

Changing Forms of Narratives of Detective Fiction in the Modern Era of Science and Technology

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61165/sk.publisher.v13i5.2>

Abstract: Digital Globalization has been the maxim of the late 20th and early 21st century. It has made the world smaller and closer. The changing character of the present era stems from the integration of biology and technology, thus making the world a global village. Access to the world's literature is no longer a distant dream. New cultural narratives, along with society, are being discovered and transformed with the emergence of new technologies. The study aims to establish how detective fiction, although criticized and categorized as popular fiction has triumphed over other genres of literature as being the most read genre of literature in the world, and walking hand in hand with changing times has survived its importance and created new avenues for readers in this techno- crazed world. The paper attempts to map the changing gamut in the narratives of detective fiction as it is undergoing a momentous change with the advent of globalization which brought with it technological revolution in doing so, the paper aims to study how the changing spectrum in the fields of technology, digitalisation, and globalisation influences not only the subject matter of contemporary crime narratives but also the genesis, allocation, and consumption of crime fiction in the world at large. It also showcases how detectives, as well as criminals, make use of digital technologies in crime fiction. Digitalisation, be it remakes, social media adaptations of crime novels, podcasts, fan fiction or transmedia narratives, aids in space for self-reflection for society.

Keywords: Detective, Crime, Globalization, Technology, Digitalization, Posthumanism, Podcast.

I. INTRODUCTION

“Globalisation is transforming trade, finance, employment, migration, technology, communications, the environment, social systems, ways of living, cultures, and patterns of governance.” (Streeten 52)

Globalisation has brought about a massive breakthrough in the technological revolution. With the coming of the Industrial Revolution in the 1960s, the 1970s scientific revolution rapidly enveloped the whole society with various behavioural, economic, dimensional, and cultural changes. The arrival of globalisation not only shrank the geographical boundaries but also erased them altogether, making movement and connectivity so rapid. Globalisation and technology have democratised information, giving everyone an equal opportunity to access and process data.

With the harbinger of the Age of Enlightenment, our lives have been moulded with several nuances that technology has brought forward. Machines and technology have revolutionized the world on a large scale, not confined only to the augmentation of human labour but also in several spheres that have substituted them altogether, thus making almost everything

technologically driven. In view of the current milieu, newer and up-to-date technological systems need to be devised in order to meet the requisition of today's postmodernist, post-industrial society. As residents of a technologically advanced world, we experience systems that have become more powerful and are continuously being generated and improved. The regeneration of various digital forms of more worldly and automated mechanical, electrical, electronic, and communication systems gives a promise of a technologically advanced society. These systems constitute integral elements of modern industrial and everyday activities and are supposed to transcend to a level of accuracy, efficacy, and quality, ranging across a wide array of operating environments.

Humans are undergoing tremendous change through their convergence with technology. So, if there is a change in the idea of humans as an integral self, everything associated with it will also experience some change. Literature is an inevitable part of human life, an extension of society. Cyberspace forums like Wattpad, acclaimed for their utopic potential, also provide a congenial platform even for amateur and budding authors to portray their literary creativity. Even professional authors take advantage of the far-reaching aspect of digital space to form a connection with their readers and gain more readership. They inculcate an interest in reading among more and more people and aid in making a phenomenal change in the reader's behaviour. In the time of the pandemic, when everything came to a standstill, the internet provided a digital library that effectively replaced our traditional system of learning and teaching. This new model of storytelling is exuberantly accepted with open arms by everyone as a beneficial and entertaining addition to the extant undertaking. It aims to catch the attention of the younger audience, who are the progeny of the digital world, as they find it difficult to attract such an audience through traditional means. Though the reading population has increased in number, if we see the percentage of those readers, people reading through traditional means, i.e. books, are fast declining because of the more accessible and user-friendly nature of technology. One sitting in remote areas can easily access an infinite number of books in digital libraries with a click of a button. Also, due to the easy accessibility of technology across all ages and genders, people prefer viewing rather than seeing. Though the advancement in the digital world of literature is vast, there remains significant room for growth. Despite its global accessibility, its primary users are younger audiences, who also explicitly belong to better-educated classes. Only through several changes and time can a more diverse audience be acquired, which will require the digital mediums to broaden the range of their materials and use better interfaces; only then can some significant growth in the use of digital media be realised.

