology which "postulates that the individual is the foundation of society"²⁸⁴ – in my opinion, Reacher also sees that the nation consists most importantly of individuals.

Reacher and his role in the community could be described, in Baker's term, as a "citizen-soldier" who is "loyal to the republic, loyal to the imperatives of the military and state, an active agent

²⁸³ John Horne, "Masculinity in Politics and War in the Age of Nation-States and World Wars, 1850-1950," *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*, ed. Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004) 31.

²⁸⁴ Hamilton, 9.

rather than a passive participant”.²⁸⁵ Here, Baker describes a character that emerged in the post-WWII militaristic society, who “is crucial in forging a connection between Americans and the nation-state, for the construction of the American subject is inextricably bound up with obligations to, and rights conferred by, the state.”²⁸⁶ Reacher, being a former soldier, represents a person for Americans to identify themselves with. Frustrated with the functions of politicians and corrupt big shots in the army, he reflects ordinary citizen’s feelings of frustration and distrust. However, Reacher’s deep connection with the army and the state ensures that the hegemonic ideology is not contradicted.

Reacher is at the same time an ordinary soldier and an exemplary male; this setting is also central in the identity of hard-boiled detectives, since Rawson argues that the hard-boiled protagonist is “an elite individual simultaneously representative of and superior to his culture”.²⁸⁷ A phrase which was used as a blurb in the book jacket of one of the Jack Reacher novels; “Men want to be him, women want to be with him,” describes the protagonist’s role quite well. At the same time as he is portrayed to be like any of us, he is an educated man (he speaks French and uses ‘educated’ words and phrases such as, “I like bovines better than edentates” [*EB*, 163]). Reacher represents the official in the army, the military police, which has influence on all other soldiers, and also his physical characteristics and abilities besides his mental abilities make him an elite individual.

The portrayal of the army differs from the position of the law and the family institutions in Child’s series. As the law and the family are mostly treated according to the tradition of the hard-boiled subgenre, the army is primarily and more openly portrayed as a source of masculine individualism, not its limitation. However, it can be argued that the ideological influences of and connection to all of these three institutions are overlooked and ignored in Child’s narratives, as the individual agency of the male protagonist and masculine individuality in general are emphasized.

²⁸⁵ Baker, 19.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁸⁷ Eric Rawson, “To Hell with Ya: Katabasis in Hard-Boiled Detective Fiction,” *The Journal of Popular Culture* Vol. 42, No.2 (2009) 294.

Reacher is without a doubt deeply involved in the army; his position varies between being a lone warrior, with skills and experience gained in the army, and living the role of a soldier, whose goals are inherently consistent with the dominant ideology of society. Reacher represents the values of the army, and continues living his life according to them after leaving the service. He protects the values which form the ideological core of the army institution. These values are used to interpellate subjects, to make them commit to the institution instead of questioning its actions and the actual motivations behind them. Reacher represents this warrior masculinity central in the interpellation process. In the end, Reacher is identified as a soldier of the U.S. army, thus again his individual agency is a fallacy.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to examine the visible ideological tension between individual agency and institutions in Lee Child's modern hard-boiled detective fiction. My thesis is part of the discussion on the ideology of hard-boiled detective fiction, which has revolved around the possible conservatism or subversiveness in relation to dominant ideological discourses.²⁸⁸ In this thesis, my focus has been on recent hard-boiled detective fiction with a white, heterosexual male protagonist. The revision of the white, heterosexual masculine individualism emphasized in the tradition of the subgenre occurred in the 1980s, when female and ethnic authors began to question the position of the hard-boiled detective protagonist.

The conventions of the traditional hard-boiled subgenre acted as a starting point for my study, since societal institutions were consistently portrayed as corrupt and inefficient in the early twentieth-century hard-boiled narratives; the individual agency of the male detective was strengthened by making a separation between the detective protagonist and institutions. However, the detective's liminal position as an outsider in society is more complex, since the detective is only superficially separated from these institutions; beneath the surface, the detective is witnessed to reproduce the dominant ideology of society instead of rebelling against it.

