



Detective Fiction in Different Cultures

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ABSTRACT

In the wake of Postmodernism, detective fiction has become one of the most popular subjects among the critics and scholars. Apart from being a preferred topic for study and analysis by critics, this genre is also enjoying popularity among the readers. This paper seeks to attempt a study of detective fiction created in different culture like French, Japanese, Chinese etc and explore detective fiction in Urdu and Bengali language. This paper would also discuss the subgenres of detective fiction.

Keywords: Postmodernism, Detective Fiction, Culture, Subgenre

Emile Gaboriau created Monsieur Lecoq. Lecoq featured in many French stories such as Les Dossier no. 113, L'enclave des Paris, L' Affaire Lerouge. Gaboriau introduced French readers to an intelligent detective who would solve crimes using his intelligence. During the early part of 20th century, detective fiction entered the world of Japanese Literature. Many critics consider Edogawa

Rampo as the first Japanese mystery writer (Hemmann 177). The real name of Rampo was Taro Hirai. In fact, the name Edogawa Rampo is the Japanese pronunciation of Edgar Allan Poe (Hirohisa 52). He was the founder of detective story club in Japan. This club annually awards writers for their contribution to mystery writing. The period of 1900-1949 is known as the Golden age of China's crime fiction (Kinkley 54). Chinese translations of western literary works were published during this period. Many native Chinese crime stories started being circulated during this period. Chenq Xiaqing was an avid reader of Doyle's works. He later translated many popular Holmes stories into Chinese. This opened China's eyes to the rest of the world. Xiaqing penned Sherlock in Shanghai. It was his own detective novel. His later works clearly show that he drew inspiration from Doyle's works. His crime solving duo, Huo Sang and Bao Lang has similarities with Holmes and Dr Watson. In the United States, in the 1960s, various writers introduced their readers to the various subcultures.

Russia was already witness to Fyodor Dostoevsky and Mikhail Zagoskin's stories. These stories had robberies, detectives catching culprits and other elements of crime such as betrayal and revenge. These stories did not have a clear detective plot. Aleksey Nikolaveyich Tolstoy wrote The Garin Death Ray. This story had a clear detective plot and an entire story revolved around this plot. This can be seen as the birth of detective fiction in Russia. Nineteenth century also saw the birth of detective fiction in the Indian subcontinent. Asrar Ahmed was a prolific and best-selling Urdu writer of the time. He went by the pen name Ibn-E-Safi. He started writing in British India and later continued to write in Pakistan. He wrote a series of stories known as Jasoosi Duniya featuring Col Fareedi and Captain Hamid. This period also witnessed the growth of many Bengali authors. Among the many Bengali authors who wrote mystery and detective stories, two became very famous. They were Saradindu Bondhopadhyay and Satyajit Ray. Saradindu Bondhopadhyay created Byomkesh Bakshi, the truth seeker. Along with Bakshi, another notable Bengali fictional detective from the time was Feluda. Feluda was created by Ray and stories featuring him were successful and popular and many of the stories were adapted into popular cultures such as cinema and TV.

1.5 Subgenres of Detective Fiction

Inverted

In stories belonging to this subgenre, the perpetrator of the crime is introduced to the writers at the beginning of the story. The entire story is a cat and mouse game between the detective and the culprit.

Serial Killer Mystery

This subgenre was born from another sub genre "Police Procedural". The stories belonging to this subgenre introduces a homicidal maniac to the readers (Dodd 246). The story shows many characters who are generally a part of Government organization and force and who work together in order to catch the maniac.

Legal Thriller

These stories usually begin with closure of an investigation. Major part of the story involves court proceedings. Many modern-day best-selling books belong to this subgenre. John Grisham, Michael Connelly, Paul Levine are some notable authors writing on this subgenre.

Occult

These are detective stories involving supernatural elements in mysterious premises.

Locked Room Mystery

Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" belonged to this subgenre. The crime in these stories usually takes place in a way that initially seems impossible as there would have been no way the culprit would have gotten into the crime scene, committed the crime and got out of the crime scene.

1.6 Technological Advancements and its Effect on Detective Fiction

Modern Technological advancements such as the Internet, GPS and CCTV and introduction of gadgets and devices such as mobile phones have rendered many formulaic plots used in the detective fiction stories outdated and obsolete. Police procedurals have changed a lot. There are many scientific and forensic tools such as lie detector test and blood spatter analysis. This changes the way stories are written. Even the old stories featuring Holmes and other detectives are being rewritten in the context of modern times. Changing and evolving technologies do pose challenges to writers of the genre who belong to the old school of thought but the writers continue to innovate as the times demand and the stories belonging to this genre continue to excite the readers.

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