

THE ENGLISH DETECTIVE NOVEL: HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL ASPECT

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The current article deals with the peculiarities of the development and formation of the English detective novel. Three main stages of English detective fiction – classic, modern, and postmodern are described. It is established that the classical detective novel is a kind of puzzle that is built around the mystery of solving a crime. The narrative is built logically and consistently, and the protagonist discovers the truth by critically analyzing the facts. The compositional features of the detective story determine the binary opposition of the characters, mostly male, – good (the detective, their assistants) and bad (the criminal, their accomplices).

In a modern detective novel, the puzzles are scattered and mixed, often falling into the hands of secondary characters. To solve the mystery, it is no longer necessary to have good deduction skills but to pay attention to a certain important point that is key to the investigation of the crime and usually becomes obvious to the assistant or friend of the protagonist. Women play brilliantly in the detective scene, acting both on the side of good and evil. The instruments of crime are becoming more and more diverse and extravagant.

In a postmodern detective novel, the picture of the crime is rather blurred and not very important. Various variants of its interpretation and the feelings of the characters come to the fore. The most characteristic feature of the detective novel of this period is its polyphony: the plot of the work necessarily has inclusions of historical, philosophical, adventure, or science fiction novels with a psychological component. The desire to restore justice, which is basic to the detective, disappears, and the division into good and bad becomes conditional or false. The central character in the work is an ordinary person with a whole palette of emotions and problems that prevent him or her from realizing his or her purpose in this world. Events in a postmodern detective story develop around the process of searching for and cognizing oneself.

АНГЛІЙСЬКИЙ ДЕТЕКТИВНИЙ РОМАН: ІСТОРИКО-ТЕОРЕТИЧНИЙ АСПЕКТ

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Ключові слова: детективний жанр, детективний роман, класичний детективний роман, модерний детективний роман, постмодерний детективний роман.

Стаття присвячена дослідженню особливостей розвитку та становлення англійського детективного роману. Виокремлено три основні етапи англійської детективістики – класичний, модерний та постмодерний. Встановлено, що класичний детектив є своєрідним пазлом, який складається навколо таємниці розкриття злочину. Оповідь будується логічно та послідовно, а головний герой відкриває істину, критично аналізуючи факти. Композиційні особливості детективу зумовлюють бінарну опозицію героїв, здебільшого чоловічої статі, – хороші (детектив, його помічники) та погані (злочинець, його спільники).

У модерному детективі пазли розрізнені та перемішані, часто потрапляють у руки другорядних героїв. Для того щоб розгадати загадку, вже не обов'язково мати хороші навички дедукції, а варто звернути увагу на певний важливий момент, який є ключовим для розслідування злочину та зазвичай стає очевидним для помічника чи друга головного героя/героїні. На детективній сцені блискуче грають ролі жінки: виступаючи і на стороні добра, і на стороні зла. Інструменти вчинення злочину стають дедалі різноманітнішими та екстравагантнішими.

У постмодерному детективі картина злочину є доволі розмитою та не надто важливою. На передній план виходять різноманітні варіанти її інтерпретації та почуття героїв. Найбільш характерною ознакою детективного роману цього періоду є його поліфонійність: сюжет твору обов'язково має вкраплення історичного, філософського, пригодницького чи науково-фантастичного романів з психологічним складником. Базове для детективу прагнення відновити справедливість зникає, а поділ на хороших і поганих стає умовним або хибним. Центральною в творі є звичайна людина зі всією палітрою емоцій та проблем, які перешкоджають їй осягнути своє призначення в цьому світі. Події в постмодерному детективі розвиваються саме навколо процесу пошуку та пізнання самого себе.

Introduction

The detective novel is a genre of literature that gained popularity in the 19th century and is still popular today. The first literary study devoted to the detective genre belongs to G. Chesterton, who published his article “A Defence of Detective Stories” in 1902 (Chesterton, 1902). Since then, many reflections on the poetological nature of the detective story have been published, and they have been mostly by practitioners of the detective genre. Among the authors who have written on this topic, Tz. Todorov (“The Poetics of Prose”, in which a chapter is devoted to the typology of detective literature, 1977), A. Vulis (“Poetics of the Detective Story”, 1978), A. Adamov (“My Favourite Genre is a Detective”, 1983), H. Andzhaparidze (“Results of the Century”, 1999) are to be mentioned.

