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## THE FUNCTIONING OF THE DETECTIVE SCHEME IN POSTMODERN LITERATURE

(G. del Toro and C. Hogan «The Strain»)

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*In postmodern literature, the detective story does not often act as an independent genre, but merges with other genre varieties of the novel and performs predominantly a formal function of the narrative organization of the story, which ultimately blurs the very structure of the detective story. Therefore, the novel G. del Toro and C. Hogan «The Strain» is not an exception, as a postmodern novel, which combines elements of horror novel, mystery, thriller, detective story. The article focuses on detecting and investigating detective elements in the novel G. del Toro and C. Hogan «The Strain» and their role in the composition of the literary work.*

**Key words:** *postmodern novel, detective story, classical detective story, mystery, formulaic scheme.*

The novel «Strain» by Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan refers to postmodern literature, that involves the genre diffusion, the eclecticism and the complexity of content, the synthesis of many traditional genre forms within the same text. The combination itself of different genre forms within the same text, among other postmodern features, gives a unique singularity and originality of this work of literature. The novel, as a sort of epic genre, is also characterized by the lyrization and the dramatization of the narrative, which is a manifestation of the generic-type transformation of the postmodern work.

Dramatization of the story is associated with the use of signs of horror novel, mystery, thriller, detective story. The discovery and research of detective manifestations in the text of this novel is the purpose of our study.

The study of the detective genre in literary criticism lasts a long time, over a century, but due to the fact that the features of the detective genre are changing and transforming, acquiring new features and manifestations, the research is relevant.

The detective story has been investigated by different approaches: typological, systemic, comparative-historical, structural, etc. R. Austin Freeman, a well-known English author of detective stories, highlights the com-

positional features of the detective story in his essay *The Art of the Detective Story* (1924): the problem (crime); investigation (solo part of the investigator); solution (the answer and the question «who?»); proof, analysis of facts (answers and questions «how?» and «why?») [5, p. 14].

V. Shklovskii, Yu. Shcheglov and Yu. Lotman analyze the detective story by means of the structure-formalist approach. All these studies are conducted on the material of the classical detective story — A. Conan Doyle's short stories about Sherlock Holmes. V. Shklovsky outlined the scheme of repetition of motives, techniques, elements that have stable, permanent functions in the detective text. Highlighting nine points that form the basis of Conan Doyle's short stories («expectations», «appearance of clients», «evidence», «misinterpretation», «departure to the place of crime», etc.) [3, p. 141–142], while the characters are only functions. V. Shklovsky reduces the detective text to the commission and investigation of the crime: «In the story there is nothing but a crime and a consequence» [3, p. 141].

Then, Y. Lotman develops this idea by dividing literary works by purpose reproducing a fact of life and «... in which the tragic life contradictions are replaced by incredible» riddles» and «secrets», here the difficulty is only simulated. It is only necessary to bring to them some uncomplicated system of rules and everything is unraveled as a ball of thread. Problems begin when the reader, accustomed to «the game by rules», requires equality in the knowledge of all the moves» [2, p. 375–388].

We shall notice, that all these considerations are fair in relation to the classical detective story, but with the emergence of modern, and then post-modern literature, the existence of «code», «schemes» of a detective novel is impossible, this is due to a change in the narrative manner, narrative strategies, different temporality between the story and the plot, the order of discourse.

In the novel we analyze, detective elements are assimilated in the general context of the postmodern character, which gives the right to characterize the novel as a hybrid form, where the authors combine a classical detective scheme with new narrative strategies, different temporalities, and mystery. The intensified attention to irrational and mystical is one of the leading signs of the postmodern novel, that is typical of the novel «The Strain.»

We shall notice, that we understand mystery not as a way of self-perception in the world, but as a «formal artistic device» [1, p. 213].

