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TRANSFORMATION OF THE DETECTIVE STORY IN DONNA TARTT'S NOVEL "A SECRET HISTORY"

Sociological, culturological and comparative literary studies show that the detective genre today is one of the most popular genres of literature, which is equally popular with both male and female readership, and its popularity often does not depend on the age of the readership. Today, detective literature provokes interest not only with readers, but also with literary critics. The research of works of the detective genre is carried out by such scientists as M.A. Bondarenko, M. Butor, I.V. Belozeroва, S. Zizek, and many others; they investigate various aspects of detective literature: the place of literary pieces of the detective genre in mass and elite literature, engage in the development of typology of genres and subgenres, etc. The 21st century itself is fusion of previous experience instances in every field, and, thus, literature is not an exception. One can hardly speak of the purity of any genre any longer, [2] as far as one literary work may have attributes of several different genres. **This piece is an attempt to explore the detective story genre boundaries and ascertain attributes of this genre in the novel "A Secret History" by Donna Tartt.** Literature responds quite quickly to changes that occur in society. Any national literature responds to changes that occur in the country. When literature responds to these changes, a new literary hero appears, or the already existing one is transformed.

Overview:

According to R. Cook there are over thirty semi-scientific schemas of classification of the types and subgenres of mystery literature. Among them there are amateur detective, prehistoric (i.e. pre-Poe), espionage, hardboiled, heist, impossible crimes, legal mystery, noir, whodunit and howdunnit (inverted) and many others [3]. A definite opinion about what was the first detective story does not exist. Some researchers believe that as the first detective work can be considered the play by Sophocles "Tsar

Oedipus, “because, despite the irrational and supernatural methods of investigation, the work contains all the formal characteristics of detective stories” [4]. The Persian fairy tale, which is known in the English-speaking world under the name “The Three Princes of Serendip”, also has some bearing on the origin of a detective story. Recalling this tale, Horace Walpole introduced the word serendipity, as the princes uncovered the mystery of the missing camel through insight. [5] Using this story, Voltaire contributed to the development of the detective literature and understanding of the scientific method of investigating crime in the novel *Zadig*. Other researchers believe that as the archetype of a detective story can be considered a fairy tale “The Three Apples” from the series of stories “A Thousand and One Night” [6]. But it is possible to disagree with this definition, since the protagonist does not make any efforts to solve the crime and find the murderer, so this story has nothing to do with the detective story, even in its broadest sense.

Recognized as the traditional detective stories by the modern reader, these literary works began to appear in the nineteenth century, and they were written by such authors as Moritz Hansen, William Evans Burton, and Emil Gaborio. The culmination of their work was short stories that were not too popular [7]. Everything changed in 1841 with the publication of the story of the American author Edgar Poe “The Murder on the Rue Morgue”. This was the first modern detective story that portrayed the detective as a hero. The image of Auguste Dupin was partly written off from the first real-life detective, a former criminal, and subsequently criminalist Eugene François Widocq [8]. Just like Widocq, Dupin is a Frenchman and intellectual process, the use of “gray cells”, is his primary method of investigating crimes and solving mysteries. Despite the fact that Edgar Poe was an American, his detective stories are a prototype of classic detective stories, which are characterized by reflections, and whose style was adopted by British and European authors. The eccentric genius Dupin is the predecessor of Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple, who used gray matter to achieve striking results in the investigation of the crime. The main requirement for a classic detective story is a rational, logical investigation of the crime, which is based on

available clues. Most of the features that Edgar Poe laid in Dupin, influenced the image of the detective, created in the 19th and early 20th century.

