



UiO : **University of Oslo**

Reporting clauses in British general vs. crime fiction



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Outline

1. Object of study: expansions in reporting clauses
2. Background and research questions
3. Corpus/Material/Method
4. Qualitative findings: crime vs. general fiction
5. Summing up: Implications and further research

Quoted speech/ Reported clause **Reporting clause**

"No, I haven't heard from him yet," he said.



Quoted speech/Reported clause **Reporting clause**

'No, I haven't heard from him yet,' he said.

Reporting clause with expansions/glossing phrases

1. "We'll see," he said again.
2. "What did I tell you?" demanded Terry aggressively.
3. "What happened to the cherry tree?" asked Anton after a moment.
4. "No sweat," said Woody, getting out.

Quoted speech **Reporting clause**

"No sweat," said Woody, getting out.

Reporting clause in **final** position: (approx. **82%** of all occurrences)

Reporting clause Quoted speech

Then she asks sharply: "Who's he?"

Reporting clause in **initial** position: approx. 11% of all occurrences

Quoted speech

Reporting clause

Quoted speech cont.

"Here comes her ladyship," said Len, making a mock curtsy, "with ginger Tessa."

Reporting clause in **medial** position (suspended quotation): approx. 6% of all occurrences (2/3 verb+speaker only)

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Background

1. "You're a fucking maniac," said Tom.
2. "I don't know how you can say that," I spluttered.
3. "I withdraw it," I said magnanimously.

Advice given to writers

- “never use a verb other than "said" to carry dialogue”
- “the general rule in fiction is to eliminate as many adverbs as possible”
- “never use an adverb to modify the verb ‘said’”

