HISTORICAL ANALYSIS THE HARD BOILED DETECTIVE FICTION

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ABSTRACT

Detective stories have been popular among readers ever since its inception. This kind of stories concerns itself with some kind of crime and mystery around it. Sometimes it is about the solving a crime, sometimes it is about catching the criminal, sometimes it is about to see that criminal get punished rightfully. Plot may vary but a detective story always has a crime, an extraordinary situation and of course, a detective.

As there is no perfect crime, there is no perfect detective story. Edgar Allen Poe created Dupin, who shows leaps between in logic and thinking process, but there can be connections if one wants to look for it. The problem with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes is that his scientific approach which is not inappropriate for the Victorian era but fails to match other times.

The setting is usually of a rural area of with a big house where the murder takes place, detectives inspect, alibis are checked, clues are revised, and in an grand revelation the murderer is identified. This kind of story emphasis on plot over all other aspects, characters are flat and serves nothing to story, detective figure often becomes a tool to just give the answer to the puzzle that author had set in motion and had reader guessing the answer. As these are puzzles and like every puzzle people gets bored with them when it goes over a point and becomes oversaturated. As Stephen Knight says, "the history of detective fiction ceases to be definitive from this point as new authors bring elements from different types of detective fiction and produce new combination to tell stories that are new and suitable for the modern readers."

On the literary scene of the American continent, 'cosy riddles' of English detective fiction does not get much attention. It is reserved for 'hard-boiled' kind of detective stories which are totally different from other detective stories. In 'hard-boiled' we have a detective, but he is not the thinking machine like Holmes or Dupin. Nor he is gentleman like English detectives. Above all he is human, like a real person. And that makes the difference. Here, plot is not as important as the atmosphere. The setting here is of urban area, which gives a way to portray reality of the era. Detectives is genius but not superhuman. He often gets beating form villains. He is on the side of good but does not always takes the proper way, sometimes he breaks laws, sometimes he uses manipulation and deception, but it all he does for the justice and righteousness. We see a roughness and practical approach in his manners. As Chandler argues, "Detective fiction is not considered as a literary genre but a popular genre. However, being popular it always has been in fair existence and never to be in range of extinction. More or less the story starts with picaresque novels, which in turn emerges from the early folktales. Folktales are source genre for any of the sub-genre but picaresque tradition is actually not logical predecessor of the detective fiction but history and culture never follow logic. Picaresque tradition had a focus on a central character - a rogue who has an adventurous life. Detective fiction has the same adventure element although in a different perspective. Rogue later turned into detective in the colour of social, cultural, political notions. The methods of Victorian detectives differs from the method of the an golden age detective. But time is not one dimensional entity, Every time has a taste, which can be called popular taste - a taste that seems correct According to time and gradually fades to make space for new kind of taste. Why people of the past war era could relate with the hard boiled cannot be a question as it has a near perfect reason that people were living in that reality from which the Hard boiled emerged. The ambivalence reaction to hard boiled as an academic subject are is because of its flexible and unclear definition of the genre, if one want to consider it a genre.

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Dissection of the Hard-boiled Detective

The hardboiled detective is unique, he is unlike anything readers had seen before. He is not as gentle as Victorian detective, he is rough. He does not work in 'cosy' atmosphere
like his English counterpart. He works in an omnipresent devastated world where he is not the strongest. He is named ‘hard-boiled’ because he live in rage and aggression towards the evil in world.

Loneliness
The hard-boiled detective often has no help either from people or police while working as both see him as an entity not to trust unless you are his client. This attitude often makes him lonely. That is why he seems rough and hard towards world. There are socio-political unrest of the era which we have to consider as the Great Depression and world war had brought more anxiety in people, which had downed their morality. The detective had to face those people on daily basis which can be a deadly experience for a mind who has so much mettle pressure to solve a case. Loneliness of this kind of detective is seen to be resulted into alcoholism. ‘The bar’ is one of the most often appeared phrases in this kind of stories. So, the lonely detective is against the big hard world, which makes him unique.

Unsettling Atmosphere
The atmosphere of the hard boiled fiction is of unsettling and strange feelings, where no one feels home every time. The description of the atmosphere alone can tell us how the world was gloomy and dangerous. The setting is urban, especially Los Angeles. In farewell, My Lovely Chandler introduces the city as tough we are within it and with a bleakness that makes reader feel uneasy from start.

Roughness and Violence
This kind of detective has to be rough, because he has no authority over people which can make them cooperate with him. He has to get his answers hard way, sometimes with some bribe or little threats. That also include occasional beating of villains and henchmen. His style is of quick action. He doesn’t even care for the physical damage a person might get, because he himself lives in the same danger every day. Violence also indicates the anxiety of the post war era which brings the question of loss of humanity after the traumatic experience of the war.

IMPERFECTION
This kind of detective is a human character of a story that uses realism. That makes the detective figure an imperfect human being and professional also. Which is opposite of the detectives found in other kind of detective stories. This imperfection is one of the most highlighted characteristics of hard boiled detective as flaws in his character often diverts the way of stories. The plot becomes irrelevant when it comes to his decisions, often wrong in situation and sometimes dangerous. He often finds it hard to take a firm decision in short time but not always. He is mean sometime, sometime he is so proud that he returns the payment of incomplete work. His imperfection makes him more humane than Victorian or classical detectives.

Language of Slang
Detectives are a kind of servicemen whose skills helps the clients to solve their problem, so detective has to deal with stranger persons. So they use very formal and in many cases ornamental languages. But hardboiled detective just stripes himself off that modesty. He uses the common language, with uses of common slang and dirty phrases. The culture of America at that time suggests regular use of this kind language, which reflected in the hard boiled novels as a depiction of reality. This language suits the rough detective who has to deal with hard people in mean streets.

Determined Survivor
The problems of the a hardboiled detective is like the problems of a common man, he has to think about his economic status and have to work for money. This situation force him to become a tough man, which in other sense makes him sensible towards other people who are suppressed or victimized. His question of survival, whether it is economical or physical, always makes him a tense character.

REFERENCES