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ISAAC ASIMOV IS A DOYLE MAN- A STUDY ON ASIMOV'S *THE CAVES OF STEEL*

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ABSTRACT

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is one of the pioneers of the English detective fiction and he created a new trend in detective fiction through his Sherlock Holmes stories. He is the inspirational force behind many modern sleuths, who still show the traces of Sherlock Holmes, the first scientific detective of the world. Many writers of the later centuries were greatly influenced by Doyle. Isaac Asimov, the popular American mastermind, is one of those writers, who were attracted by Doyle. Though he once told that he was not a true enthusiast of Holmes, there are many examples in his Baley novels to show the influence of Holmes. Asimov travels in the same path created by Doyle.

Keywords: Arthur Conan Doyle, Isaac Asimov, Sherlock Holmes's Influence, Social Concern

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INTRODUCTION

Asimov takes a keen interest in skillfully portraying the social conditions in the remote future. He imagines that the future world will be filled by robots for doing all sorts of works. He expects that utilization of human resources will be limited by the existence of robots and it may lead to unemployment problems. Asimov, though attempts to present a mystery, never fails in his social concern. He is aware of the fact that the future earth will suffocate with over population and the essentials like water and food will be served in ration. There will not be any food option for the future generation to satisfy their palate. Asimov also expects that there will be a rebellion against robots and the human workers will exhibit hatred against the robots. This situation portrayed in *The Caves of Steel* is Asimov's recollection of the social scenario after Industrial Revolution. In the Victorian England, post Industrial Revolution was full of commotion. There was deep hatred against the machines as they created unemployment in larger level. This proves that though Asimov lived in the twentieth century and dealt with remote future in his novels, he was interested in Victorian England.

Elijah Baley Vs Sherlock Holmes

In the style and temperament, he closely resembles Doyle. Though he deals with mystery, he never talks about women beaters, child abusers, rapists, etc. He does not follow the aggressive and ruthless style of American hardboiled detective fiction, though it was a popular trend of twentieth century. His sleuth, Elijah Baley, is like a Victorian detective, who exactly follows the line of 'observation, analysis and deduction' method of Sherlock Holmes. Gavin Brend glorifies Sherlock Holmes, "If ever a man was immortal, that man was

Sherlock Holmes" (178). Asimov never wanted Baley to be a typical hardboiled detective, who is always revolver ready, adopts any method to beat down his enemies and unscrupulously beds with any woman, who is willing to bed with him. Though Asimov makes Baley involve with Gladia Delmarre, his client, his involvement is not the careless and loveless approach of the hardboiled school of American tradition. His pity for Gladia results in his love for her. Though Baley is deeply disturbed by his extramarital relationship, he is ultimately helpless to break his relationship with her.

Often critics opine that Doyle devoured over the mysteries of his predecessors and lamented over the loopholes of those detective stories. W.H. Auden says: "To surprise the reader when the identity of the murderer is revealed, yet at the same time to convince him that everything he has previously been told about the murderer is consistent with his being a murderer, is the test of a good detective story" (66). The detectives of the past were not scientific and they did not use the power of observation to solve their cases. They mostly depended on the chances to bring out the solution for the mysteries. Doyle hated this chance oriented detective methodology and wanted his detective to have the extraordinary power of scientific reasoning. In his earnest attempt to create a logical detective, he concentrated less on the human part of Sherlock Holmes. Holmes has been created as a logical thinking machine devoid of all emotions. There are occasions to prove that Holmes is not emotionless, but he controls it to sharpen his intellect.

When Asimov decided to follow Sherlockian method, he was well aware of the complaints on the master detective. Therefore, Asimov must have decided to create a detective with excellent reasoning skills along with normal emotional traits. He was also under the compulsion to satisfy his American readers. He, therefore, made his detective involve with other woman. However, it is limited to only one and there is a strong emotional bond between Baley and Gladia. Perhaps, Asimov's personal relationship with Janet O.Jeppson, while his wife Gertrude Blugerman was alive, made him create the same kind of relationship for his detective. There is a striking resemblance between Doyle and Asimov in the character portrayal of criminals and crime victims. Their depiction of crime motives and the sufferings are the same.