FIGURE 1. SAY vs. other reporting verbs 1900-2019

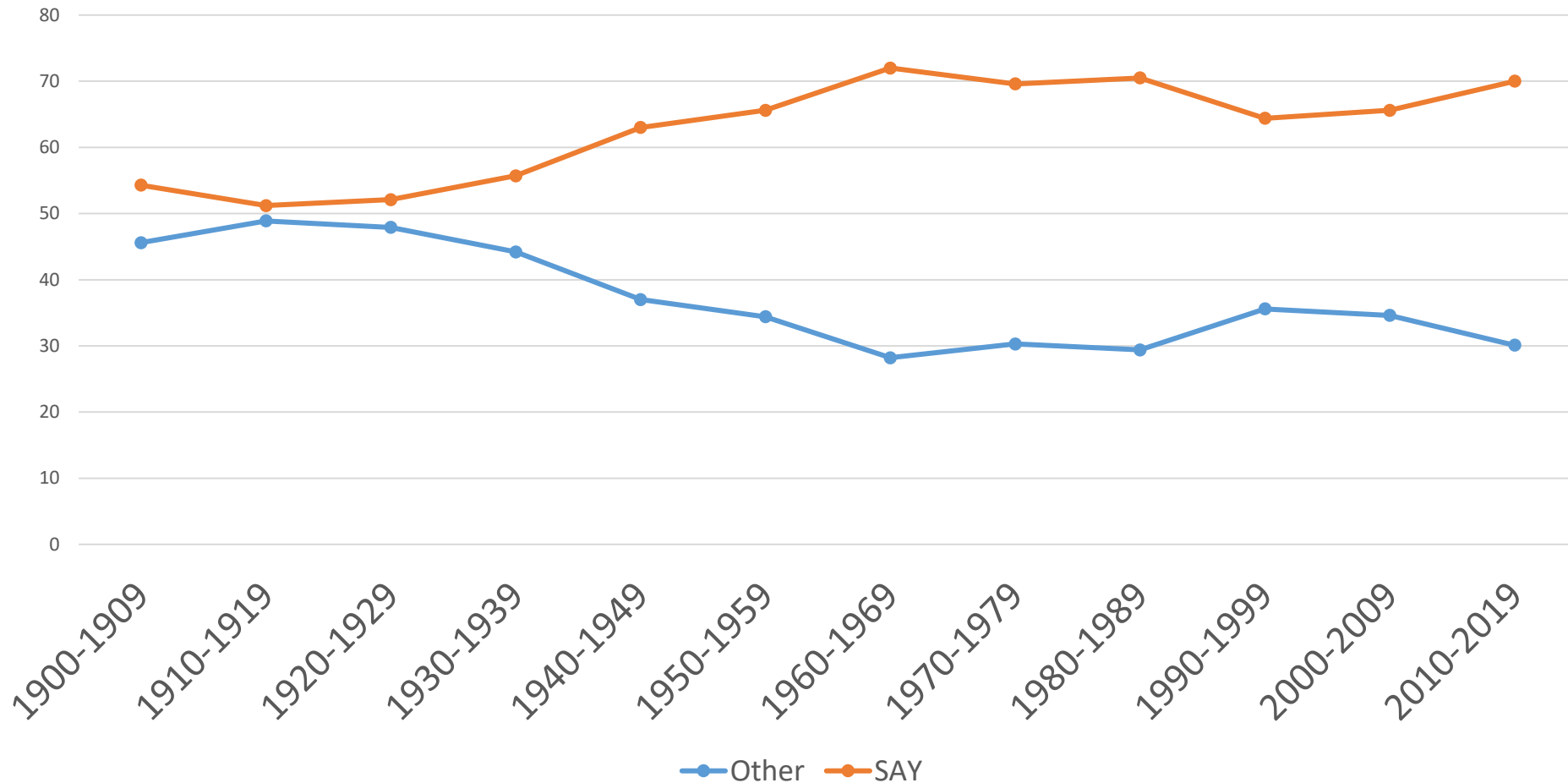


Figure 2. SAY vs. other verbs in romance fiction

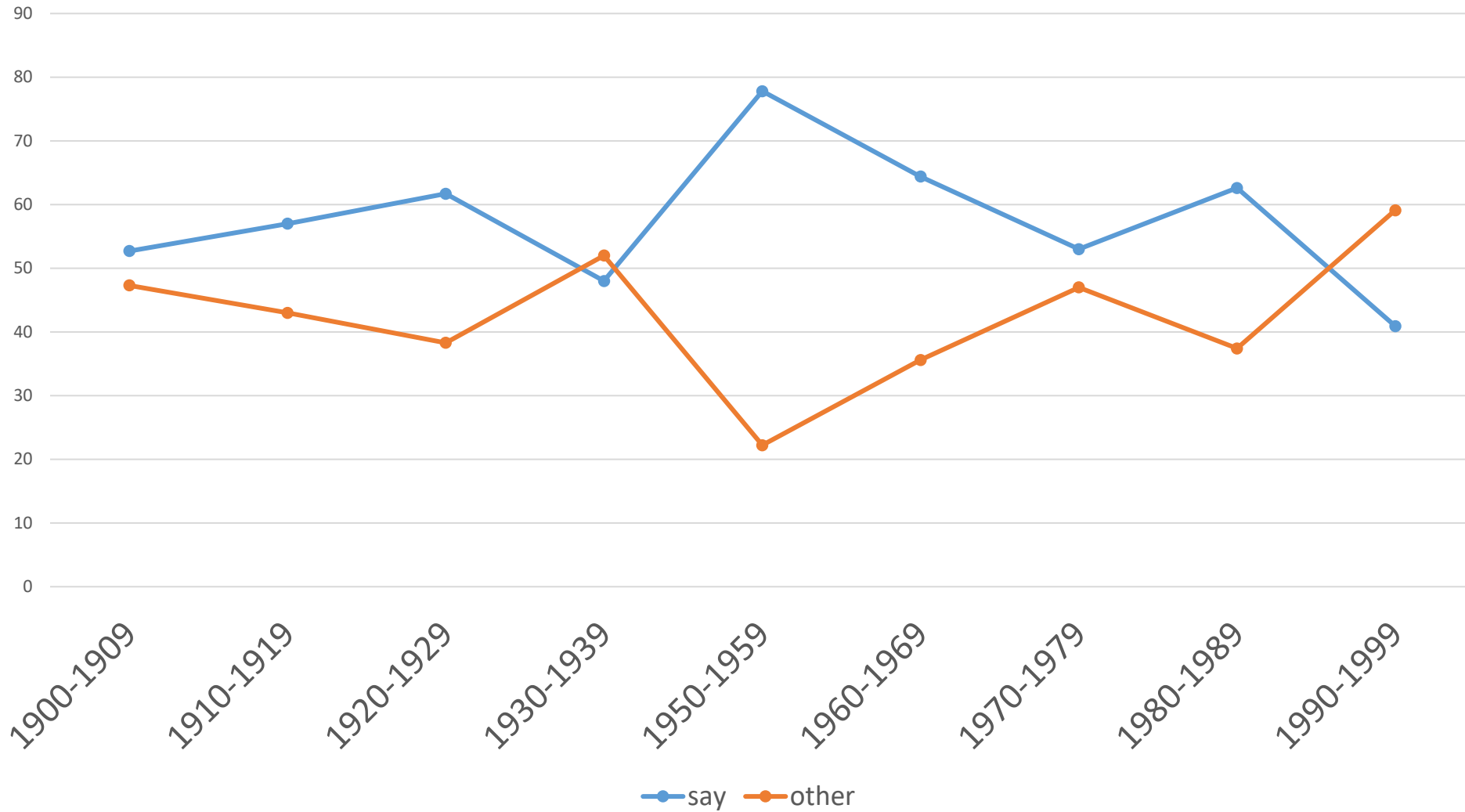


Figure 3. Adverb expansion

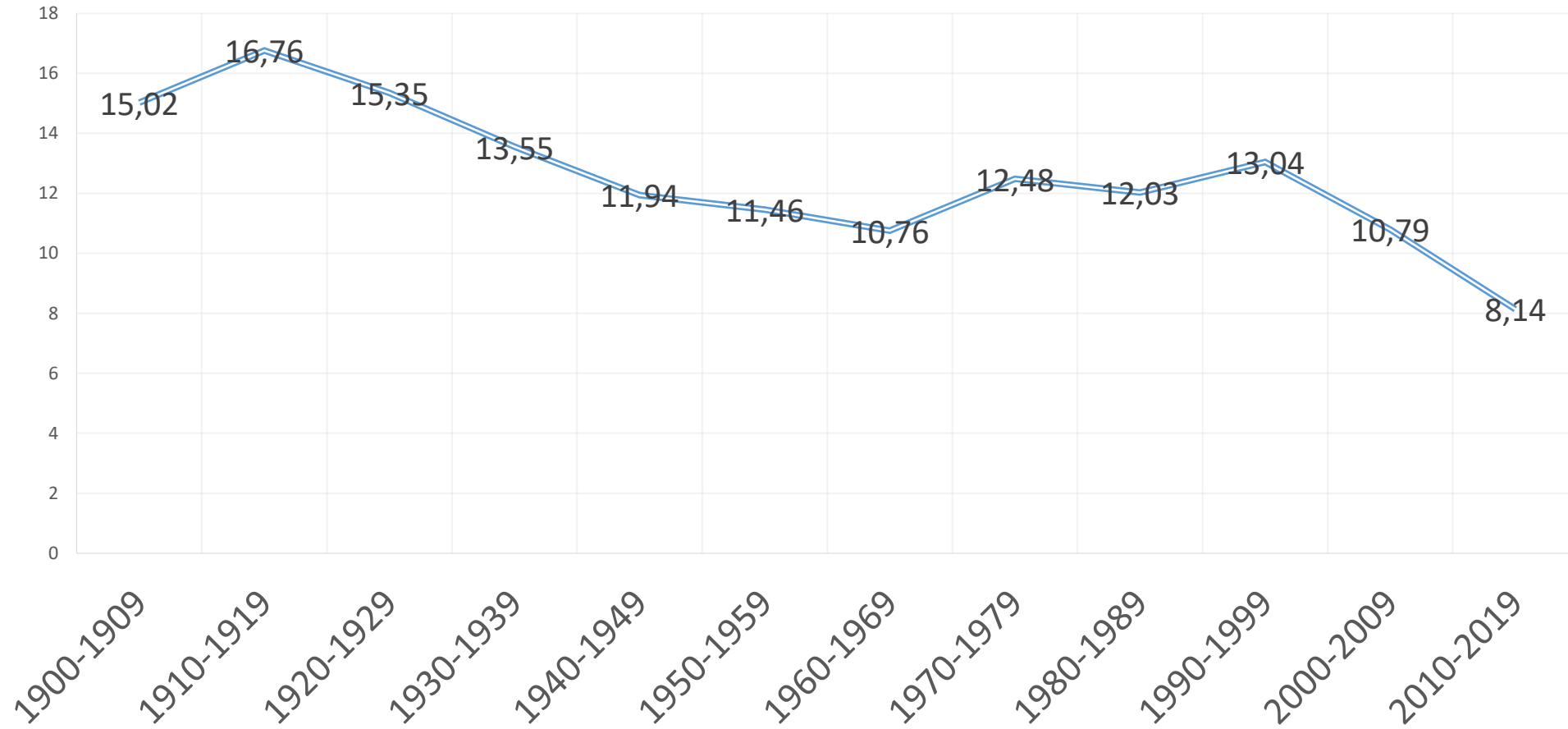
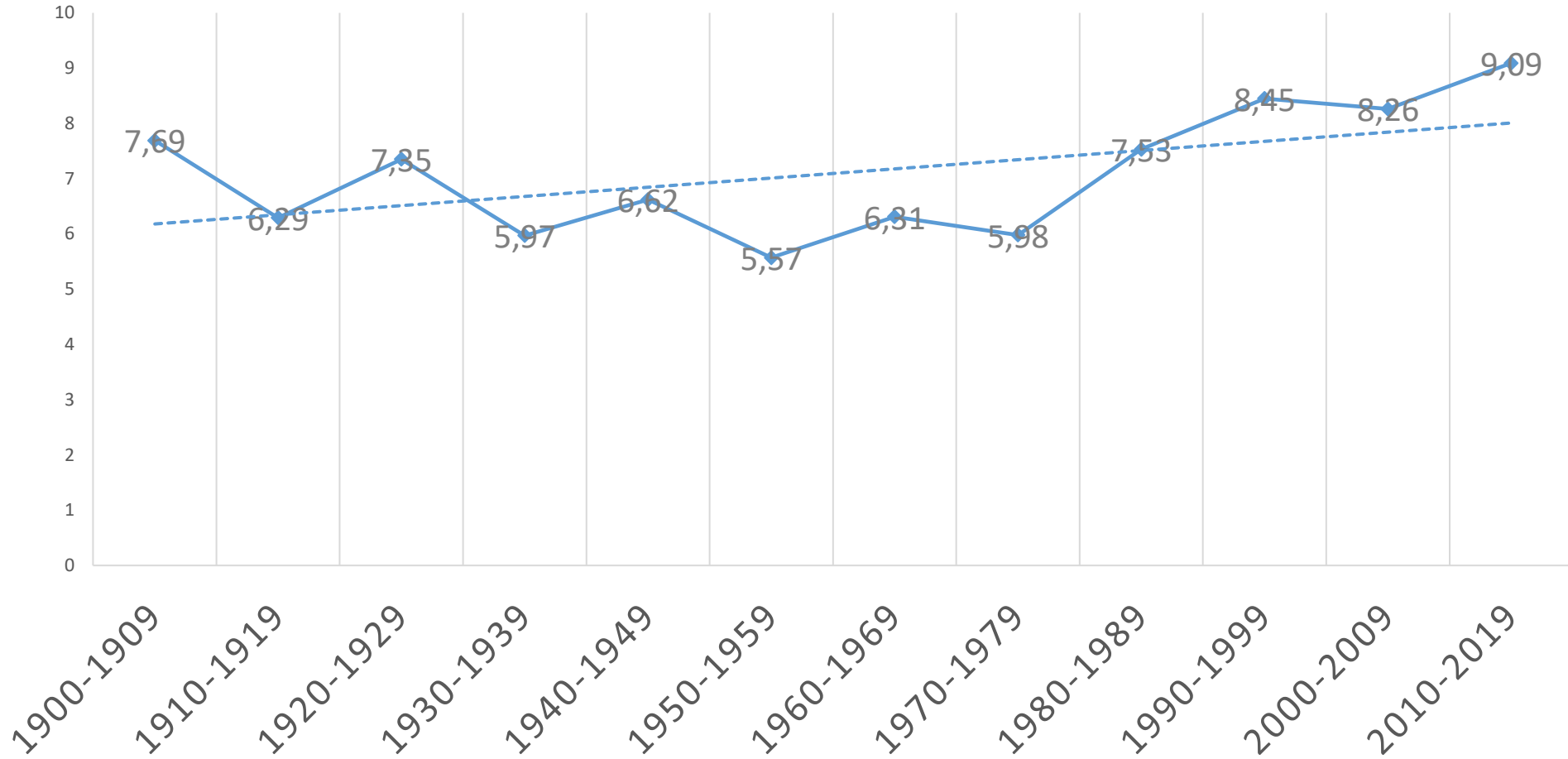
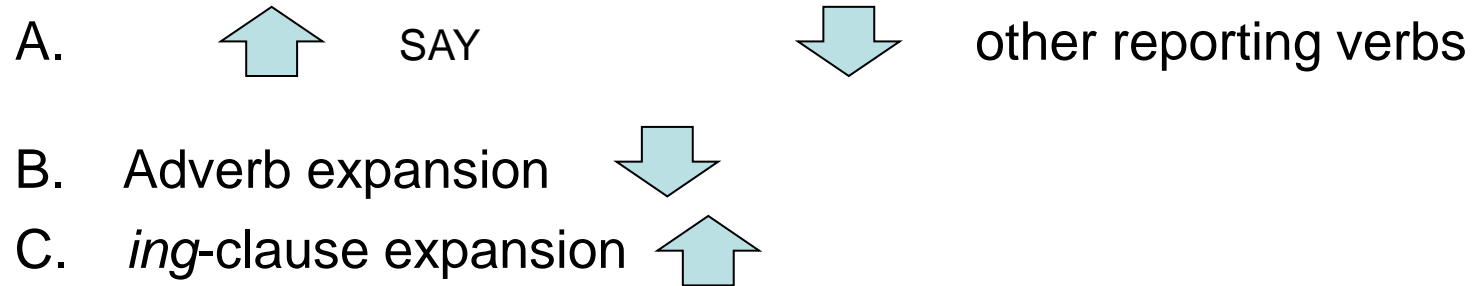


Figure 4. *ing*-clause expansion



Background



- Potential subgenre differences

Research questions

1. to what extent does literary subgenre contribute to the makeup of reporting clauses with expansions/glossing phrases?
2. to what extent have the two subgenres general and crime fiction developed differently in recent years?

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The Corpus of British Fiction (CBF)

- Novels published between 1900 and 2019 by British writers
- Approx. 114 million words
- Sub-genres: adventure, crime, general, historical, humour, romance, spy, war
- No children's or juvenile literature / science fiction / fantasy literature
- Approx. 2/3 male authors
- Many authors are represented with more than one book (approx. 450 different authors)
- POS-tagged with CLAWS; lemmatised with TreeTagger; pre-/post-processed with Python/Perl scripts
- Indexed with CWB / searchable with CQP

Material for the case study

Method

- Random sample of 8,000 instances of direct speech (1,000 per decade/genre)
- Four decades: 1980-2019
- Two sub-genres : crime and general fiction

Table 1. Material used for this study: crime and general fiction 1980-2019

Genre (C/G)+ Decade	No. of texts	No. of DS	% DS
C1980-89	41	34,951	18.4
G1980-89	42	33,602	16.2
C1990-99	50	52,592	18.7
G1990-99	43	42,481	16.7
C2000-09	47	70,122	16.6
G2000-09	53	52,538	12.0
C2010-19	53	95,914	20.5
G2010-19	40	42,053	12.9