If Edgar Poe was the creator of the detective story genre, then Arthur Conan Doyle was the one who rooted it as a popular literary genre. The main distinguishing feature of the works by Conan Doyle is the introduction of the detective's assistant – Dr. Watson to the narrative. Notwithstanding the fact that he is infinitely devoted to Holmes, he is his opposite. His approaches to solving the problem are obvious and unsophisticated, while Holmes's approaches are complex and intricate. Watson sees the crime superficially, only that part of it that is open to the common man in the street, while Holmes tries to understand the depths of the crime, to discover the psychological motives of the criminal. Watson is emotional, whereas Holmes is objective from the scientific point of view. Another hero of the classic detective is a bureaucrat detective – Inspector Leistred (character introduced by Conan Doyle), Inspector Japp (by Agatha Christie), etc. All of them are an integral part of the detective story works of the Golden Era. These characters are sometimes silly (in the works of Conan Doyle), sometimes comical (in Charles Snow's works), sometimes simple employees, not capable of miracles of deduction, when the most notable heroes of the classic detective story solved crimes exceptionally by using logic and deduction. The sense and meaning of the detective stories consisted of intellectual confrontation in order to gather evidence and, using the deduction method, to understand how they relate to each other. In the time of the classic detective nobody could think about “struggle without rules”, however the situation would change in the subsequent years.

World wars, the Great Depression, spy games, technological progress and much more that happened in the 20th century could not but affect, in particular, the detective genre. The genre of the “cool detective” (hard-boiled) – the American school – actively developed in the period between the world wars; unlike the English school, where the heroes-detectives were always perceptive, sharpened the observation skills, in order to uncover the mystery of the crime and were never involved in romantic relationships, the heroes of the hard-boiled genre are their complete

opposites. At a time when, for a British detective, the disclosure of a crime can be compared to the neat piling of a puzzle, the “cool” detective prefers to solve the problem with the use of force, comb the streets in search of evidence, without fear of confrontation with possible offenders. Over time, not private detectives, but policemen, became much popular. This new trend became a sort of vindication for the police, which was ridiculed (Inspector Lestrade, Japp, etc.) by the authors of the detective genre until this moment. Since Dickens, police officers, in most detective novels, seemed incompetent, unable to solve a crime without the help of a private detective, such as Sherlock Holmes or any other. Accordingly, with the advent of a police detective in the 1940s and 1950s, stupid state bureaucrats lost their positions in detective stories. A new detective-policeman was confident and could solve any crime.

Basic analysis:

The first author who is credited with the creation of the inverted detective story is Austin Freeman with his collection of short stories *The Singing Bone*, which was published in 1912 [1]. Once he said:

“Some years ago I devised, as an experiment, an inverted detective story in two parts. The first part was a minute and detailed description of a crime, setting forth the antecedents, motives, and all attendant circumstances. The reader had seen the crime committed, knew all about the criminal, and was in possession of all the facts. It would have seemed that there was nothing left to tell, but I calculated that the reader would be so occupied with the crime that he would overlook the evidence. And so it turned out. The second part, which described the investigation of the crime, had to most readers the effect of new matter” [13].

The inverted detective story (another name is “howcatchim” is a detective story, mystery story, where the crime is delivered to the reader in the beginning of a story, and the identity of the perpetrator is usually shown to the reader as well. This is a story, where the reader has the advantage compare to the sleuth. There may also be subsidiary puzzles, such as why the crime was committed, but those are cleared up along the way. This format is the opposite of the more typical “whodunit”, where all of the details of the perpetrator of the crime are not revealed until

the story's climax [11]. "A Secret History" by Donna Tartt is basically a university prose (genre, which became popular as both mass and elitist literature in the past few decades), [9] and an inverted detective story, not whodunit, but whydunit [10].

Donna Tartt (Donna Louise Tartt) was born in December, 23, 1963, in Greenwood, Mississippi. Her most notable literary works are "A Secret History" (her debut novel) and "The Goldfinch". She wrote "A Secret History" in 1992 and "The Goldfinch" in 2013, the book which became winner of 2014 Pulitzer Prize for fiction. Toward the end of the 20th century, when working on the novel "A Secret History" Donna Tartt was connected to the "literary brat pack," a young, East Coast group of writers whose tales of drug use and disaffection were, in the late 80s and early 90s, a by-word for literary cool. They said that Bret Easton Ellis, one of the leaders of the group, was Donna Tartt's friend and man whom she devoted her novel "A Secret History" and they studied together at Bennington College in Vermont. She started to write her debut novel in Bennington and it was rumored that she used her co-eds as models for the characters of the book [11].