Famous Bulgarian novelist B. Rainov (“The Black Novel”, 1970) and Hungarian literary critic T. Kestheyi (“Anatomy of a Detective”, 1989) contributed to the systematization of historical and literary views on the genesis and emergence of genre varieties of the detective. The researcher H. Pyrhonen focuses on the moral aspect of detective literature and proposes a typology of the detective genre in her work “Chaos and Murder: Narrative and Moral Problems in Detective Stories” (1999). Another classification of the detective genre is found in M. Mozheiko’s work “Philosophy of the Detective: Classic-Nonclassic-Postnonclassic” (2011). These works trace the history of the genre, analyze its morphology, and study contact and typological similarities in the works of different authors. Some

axiological aspects of the detective novel are analyzed by U. Eco in his work “On Literature”, 2002.

However, there is no diachronic study of the evolution of the English detective novel, which contributes to *the topicality* of the research. *The article aims* to find out the peculiarities of the artistic transformations of the English detective prose of the 19th and 20th centuries. *The object* of the research is the English detective prose of the 19th and 20th centuries. *The subject* of the research is the specifics of the English detective literature of the determined period.

Materials and methods

The material of the research is detective novels of the English writers of the 19th and 20th centuries, which belong to different periods of the development of the detective genre and allow us to trace its evolutionary changes.

The specifics of the selected material led to the choice of research methods. The comparative and typological method is used to establish common and distinctive features of the embodiment of the artistic paradigm of the detective, which is considered in the context of cultural and historical factors that led to the formation of the English detective novel. With the help of the biographical method, it was possible to establish a connection between the life experience of the authors and the peculiarities of their styles.

Discussion

The stages of the evolution of the detective story as a genre can be defined as follows: detective classics (up to the beginning of the 20th century), detective modernism (the 1910s–1970s), and detective postmodernism (after the 1970s). The classical detective novel is built on the laws of classical philosophical metaphysics, justified by the presumption of the ontological meaning of existence, which is objectified in the phenomenon of logos. In the context of the theory of the detective novel, this means that the narrative is based on the implicit presumption that there is an objective picture of the crime, which is based on certain actions of the criminal subject. Along with the presumption of an objective picture of the crime, which gives the circumstances a single meaning and unites them with common logic, the second unshakable presumption of the detective is the presumption of justice. As we can see, in the classic detective story, “the norm always prevails in the end – intellectual, social, legal and moral” (Formula fiction). Unlike the classical detective, the modernist detective questions the presumption of the inviolability of the socio-cosmic order, thus recording his anti-traditionalism and anti-normativity.

While the classic detective story is a kind of “puzzle” where the modules of the mosaic need only be placed in the right order to form a corresponding

picture of events, in the modernist one, the details of the overall picture are not only scattered and mixed, but each of them is always given to the reader and the characters in the wrong focus, which deforms the true contours of events, shifting axiological emphasis. For example, D. Sayers, A. Christie, and M. Lowndes create a real axiological riddle for their readers by presenting episodes of the same story inconsistently and from the perspective of different characters. Very often the key to the solution is the moment witnessed by one of the secondary characters. Thus, women detectives of the modern period radically change the tradition established by women detectives of the classical period – E. Green, A. Cambridge, E. Orsi, Z. Popkin, whose works are a familiar puzzle that requires deduction skills to solve.

The goal of any detective story is to solve a mystery, to solve a crime. The narrative is the unfolding of a logical process by which the protagonist arrives at the truth through a sequence of facts. Solving the crime is the only solution to the detective story. However, the leading place in it is still given to the investigation, so the description of the characters and their feelings fade into the background. Very often, the mystery is solved using logical conclusions based on what both the detective and the reader know. The described compositional structure of the detective story gives rise to the following binary paradigm of characters: on the one hand, a negative character (the criminal and his accomplices), on the other hand, a positive character (the investigator, his assistants, and the clients of the investigation). Both parties are interconnected by a series of events, facts, and phenomena that somehow lead to the solving of the crime, i.e. to the victory of good over evil. It is worth noting that there are several detective stories in which it turns out that the obvious division of characters into “bad” and “good” was wrong. For example, in cases where the criminal himself hires a detective to deflect suspicion, keep abreast of the investigation and, if necessary, lead the investigation down the wrong path; or in police detective stories where one of the officers turns out to be an accomplice of the criminals.