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Table 2. Annotation scheme

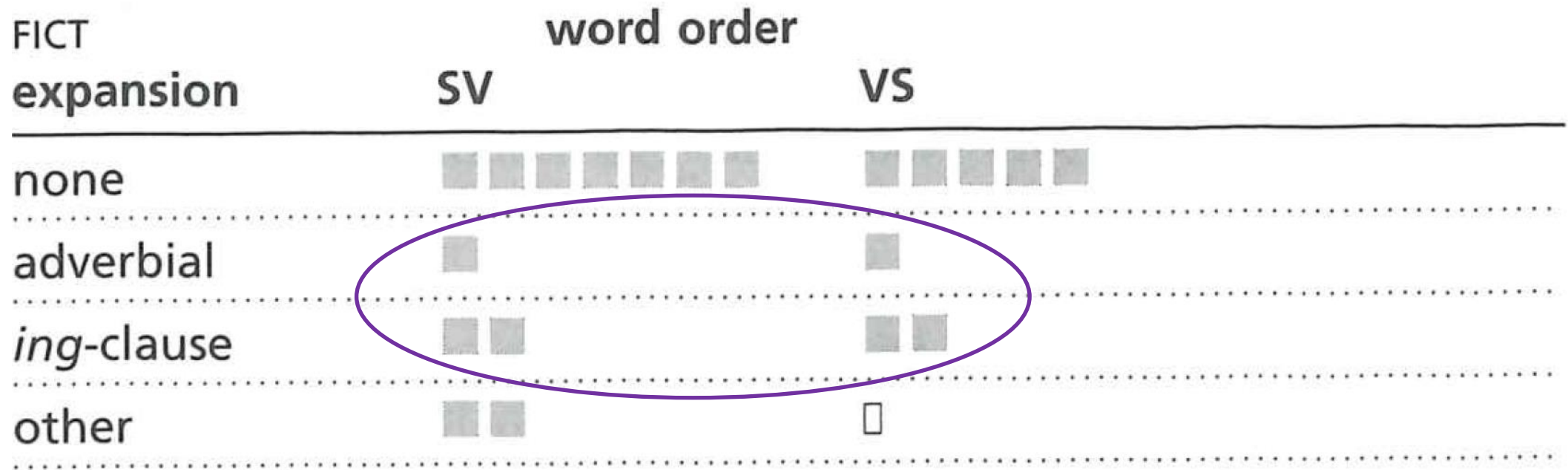
Type of annotation	Annotation / Examples	Remark
Verb	<i>say, add, reply, mutter, tell, shout, whisper, etc.</i>	
Expansion type	adj, adv, ed, ing, np, pp	Focus of study: adv, <i>ing</i>
Position of reporting clause	final, initial, medial	+ Embedded: <i>Downstairs, people called, "Goodbye," and slammed doors.</i>
Expansion/Glossing	e.g. <i>craning his neck</i>	Simultaneous/Following body, eye movement, etc.
Clausal expansion	and / as / as if / rel. / when clause, etc.	Found in 5.4 – 9.7% of the instances
Meaning of expansion	affective, evaluative, place, time, tone/voice	NB! Tentative/Difficult
Length of suspension	in no. of words	88-95% speaker + verb only (= 2 words)

Table 3. Type and number of expansions in random sample

Genre/ Decade	Adj	Adv	-ed	-ing	NP	PP	∅	%
C1980	5	114	3	75	12	36	757	32.4
C1990	1	145	11	105	5	44	706	44.1
C2000	5	118	2	74	10	46	741	34.4
C2010	3	107	2	124	18	50	693	43.9
G1980	11	127	5	99	10	64	688	45.9
G1990	2	100	14	114	12	64	711	43.0
G2000	5	109	12	112	11	36	712	40.0
G2010	9	76	7	83	10	62	756	32.7

Table 11.2 from Biber et al. 1999

each ■ represents 5% □ represents less than 2.5%



What do *ing*-clauses encode: in order of frequency

1. **Body movement** (crime 56-68%; general 43-65%)
 - "Over there," said Isabel, pointing to the other side of the saleroom.
 - "It's cool," she said pouring herself some coffee.
2. **Mental "activity"** (self-reflection/inner dialogue) (crime 13-21%; general 15-25%)
 - "May I see the paperwork ?" she asks, ignoring for the moment the second half of his statement.
 - "Why ?" said Pascoe, suspecting it might be wiser to throw a faint and get carried out rather than pursue the matter further. «
3. **Eye movement** (crime 11-17%; general 9-20%)
 - "Only one tea-pot," he said, looking at Mma Makutsi.
 - "Look, I'm sorry, Maddstone," he said, staring down at the decking.
4. **Tone/Voice (manner)** (crime 5-12%; general 10-15%)
 - "Chaos !" he exclaimed, laughing, his arms now propped either side of her.
 - "Miss, my mum is a non-Catholic as well," she says, pronouncing every vowel and consonant with her usual precision.

Research questions revisited

1. to what extent does literary subgenre contribute to the makeup of reporting clauses with expansions/glossing phrases?
less than we thought, at least between crime and general fiction

2. to what extent have the two subgenres general and crime fiction developed differently in recent years?
very little it seems:
 - single adverb expansion decreases in both subgenres
 - *ing*-expansion shows no clear trend in either subgenre in the random sample

But...