There are a number of famous authors who wrote traditional detective stories and naturally the number of famous sleuths, though fictional. The most famous among them is undoubtedly Sherlock Holmes. Holmes was created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, a Scottish doctor, who worked in a number of genres, but is most widely-known for his sleuth. In 1893 after over fifty stories about Sherlock Holmes Arthur Conan Doyle decides to kill off his creation: Sherlock Holmes fights with his arch enemy Dr. Moriarty and both perish in the waters of Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland. However, in ten years after the death of the famous sleuth, to the greatest excitement of the readers, Arthur Conan Doyle revived Sherlock Holmes.

Regardless of slight differences and peculiarities of different writes, there is a notion in detective fiction such as "Holmes canon", which is relevant to a traditional detective story, and which is totally uncharacteristic of the inverted detective story. Classic detective fiction tends to follow certain patterns and rules, this is pertinent to both Victorian detective story and Conan Doyle detective story, and utterly impertinent to

the inverted detective story: “Deduction ought to be an exact science”, whereas in the inverted detective story there are other options, it is not about pure science, but rather about the cognition.

‘A Secret History’ by Donna Tartt is known as an inverted detective story. It commences with the murder of a student in early days of April by five other students. It may seem obvious that the line of the narration would eventually lead to the arrest of these five students, however, it may only seem. To define this work solely as the inverted detective story may be linear, as far as it may be a case exceptionally in structural terms. The semantics of the novel is much deeper and not restricted to solving a crime (by the detective). In fact neither the state police not the FBI were able to solve this murder, and no other detectives (private detectives) were present in the novel. Law enforcement officers were unable to solve any of the committed murders.

“A Secret History” refers to a number of issues that lie beyond the characteristics of any kind of the detective story. It deals with philosophical matters, with the eternal, sublime things. One of those things is loss of self:

“The Furies,” said Bunny, his eyes dazzled and lost beneath the bang of hair.

‘Exactly. And how did they drive people mad? They turned up the volume of the inner monologue, magnified qualities already present to great excess, made people so much themselves that they couldn’t stand it’ [12; p. 58].

Can we say that Tartt followed the rules of the inverted detective story and in the beginning of the novel explained the reasons of Henry’s suicide? Can we say that he gradually lost his self, that his inner monologue has finally reached such a volume that he couldn’t stand it any longer?

Another problem that the author poses for the reader is the issue of control. It is an opposition of conscious/subconscious. The conscious, the rational, the controlled:

“Because it is dangerous to ignore the existence of the irrational. The more cultivated a person is, the more intelligent, the more repressed, then the more he needs some method of channeling the primitive impulses he’s

worked so hard to subdue. Otherwise those powerful old forces will mass and strengthen until they are violent enough to break free, more violent for the delay, often strong enough to sweep the will away entirely. For a warning of what happens in the absence of such a pressure valve, we have the example of the Romans. The emperors. Think, for example, of Tiberius, the ugly stepson, trying to live up to the command of his stepfather Augustus. Think of the tremendous, impossible strain he must have undergone, following in the footsteps of a savior, a god” [12; p. 60].

Whereas the irrational, the subconscious, the uncontrolled may set free. The Greek group being fascinated by their teacher (a person that is perceived as a magician, someone who had sublime experience, illuminated philosopher and a mystic at the same time) under the leadership of Henry Winter decides to impress their teacher and reach the realm of irrational, they decide to make Bacchanal and after umpteen attempts they finally succeed. Being transcend, they lose control, lose their selves, and see (hallucinate about) Dionysus:

“Well, it’s not called a mystery for nothing,’ said Henry sourly.