Aristotle gave three unities of place, space and time, which, as time progressed, slowly and steadily kept changing. The author's outlook towards these unities became liberal as the view became panoramic, but that panoramic view has today become cosmic. In traditional books, the space was confined to two cities, but today, it is not even barred to continents, as in this digital age narratives, even space is included.

The movie *Edge of Tomorrow* inspired by the novel *All You Need is Kill* by Hiroshi Sakurazaka, featuring Tom Cruise in the lead role, showcases people stuck in the exact moment and travelling to and from that time only to return to the precise moment to change the possible outcome of an action. The dimensions have changed with the coming of science and technology, and time and travel have become a common phenomenon.

With the coming of science and technology art is envisioning a futuristic species of human beings who are an amalgamation of humans and technology blended into one turning humans into superhumans. In the *Avengers* movie "Iron Man", behind the exterior of the armoured superhero is Tony Stark, a genius scientist who employs his abilities to create a powerful exoskeleton that enables him to be a superhuman with a wide range of powers. Although Iron Man is a simulated reality in a tangible world, this vivid example promises a bright future. Hitherto, many great successes can be seen in the field of science and technology, which makes it feasible to lengthen and improve people's lives through the use of pacemakers, hearing devices, artificial legs and many others.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper begins with correspondence between technological discourse and social discourse in interface with criminology. The paper elaborates how with the dawn of globalization, detective fiction became multifaceted and versatile giving kaleidoscopic layers to the structure and analysis of the literature of sleuths. For a better understanding of the topic, a brief description of modern adaptations of traditional detectives is included like Holme's modern-age TV adaptation and Agatha Christie's 21st-century adaptation of "Body in the Library" on Twitter. Following the same path are the works of Shari Lapena's "An Unwanted Guest" and Pierre Lemaitre's "Alex". The literary works cited in this paper include "Serial" by Sarah Koenig and Six Stories by Matt Wesolowki which showcase the coming together of two important disciplines of the modern era to provide auditory pleasure in podcast format which is a new progeny of technology to the readers. The interplay of literature in the podcast and then podcast in the literature shows the interdisciplinary nature of detective fiction and series of works, published consecutively, starting with Mary Shelley "Frankenstein", Rick Deckard's "Do Android Dream of Electric Sheep?" and Richard Morgan's "Altered Carbon" establishes that the new narrative of detective fiction is also connected with posthumanist leanings thus demonstrating a close relationship between mortal subjectivity in relationship with AI and computing machine.

III. BODY

Marshall McLuhan asserted that "The new electronic interdependence recreates the world in the image of a global village."(31)

Literature is a reflection of society, having the potential to create social realities. This interplay between culture and literature asserts that the change in society's narrative is inevitable. Digitalisation has revolutionised every facet of life, including literature, be it diasporic, dystopian, romantic, historical, horror, bildungsroman or crime fiction, which is no exception. Digitalisation has influenced crime fiction more in contrast to its literary counterparts. In contemporary times, 'hidden' part of the internet has expanded and this has offered criminals a wider expanse in which they can carry out their illicit activities.

Zygmunt Bauman once stated, "What was some time ago dubbed (erroneously) 'post-modernity' and what I've chosen to call, more to the point, 'liquid modernity', is the growing conviction that change is the only permanence, and uncertainty the only certainty"(82).

Crime in accompaniment of technology can be a very deadly mixture and has the capability of wiping out the entire human race. Technology is a boon in the hands of those who wield it with prudence, but it becomes a bane in the hands of mischievous particles of society. Crime fiction captures every part of the curriculum, be it forensics, culture, religion, problem-solving, geographical knowledge, audiovisual perceptiveness, or reading comprehension. Crime is a rampant phenomenon prevalent in every day and age that scars the very fabric of society.

Detective fiction is a branch of crime fiction and with its ever-changing nature has been able to be identified in today's world as among the most popular genres of English Literature. It has the ability to make readers conscious of the social realities and flux of the human psyche. Historical accounts, although demonstrate a short chronology of the genre by the rate at it flourished in the first half of the 20th century, ranging from famous accounts by writers like Arthur Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie etc. who gave the world splendid detective hero's figures, is worthy of being remembered. Detective fiction then accelerated into encompassing even the scientific and technological advancement of the modern era, thus expanding the genre to greater heights. Globalization has eradicated the necessity of people to traverse through geographical boundaries to become "citizens of the world". Technology has aided in making the concept of "netizen" true for every individual in the world.

