



Hanna Aleksandrova  and Hanna Tabakova 

Department of Ukrainian and Foreign Literature and Comparative Literature, Berdyansk State Pedagogical University, Ukraine
animisapientia@gmail.com

Features of the Ironic Detective in Daniel Pennac's novel *The Scapegoat*

Abstract: Ironic detective is a relatively new genre in literature. Its development dates back to the middle of the twentieth century and continues up to the present days. The final crystallization of the genre is taking place in our time. The works of Polish author Joanna Chmielewska became one of the first examples of ironic detective stories. However, the French literature of the twentieth century also has notable representatives of the genre. The present article examines the peculiarities of the irony functioning in the detective genre, in the context of the work of the popular modern French writer Daniel Pennac. We distinguish irony as a means of comic and as a principle of work organization, which is inherent in the genre of ironic detective. Consideration of the ironic detective is impossible without a brief analysis of the detective development stages as a whole, therefore, the article also deals with the genesis of the detective genre from the classic to the French novel-noir. The emphasis will rest on the peculiarities of the ironic detective's development. Using D. Pennac's novel *The Scapegoat* as an example (the French edition is called *Au bonheur des ogres*, originally published in 1985), the features of the genre, alongside their manifestations at the content and formal level are illustrated. The article focuses on the fact that naturalistic details, scenes of cruelty, evil and chaos, caused by the consequences of the Second World War, are weakened due to ironic characteristics, stereotypes, as well as the very attitudes of the author and the narrator towards the surrounding world. The research proves that the analysed genre is an artistic form of a panoramic view of the society of the 80s with its false ideals and its consumerism.

Keywords: *irony; detective story; Pennac; noir; postmodernism.*



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Postmodernist literature quite actively uses comic means when creating a text. This especially applies to irony, because, from the point of view of postmodernist aesthetics, it is not only a technique, but also a kind of artistic principle. Back in 1969, C. Glicksberg rightly noted that “[t]wentieth-century literature is in many ways committed, for better or worse, to the ironic mode” (Glicksberg 3).

One of the bright signs of postmodernist discourse is its focus on a kind of genre transgression, when the genre matrix is destroyed by borrowing elements from other structures. That is what happened to the detective narrative. Controversial in nature, at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century, it demonstrated considerable genre flexibility and enriched itself with such subgenres as the fantastic or mystical detective (locked room mystery), women’s detective, hardboiled detective, police procedural, etc. Often, such genre types do not even have an established definition, because they are in the process of formation. The ironic detective is among them. The functioning of the detective discourse under the influence of irony becomes a powerful factor in the formation of the postmodernist perception of tradition, a new view of the world via comic means.

What is irony, given that not only is it able to influence the style, but also become a defining principle for the ironic detective genre? This complex concept is allotted more than one simple definition in a specialized dictionary, instead a whole slice of history is offered, where changes in the understanding of the concept over the centuries are presented. The only thing clearly indicated in the dictionary is the main sign of irony: antiphrasis (“the use of a word in a sense opposite to its proper meaning”) (*A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* 44).

We find a similar understanding of it in the *Literary Encyclopaedia*, where this phenomenon is called a trope or, more rarely, a stylistic figure, and also the Greek origin of the word *eirōneia* is noted: feigned ignorance. Irony itself is defined as “a subtle mockery, hidden with the help of a respectful different language, a denial under the guise of agreement, a mocking assessment of a valued object, phenomenon” (Kovaliv 436). Consequently, a common feature is that the explicit and implicit components of irony come into conflict, in other words, we say one thing and understand something completely different. So, in order to understand an ironic text, it is necessary to have a certain erudition, to understand the context and to be familiar with the cultural field of the author, otherwise irony as a technique will not work.

However, the concepts of trope or technique do not fully cover the whole meaning of irony, because in addition to a purely philological meaning, it is also an aesthetic category, which is defined as “a sceptical, mocking attitude in the form of serious appreciation or praise, which proves the superiority of the author over the object of ridicule, internal liberation from his power” (Kovaliv 437). This means that an ironic text will always challenge the reader, firstly, whether he/she will decode the meaning of irony, and secondly, whether he/she will be able to stand on the same level with the author, who in a work where irony is the organizing principle, usually acts as a demiurge.

Such a game with the reader-recipient is absolutely consistent with the aesthetics of

postmodernism. We can add an open and changing genre matrix to the detective story as a type of mass literature aimed at dialogue with the reader and oriented towards him/her. The detective genre and its author have an additional intention, because they challenge the mental abilities of the reader in the ability to solve the mystery, which is the main goal of the work. Thus, irony strengthens the nature of the detective to such an extent that in the second half of the twentieth century a separate genre of the ironic detective developed.