Figure 5. *ing*-expansion: crime

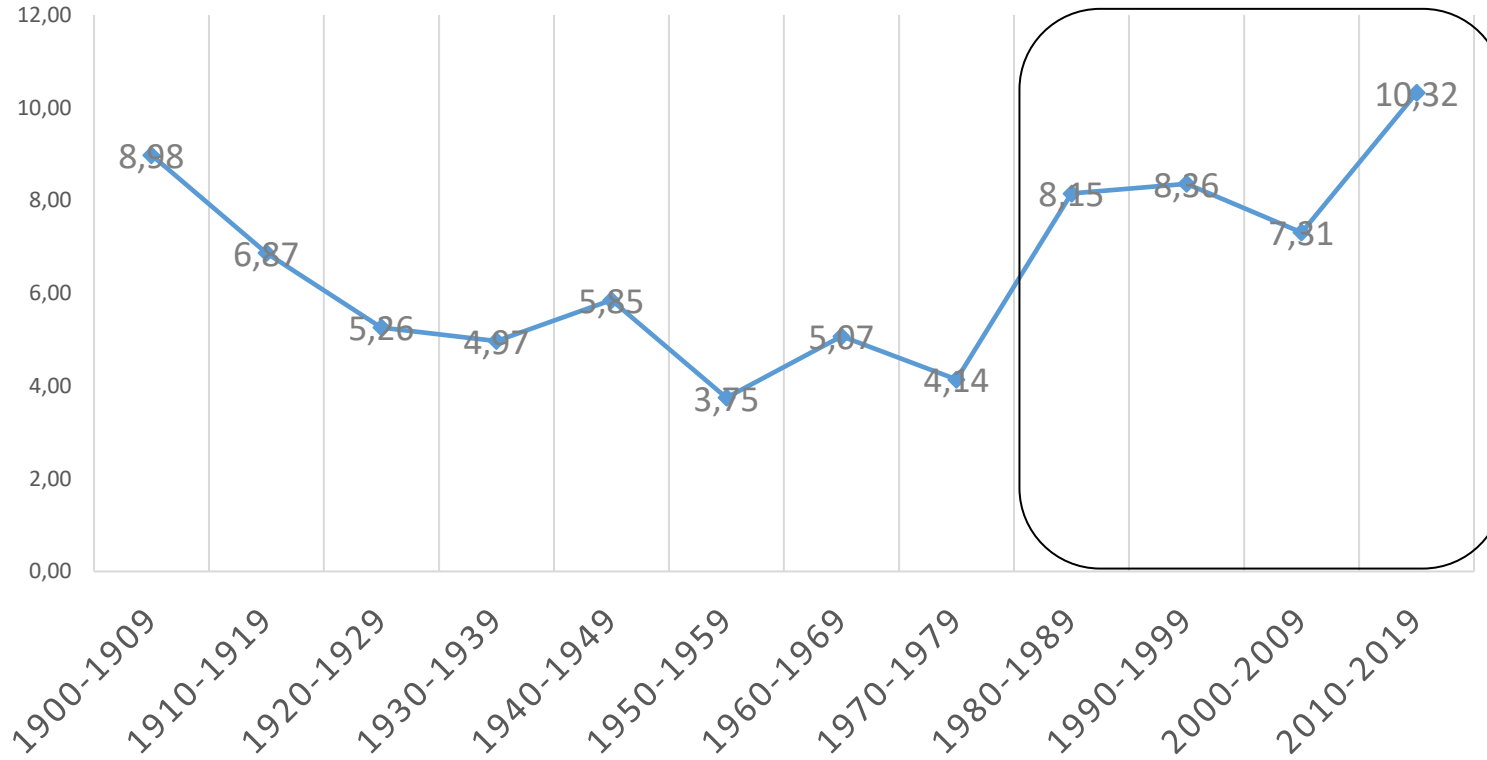


Figure 6. General

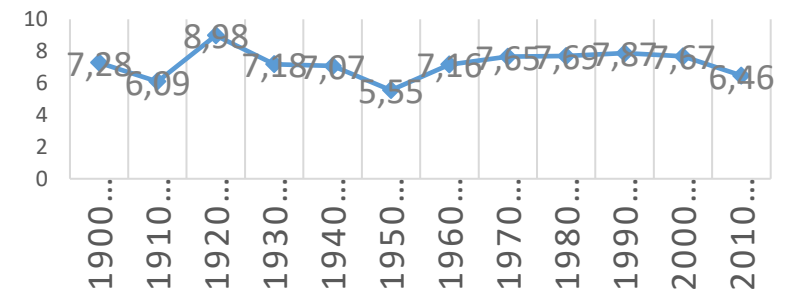


Figure 5. Crime

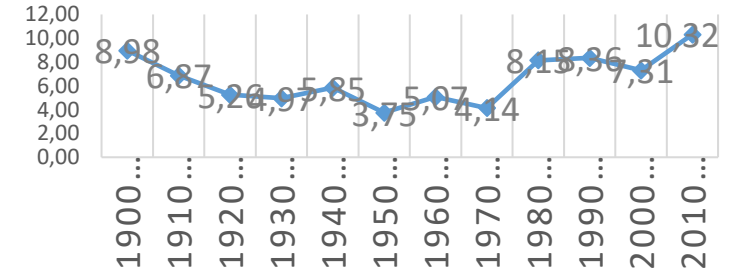
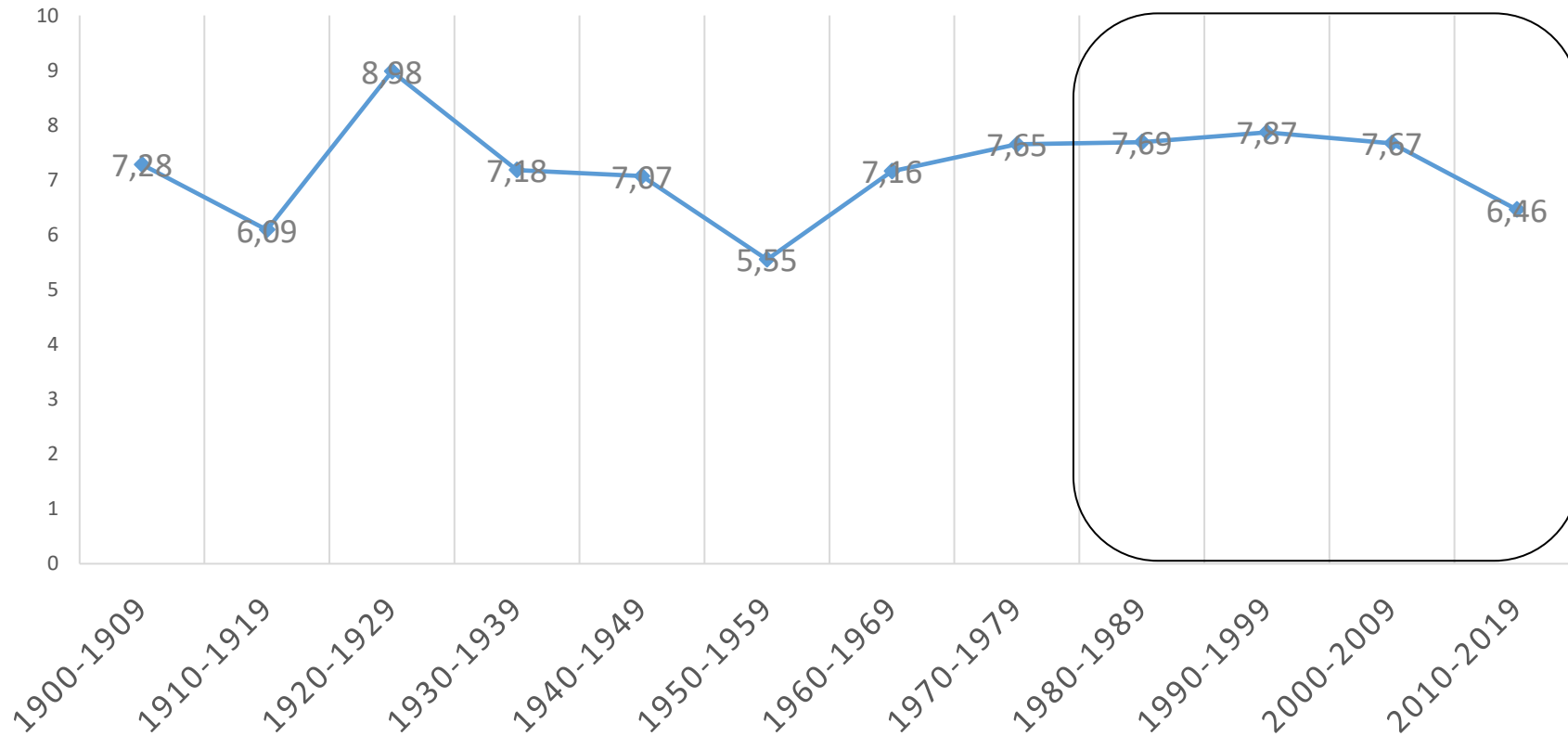