‘Take my word for it. But one mustn’t underestimate the primal appeal – to lose one’s self, lose it utterly. And in losing it be born to the principle of continuous life, outside the prison of mortality and time. That was attractive to me from the first, even when I knew nothing about the topic and approached it less as potential mystes than anthropologist. Ancient commentators are very circumspect about the whole thing. It was possible, with a great deal of work, to figure out some of the sacred rituals – the hymns, the sacred objects, what to wear and do and say. More difficult was the mystery itself: how did one propel oneself into such a state, what was the catalyst?’ [12; p. 237].

Having lost control, their selves, the young people kill a farmer. After the murder they have an extremely vague recollection of the event and absolutely no details, apart from horrific ones, which they deduced. They don’t have any remorse; except for the one that they should have buried the farmer, because of according to the ancient Greek a body should be buried in order not to hunt the killers. The whole Bacchanal thing is described as something sublime, spiritual, purging, being worth of

sacrifice – the blood was spilled. There is only a slight hint on the part of the author that the bacchanal could not have been complete without bloodletting.

The whole Greek classed is delivered to the reader as suffering romantic heroes, superheroes who think in different categories – earthly problems are too insignificant, too minor for them. The murder of the farmer is quickly forgotten; however Bunny's disappearance drew attention of the authorities. Local law enforcement and the FBI lead massive man-hunt – this is the time when reader may start thinking that the authorities might bring the culprits to justice, however the FBI agents leave as soon as the body is found and the local police closes the case as an accident. At this very moment the reader may reconsider character assessment. In this inverted detective story there is a very thin line between a protagonist and antagonist. While waiting for a traditional detective to appear as a protagonist, and fight the evil and bring to justice those who deserve it, one may miss the opportunity to enjoy playing intellectual game with Henry who, for the lack of real characters, plays both the role of antagonist and protagonist:

“It's funny,” said Francis. “I have a hard time believing he's really dead. I mean - I know there's no way he could have faked dying – but, you know, if anybody could figure out how to come back, it's him. It's kind of like Sherlock Holmes. Going over the Reichenbach Falls. I keep expecting to find that it was all a trick, that he'll turn up any day now with some kind of elaborate explanation” [12; p. 613].

Henry's character is enigmatic; Henry himself is a very mysterious young man. He thinks unconventional, he does unconventional things, and he tries to reason with unreasonable, though he understands the vanity of it. He plays the game, measured, well timed and efficiently executed. He is always at least one move ahead of his adversaries, and in that game everyone is his adversary.

Conclusion:

Speaking of a classic detective story or for any detective story for that matter, it should be noted that this story is built in accordance with certain rules. Regardless of the author their characters are very similar

(they are similar semantically and have more or less similar set of characteristics and attributes) and act according to a certain pattern. In 1925, the literary critic Viktor Shklovsky analyzed the works of Conan Doyle and developed a universal scheme for their construction, which gives a visual representation of what a classic Sherlock Holmes story is: 1. Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson recollect memories of past deeds, of solved crimes. This, in fact, an overture that tunes the reader, draws the picture and creates the appropriate atmosphere. 2. The appearance of a client reporting a mysterious incident (murder, kidnapping, etc.). 3. The action part of the story – investigation – Sherlock Holmes collects evidence and clues (mostly mental process). 4. Watson gives the wrong interpretation to the clues and thus leads the reader along a false track. 5. Investigation at the crime scene. 6. The police officer (the inferior protagonist, sometimes antagonist of the great detective) reaches the wrong conclusion, interprets the evidence incorrectly. 7. An interval filled with Watson's reflections – he does not understand what the matter is. At this time, Sherlock Holmes, hiding the hard work of thought, smokes or plays the violin, then connects the facts in groups, not giving a final conclusion. 8. The denouement, mostly unexpected. 9. Sherlock Holmes gives an analytical analysis of the facts [14].

