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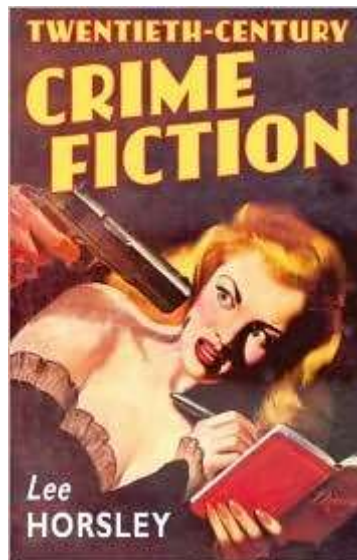
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Crime Fiction and Crime Detection: Contributions to the society with reference to Lee Horsley's works

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Introduction

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Crime Fiction and Crime Detection

The literature of twentieth century has abundant crime fiction, plays, and short stories, etc. These are handled in a different way from those of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This difference may be traced to the penal realities of the time. The reasons may include the absence of intense policing and heavy dependence on intuitive work rather than on any electronic or other gadgets. Organized processes for the detection of criminals on any routine basis were not spectacular. The systems used to detect and solve mysteries of crime were largely privatized. It looked as if the prosecution of theft was the responsibility of the injured party who might offer a reward for information or hire an agent. The authorities relied on members of the public to detect crime. The main tool of law-enforcement was the fear of horrific punishment if caught.

Lee Horsley's Noir Fiction

This study draws from the works of Lee Horsley who has written on Literature and Politics. Her books *Political Fiction and the Historical Imagination* (1990), *Fictions of Power in English Literature 1900-1950* (1995) and *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction* (2004) present interesting explanations of how crime is dealt with in the past centuries and in the twentieth century.



Noir Fiction

Noir fiction stands for “gripping tales full of deceit, nihilism, paranoia, and crime” (<http://voices.yahoo.com/what-noir-fiction-8212255.html>). *Noir* in French means black or of the night as per the reference cited above. Another term used is “hard-boiled.” This generally refers to Language in India www.languageinindia.com

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mystery fiction in which tough guys face mysteries and solve them. This term is used to refer to American mystery novels. In general, both noir fiction and hard-boiled fiction include “gripping tales full of deceit, nihilism, paranoia, and crime” (<http://voices.yahoo.com/what-noir-fiction-8212255.html>).

This paper focuses on how the noir division or hard-boiled type of literature influences criminologists and the crime doers.

Globalization, Crime and Crime Doers

The modern scenario of art amplifies the crime in different angles and dimensions; globalization has placed crime detection, punishment and elimination as a higher task and has developed modern gadgets and technologies both for the investigators and the crime doers.

Crime Fiction and Society

Crime fiction has impressively improved our understanding of the modalities of crime and crime detection and punishment. There is an increased level of popular anxiety about crime everywhere. Crime has grown alongside the academic discipline of criminology, and for most people the major source of information about crime is mass media news.

For crime fiction and criminology to develop, these must go beyond their traditional boundaries of investigation and consider not just how crime is committed or realized but how it is represented in our crime society, with what possible consequences.

The Genre of Crime and Its Contributions

The genre of Crime has grown enormously in the 20th century. People are interested in reading crime fiction because they are fascinated by the margins of the world, those places where society rules break down. They wonder what they would do in similar situation, how they should cope

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with such issues. They learn how to deal with fear and the unknown and at the end they have the sense that certain justice meted out.

It is possible to find literary antecedents to modern crime novel far back in history. The Bible tells how Cain slew Abel the third human ever created and had managed to murder the fourth (Horsley 2009: 3). In crime fiction we will notice how characters shift, especially within a single text, between the roles of victims, murderer and investigators. That is, there is much dynamism noticed between the traditional fixed characters triangle of crime and detective fiction: victim, murderer and investigator.

The Impact of Noir Fiction & Hardboiled Fiction

The Noir Impact

According to George Tuttle (<http://noirfiction.info/what.html>), in the noir sub-genre, the protagonist is usually not a detective but instead a victim, a suspect, or a perpetrator. He is someone tied directly to the crime, not an outsider called to solve or fix the situation. Other common characteristics are the emphasis on sexual relationship and the use of sex to advance the plot and the self-destructive qualities of the lead characters.

Charles Rzepka, in his book *A Companion to Crime Fiction* says, “The labels ‘noir’ itself make it difficult, if not impossible to come up with a precise definition; terms have been used and abused by readers, writers and critics so long and so often that as with most literary labels their meanings have become blurred and the noir crime story deals with disorders, disaffection, and dissatisfaction” (p. 197).

A quality noir story must emphasize characters’ conflict. The crime of or threat of crime with which the story is concerned is of secondary importance. Moreover, it reflects the society to the people.

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The Hardboiled Impact

Hardboiled crime fiction is a literary style, most commonly associated with detective stories distinguished by the unsentimental portrayal of violence and sex. “Hardboiled” didn’t refer exclusively to a type of crime fiction; it meant any tough and violent fiction, which also included adventure and western stories. Hardboiled detective fiction can be recognized by four main elements; the language, the settings, the detective, and the detection.

John Scaggs, in his book *Crime Fiction: New Critical Idiom* says, “The first of these is what kind links the hardboiled detective fiction has with other literature of the period. Hardboiled language describes things rather than ideas, adjectives are kept to a minimum, it reports what happened and what was said, not how it felt” (p. 301). Many writers of hardboiled detective fiction have said that they began by imitating Ernest Hemingway.

As for the settings of the hardboiled detective fiction, large cities are generally preferred. The cities are described as dark, dangerous places run by corrupt politicians and gangster syndicates. The sort of crime that takes place in their stories also could be read about in newspapers.

As Raymond Chandler in his book *The Simple Art of Murder* puts it, the world they describe is “not a fragrant world but it is the world you live in” (p.285). The hero of Hardboiled detective stories is usually a private detective hero in the nineteenth century. The hero brings order to the lives of the people they choose to help. This is the third element.

The fourth defining characteristic of hardboiled detective fiction is the method of detection itself. In keeping with origins in western and romance stories, the hardboiled detective is usually presented as being on a quest. The predominant element of hardboiled fiction was derived from the incidents that happen very common in society.

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Detective Fiction in Indian Writing in English

Even as diaspora experience dominates Indian writing in English, detective fiction writing in Indian writing in English also has grown abundantly. There is a large audience of readers who are not well at home with Indian writing in Indian languages. These readers include millions of children and students who prefer to go to English medium schools and these children and students seem to avidly read detective fiction in Indian writing in English. Characters are Indian and their personal preferences and characteristics are Indian even if they are idiosyncratic. Intuition and dynamic planning are offered as some of the impressive traits of characters in these novels in Indian writing in English.

As for Indian detective fiction in Indian languages, these are often serialized in magazines. In many Indian languages, historical themes and detection seem to go hand in hand. An insightful presentation of detective fiction in Indian writing in English and Indian languages is available in http://www.tehelka.com/story_main52.asp?filename=hub120512Case.asp by Aradhna Wal.

Conclusion

Twentieth century crime fiction presents criminals in some peculiar ways: sometimes critical of the characters, sometimes with great admiration and some other times ignoring the characters altogether while focusing on the suspense elements of the events reported. Crime may be unresolved, enticing the readers to speculate and get involved. Criminology and crime fiction established close relationship, challenging political leaders to come up with adequate legal provisions against ever-changing nuances of crime.

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