The Portrayal of Crime Victims

Asimov's victims of crime echo the same inner turmoil experienced by Doyle's characters. They try their level best to balance their psyche with their physique. However, the long lasting wound of crime victims mar their effort to come back to their normal life. Though Asimov's timeline is the far future, the human beings and their psychology is the same. The incredible technological changes aid only to change the exterior life tremendously. The inner psyche and emotional turmoil remain the same even after millennia. Human beings exhibit the same emotional traits, which are unalterable by the external forces. Doyle and Asimov share a common platform of crisis portrayal in which they talk about how the innocent people are victimized by the cruel criminals. The common human psychological shortcomings like greed for power and wealth, fear, anger and jealous cause the catastrophe for many people. In *The Caves of Steel*, fear causes the police head, Julius Enderby, to commit a murder. In fear of robots, he unknowingly kills the roboticist Dr. Sarton of the spacer world. Dr. Sarton loses his life quite unexpectedly. He falls prey to a scheme that is plotted against a robot. He is the leading roboticist of the spacer world and he takes great pride in creating humoid robots exactly resembling him. The plot is presented as one of the cases of Elijah Baley, the C-5 rank policeman of the earth. He is assigned to solve the case of Sarton's murder, which has happened in the spacetown. Baley is also informed that a robot called R. Daneel Olivaw will assist him in the investigation.

Asimov speaks of a remote future in which human assistants are replaced by the robots. Elijah Baley is known for his intelligence and loyalty. He proves Poe's words: "As the strong man exults in his physical ability, delighting in such exercises as call muscles into action, so glories the analyst in that mental activity that disentangles" (378). Baley is aware that robots are disliked by the earth people for they have stolen jobs from the human beings and they have caused unemployment problem in a larger level. Baley discusses the case of Dr.Sarton with Julius Enderby, the Commissioner of New York. Enderby, a Medievalist, wears a glass for his eyes and has windows in his office. He says he broke his glass three days before and suffered a lot. He is quite medieval, which is not particularly liked by Baley. Enderby informs that if Baley succeeds, he will be promoted

to C-6 rank. Baley wonders why Enderby has handed over the case to him while there are many higher officials. Enderby says that the victim is a spacer called Roj Nemennuh Sarton, who was living in the space town. He was blasted by an energy blaster three days before. In fact, Enderby was in the space town while the incident occurred. The spacers have asked the earth authorities to handle the case and to find out the murderer as soon as possible as the space town is near the earth and it falls under the earth jurisdiction. Enderby knows the ability of Baley as they are friends from their college days. There is another vital reason to choose Baley that the spacers have allotted a robot called R.Daneel Olivaw to join with Baley in his investigation and the robot will stay with him in his apartment. Baley is shocked and says that his wife Jessie and son Ben will not accept it. Enderby requests earnestly and explains that they cannot oppose the spacers, who are very powerful. Finally, Baley accepts the assignment.

Dr. Sarton becomes the poor victim of crime because of his wrong decision to create robots exactly resembling him. He regards it as his highest achievement in creating the humoid robots like him. He has to pay a big price for his poor decision-making. He does not expect that the earth people's hatred towards robots will result in his death. He is not aware that the hatred was so deep that the police commissioner of the earth himself will plot against the robots. Julius Enderby visits the spacetown as a part of his official work. He learns that Dr. Sarton has created robots resembling human beings. Enderby is a medievalist, who believes in the old ways of the earth. He, like majority of the earth people, is not comfortable with the robots. He has developed an aversion towards the robots as they have replaced human beings in the industry and caused unemployment problem. He, being the member of a secret anti-robot movement, cannot stand the thought of adjusting with the humoid robots. He schemes that the humoid robots should be destroyed with the help of R.Sammy, a basic model robot used for menial jobs in Enderby's office. He makes R.Sammy carry an energy blaster secretly and kills Dr. Sarton thinking that he has destroyed the humoid robot. The detective Baley finds out that Dr. Sarton was murdered accidentally by Enderby as he had vision defects. He, having broken his glasses, misidentified Dr.Sarton for the robot and shot him dead. Baley, by using his excellent deductive skills, finds out the truth. He, like Sherlock Holmes, interviews many people, visits the scene of crime, collects the clues and deduces the truth cleverly.