Thus, the mystery becomes a sign of not so realistic literature but mass, popular, formulaic literature. We define the novel «The Strain» as a combi-

nation of several meta-genres: detective, philosophical, love, and mystic, where the mystical is interpreted in a broad sense, namely: as an embodiment in the work using a certain system of artistic and figurative means of the sensory experience of passive cognition by a person of a secret, supernatural and communication with him. It is mystery, in our view, that destroys the traditional logical scheme of the detective story in the novel, due to the introduction of various narratives and space-time continuum that fabulously combine the rational and the irrational, the past and the present.

The classic detective story is based on the scheme: a crime, an investigation of a detective, a punishment, and the connecting link of the plot is always a enigma, a secret, for the disclosure of which the intellect and the intelligence are required. In the classical detective story, for example, about Sherlock Holmes, a detective, arriving at the crime scene, conducts an investigation, which ends with the disclosure of the crime. The reader, who, step by step, follows him in his investigation of a crime, often does not notice certain details and makes incorrect conclusions and assumptions that does not allow to expose the villain, as this is the priority of the detective who is investigating the case.

In the novel «The Strain» the narrative begins not with the description of the crime, but from the retrospective history of the childhood of Abraham Setrakian. This story is presented in the form of a «*bubbeh meiseh*,» which grandmas tells him at lunch.

«*Once upon a time,*» said Abraham Setrakian's grandmother, «*there was a giant*» [4, p. 9].

«*...bubbeh meiseh, a «grandmother's story». A fairy tale. A legend*» [4, p. 9].

But this is not an ordinary child's fairy tale, but a strange and scary legend about Joseph Sardu, who was very good and extremely high. Having gone with his father and his family to hunt for a wolf, Joseph survived alone. Although he was alone, but he felt he was being followed, he decided to return to the cave, where his family had been killed, to avenge their death and die in battle.

«*Master Sardu carried each body away from the cave and buried them deep. Of course, this exertion severely weakened him, taking most of his strength. He was spent, he was farmutshet. And yet, alone and scared and exhausted, he returned to the cave that night, to face what evil revealed itself after dark, to avenge his forebears or die trying*» [4, p. 11].

As we have seen, the authors seek to convince the reader of the truthfulness of the depicted events, and this is evidenced by the fact that a Jozeph

diary was found, where he wrote about the events that took place in the woods.

*«This is known from a diary he kept, discovered in the woods many years later. This was his last entry» [4, p. 11].*

And then, 11 weeks later, Joseph returned to the village, retired in the castle, dismissed most of the servants, never walked in the afternoon and never showed up. Only at night in the village walked a giant, and especially the children heard a knock of his stick. Soon the peasant children began to disappear, they were found dead.

*«Then, in the eleventh week, one night a carriage with curtained windows arrived at the Sardu estate. It was the young master».*

*«Then, Abraham, some peasant children began to disappear. Stories went around of children vanishing from surrounding villages as well». «Their bodies were found in a clearing of the woods, as white as the snow surrounding them, their open eyes glazed with frost» [4, p. 12].* This detail, which characterizes the dead bodies, white as snow, becomes the leitmotif of the narrative in the novel.

About the next events the grandmother learns from the gypsies, who often passed around the castle, therefore, they talked about all sorts of eccentricities that took place around the castle, *«...of hauntings and apparitions near the castle. Of a giant who prowled the moonlit land like a god of the night. It was they who warned us, «Eat and grow strong-or else Sardu will get you»» [4, p. 13].*

As you can see, in this story, that was filed at the beginning of the novel, appear several narrators: Grandma, Joseph, Abraham Setrakian, Sardu with their diary entries, gypsies. Such an assignment of a narration from one narrator to another allows us, in our opinion, to convert the mystical and the secret events into the plane of reality, and to convert the terrible and scary story of the Giants Sardu into a parody scheme, since the final story was told by the gypsies, who, as you know, shouldn't be believed.

We can state that at the beginning of the novel, the authors resort to the game with the reader, violating the effect of the predictable expectation from reading the literary work.

Such a retrospection, a review of the past, is necessary for the author to explain how and why the Jewish antique dealer Abraham Setrakian becomes a detective, since he was one of the first who met the criminal, tracked him for many years. It is the image of Abraham in the novel that connects various time continuums: the past and the present. The story of the offender,

Juzeph Sardu, is presented at the beginning of the novel through the prism of Abraham's perception.