The postmodern detective story is constructed “as a collage of interpretations, where each can equally claim to be ontologized, provided that the programmatic rejection of the initially given ontology of events and the so-called correct interpretation of them is not accepted” (Mozheiko, 2007: 149). It differs significantly from both classical and modernist detective stories, as it is not characterized by the obligatory presence of an objective picture of the crime. The integral meaning of events is determined by the process of their interpretation. M. Mozheiko notes that in the postmodern detective

story, the axiological emphasis shifts toward the hero's search for himself, and his identity. The focus on the restoration of justice and law and order inherent in the detective genre becomes "blurred", which corresponds to the postulates of postmodernism. They are based on the refusal to recognize the existence of a rational, logically constructed ontological picture of existence in favor of a relative and unstable by its nature sphere of world perception, which is based on a deeply emotional, internally experienced reaction of a modern person to the world around him (Mozheiko, 2007).

The official "date of birth" of the detective genre is April 20, 1841, when E. Poe's story "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" was first published. Then "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" and "The Purloined Letter" appeared. Their common protagonist was the melancholic private detective and intellectual Dupin. The founder of the detective genre, E. Poe, called his detective stories "stories of inference" (Murphy, 2002: 43). According to V. Neuburg, the constitutive features of the detective genre, namely the normativity and rigidity of genre laws, the combination of incredible and dominant plausible values, the categories of the mysterious (in combination with its rational analysis), the ugly and the horrible, the closedness and conventionality of the chronotope, the special structure of the protagonist's image, go back to romantic aesthetics, in the modification it acquired in the literary theory and practice of E. Poe (Neuburg, 1977).

By all accounts, one of E. Poe's most significant contributions to the development of the detective genre is the creation of an inseparable pair of protagonists: an intellectual detective and his companion, who is assigned the role of chronicler of the events. This compositional technique is used by a large number of E. Poe's followers, including A. Conan Doyle and A. Christie.

D. Sayers considers E. Poe's works to be a hybrid genre of "mystery stories", which, on the one hand, differ from the detective story itself, and on the other hand, from "horror stories" in their purest form. In these stories, a terrible incident (usually a murder) occurs at first, which is devoid of any explanation or motive, an absolute mystery. Then the detective mechanism begins to work, the purpose of which is to solve the mystery and punish the killer. D. Sayers distinguishes three areas in the detective genre: the detective story itself, mystery literature, and horror literature (Sayers, 1977).

W. Collins develops such an important element of the detective story as intrigue (which was not represented in E. Poe's works, because he was a supporter of the intellectual process of searching for truth through logical inferences, without various conflicts), uses the theme of social inequality (for

example, in the novel "The Dead Secret"), as an adherent of romanticism, pays great attention to human feelings and emotions. By 1856, the author managed to develop his method of constructing a detective novel, the algorithm of which is as follows: formulate the main idea, determine the circle of characters, establish the sequence of events, and start writing from the very beginning (O'Neil, 1988). It is fully observed in the famous novel "The Moonstone". W. Collins made the heroine of his works a completely "different" woman who is not inferior to men in terms of energy or initiative. The author contrasts her with traditional passive female characters in nineteenth-century British literature. The writer achieves this effect through psychologism and polyphony. The detective novel "The Moonstone" introduces eight different points of view on the situation. It should be noted that later this literary polyphony is transformed into a polyphonic novel. In addition, Collins combines a detective story with a family story: the characters of the novel tell not only about the events related to the moonstone, but also about themselves, their habits, their views on life, and their characters. Exceptional ingenuity in the construction of the intrigue, virtuosity, and consistency in its investigation, deep psychologism in the description of the relationships and experiences of the characters, expressive dialogues and insightful monologues, good-natured humor and caustic satire of hypocrites, wonderful landscape sketches, masterful descriptions of the elements and their frequent inclusion in the canvas of events that contribute to the resolution of the intrigue – these are how Collins captures the reader.