Figure 6. *ing*-expansion: general



Implications and further research

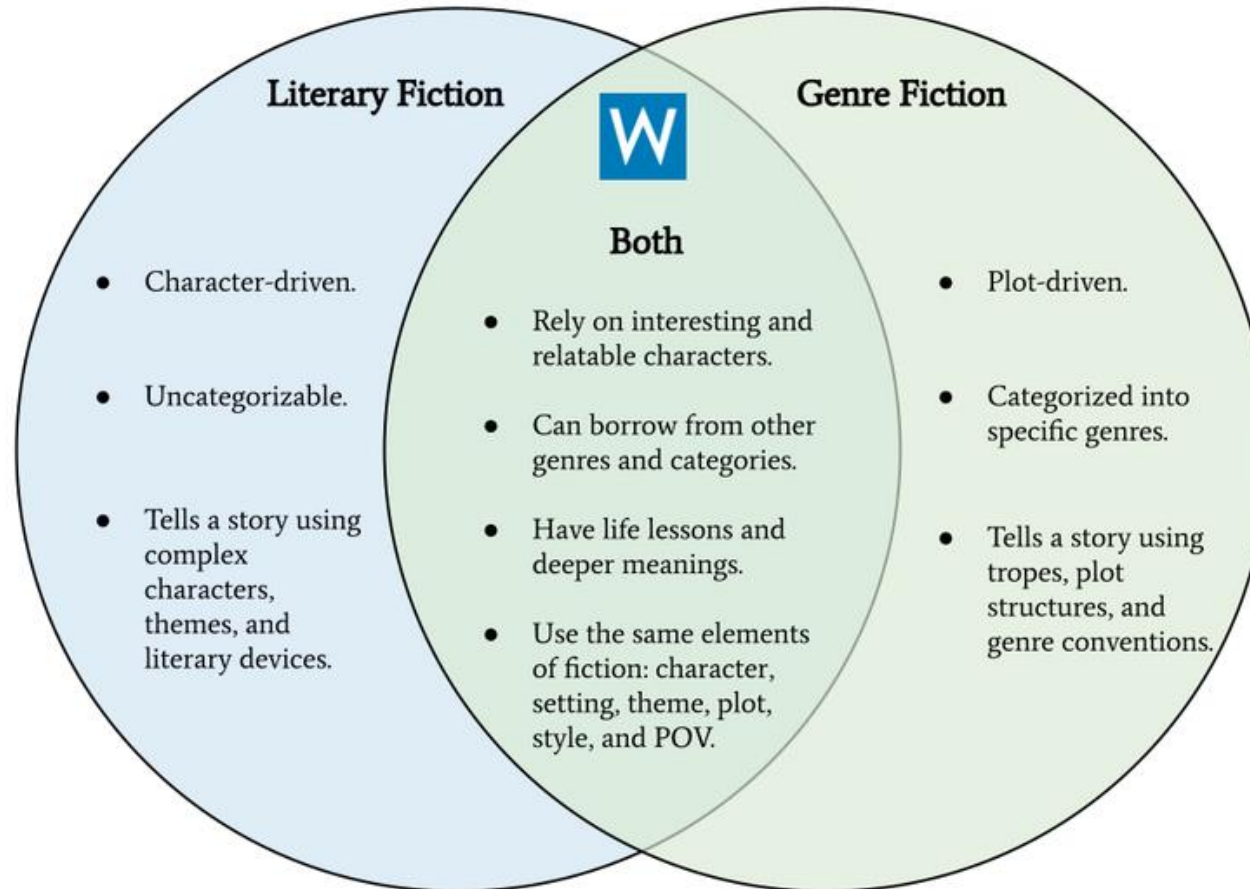
- Awareness of subgenres of prose fiction is important
- Corpora of prose fiction should have a good coverage and balance of subgenres
- How and to what extent do different kinds of expansion contribute to characterisation, plot and theme in subgenres of British prose fiction?
- Include and compare the use of free direct speech in addition to direct speech to get a more complete picture of this mode of describing characters.

Compare:

1. *“A friendly article?” I stepped over the scattered seat cushions.* (free direct speech + new sentence)
2. *“A friendly article,” I said, stepping over the scattered seat cushions.* (ing-expansion)
3. *“A friendly article,” I said, as I stepped over the scattered seat cushions.* (subordinate clause expansion)

The End

Literary Fiction vs. Genre Fiction Venn Diagram



<https://writers.com/literary-fiction-vs-genre-fiction>

Challenge: How to capture (free) direct speech when quotation marks are missing

1. No overt marking or use of dash

Dorian remained where he was, and the intense man – who was the volunteer co-ordinator at the project – joined him. **Who's he?** *the man spat in the direction of Wotton's retreating back.* His own name was a classless John.

—'**Enry Wotton**, Dorian sneered, despising himself for the way he automatically dropped into Mockney. '**E's Phyllis's son.**

2. Use of no marking or colon only to mark direct speech

From our high perch we watched the black and white feather twist down out of the grey sky. **Come on**, *I said: I'll race you to catch it.* Marie-Angèle hesitated. **Supposing someone sees us?** I blew out my cheeks at her. **Cowardy-custard. I dare you.**

3. Drama-style dialogue marking

GENTLY [tagged RR by CLAWS!]

You may be sure I'm listening.

STEPHEN

Well, that's entirely what I've come to tell you.

