

## Exercise 7 Instructions

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### Background

Not all evolutionary approaches to examining narratives have come directly from the field of Cultural Evolution. Darwinian theory has been applied to the study of literature since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and Franco Moretti comes from this tradition and become influential in the combining of literary studies with the Darwinian theory of evolution. As such his approach is highly compatible with a Cultural Evolution approach to narrative. In *the Slaughterhouse of Literature*, Moretti applies a Darwinian approach to explaining why some 19<sup>th</sup> century detective novels were not culturally successful, focussing on the literary device of the clue.

### The Exercise

To complete this exercise read the article:

Moretti, Franco. "The slaughterhouse of literature." *MLQ: modern language quarterly* 61.1 (2000): 207-227.

A pdf copy of the article is included, and it can also be accessed at this link:

<https://msu.edu/course/eng/487/johnsen/61.1moretti.pdf>

After completing the exercise, reflect on the key questions below.

## **Key Questions**

**Does Moretti's discussion of the detective novel provide examples of variation, competition, selection and inheritance?**

**Is the way the clue changes as a literary device an example of cumulative culture evolution? Does it accumulate traits and become more complex?**