In the 90s of the 19th century, A. Conan Doyle entered the detective arena, and his contribution to the development of detective literature is invaluable. He creates the image of a professional detective Sherlock Holmes and improves the "impossible murder" technique. Some of the features of this successfully constructed image will be used in the twenty-first century, especially in numerous film adaptations of detective stories. In parallel with Conan Doyle, A. Derleth, E. Green, A. Cambridge, L. Linwood, E. Orci, and M. Post work with the motif of disappearance, in particular the disappearance of a train (James, 2009). The disappearance motif found its niche in the Victorian detective story. Women detectives used the experience of men. The first to do so was A. Green, whom A. Murch calls the founder of the English female detective (Murch, 1958: 134). She coined the term "detective story". Thanks to the author's knowledge of the law and investigative methods, "The Leavenworth Case", which she debuted in 1878, became the first bestseller in the history of the United States (750 thousand copies were published in 15 years). The writer describes a crime committed in a closed space.

Since the outbreak of the First World War, literature, including detective fiction, has been relatively stagnant, usually due to the collapse of publishing houses. The first postwar female detective story was created by the legendary A. Christie. In 1920, she published the novel “The Mysterious Affair at Styles”. Already in the process of writing the book, she invented a method to which Christie remained faithful to the end: “The whole point of a good detective story is to make the murder suspect not seem like one to the reader, and in the end, it turns out that it was he who did the killing” (Priestman, 1998: 65). Unlike her male counterparts, she did not go into detailed descriptions of murders, weapons, or revenge, but focused primarily on depicting social injustice, especially the problems of the judicial system of the time. J. Kestner and Ph. James call her works “intuitive” detective stories, in which the crime is solved through the characters’ inherent psychological insight (Kestner, 2010). An important achievement of A. Christie is certainly the image of Mrs. Marple, who, unlike her predecessors, who played the role of a friend, assistant, or secret passion of the protagonist detective, works alone without the help of the Watsons and always does it more professionally than the male detectives (Devdiuk & Huliak, 2022). The heroine’s personal life is left out of the novel. In her characteristic psychological manner, the author focuses not on the investigation of evidence, but on the content and structure of the dialogue, observations of the behavior of the characters, and the identification of analogies that lead to certain conclusions. Everything is verified, the details are significant, the realities of everyday life are accurate and expressive, and everything is illuminated by subtle humor, the various possibilities which A. Christie skillfully uses (Huliak, 2015: 138–147).

Along with A. Christie, an important achievement in the genre of the female postwar detective was the work of P. Wentworth (1878–1961), who was born into a general’s family, led a measured life as a British aristocrat, and did not think about fame in the field of literature. Her first detective novel was “The Astonishing Adventure of Jane Smith”, 1923. It initiated a series of books about Miss Silver. The character of the heroine, a former governess who opened her detective agency in adulthood, has some parallels with Miss Marple by A. Christie. However, Ms. Silver has individual characteristics: first, she is a professional who investigates not out of curiosity but for profit; second, she requires complete frankness from her clients and only then takes up the case; third, she has no eccentric manners. Ms. Silver’s main and unchanging method is the notes she takes during the investigation process. She does not conflict with police officers but rather helps them

whenever possible (Kungl, 2006). The only crime depicted in Wentworth’s novels is always murder. The writer, as was customary at the time, does not focus on the psychological aspects of the situation. For her, murder is the starting point of a fascinating logical journey. In addition to murder, there are additional elements in the novels of the English writer, for example, friendly relations between young people separated by war. The second storyline can be a romantic story. The mysteries in the author’s detective stories are usually intricate and complex, but in the end, everything becomes clear. The situation itself and the context are open to readers, do not contain intrigue, and, as a result, lead to an easy solution. The plot is linear and chronological. This simplicity attracts the reader.