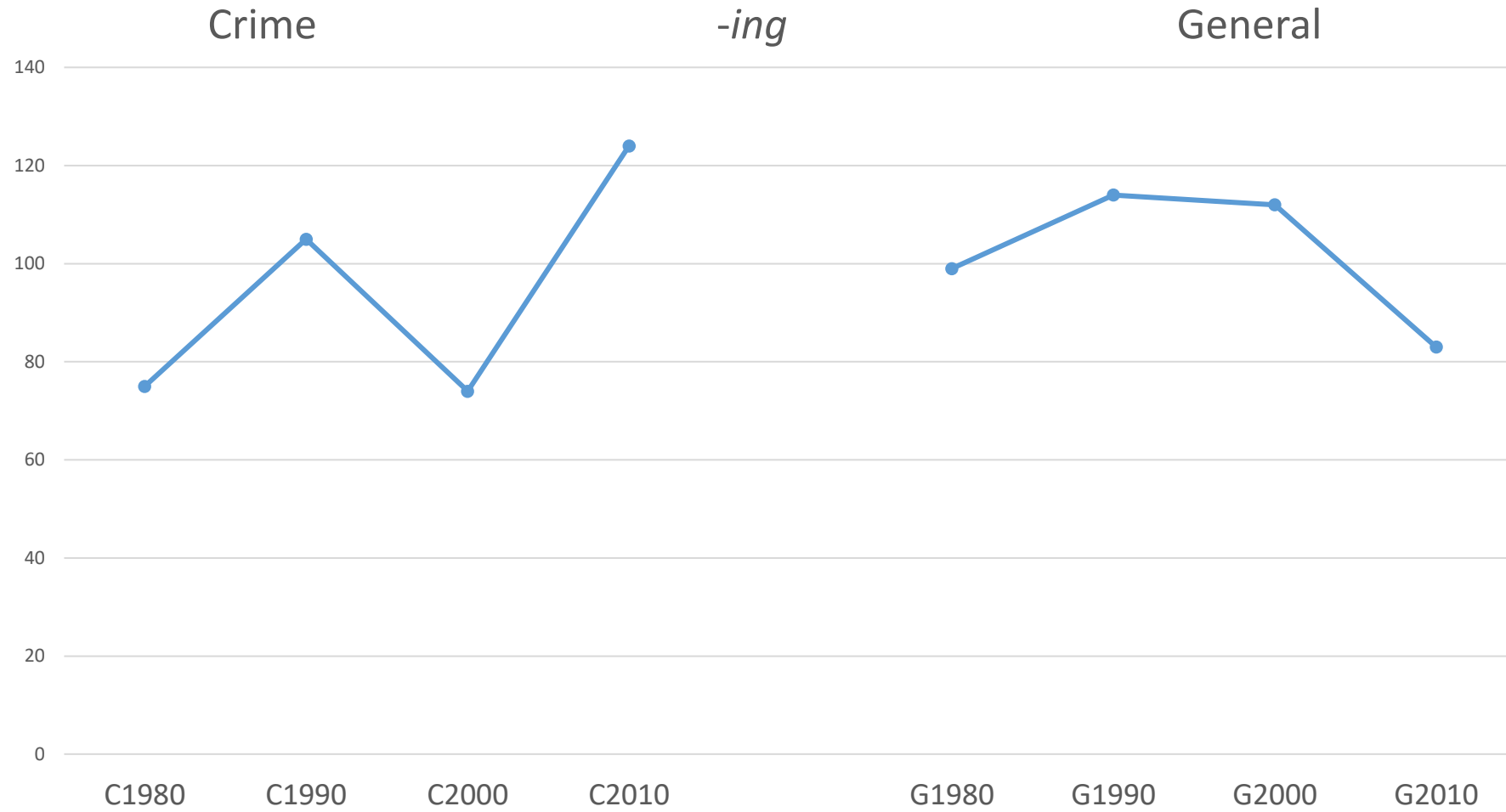
And once more Stephen hesitates, as though again weighed down by a word of thunder, such a word as, when spoken, may chain-react to infinity.

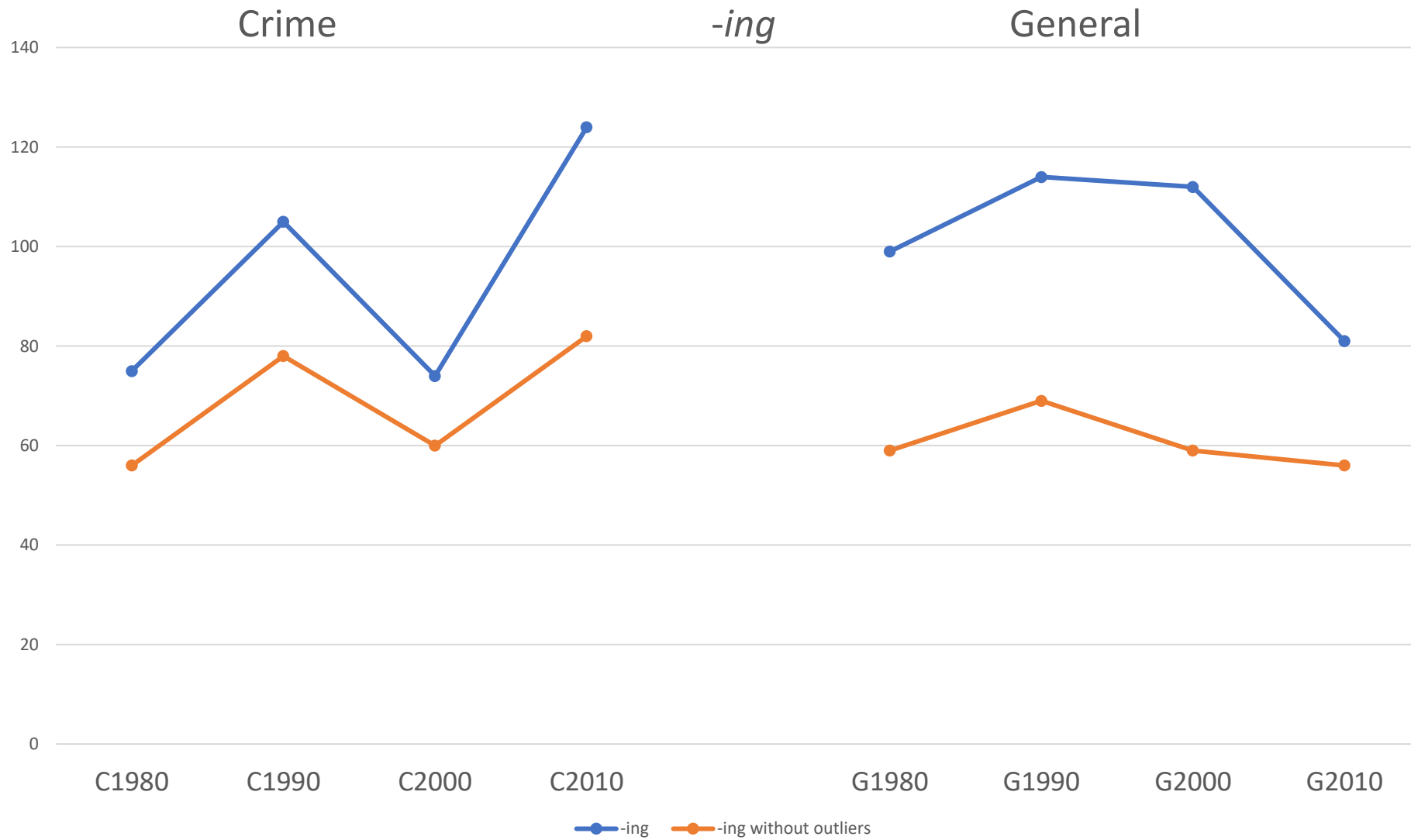
"Undoubtedly *cry* becomes less important as we move into the nineteenth century and then on to the twentieth: but this decline is not steady and wants analysis. One would like to know, of course, which nineteenth-century novelists retain a taste for *cry*; but one would also like to know where the decibel level of novelistic conversation really becomes lower and where *cry* is simply displaced by more learned synonyms (*exclaim, ejaculate*)."