In addition to Abraham, an epidemiologist Ephraim Goodweather conducts a case investigation and searches for the offender.

The entire text of the novel is a gradual disclosure of a crime committed against the background of the private life of Ephraim and the memories of Abraham; besides, we also learn about the offender not immediately, but during the literary work.

The crime described in the novel is also not one-time, spatially and temporally limited. The crime seems strange, impossible, which also gives him a mystical character.

Already by the description of the crime it is clear that this is not an ordinary crime, because simply by reason can not be explained. The role of mystery, the supernatural intervention is obvious to the reader. The logical laws of the classical detective story do not work here, because the crime seems fantastic, mystical. However, the authors of the novel «The Strain» are trying to turn the reader into a routine analysis, guided not by fears and emotions, but by reason. The episodes, that cause fear and a sense of danger, are replaced by attempts to give a logical and reasonable explanation of the crime. Thus, in the text gradually appears the motive of vampirism, which is interpreted as a moral and ethical category of human being, and not a mystical-fantastic element of the literary work. The scientific substantiation of vampirism, presented in the novel, makes it possible to conclude that this is a real illness that paralyzes the will of a person, makes it different.

*«The virus mimics the host's form, though it reinvents its vital systems in order to best sustain itself. In other words, it colonizes and adapts the host for its survival» [4, p. 270].*

Thus, the apparently mystical and fantastic phenomenon of vampirism in the novel is converted by the authors into a real plane, interpreted as a disease that threatens human destruction. Such a transfer from the mystical plane to the real one in the novel «The Strain» is possible due to detective history, the search for the offender, because it is a detective investigation that balances on the verge of rational and irrational, helps to understand the nature of the catastrophe that threatens humanity.

Moving in his investigation as if in a labyrinth, the main detectives, Abraham and Ephraim, gradually outline, become aware of the character of the offender. If he has been known to Abraham since concentration camps, he will «open up» for Ephraim gradually.

*«Sardu. Or a Thing that once had been him. Its skin was shriveled and dark, blending with the fold of its dark, loose robes. Much like an animated blotch of ink. The Thing moved effortlessly, a weightless phantom gliding across the floor. Its talonlike toenails scraped the wood ever so softly» [4, p. 147].*

Thus, for Abraham the perpetrator of crime is known, he knows about his danger and insidiousness.

Ephraim gradually finds out in the course of the crime investigation at the airport, J. Kennedy, that *«He has had many forms. Currently, he has taken the body of a Polish nobleman named Jusef Sardu, who went missing during a hunting expedition in the north country of Romania, in the spring of 1873» [4, p. 373–374].*

By resorting to this not completely traditional detective scheme of the offender, the authors use the editing, «torn tale style», which enables the image of the life of the perpetrator as a series of horrible crimes, which he has been carrying out for several centuries. Due to such a large number of crimes and an overly long period of time when the perpetrator managed to be non-punitive, the authors raise another issue — the magnitude of the crime, the dependence of the fate of many people on the wishes of the offender. In fact, the crime does not concern a single person, not even a group of people, but all of humanity. «... that a plague has been loosed upon this city. And soon the world beyond» [4: 242]. Thus, the form of the detective story again leads the reader to realize not separate problems of the individual, but to rethink, to understand the relationship between man and the world, man and nature, man and society, which gives them a philosophical and ontological interpretation in the novel. At this stage of the text, the detective canvas of the novel is merely a formal scheme that transfers the reader to another range of issues, without the elements of didactics and moralisation from the part of the authors.

Such a transfer of the narrative from the detective plane to the ontological and philosophical plane changes the concept and the understanding of the victim. If in a classical detective story a victim is a person who has actually committed a crime, then her punishment does not cause sympathy for the reader, then in the novel «The Strain» children, families, elderly people become victims, as the authors, on the contrary, cause a reader's confusion, compassion.