"Some estimates have claimed that one-fourth of all the fiction published in English is crime fiction, while others claim that the figure is closer to one in every ten books published. Perhaps more than sheer bulk, what needs to be taken into account

is the fact that fictional detectives and the concept of the detective novel have captured public imagination like no other form in the twentieth century.”(Gupta 3-4)

Detective fiction evolved through the roots of crime fiction, with the traditional detectives of Poe, Doyle and Christie as the archetype of a classic investigator. However, the emergence of science and technology paved the way for the modern detective who deals with intricate and complex crimes. In earlier novels, crimes were committed by administering some poison or use of some weapon. In today’s day and age, with the advancement of science, detecting a crime has become very difficult as modern problems require modern solutions, so even detectives and police forces seem to be using modern technologies to solve crimes. Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes has become a trailblazer of popular culture, present in every canvas of art, be it novels, films, TV shows, OTT, or Radio shows. His unparalleled influence on culture can be testified by his legacy, which exceeds the limits of Doyle’s written words. Doyle’s enigmatic and eccentric detective is explored excessively in various new interpretations, exploring his inquisitive quests. “He even has a website called *The Science of Deduction*”.

Agatha Christie has given the world some of the best mysteries ever, and for that reason, she is called the ‘Queen of Crime’ despite the continuous refrains that ‘the book is better than the movies’, it cannot be denied that digitalisation has aided in making Agatha Christie relevant even in contemporary times. Twitter’s adaptation of Agatha Christie’s *The Body in the Library* remoulded her great genius for the twenty-first-century audience. Her great genius inspired many new-age writers to follow her style of writing; one such author who dwelled in the world of crime is Shari Lapena and her work *An Unwanted Guest*, a murder mystery in a hotel. It resembles Agatha Christie’s style and seems like a riff on her work, *And Then There Were None*.

It is a very gripping novel, with its vivid crafting and believable characters, thus providing a beguiling thriller experience. However, it will not lull the reader into believing that they know how the story is going to unfold. It becomes more bewildering as one dives deep until calmness prevails and the truth presents itself. It follows the story of a group of strangers who go to a remote Mitchell’s Inn to spend their weekend. In the forest, in the lap of nature, where they think they are safe from the world, misfortunate incidents start to occur.

Lovers of classic locked room murder mystery will find this book up to mark. This book is truly a work of the modern technological evolution of Agatha Christie’s work through the magnificent use of modern equipment and modern technologies. Lapena has revolutionised the genre and, in doing so, has paid a tremendous homage to the excellence that is Agatha Christie; the novel deals with more common current relationship issues along with modern technologies. Despite being contemporary, what makes it more intriguing and draws it closer to Christie is seeing them plunged into darkness, having their modern modes of communication taken away from them and how they coped in that situation.

Alex (2011) also brings to the forefront the psychological horrors of technology, as the continuous surveillance traces the horrors akin to *1984* by George Orwell in the form of pervasive observation: “Big Brother is watching you”(2). It is a fiendishly plotted murder mystery by Pierre Lemaitre and follows the journey of a woman who is abducted and locked in a cell, only to be watched incessantly by her abductor. The book is filled with twists and turns, making it impossible to encompass the metaphor of cat and mouse cleverly used by the author to judge who is the real villain at the book’s heart.

From the use of forensics, chemicals, modern communication devices and networking sites, the novel takes aid of contemporary technology in the development and denouement of the mystery. Physical stature was used as a testament to measure the strength by which one overcomes one’s enemy through the means of physical dominance. Thus, this image of a traditional hero is used to create a psychologically chilling picture of an abuser in a hero’s shoes. On the other hand, the heroine is shown to be a woman with strong mental abilities, and her ability to fight in troubled times rather than being limited to an image of a prototypical helpless woman makes her a sound example for other women. As a contemporary crime novel, it focuses not only on evoking astonishment but also, in equal parts, entertainment and social commentary.

It has been almost fifteen years since the term podcast was coined, and it has taken the world by storm because of its conversational and intimate tone. True crime podcasts are such a rage right now that podcast hosts do live tours and sell out gigs as if they were *Backstreet Boys*, and everybody is ecstatic about how a particular crime was showcased as if we are talking about great music or comedy and not horrifying murders and murderers.

One such example of investigative journalism is the podcast *Serial*, hosted by Sarah Koenig, who narrates nonfiction stories over multiple episodes. It is referred to “as an audio game changer”. It deals with the most essential elements of life: love, death, justice and truth. It helped podcasts broaden their horizons and find their position in the cultural mainstream.