Lambert 1981: 18

Never use a verb other than "said" to carry dialogue. The line of dialogue belongs to the character; the verb is the writer sticking his nose in. But "said" is far less intrusive than "grumbled", "gasped", "cautioned", "lied".

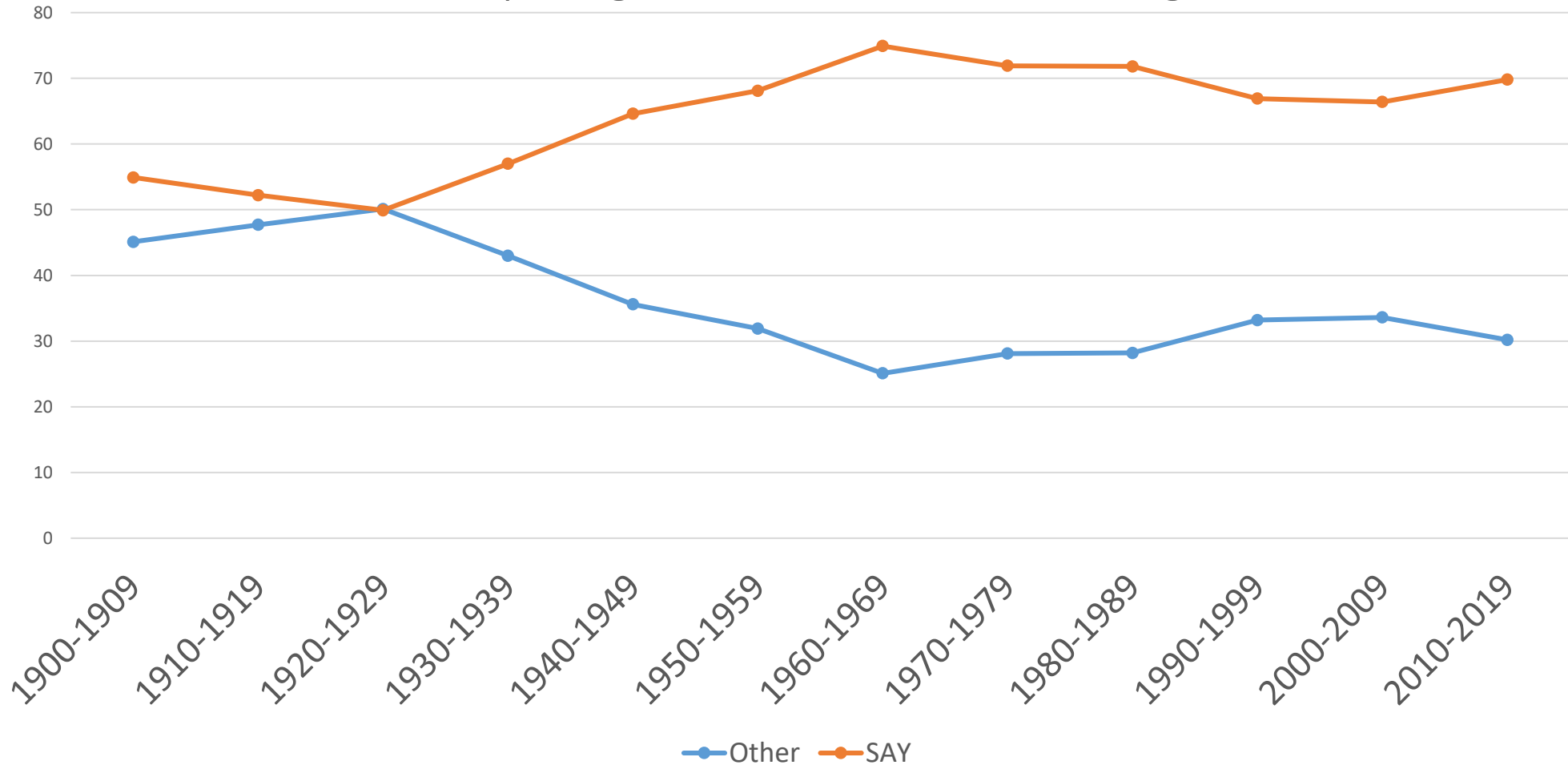
Elmore Leonard, The New York Times, 2001





Decade of publication	Number of texts	Number of words
1900-1909	87	7,993,353
1910-1919	106	8,968,353
1920-1929	137	11,696,863
1930-1939	122	10,539,148
1940-1949	79	6,825,134
1950-1959	120	9,596,786
1960-1969	126	10,835,670
1970-1979	86	7,624,300
1980-1989	109	7,828,318
1990-1999	120	8,736,766
2000-2009	127	13,097,299
2010-2019	109	10,712,830
Total	1,328	114,454,820

SAY vs. other reporting verbs 1900-2010 in crime and general fiction



Previous research/focus on

- Order of speaker and verb in reporting clauses
- Reporting of speech in fiction and news
- Form and function of reporting clauses
- The reporting verb
- Contribution to characterisation
- Dickens and 19th century literature
- Childrens literature
- Contrastive approach

Less researched/focus on

- **Expansions in reporting clauses** (but see e.g. Caldas-Coulthard 1987, Biber et al. 1999, Nishio 2005 & 2013; Mahlberg 2013; Ruan San Segundo 2017)
- 20th- and 21th-century fiction
- Sub-genres of prose fiction

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- Toolan, Michael J. 1990. *The stylistics of fiction : a literary-linguistic approach*. London: Routledge.

Genre (C/G)+ Decade	No. of texts	No. of texts with zero instances of <i>-ing</i>	Outlier texts	Outlier texts
C1980-89	41	17	2	Smith, Joan: <i>Why Aren't They Screaming?</i> Wingfield, R. D.: <i>Frost at Christmas</i>
G1980-89	42	14	3	Archer, Jeffrey: <i>First Among Equals</i> Boyd, William: <i>A Good Man in Africa</i> Wesley, Mary: <i>Not That Sort of Girl</i>
C1990-99	50	22	2	Smith, Joan: <i>What Men Say</i> Wingfield, R. D.: <i>Hard Frost</i>
G1990-99	43	17	3	Cusk, Rachel: <i>The Country Life</i> Gibson, Miles: <i>Fascinated</i> Wesley, Mary: <i>Dubious Legacy</i>
C2000-09	47	20	2	Fforde, Jasper: <i>The Big Over Easy</i> Wingfield, R. D.: <i>A Killing Frost</i>
G2000-09	53	26	3	Barker, Nicola: <i>Darkmans</i> Gibson, Miles: <i>Mr Romance</i> Smith, Zadie: <i>White Teeth</i>
C2010-19	53	16	2	Cole, Daniel: <i>Ragdoll</i> Galbraith, Robert: <i>The Cuckoo's Calling</i> Healey, Emma: <i>Elizabeth is Missing</i>
G2010-19	40	17	2	Archer, Jeffrey: <i>Be Careful What You Wish For</i> Hollinghurst, Alan: <i>The Stranger's Child</i>