In the interwar period, detective fiction demonstrates a richness of language and plot riddles, which is connected, on the one hand, with the development of modernist literature, which, without allowing for templates, significantly enriched the poetic possibilities of prose, and, on the other hand, the development of civilization with its attention to technology and the diversification of weapons. At this time, G. Heyer (1902–1974) published her detective story “Traces in The Darkness”, in 1931 and E. White (1876–1944) published “Put Out the Light”, in 1931. The former successfully creates characters, paying attention to the psychological picture, while the latter skillfully combines the features of classic English genres in her works, such as the gothic novel and the detective story. Meanwhile, E. Huxley (1907–1997), who made her mark in the 1930s, pays special attention to the problem of relations between the white and black populations. Resorting to elements of psychoanalysis, the author considers revenge as the root of any crime. The latter is a demonstration of the maturity of the female detective, her going beyond the purely entertaining genre. Despite the increase in the number of female detectives in the mid-twentieth century, in terms of quality, most works are inferior in terms of artistic level to male prose.

Among the female English detectives of this period, Ph. James in “Talking about Detective Fiction” identifies four significant figures who had the greatest influence on the development of the genre, in particular A. Christie, D. Sayers, M. Allingham, and N. Marsh devoted the fifth chapter of the study to them (James, 2009). D. Sayers has a special place in this list, because, according to Ph. James, it was she who brought a real literary language, refined and imaginative, to the detective story, and made the protagonist an intellectual, continuing the work on the style of the work and the system of images begun by A. Christie.

D. Sayers’s critical work in the field of history and theory of the detective genre is important.

Actively defending the detective story, which was accused by opponents and even haters of this type of literature, D. Sayers wrote an essay in 1946 entitled "Aristotle on Detective Fiction" in which she highlights the basic principles of her creative style. In her opinion, "one can endow characters with vivid speech characteristics, carefully choosing words and thoughts, and still not achieve the desired dramatic effect, or one can succeed with a story that, while lagging in all these parameters, would have a fascinating plot. The most important thing is that the soul of a detective story is the plot, and the characters are secondary" (Sayers, 1936: 23–35).

D. Sayers's discoveries and achievements on the path to becoming a female detective were confirmed by the creative works of M. Allingham and N. Marsh. M. Allingham, for example, very often resorted to describing the realities of her time and was not afraid to "enter someone else's territory". The author boldly adapts the atmosphere of the work according to the type of activity of the characters. According to her, "a detective novel is to some extent a reproach to the public consciousness" (James, 2009: 131). Much of what happens in detective stories took place in the reality of the time. The descriptions of gloomy neighbourhoods in the northwestern part of London destroyed post-war streets, and coastal areas in Essex are particularly successful. As in D. Sayers's books, the protagonist of M. Allingham's works is a person from the highest circles of society, endowed with deep psychology. According to literary critics, the writer's talent was best demonstrated in the work "More Work for the Undertaker" (1948), which combines an exciting detective story with a description of the life of the eccentric Palinode family (Pykett, 1996: 52). In contrast to A. Christie, M. Allingham introduces the reader to the private affairs of one of the characters, Lady Amanda Fitton, describing her marriage and the peculiarities of her profession as an aircraft designer. As for N. Marsh, she wrote according to her theory, which was as follows: "... the mechanics of a detective story may be invented from beginning to end, but the language must be real" (Pykett, 1996: 205). It is known that in the formula for a successful detective story, fifty percent is an interesting investigation, twenty-five percent is the characters, and another twenty-five percent is something with which the author is more familiar than the reader. The third element in the New Zealand writer's work is theater, with which the author was well acquainted. She makes the world of actors the setting for her most famous detectives: "Enter a Murderer" (1935), "Opening Night" (1951), and "Death at the Dolphin" (1967). N. Marsh opens up the backstage for the average reader and depicts theatrical intrigues, demonstrating the problems

faced by troupes of professional theater actors in the postwar period (Pykett, 1996: 112).