I see that the contradiction between the position of the individual and the significance of institutions is inherent to human experience, especially in Western individualistic culture. Hard-boiled detective fiction, and Child's Jack Reacher series, brings this existential discussion to the surface, as its narratives revolve around ambiguous relationships between the individual and the institutions. In modern society, people are brought up to internalize the notion of the power and influence of the individual. These individuals then, later on, come to experience the profound contradiction between the

²⁸⁸ My thesis builds upon the work of critics such as Cranny-Francis (2003), Messent (1997), Reddy (2003) and Walton and Jones (1999), who approach the matter of ideology in their criticism of detective fiction.

demands of the institutions, which present demands and obligations towards the community, and their internal need of autonomy and freedom.

In my study, I have employed Neo-Marxist theory and Louis Althusser's ideas on the functions of ideology. I have seen that Althusser's view on the reproduction of ideology through institutions proposed a suitable theoretical and conceptual framework for my thesis, since he argues that the ideological reproduction ultimately takes place by hiding the ideological from sight and making people believe in their autonomy and their individual agency – thus the contradictions between the demands of the institutions and the demands brought on by the individualistic worldview are diluted, as the individuals are offered a place to employ their individual agencies, even if distorted ones, through interpellation. Althusser divides societal institutions into two different categories of *State Apparatuses* which use different means of reproducing the hegemonic ideology of society. These institutions have different ways of *interpellating* individuals as autonomous subjects. I see that in this study the concept of interpellation has been crucial in the investigation of the position of individual agency and institutions in society; interpellation ensures ideological subjection of the individuals and thus obscures the contradiction between the innate desire for individual agency and the reality of institutional power.

The Jack Reacher series with its detective protagonist relies heavily on the conventions of the traditional hard-boiled, as it highlights the significance of the detective's individual agency by the rejection of institutions deemed harmful to it. Reacher attempts to make a clear separation between him and the institutions which represent loss of autonomy with obligations and constrictions. His forceful separation from institutionalized law, the institutions of family and the army, similar to the Early period of hard-boiled detective fiction, depicts the individual's desire to flee institutional pressures. However, this separation is superficial, and Reacher's connection to the three institutions is deeper than he can admit, and in some cases more visible than in the tradition of the subgenre.

Reacher, by adopting the role of the homeless wanderer, flees the communal obligations to a position in society, which is only able to provide him with a fantasy of total individual agency. I see that this fantasy is an Althusserian fantasy of interpellation, employed recurrently in the American cultural imagery. By providing Reacher with a seemingly autonomous position outside the influence of institutions and hence dominant ideology, Child's Jack Reacher series provides the reader an idealized version of individual ideology, also contributing to the act of interpellation as a literary work.

I analyzed the representation of individual agency in relation to three institutions. In the first analysis chapter, I discussed the portrayal of the law in the series. The novels adopt the vigilante myth present in the tradition of the subgenre; the detective's individual moral code is elevated above the institutional law deemed helpless and corruptible. However, I conclude that Reacher's own morality inherently reflects the morality present in the individualist tradition of America. Reacher's is not separated from the institutionalized law, as he continues to function according to his past career as a military police officer; he shares the values, the means of promoting justice, and the goals with the institution.

Even if Reacher has left his position inside the official law, he identifies himself deeply with the values he sees the law represents. He fails to interrogate the ideological background of his motivations, which is ultimately linked to the ideology of the institution. His criticism of the institutional law is concentrated on the inefficiency Reacher sees to derive from modern capitalistic culture, which promotes greed and selfishness. I see Reacher's ambiguous position as a promoter of an individual sense of morality inside the official legal system as a result of Althusserian interpellation; the institutional morality is seen to form on the individual morality of people. Ideology, promoting the significance of individual agency, is also used inside the institutional law in order to ensure the internal coherence of the agents of the law and their commitment to the ideology of the institution. By

promoting the idea of individual morality, the purposes and motivations behind the repressive institution of the law are made unintelligible.