Without a doubt, these rules cannot be applicable to every detective story, given that there are over thirty types of those and they differ in many aspects – structurally, culturally, topically, etc. However, the detective story genre deals with the investigation of the crime and the essence of the detective story is for the crime to be solved. Executing the punishment is the main prerequisite of the detective story. In our opinion, the novel “A Secret History” by Donna Tartt, though possessing attributes of the detective story, namely an inverted detective story, due to the murder introduction in the beginning of narrative, lacks main features of the detective story. It may structurally look like one, though it is not such in essence. The novel lacks a protagonist detective and antagonist detective, investigation process, evidence gathering, just or unjust sentence, perpetrators identity uncovering. One of the most significant features of a protagonist of the detective story is to be a hero (the definition of being hero

may vary) and bring justice, which is not the case in Tartt's novel. In the inverted detective story the reader has the advantage of knowing and follows the protagonist's line of thinking and acting towards, if not an arrest of the perpetrator, then at least towards uncovering of the truth. In Tartt's novel the reader is deprived of that. The initial group of five who knew about the murders, because they committed them is enlarged only by two more – Julian Morrow the Greek teacher, who is the instigator of the Bacchanal, and the reader; the crimes remain unsolved and victims are not vindicated. The novel should not be read as a detective story of any kind, for while waiting for someone to solve the crime, the reader may lose the chance to solve the mystery and recognize the subtle philosophy of “A Secret History.”

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Анотація

А.О. Мунтян, І.В. Шпак. «Трансформація детективного жанру в романі Донни Тартт «Таємна історія»

Дослідження в області порівняльного літературознавства показують, що детективний жанр сьогодні є одним з найпопулярніших жанрів літератури. Дана стаття – це спроба дослідити межі жанру детективної історії і визначити атрибути цього жанру в романі Донни Тартт «Таємна історія». Сьогодні детективна література викликає інтерес не тільки у читачів, але і у літературних критиків. Дослідження робіт детективного жанру здійснюється такими вченими, як Бондаренко, Бутор, Білозьорова, Жіжек і багатьма іншими; вони займаються дослідженням різних аспектів детективної літератури: місцем літературних творів детективного жанру в масовій та елітарній літературі, беруть участь в розробці типології жанрів і піджанрів і т. д. Перевернутий детектив – це твір, де про злочин читачеві говорять на початку твору, а особистість злочинця зазвичай також стає відомою читачеві з перших сторінок. Це твір, в якому читач має перевагу в порівнянні зі слідчим. У ньому можуть бути і додаткові мотиви та лінії, наприклад, чому було скоєно злочин, які розкриваються по ходу дій, які відбуваються в творі. Цей формат є протилежністю більш типового «whodunit», де всі деталі, пов'язані з особою, винною у вчиненні злочину, не розкривається до кульмінації історії. «Таємна історія» Донни Тартт стосується ряду питань, які знаходяться за межами характеристик будь-якого детективного твору, але при цьому відносяться до філософських питань: питань буття та піднесеного. Деякі з них – це втрата самості, контролю, піднесене і божественне і т. д. «Таємна історія» Донни Тартт, хоч і має атрибути детективного твору, а саме перевернутого детективного твору, через скоєння вбивства на початку

розповіді, не має основних рис детективного твору. Структурно вона може виглядати, як перевернутий детектив, але по суті таким не бути. В романі відсутній протагоніст – детектив-герой, антагоніст, слідчий процес, збір доказів, справедливе чи несправедливе покарання, виявлення особи правопорушників. Одна з найважливіших особливостей головного героя детективного роману – бути героєм (визначення героя може варіюватися) і нести справедливість, чого немає в романі Тартт.

Ключові слова: детективна історія, роман, традиційний детектив, перевернутий детектив, масова література, детектив-герой.