For the next generation of writers, the way was opened for new achievements and modifications in this field. Thus, in the second half of the twentieth century, detective women (C. Brand, E. McCloy, R. Rendell, E. Ferrars, D. Fleming) actively turn to the classical canons, in particular in the portrayal of the protagonist, while at the same time resorting to the techniques and means introduced by their famous predecessors. These are, in particular, the technique of a "closed" room (C. Brand), the incredible similarity of two people (E. McCloy), a wide variety of murder methods (R. Rendell), the recreation of historical reality (D. Fleming), a meticulous description of details (E. Ferrars), an appeal to the inner world of the characters (D. Fleming), etc. A striking example is the work of E. Peters, in particular her book "Fallen into the Pit" (1951), which was the first in a series of thirteen novels about the Fells family. It continues the traditions of the British detective, which were significantly expanded in the works of Ph. James and R. Rendell. E. Peters did not adhere to the view that the detective genre and serious literature should be distinguished. Her novels are an interweaving of detective traditions and innovative literary approaches, the study of human psychology, and manifestations of society, politics, and crime. E. Peters's work has been recognized not only by readers but also by critics. Her novels were repeatedly awarded both in England, where she received the Silver Dagger, and in America, where she was twice awarded the Edgar, the highest honor of the American Mystery Writers Association. Shortly before her death, E. Peters was awarded the Cartier Diamond Dagger for her creative contribution to the development of the genre (MacCracken).

In the 70s of the 20th century, A. Fraser entered the history of the detective genre extremely quickly. She improvises on the theme of an impossible murder, keeps the reader in suspense until the very end, and makes all the main characters suspicious. Using her knowledge of the history of the British monarchy, the writer raises topical issues that highlight the present and past of British reality. The protagonist of her works, TV journalist J. Shore, is a strange fusion of traditional and modern women who often find themselves in emergencies. The author describes many of J. Shore's adventures with black humor. At the same time, her novels are always perfectly constructed in terms of drama. In the last decades of the last century, the detective world learned about the names of R. Rendell, E. Granger, Ph. James, and others. For example, R. Rendell received several unofficial titles: "The Queen of the Crime Novel", "The First Lady of Detective Fiction" and "The New Agatha Christie". She is the author of the famous

Inspector Wexford mystery series, several non-serial psychological detectives, and novels written under the pseudonym Barbara Vine. In her works, the writer skillfully combines the achievements of her predecessors, using already developed plot schemes and varying the system of characters, with a variety of contemporary themes and issues, for example, she writes about sexual inequality, social discrimination, and domestic violence. For her work, R. Rendell has received all kinds of awards and prizes, both literary and state, and her books are loved and popular among readers around the world. In England, her novels have been awarded the Golden Dagger four times and the Silver Dagger once, and in 1991 the writer was awarded the Diamond Award for her achievements in the genre. The modern detective is no longer content with mere fidelity to the canons and the need to avoid anything that resembles everyday life, from which detective readers seem to dream of escaping for a while to a fictional literary country where all their desires will be fulfilled by the author. Thus, according to Ph. James, one of the brightest representatives of the female detective story of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the detective story is a literary game with a certain set of rules that must be followed for the genre to remain a genre (James, 2009). The writer proves that although the crime is solved again and again, there are problems that even the author with his almost unlimited power in the detective and literary space cannot solve. According to Ph. James, detective stories increasingly deal with the doubts and troubles of the twenty-first century, but they give confidence that the human mind can overcome even the most difficult problems (James, 2009). The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries were characterized by a rapid increase in the number of female detectives.

In the 90s, the use of cool detective elements and writing detective movie scripts became extremely popular. The works of C. Graham, L. La Plante, and M. Walters are developing in this field. C. Graham is the author of a series of novels about Inspector Barnaby, which formed the basis of the famous British television series “Midsomer Murders”, launched in 1997.

The beginning of the 21st century is characterized by the polyphony of the detective novel. It combines elements of classic, historical, and cool detective novels, philosophical reflections, supernatural motifs, and depictions of modern means of communication and investigation.

Results

English detective fiction has always been, is, and, we assume, will always be popular. The secret of this success, in our opinion, is the constant development and improvement of the detective genre. Having analyzed three stages in the history

of the English detective novel, we state that there is a specific set of features characteristic of the detective invariant. These include mystery, a combination of improbable and dominant plausible values, closed and conventional chronotope, and a binary opposition of good and bad characters. The above features are present in the classic detective story.

The modern detective story is characterized by the fact that the “closed room” principle does not always work, because the number of suspects is not limited. There is also a certain moral of the story and the improvement of the instruments of crime. The postmodern detective story is a synthesis of several literary genres that are organically combined in one work and shift the emphasis to human emotions. However, the picture of the crime is there, albeit in a blurred form.

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