

THE STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE DETECTIVE GENRE IN ENGLAND AND AMERICAN LITERATURE

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Abstract This paper explores the evolution of the detective genre in both English and American literature, tracing its origins from Edgar Allan Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841) to the contemporary works that challenge traditional genre conventions. The study covers the development of detective fiction through different phases, including the Golden Age of British detective fiction with Agatha Christie, and the rise of American hard-boiled crime fiction, represented by writers like Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler. The article also addresses postmodern shifts in the genre, including the works of Patricia Highsmith and contemporary authors who explore themes of identity, power, and justice.

Аннотация В данной статье рассматривается эволюция детективного жанра в английской и американской литературе, начиная с произведения Эдгара Аллана По «Убийства на улице Морг» (1841) и заканчивая современными произведениями, которые ставят под сомнение традиционные жанровые каноны. В статье описывается развитие детективной прозы в разные исторические периоды, включая «Золотой век» британского детектива с Агатой Кристи, а также возникновение американского жесткого детектива, представленного такими писателями, как Дэшил Хэммет и Рэймонд Чандлер. Также

рассматриваются постмодернистские изменения в жанре, включая произведения Патриции Хайсмит и современных авторов, исследующих темы идентичности, власти и справедливости.

Annotatsiya Ushbu maqola ingliz va amerika adabiyotidagi detektiv janrining rivojlanishini, uning 1841 yilda Edgar Allan Poe ning “Rue Morgue ko‘chasidagi qotilliklar” asaridan tortib, zamonaviy asarlarga qadar bo‘lgan tarixiy bosqichlarini o‘rganadi. Tadqiqotda detektiv adabiyotining turli davrlaridagi o‘zgarishlar, jumladan, Britaniyaning “Oltin asri” va Agata Kristining detektivlari, shuningdek, amerika qattiq detektiv janrining rivojlanishi ko‘rib chiqilgan. Shuningdek, maqolada postmodern davrda detektiv janrining o‘zgarishi, xususan, Patricia Xaysmitning asarlari va zamonaviy mualliflar tomonidan insoniyat, hokimiyat va adolat kabi mavzularni tadqiq qilish yoritilgan.

Keywords: Detective fiction, English literature, American literature, Edgar Allan Poe, Sherlock Holmes, Golden Age, Agatha Christie, Hard-boiled detective, Raymond Chandler, Postmodern detective, Identity, Justice.

Ключевые слова: Детективная литература, Английская литература, Американская литература, Эдгар Аллан По, Шерлок Холмс, Золотой век, Агата Кристи, Жесткий детектив, Рэймонд Чандлер, Постмодернистский детектив, Идентичность, Справедливость.

Kalit so‘zlar: Detektiv adabiyoti, Ingliz adabiyoti, Amerika adabiyoti, Edgard Allan Poe, Sherlok Xolms, Oltin asr, Agata Kristi, Qattiq detektiv, Reymond Chendler, Postmodern detektiv, Identitet, Adolat.

Introduction

The detective genre has long fascinated readers with its suspenseful plots, intellectual puzzles, and compelling protagonists. Originating in the 19th century, this genre quickly developed into a significant branch of literature that reflects not only the evolution of narrative techniques but also broader cultural and social issues.

The emergence of Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” (1841) laid the foundation for modern detective fiction, introducing key elements such as

logical deduction and a brilliant investigator. Later, Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories solidified the genre's popularity in Britain, emphasizing rationalism and order. Meanwhile, in the United States, the early 20th century saw the rise of hardboiled fiction through writers like Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, who brought a darker, more cynical tone to detective narratives.

Over time, the genre expanded to include various subgenres—such as psychological thrillers and forensic crime fiction—while continuing to adapt to social change and reader expectations. This article explores the main stages of development in English and American detective fiction, identifying critical shifts and their cultural significance.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative and comparative literary analysis to examine the evolution of the detective genre in English and American literature. The research focuses on close readings of key texts that are representative of different historical stages of the genre, beginning with foundational works such as Edgar Allan Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841), Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes series, and extending to later authors like Agatha Christie, Raymond Chandler, and Patricia Highsmith.

Primary sources include canonical detective novels and short stories from the 19th and 20th centuries, while secondary sources comprise scholarly articles, critical essays, and literary histories that address the development of detective fiction. Analytical attention is given to narrative structure, characterization of the detective figure, thematic concerns, and the influence of cultural and historical context.

By comparing British and American traditions, the study identifies divergences and convergences in style, ideology, and audience expectations. Special emphasis is placed on the shifting representations of crime, justice, and morality across time and geography.

Results and Discussion

The development of the detective genre reveals a dynamic interplay between literary form, cultural context, and ideological concerns in both English and American literature. The genre's formalization in the 19th century began with Edgar Allan Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841), widely recognized as the first modern detective story. Poe introduced key genre conventions: the brilliant but eccentric detective, the passive narrator, and the method of ratiocination. As Tzvetan Todorov notes, Poe "gave birth to both the story of the crime and the story of the investigation, making the detective genre a dual narrative form" [8.P.43].