Six Stories by Matt Wesolowski, 2017, is highly intriguing as the story is told in a podcast book format. The true crime Podcast genre has become such a rave that it caters to everyone’s taste because of its vast accessibility; every listener finds the material and voice they want to listen to. As can be interpreted by the name of the novel, *Six Stories* deals with the lives of six individuals. It is a multilayered narrative in which the podcast host, through a series of interviews with the six individuals, peels the layers and moves toward a final solution at the end. It is all because of the advancement of technology that instead of adapting fiction to work in a podcast format, it is happening the other way around.

It deals with the unsolved murder of a teenage boy, a bully, as many accounts insinuated it. He, while on an expedition in Northumberland, goes missing, and a year later, his body is discovered by the noble’s son in a swamp; what follows is how and why he was murdered. It has an added supernatural flavour with the presence of beasts and witches. The novel is written in the form of a transcript of a podcast, at least the part containing the recordings of the interview.

The characterisation in the book is a work of outstanding craftsmanship, and the storyline pivots on them. Instead of the traditional way of investigation, the story dives into the relationships the characters share among themselves, their bond, their secrets, and their opinion of the murdered boy and each other. It deals with the inner happenings of the minds of the individuals and how it all culminated in the death of Tom Jeffries. It is a modern mystery and a welcome break from the traditional way of writing thrillers. It shows the advancement of digitalisation as, in place of a conventional detective, an online journalist, through a series of digital interviews, tries to work out the murder mystery by using such a unique and original narrative presentation style. He makes the characters almost lifelike and three-dimensional.

Even though so much time has passed, the narrative is still very intriguing and relevant in the present scenario. Still, with the coming of new devices and a new range of equipment, the narrative also adapted to the changing times. Mary Shelley’s vision of creating a monster that foreshadows the concept of bioengineering, genetic engineering and other augmentation of human traits makes her novel a harbinger of the exploration of the idea of posthumanism. Victor Frankenstein’s monster was the technological manifestation of man’s interference with laws of nature, as in doing so violated traditional laws of humanity. This sentient creature was a jigsaw of many body parts assembled to create this unorthodox being.

In the early nineteenth century, when this otherworldly concept was created, science and technology were at its nascent stage. So, for the time it was written, it was a revolutionary idea and a knock on the upcoming scientific breakthrough in artificial intelligence.

As Fukuyama cautions, “The most significant threat posed by contemporary biotechnology is the possibility that it will alter human nature and thereby move us into a ‘posthuman’ stage of history” (7).

The human body was used to be treated as a perfect entity. However, this image has been distorted with the advent of science and technology, and the ideals of anthropocentrism have been altered. Like any other bio-entity, humans keep on constantly changing, as is the case with science and technology, so the nature and narratives of crime and detective fiction change with changing times. This constant change, this continuous evolution which was previously only limited to science and technology, has now also entered human space.

Theorists believe that, somehow, our thoughts will be directly socialised without the mediation of language via the use of technology. Thus, even humans turn into robots; this ideology is central to the Posthumanism vision. It displaces the idea of the human being at the centre of the world or that humans are sovereign, autonomous, coherent entities.

As posthumanism progresses, so do the multiple concerns related to its multifaceted structure worries regarding the crimes that may spring up as a result of abuse of technological advancements like artificial intelligence, cyborgs and cognitive augmentation that may shake the very fabric of ethics and mores of society.

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? (1968) is a dystopian novel showcasing Rick Deckard's journey. A private agent is assigned the duty to kill six escaped Nexus-6 model androids. The novel transgresses through the blurred association between humans and technology, with its themes making posthumanist explorations.

Dick's novel employs the symbol of sheep as a mark of a person's social standing. In Christianity, sheep represents Jesus and is often associated with innocence and purity. However, the novel continues on the same thread, people grappling with the prospect of having a natural or android sheep. However, the natural sheep denotes a connection to the real human world; the image is used as a commentary on the capitalist society, which becomes even more poignant as the protagonist continuously yearns to buy a natural sheep, which, although distorted, has a tangible semblance to the human world.

The novel's analogy explores the modern generation's obsession with technology as the very identity of being a human is questioned by the virtual entity displacing humans from the face of the earth. Although this dystopian event is a fictitious account of an apocalyptic world, it gives testimony to the current ambiguity regarding the "human question" as interdependence on technology can spiral out of control within seconds.

As Harris warns, "The real danger is not that computers will begin to think like men, but that men will begin to think like computers" (175).