*«It was the young girl who had died holding her mother's hand. Eph had memorized her body's location on the floor without realizing it. You always remember the children. Her blond hair lay flat, a smiling sun pendant hanging*

*from a black cord rested against the pit of her throat. Her white dress made her look almost bridelike»* [4, p. 90].

Thus, the authors emphasize the insecurity of a person, the possibility, the probability that it can fall victim of the ambitions and desires of another person. This insecurity causes despair and fear, since it is not important for the perpetrator who will be his next victim.

The authors of the novel «The Strain» say that such a spiritual emptiness, the loss of all human basis, humanity in man, is a disaster, a problem that more and more covers the humanity.

So, after analyzing the elements of the detective story in the novel «The Strain,» we can state that the authors fall away from the scheme of the classical detective story in the text, which is quite natural for the postmodern novel. Detective elements of the work are rather a «formulaic scheme», which, due to the fragmentation, the ragged narrative, makes it possible to combine, within the same text, the figures of several narrators (Grandma, Abraham, Ephraim, Juseph, Gus, Eldrich Palmer).

In addition, because of this detective scheme, the authors retain the mystery and the tension of the story, while resorting to the elements of mystery. However, the authors attempt to analyze the unusual, unrealistic events, with the help of human reason to give logic and intellectual arguments, which excludes the unreal explanation of the depicted events and enables them to be interpreted on a philosophical and ontological plane. Such a transformation of moral and philosophical issues, giving it ontological character without signs of didacticism and moralisation is possible precisely because of the use of detective elements in the text of the novel.

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## ФУНКЦИОНИРОВАНИЕ ДЕТЕКТИВНОЙ СХЕМЫ В ПОСТМОДЕРНИСТСКОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЕ (Г. дель Торо и Ч. Хоган «Штамм»)

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*В статье выявлены и проанализированы способы и пути трансформации схемы классического детектива в постмодернистском романе Г. дель Торо и Ч. Хогана «Штамм». В постмодернистской литературе детектив чаще всего выступает не как самостоятельный жанр, а соединяется с другими жанровыми разновидностями романа и выполняет преимущественно формальную функцию сюжетной организации повествования, что в конечном итоге размывает саму структуру детективного сюжета. В романе Г. дель Торо и Ч. Хогана «Штамм» соединены элементы романа ужаса, мистики, триллера, детектива.*

**Ключевые слова:** *постмодернистский роман, детектив, классический детектив, мистика, формульная схема.*

## ФУНКЦІОНУВАННЯ ДЕТЕКТИВНОЇ СХЕМИ В ПОСТМОДЕРНІСТСЬКІЙ ЛІТЕРАТУРІ (Г. дель Торо та Ч. Хоган «Штамм»)

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*У статті виявлено та проаналізовано способи та шляхи трансформації схеми класичного детективу в постмодерністському романі Г. дель Торо та Ч. Хогана «Штамм». У постмодерністській літературі детектив найчастіше виступає не як самостійний жанр; він синтезується з іншими жанровими різновидами роману і виконує переважно формальну функцію сюжетної організації оповіді, що в кінцевому рахунку розмиває саму структуру детективу. Тому роман Г. дель Торо та Ч. Хогана «Штамм» — не виняток; він є постмодерністським романом, у якому поєднані елементи роману жаху, містики, трилера, детективу.*

*Завдяки детективній схемі автори зберігають таємничість і напруженість оповіді, вдаючись при цьому ще й до елементів містики. Однак саме незвичність, нереальність подій автори і намагаються проаналізувати, логічно та інтелектуально аргументувати на рівні свідомості і реального буття, що виключає ірреальне пояснення зображуваних подій та дає можливість їхньої інтерпретації в філософсько-онтологічному плані. Така трансформація морально-філософської проблематики, надання їй онтологічного характеру без ознак дидактизму та моралізаторства можлива саме завдяки використанню детективних елементів у тексті роману.*

**Ключові слова:** *постмодерний роман, детектив, класичний детектив, містика, формульна схема.*

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