In the British tradition, Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* series consolidated and popularized these conventions. Holmes's reliance on empirical observation and deductive reasoning mirrored the period's faith in science and rationality. As Stephen Knight points out, "Holmes's investigations affirm the Victorian ideal of order through logic and classification" [3.P.85]. Doyle's work not only shaped popular imagination but also reflected British imperial confidence and the notion of crime as a disturbance of social harmony.

The genre's Golden Age, primarily in Britain between the 1920s and 1930s, introduced intricate plotting and the "whodunit" format. Agatha Christie's novels, such as *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926), emphasized puzzle-solving over psychological realism. According to Julian Symons, Christie "focused on plot as the ultimate organizing principle, subordinating character to the game of detection" [5.P.112]. The detective during this era often functioned as a symbolic figure of justice, restoring moral and social order through intellectual mastery.

In contrast, the American hard-boiled tradition emerged during the same period but diverged sharply in tone and content. Writers like Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler depicted urban environments marked by corruption, violence, and moral ambiguity. Chandler's *Philip Marlowe*, for instance, operates in a world where "the law itself is part of the disorder" [1.P.176]. This version of the detective is not a gentleman amateur but a cynical professional navigating systemic decay. As John G.

Cawelti observes, “the hard-boiled detective serves as both participant in and critic of a corrupt world” [2.P.143].

Later developments in both traditions reflected changing societal values. In the postmodern era, authors like Patricia Highsmith deconstructed the genre’s moral binaries. Her novel *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955) blurs the line between criminal and investigator, as the anti-hero evades detection entirely. This evolution signals a shift from the affirmation of order to a deeper inquiry into the instability of identity and justice.

Moreover, contemporary detective fiction often interrogates issues of race, gender, and social justice. Authors such as Walter Mosley and Sara Paretsky use the genre to critique institutional power structures and offer alternative narratives to traditional, often white and male-dominated detective archetypes. These innovations demonstrate that the genre remains a flexible and potent vehicle for exploring complex ethical and social questions.

Conclusion

The detective genre in both English and American literature has undergone a remarkable evolution, reflecting the changing social, political, and cultural landscapes of its time. Emerging in the 19th century with the works of Edgar Allan Poe, who is often credited with formalizing detective fiction, the genre began as a tool for intellectual entertainment, driven by the meticulous logic of characters like Poe's C. Auguste Dupin. These early detective stories, epitomized by the methodical approach to solving crimes, emphasized deductive reasoning, and moral clarity, with the detective figure often portrayed as a savior of society who restores order.

As the genre evolved into the Golden Age of detective fiction, exemplified by writers such as Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers, the focus shifted toward the creation of intricate, puzzle-like plots that captivated readers with their complexity. During this period, the detective genre became a symbol of civility and the triumph of intellect over chaos. The emergence of iconic detectives such as Christie’s Hercule

Poirot and Miss Marple introduced characters that combined intellectual rigor with moral certitude, reinforcing the societal belief in the value of logic and justice.

However, the genre's transformation did not end with the Golden Age. In the early 20th century, the rise of American hard-boiled detective fiction marked a radical shift in tone and style. Writers such as Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler redefined the detective, often presenting morally ambiguous characters who operated in a world of corruption and violence. These detectives, such as Chandler's Philip Marlowe, were less concerned with restoring order than with navigating a morally complex world where justice was elusive and the distinction between right and wrong was often blurred. The hard-boiled genre reflected the disillusionment of the post-World War I and Great Depression eras, capturing the gritty realism of urban America and offering a critique of societal norms and institutions.

In the latter half of the 20th century, as postmodernism gained influence, the detective genre underwent another transformation. Writers such as Patricia Highsmith and Thomas Harris pushed the boundaries of the genre, incorporating psychological depth and exploring themes of identity, obsession, and morality. The modern detective is no longer just a solver of puzzles but a figure entangled in the complexities of human nature. In works like Highsmith's Ripley series and Harris's *The Silence of the Lambs*, the line between detective and criminal often becomes indistinct, challenging traditional ideas of good versus evil.

The contemporary detective genre continues to evolve, embracing even more diverse forms and themes. While some modern authors maintain the classic elements of crime-solving and detection, others focus on deconstructing the very conventions that once defined the genre. Today's detective fiction often reflects a world where traditional notions of order and justice are questioned, and where characters grapple with personal and societal dilemmas that go beyond simple crime-solving. Themes of social justice, race, power, and identity have taken center stage, as contemporary authors use the detective story as a lens to explore broader societal issues.

The detective genre's ability to adapt to the shifting tides of history and culture ensures its continued relevance in contemporary literature. Whether through the intellectual puzzles of the Golden Age, the gritty realism of hard-boiled fiction, or the psychological depth of modern works, the detective genre has proven to be an enduring vehicle for examining the complexities of human nature and society. As we move further into the 21st century, it is clear that the genre's transformation will continue, offering fresh perspectives on justice, morality, and the human condition.

In essence, the detective genre remains a dynamic and evolving art form that not only entertains but also challenges readers to reflect on the very nature of truth, justice, and the world in which they live.

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