

THE GENESIS AND FACTORS OF FORMATION OF THE DETECTIVE GENRE IN ENGLISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE

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Abstract

This article considers issues related to detective genre which is a captivating branch of fiction centered around the unraveling of mysteries, typically involving a crime like murder or theft. These stories follow the journey of a detective, who uses keen observation and deductive reasoning to solve complex puzzles, uncover hidden truths, and bring justice to light. This genre often includes elements such as misleading clues (red herrings) and unexpected plot twists, which keep readers engaged and guessing until the final resolution. Renowned authors like Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie have left a lasting impact on the genre, creating iconic characters and timeless narratives that continue to influence contemporary detective fiction.

Keywords: puzzling, crimes, investigation, golden era, questionable or well-known authors, murderer, antagonist.

The term detective originated from “detego” which means uncover, reveal, expose and was first coined by writer Anna Catherine Greene.

A literary critique and playwright Valeriy Bryusov defines the detective genre as follows: “Detective genre has become the highest form of riddle, otherwise - one or more unknown equations presented for the reader to solve would not immediately surface with an answer. So it turns out that reading a detective story is similar to solving difficult arithmetic problems.”¹

Mysteries have long captivated humanity. The pursuit of the abstract and enigmatic has been a significant impetus throughout the course of human history. Of course, this motive has also had its impact on art, including literature. Nowadays, we can see detective works published under the names of questionable or well-known authors in bookstores. So, the main goal of the detective is to either immerse the readers’ mentally exhausted brain into the world of puzzling imagination for a moment or to force them to think about a process that seems to be a complex problem in the rhythm of modern life.

But if we look back over the years, the traces of this genre can lead to some ancient

¹...Bryusov V. Ya Journal “Strekoza”-Moscow, Petrograd 1916. – 41p

and religious texts that have features of what would later be called the detective genre. For instance, the ancient Egyptian fairy tale “Truth and Falsehood” (about 1292-1191 BC) tells about a slandered and unjustly blinded man, whose honor years later his son decided to save by implicating the criminal and the judges. In Sophocles’ ancient Greek tragedy Oedipus the King, the protagonist Oedipus conducts a thorough investigation to find out the murderer of his predecessor King Laius. Herodotus in the legend “Rampsinite and the Thief” tells the story of the loss of jewelry from the royal treasury, the seals and locks of which were not broken, and attempts to recognize and catch the cunning thief. The heroine “Susanna and the Elders” from the Book of the Prophet Daniel was falsely accused by the elders who did not get what they wanted from her, but was saved thanks to an interview with those involved in the case by Daniel.

From these contents we can see that, at that time murders or thieves of the stories were only their siblings, parents, relatives.

The English people attribute the main attention to this genre in the 1920s and 1930s, so this means that it is originated in Great Britain. Even then, a school of detective writing was opened in London and accepted the first students. It was British writers who invented the “accurate writing form” of the detective genre. That is why English detectives are considered to be world famous detectives.

Edgar Allan Poe’s famous puzzle novel gradually laid the foundation stone for the detective genre of British literary studies. Edgar Allan Poe’s creative work, especially “Murder in the Rue Morgue” written in 1841 is one of the most significant novels in this genre. At the end of XIX century and the beginning of XX century, the famous writer Arthur Conan Doyle enriched the detective genre with the well-known detective Sherlock Holmes and Agatha Christie’s Hercule Poirot had attracted the curiosity of readers. In the 1930s, as it was mentioned earlier the legendary British writer Agatha Christie had become a symbol of the golden age of detective stories and the most published writer in this genre. In her novels, the detective story acquired a complete, ideal form and became truly classic.²

However, this era called the Golden Age of the detective story. Britain had gone through a difficult time, had lost a huge part of its male population and was looking for stability and consolation.

The detective genre has become a kind of entertaining, psychotherapeutic literature. Despite the fact that crimes occur in the detective story, the frivolous and detached attitude towards them, as well as the logical and consistent investigation itself and its obligatory positive ending. In addition, Golden Era detectives use the conservative settings of old England such as prim society, aristocratic estates, strict class divisions and other attributes that began to disappear after the war and which

² Belozerova I. V. Solving the puzzle in crime in the works of world literature representatives A. Christie, Ch. P. Snow. – Varonezh, 2006. – 167p

people missed.³

Other significant crime writers of the time were Dorothy Lee Sayers, Nyo Marsh, Anthony Berkeley, Gladys Mitchell, Michael Innes, Ronald Knox, Edmund Crispin, Josephine Tay, Cyril Hare, G. K. Chesterton, Freeman Wills Crofts, John Rhode, Edmund Bentley and others. This genre has evolved over time, but certain distinctive features have remained consistent.

Peculiarities of the Detective Genre in XX Century Short Stories include the following elements:

1. **Puzzle Element.** Detective stories often revolve around a central puzzle or mystery, which the protagonist, usually a detective, solves through logical reasoning and keen observation.

2. **Character archetypes.** The Detective who is a sharp, often eccentric figure with a keen eye for detail; the Sidekick who is often a less perceptive companion that represents the reader's perspective; the Villain – a cunning antagonist whose identity is typically revealed in a climactic confrontation.

3. **Setting.** Many stories are set in urban environments, but there are also rural or isolated settings that create a sense of claustrophobia or suspense.

4. **Narrative Structure.** Typically, detective stories follow a classic structure: introduction, buildup, climax, and resolution. Flashbacks and non-linear storytelling can also be used to build suspense.

5. **Red Herrings.** Authors often use false clues to mislead readers and create suspense.

6. **Moral Ambiguity.** In many stories, moral ambiguity is explored, questioning the nature of justice and the detective's role in society.

7. **The detective** must have a detective who will investigate the violation of the law. This could be a policeman, a private detective or an amateur. In English detective stories this is most often a private citizen. It is important that one of the cases is thoroughly investigated. There should not be several detectives.

8. **The reader must have** access to the same information and the same facts as the detective.

9. **The crime must not** be committed by the criminal community or must not be explained by supernatural forces.

10. **The criminal must** be a character known from the beginning of the book.

11. **The criminal cannot be** a detective or character whose train of thought the reader can follow.⁴

Conclusion. Both genres offer unique perspectives and storytelling techniques that enrich the detective genre as a whole. English detective stories tend to highlight

³ Dasilyuk A.L. Специфика английского детектива на примере романа Ч.П.Сноу. – Belarus, 2022

⁴ Dine S.S. 20 rules for detective writing-The American magazine,-1928

intellect and atmosphere, providing readers with a mental challenge and a sense of nostalgia. In contrast, American detective stories emphasize realism and action, immersing readers in a world of intrigue and suspense.

Ultimately, the detective genre's appeal lies in its ability to engage readers with complex characters, clever plots, and the timeless quest for justice. Whether it's the refined charm of an English detective or the gritty determination of an American one, these stories continue to intrigue and entertain.

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