Altered Carbon by Richard Morgan is a gritty sci-fi noir tale. It is a futuristic novel where the 'victim' is trying to solve his murder mystery by employing a man who has been killed in another planet colony. The book provides a critical lens through which even the interstellar world carries imprints of capitalist exploitation.

The novel questions technological advancement and criticises the fact that in the name of progress, fundamental aspects of existence are being tampered with, where the concept of human identity has become so fluid that body and soul have become disparate objects, where even life has become a commodity with no boundaries of identity and existence where even consciousness has become a saleable asset and the very fabric of morality is up for a bargain. Takeshi Kovacs, the cynical protagonist, a former soldier turned private detective, manoeuvres through the mysteries of multi-planetary existence and virtual immortality.

Altered Carbon is a faithful marriage of crime and science fiction; it illustrates the havoc that lies ahead of humans if they do not cautiously tread this path of a super future where posthumanist ideologies will be at the centre of everything.

In the earlier creations, *James Bond* by Ian Fleming was seen making less use of technological equipment as the world entered into a more modern, technologically crazed world; even the character of Bond seemed over-reliant on these scientific, electronic and digital gadgets. With the progress of science and technology, machines have become a permanent residence in our day-to-day lives; as in resolving the crime, the hero takes the aid of some or other technological appliance to disarm the opponent; thus, it is pivotal that the equipment and devices are trustworthy and competent in performing the desired role for which they are employed. Although technology helped him in several instances in *No Time to Die*, Bond dies as a result of a missile explosion. So one should remember that despite all its attributes, total dependence on technology is fatal, as it is not devoid of failure; past evidence proves that no human-made equipment has a constant zero probability of failure.

IV. CONCLUSION

Klaus Schwab notes that Technology is a double-edged sword. It has the potential to provide greater access to information, but it can also be used to spread misinformation and amplify fear. Technology facilitates in making human life more manageable. From ringing an alarm clock in the morning to using a Kindle at night, technology has become man's best companion, aiding man even in their sleep (as when asleep, one or the other digital device is working, be it temperature or air control devices). Nevertheless, whether this is truly a faithful friend or a friend under the guise of a foe, only time will decide, so over-dependence on such an object is imprudent. The technological revolution has reached leaps and bounds with the coming of artificial intelligence cyborgs, but this progress brings with it a cautionary tale for the masses. We have rapidly moved from humanism to transhumanism and are steps away from reaching posthumanism. However, the question that arises with man's rapid progress towards posthumanism is why humans are so keen to move towards a place/time where we have to compete with our own invention. An object that can displace us from our position on the top of the food chain, this pursuit reflects man's foolishness and greed to be attributed god-like. Technology is beneficial when handled properly, but when unchecked, human intrusion on the forces of life can result in dire consequences and become a breeding ground for crimes. Technology is a double-edged sword, and like a sword, technology, when not handled with caution, can inflict a grievous injury. Without realising ethical norms, obligations, and consequences of scientific exploration and the dangers of playing the role of 'supreme architect of the universe', it can cause moral, ethical, cultural, and even physical bankruptcy in humans. The ultimate question is, are we ready to be a cautionary tale for other species of the world?

The technological and scientific revolution enables us to celebrate myriad facets of detective fiction. Detective fiction as a genre operates in form and realm, not belonging to existing reality, as everything, including the cause and the outcomes, is probable. It works in establishing the idea that the main ideology behind detective fiction is that it is formative, also it tangents on the point that probability has become the new reality, as now computers are writing stories. So it is cemented that reality and probability coexist in the realms of modern narratives of detective fiction, as we see the convergence of science and technology with literature. Detective fiction in accompaniment with technology is an unbeatable alliance, as it has the power to adapt itself and evolve into multiple sub-genres and structures. Detective fiction takes the human psyche to a lawfully, morally correct place where there is a tenable moral equilibrium. The genre is a testament to scientific and digital progress as it makes use of technology to counter the abuse of technology, thus the action and reaction balance each other, creating a social and cultural equipoise as their interaction is a potent sphere that provides a fertile ground for investigation and analysis of the essence of humanity in an accelerating age of digitalization. It substantiates that science and technology are revolutionising the narratives of detective fiction.

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∴ Cite this article ∴

Vidusha Arora & Prof. Randeep Rana. (2026). Changing Forms of Narratives of Detective Fiction in the Modern Era of Science and Technology. SK INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH HUB, 13(5), 10-17.

<https://doi.org/10.61165/sk.publisher.v13i5.2>