Анотація

А.А. Мунтян, І.В. Шпак, «Трансформація детективного жанра в романе Донни Тартт «Тайная история»

Исследования в области сравнительного литературоведения показывают, что детективный жанр сегодня является одним из самых популярных жанров литературы. Данная статья – это попытка исследовать границы жанра детективной истории и определить атрибуты этого жанра в романе Донны Тартт «Тайная история». Сегодня детективная литература вызывает интерес не только у читателей, но и у литературных критиков. Исследование работ детективного жанра осуществляется такими учеными, как Бондаренко, Бутор, Белозерова, Жижек и многими другими; они занимаются изучением различных аспектов детективной литературы: местом литературных произведений детективного жанра в массовой и элитарной литературе, участвуют в разработке типологии жанров и поджанров и т. д. Перевернутый детектив – это произведение, где о преступлении читателю говорят в начале произведения, и личность преступника обычно также становится известной читателю с первых страниц. Это произведение, в котором читатель имеет преимущество по сравнению с сыщиком. В нем могут быть и дополнительные мотивы и линии, например, почему преступление было совершено, которые раскрываются по ходу действий, которые происходят в произведении. Этот формат является противоположностью более типичного «whodunit», где все детали, связанные с лицом, виновным в совершении преступления, не раскрываются до кульминации истории. «Тайная история» Донны Тартт касается ряда вопросов, которые лежат за пределами характеристик любого детективного произведения, но при этом касается вопросов бытия и возвышенного. Некоторые из них – это потеря самости, контроля; возвышенное и божественное и т. д. «Тайная история» Донны Тартт, хоть и

обладает атрибутами детективного произведения, а именно перевернутого детективного произведения, из-за совершения убийства в начале повествования, не имеет основных черт детективного произведения. Структурно оно может выглядеть, как перевернутое детективное произведение, но по сути таковым не являться. В романе отсутствует протагонист – детектив-герой, антагонист, следственный процесс, сбор доказательств, справедливое или несправедливое наказание, выявление личности правонарушителей. Одна из самых важных особенностей главного героя детективного романа – быть героем (определение героя может варьироваться) и нести справедливость, чего нет в романе Тартт.

Ключевые слова: детективная история, роман, традиционный детектив, перевернутый детектив, массовая литература, детективный герой.

Annotation

A.O. Muntian, I.V. Shpak, «Transformation of the detective story in Donna Tartt's novel "A Secret History"»

Comparative literary studies show that the detective genre today is one of the most popular genres of literature. This piece is an attempt to explore the detective story genre boundaries and ascertain attributes of this genre in the novel "A Secret History" by Donna Tartt. Today, detective literature provokes interest not only with readers, but also with literary critics. The research of works of the detective genre is carried out by such scientists as M.A.Bondarenko, M.Butor, I.V.Belozerova, S.Zizek, and many others; they investigate various aspects of detective literature: the place of literary pieces of the detective genre in mass and elite literature, engage in the development of typology of genres and subgenres, etc. The inverted detective story (another name is "howcatchim" is a detective story, mystery story, where the crime is delivered to the reader in the beginning of a story, and the identity of the perpetrator is usually shown to the reader as well. This is a story, where the reader has the advantage compare to the sleuth. There may also be subsidiary puzzles, such as why the crime was committed, but those are cleared up along the way. This format is the opposite of the more typical "whodunit", where all of the details of the perpetrator of the crime are not revealed until the story's climax. "A Secret History" by Donna Tartt deals with a number of issues that lie beyond the characteristics of any detective story. It deals with philosophical matters, with the eternal, sublime things. Some of those things are loss of self, control, horror; sublime and divine, etc. "A Secret History" by Donna Tartt, though possessing attributes of the detective story, namely

an inverted detective story, due to the murder introduction in the beginning of narrative lacks main features of the detective story. It may structurally look like one, though it is not such in essence. The novel lacks a protagonist detective and antagonist detective, investigation process, evidence gathering, just or unjust sentence, perpetrators identity uncovering. One of the most significant features of a protagonist of the detective story is to be a hero (the definition of being hero may vary) and bring justice, which is not the case in Tartt's novel.

Key words: detective story, novel, traditional detective story, inverted detective story, mass literature, detective hero.

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