

## **TRADITIONAL TENDENCIES IN MODERN ADAPTATIONS OF DETECTIVE NOVELS**

*Akhmedova Firuza Kakhramanovna*

*Bukhara State University Master's degree student*

*e-mail: [firikakhmedov3@gmail.com](mailto:firikakhmedov3@gmail.com)*

**Abstract.** The thesis provides a theoretical basis for the study of traditional tendencies in modern adaptations of detective novels. The detective story has become one of the most popular forms of all genres. The writers of detective novels portrayed various types of detective figures with their strange habits. The crime is investigated by an amateur person, the private detective or police department.

**Key words:** *detective, subgenres, portrayed, curiosity, engaging stories, sustain, humour.*

In this chapter the tendencies in the adaptations of the classical detective stores of the Golden Age detective fiction writers will be outlined. The focus will be laid on the adaptations of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories and Agatha Christie's Poirot and Miss Marple stories together with Gilbert Keith Chesterton and his Father Brown. The popularity of Sherlock Holmes was undisputable since the first short stories. During the publication history at the end of the nineteenth century when Doyle published his novels and short stories in Strand Magazine, he increased the sale with regular publishing of his short stories. When the first novel featuring the future famous Sherlock Holmes was published in 1887 in the Christmas issue of Beeton's Christmas Annual, no one supposed the popularity that this novel would bring. A Study in Scarlet "which introduced us to the immortal Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson" started the immense popularity of the amateur sleuth and his

companion and enforced readers to wait for buying the next issue of The Strand Magazine.

“Fifty-six Holmes stories appeared in the magazine from 1891 to 1927, many of them illustrated by Sidney Paget's now famous drawings.” The man responsible for the familiar and popular image of Sherlock Holmes as a tall man with the deerstalker hat and a calabash pipe is Sidney Paget, while in novels and short stories Doyle described Holmes wearing only the unspecific travelling cap and with several pipes that he changed according to his mood.

The popularity of the series could have been caused by the tension arising from the expectations of the next story to be published and the new adventure to be told. After the publishing of “The Final Problem” in 1893 where Sherlock Holmes died at The Reichenbach Falls, “twenty thousand readers cancelled their subscriptions to The Strand Magazine.” The popularity of the printed versions of the stories inspired people for their radio and stage adaptations, even musicals and ballets were created featuring the great detective. One of the earliest stage actors portraying Holmes was William Gillette, who played Holmes and wrote some plays featuring Sherlock Holmes. With the boom of the filming industry almost all of Doyle’s novels and short stories were made into films. One of the most memorable actors known for playing Sherlock Holmes was Basil Rathbone; however, the first actor to represent Sherlock Holmes in the movie was Viggo Larsen. Holmes was, and still is, very popular theme for directors. Between the first silent film from 1900<sup>58</sup> Sherlock Holmes Baffled until 1968 “there were 106 Holmes films and 17 versions of The Hound of the Baskervilles.” Up to now there are more than two hundred film adaptations played by more than seventy-five different actors world wide.<sup>60</sup> All these television versions and movies adhered to the original stories concerning plots, characters, time, setting and the overall appearance. In 2009 director Guy Ritchie created completely different type of the Sherlock Holmes movies, starring Robert Downey Jr. as the legendary detective and Jude Law as Dr Watson, followed by the

sequel in 2011. This dynamic version from the American production depicts Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson fighting against a black magic follower and a serial killer Lord Blackwood who has risen from the dead and is threatening London. Beside the dramatic approach to the plot, another discrepancy is the character of Sherlock. He is not as tall as his book model, more than acknowledged with martial arts and almost constantly covered with bruises and blood. The film is not based on any exact book of Arthur Conan Doyle but even though the resemblance is visible. Besides the obvious match of the names, one can identify Doyle's stories according to eccentric behaviour, inclination to scientific experiments, drug addictions and the most significantly from the cape and a pipe, violin and the omnipresent companion. Although this adaptation does not follow any concrete story and changes the characters, it respects the time arrangement of the original stories.

Another significantly different adaptation of Doyle's Holmes is the British TV series Sherlock. "A modern update finds the famous sleuth and his doctor partner solving crime in 21st century London." Released for the first time in 2010, it soon attracted popularity due to its contemporary character. Sherlock Holmes, played by Benedict Cumberbatch, and Dr John Watson, played by Martin Freeman, solve crimes with the newest technical equipment and technology, travelling by black cabs instead of coaches and Dr Watson writes an internet blog about their adventures. Cumberbatch and Freeman perfectly identify with the literary characters in characteristics and appearance of literary Holmes and Watson. Every story bears the changed title of the original Doyle's story and the plot comprises plots from several stories.

One more example of the modern adaptation of Sherlock Holmes series is the American TV series Elementary, where Lucy Liu plays Dr Joan Watson and Jonny Lee Miller plays rehabilitating Sherlock Holmes. This TV adaptation does not follow the original place setting, because this version is set New York and time when set in the twenty-first century.

One interesting fact about the film adaptations of Doyle's books is the ability to distinguish the original in it. Holmes can be a modern man using the newest iPhone or his companion can be a woman but the viewer can recognize the pattern of Arthur Conan Doyle's stories. The careful viewer can recognize one more TV character with the resemblance to Sherlock Holmes. The fictional character Dr Gregory House, M.D. is partially based on the novels of Arthur Conan Doyle. Beside the identical addresses and an addiction to illegal substances, both characters has their less intelligent assistant, both play the musical instrument and both share similar traces in their appearance and behaviour. The most significant resemblance to the book is the technique House uses to diagnose his patients.

Agatha Christie's books were also adapted for all types of media, radio, theatre and film industry. For the first man to portray Hercule Poirot is considered Charles Laughton in 1928 play *Alibi*. Three years later Austin Trevor played Poirot for the first time on film. Another reputable actor in the role of Hercule Poirot was Peter Ustinov starring in six film adaptations of Agatha Christie's stories. The most credited actor portraying Hercule Poirot on screen is British actor David Suchet. Suchet's first contact with Poirot series was in 1985 when he played Inspector Japp in *Thirteen at Dinner* with Peter Ustinov playing Poirot.

In 1989 the British TV company ITV started the production of Agatha Christie's short stories and novels starring David Suchet as Hercule Poirot and Hugh Fraser as Captain Hastings. During the first two year of the production, ITV produced thirty films in the fifty-minute length. After the one-year production break in 1992, the filming continued until 2013 with the same cast. All together Suchet portrayed Poirot in seventy films covering almost all stories by Agatha Christie about the Great Belgian Detective. Suchet is considered the best actor in the role of Hercule Poirot and one of the few people in history to remain with the role for almost quarter century and to portray almost every original story. "Although it is common in music for a pianist to play, for example, a complete Beethoven cycle [...] such

completism is almost impossible in television because of the level of commitment required from both performers – who understandably fear typecasting – and network executives, who are prone to changes of mind and fashion: ITV is unrecognisable in personnel and structure from when the first Poirot was shown almost quarter of a century ago.”David Suchet is, therefore, an unique actor who was able to remain with his fictional character and still be faithful to the original character and setting.

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