In the second analysis chapter, I focused on the family institution. In Althusserian theory, the family is an *Ideological State Apparatus*, which through socialization reproduces hegemonic ideology. Through values and beliefs made invisible and ‘natural’, the family functions as a powerful institution in ideological subjection. Similarly to the conventions of the subgenre, in the novels, Reacher seems to abandon the values connected to the family, as he separates himself from human relationships and material possessions, which would tie him to society. However, I claim that this separation stays only on the surface level of the narratives; by applying Cassuto’s theory of the sentimental core of hard-boiled detective fiction, I see Reacher placing great value on the family institution. Reacher is after the uncorrupted core of the institution, because he sees that modern capitalist culture is responsible also of the demise of the family. The novels reproduce stories of families broken and corrupted by the greed of the individual, and the result of the criminal activity is often broken family bonds. In my opinion, Reacher does not abstain from family relationships because they would pose a threat to his individual masculine agency as such, but because without a family he is able to do what is necessary in order to bring families together.

The army, which I approached in the third and last analysis chapter, has a slightly different position with regard to the tradition of the subgenre, as the army is not as common as the other two institutions in the tradition of the subgenre. However, Reacher’s relationship to the army reveals his close position inside the institution as a whole. Reacher is a soldier of the U.S. army even if he is not in the service anymore. The reason why he left the service is again the greedy individuals in the institution, not the institution itself. His identity is a soldier’s identity, and he still acts according to the values and norms of the army. He uses his army status to his advantage, and the value he places of army veterans and the camaraderie inside the institution link his role of a seemingly autonomous

individual to the army. I see that Reacher has adopted the view of the army as a place of the creation of masculine individualism through the concept of heroic masculinity, which acts as an interpellating ideology tying the individual soldiers together in order to achieve the violent goals of the institution. I link Reacher's heroic masculinity created in the army to the shift in hegemonic masculinity in the 1980s towards a masculinity that ties masculinity to militarism.

Messent argues that there has been a significant shift in detective fiction in favor of the police procedural, as the hard-boiled detective's position as an autonomous agent and separation from the official law has been recognized as limited and falsified; it has become more and more evident that the traditional hard-boiled detective with his assumed liminal position to the law is unable to conduct successful investigations in modern surroundings.²⁸⁹ However, Reacher moves fluently through social institutions, such as the law, the family and the army, and is able to take several roles as an independent agent and as an official inside the institutions. He is able to present himself as separate from these institutions, even if being part of them and reproducing their ideology at the same time. Without too much existential anxiety he adopts the masculine individualism interpellated in these institutions, and does not interrogate his authoritative position as part of these institutions. Through interpellation he is seen to confer the values of these institutions as parts of his individual agency.

Even though my thesis has discussed only three novels of the series, I see that the same themes recur in the whole Reacher series. Instead of limiting my primary material to one novel, I aimed at producing a more complete view of the series by trading in-depth analysis for a more complete view and a starting point into a long-running, extensive series that has yet to receive much academic attention. Reacher's socially produced agency offers room for further study, as in this study I did not focus on the significance of the gender, ethnicity or sexuality of the detective; all these facts contribute

²⁸⁹ Messent, 2, 11.

to the privileged agency of the detective. Reacher's position as a heterosexual white male reproduces the authority of the detective of the Early period of the hard-boiled.

All in all, I see the Jack Reacher series as an example of modern hard-boiled detective fiction which has gained a large readership by reproducing the traditional conventions of the subgenre; by promoting the significance of individual agency the readers are able to vent their own insecurities in society between the contradictory demands of individualism and institutions. It is interesting to ask why this type of hard-boiled detective fiction is popular today.

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