While Baley manages to find out the criminal, which is none other than his superior cum friend Julius Enderby, he himself becomes the victim of crime and suffers a lot. Because of the crime committed by Enderby, Baley is subjected to a severe psychological suffering. The crisis is so powerful that Baley loses his sleep. The first problem is that Baley is assigned the murder case with the condition that if he fails to solve the case, he will be demoted. He remembers well that his father, a scientist, was demoted for a mistake he committed in his research. The entire family, Baley being a small child, had to pay the price and lost their social and economical status. He still carries the wound in his heart that he does not want to lead his family, wife Jessie and son Bentley, to the same pathetic condition. The inner turmoil is so great that Baley completely loses his peace of mind. He is put under severe stress. The second problem is that Enderby informs that Baley has to work with a humoid robot partner, R.Daneel Olivaw and to accommodate the robot in his house. This makes Baley completely off his guard that he is tensed to the extreme. While he himself does not like the robots, he is aware that his wife Jessie will never have anything to do with a robot. However, he is later convinced by the exactly looking like human appearance of Daneel that he manages to accommodate him in his house without arousing anyone's doubt.

The third cum the most important problem faced by Baley is that he has to visit the space. He suffers from agoraphobia that makes the open space intolerable for him. In the earth, the cities are in underground and the weather is always controlled by artificial methods. It is the fine imagination of Asimov that the earth people are never exposed to the open space or sunlight. Baley feels it very difficult to be exposed to a direct weather and sun. However, he is left without any choice other than visiting the spacetown in which Dr.Sarton was murdered. Baley struggles a lot to keep up his spirit lively once he is in the spacetown, but he fails. Though his fear for open space mars his intellectual ability, Baley manages to solve it with his astounding emotional skills. He has learnt to keep his intellect sharp even during crisis. In this aspect, he resembles Sherlock Holmes

that both of them manage to get rid of their emotional blackouts fast. This makes the difference between Elijah Baley and other victims of crime. The fourth crisis Baley undergoes is that his fear the safety of his wife Jessie. She is an active member of the anti-robot group. When the robot R.Sammy is destroyed and the accusation starts heading towards Jessie's group, Baley is much worried. He is scared that if Jessie is suspected, automatically he will also be suspected and it will be an end of his career. This personal crisis is the biggest difference between Holmes and Baley. Unlike Baley, Holmes never lets his personal involved with his profession. In fact, he does not have any personal like family to be involved with his profession. However, Baley is able to collect himself quickly and he deduces the truth that Enderby is the culprit and makes him support his views for space expansion.

Conclusion

Thus, the victims of crime portrayed by Asimov depict the helpless and pitiable state. He concentrates on presenting the deep psychological trauma of his characters. Like Doyle, Asimov pays equal attention to paint the sufferings of the crime victims. Asimov's characters echo the same loss and inner turmoil experienced by Doyle's characters. Both Doyle and Asimov elaborate the psychological conflicts of their character when they are subjected to crime. They prove that there is an inevitable conflict between good and evil. Edmund Fuller says:

The conflict between good and evil is a common thread running through all the great literatures and drama of the world, from the Greeks to ourselves. The principle that conflict is at the heart of all dramatic action, when illustrated by concrete example, almost always turns up some aspect of the struggle between good and evil. (62)

They both try to prove that the exterior wound created by a crime will heal easily, but it will take years to cover the inner affliction. Their characters prove that however confident a person may be with rich external surroundings, he or she will completely be heartbroken if they are exposed to a helpless state of being a crime victim. Though the wound heals, the scar remains forever.

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