How does irony manifest itself in a detective story and how does an ironic detective story differ from a detective story using irony as a stylistic device, because, as Muecke rightly notes, “There are innumerable instances of irony in fiction that are not especially characteristic of any fictional genre” (Muecke 85). We want to illustrate the search for answers to these questions by analysing the work by the French writer Daniel Pennac *The Scapegoat* (*Au bonheur des ogres*, originally published in 1985), which is the aim of our investigation.

The *Scapegoat* is part of the cycle *The Malaussène Saga*, which was published by Les Éditions Gallimard in a series of noir novels and consists, in addition to the mentioned novel, of the works of *La Fee Carabine* (1987), *The fairy Gunmother* (1997), *La Petite Marchande de Prose* (1989), *Write to Kill* (1999), *Monsieur Malaussène* (1995), *Monsieur Malaussène au théâtre* (1996), *Des chrétiens et des maures* (1996), *Aux fruits de la passion* (1997), *Passion Fruit* (2001), *Le Cas Malaussène 1: Ils m’ont menti* (2017), *Le Cas Malaussène 2: Terminus Malaussène* (2023). All these novels are skilfully created in the detective-humour genre.

Daniel Pennac’s works have been translated into thirty languages. In Ukraine, Inesa Yermolenko addressed his prose using the methods of linguistic and linguopoetic analysis. Among foreign researchers, Pierre Michel, Pierre Verdaguer, Yves Ruther, and Marie France-Roir were interested in certain aspects of the French writer’s work. Therefore, the lack of a comprehensive literary analysis of Pennac’s work in general and the novel *The Scapegoat* in particular, in the context of the ironic detective genre, taking into account the multifaceted nature of irony at the level of the cannibals’ image and other artistic images, problematic, and symbolism, determines the relevance of the topic of our research.

Imitating the aesthetics of the naturalistic novel of the end of the nineteenth century, Pennac refers to the tragic events of the Second World War with its fascist ideology, cruelty, unscrupulousness, and, as a result, numerous sects of fanatics.

In the novel *The Scapegoat*, the writer depicted the echoes and consequences of the war horrors, which continue to haunt us half a century later. Daniel Pennac tries to reduce the degree of catastrophism, proving that modern detective narrative is impossible without irony. Irony provides a view from the position of freedom and objectivity, but at the same time it can be not only maliciously mocking, but also lyrical, with a sad smile. Daniel Pennac’s detective novels are characterized by an innocent mockery, a humorous treatment of cruelty scenes, and an ironic worldview.

The detective became quite popular in the 20-30s of the twentieth century, called

the Golden Age of Detective Fiction in British literature. At this time, the first literary explorations devoted to this genre appeared (H.K. Chesterton, D. Sayers, R. Knox, etc.). In 1941, Howard Haycraft's work *Murder for Pleasure: The Life and Times of The Detective Story* was published, where the author directly states that the detective's function is to entertain the reader, although the genre has its own rules: "It only for what It; Is a frankly non-serious, entertainment form of literature which, nevertheless, possesses its own rules and standards" (Haycraft xi-xii).

As a genre of popular literature, the detective story really has an adventurous character that is often far from real life, the plot keeps the reader in tension, exploiting the technique of suspense. The first known examples of the genre, which are traditionally attributed to E. Poe and A. Conan-Doyle, are at a first glance far from humorous, instead, elements of the Gothic come to the fore here. However, it is paradoxical that the first parodies appeared on Conan Doyle's hero, Holmes (M. Leblanc Arsène Lupin vs. Sherlock Holmes, 1908, prose by Kurt Mattul and Mathias Blank, the 1900s, Henry Lyon Oldie Sherlock Holmes vs. the Martians 2014, etc.). And no matter how hard the author tried to "kill" his hero, he not only "survived", but also became almost more popular than the author himself and has not lost ground for the second century.

So, the detective turned out to be quite a productive genre, where the means of the comic, in particular irony, could be successfully implemented. B. Shaw's observation is correct: "Narratives that make use of the carnivalesque, satire, parody, and the like are subversive in their intent for they instruct as much as they entertain. Thus, crime with comedy becomes a recognized subgenre in criminal literature". (Shaw 14).

In 1929, Ronald Knox, a member of the Detective Club, which still unites English detectives, published *Ten Rules for Detective Fiction or Decalogue*. In the spirit of the biblical 10 commandments, the author prescribes 10 rules of a real detective, which writers actually immediately began to violate. Some of these rules are frankly ironic, including "No Chinaman must figure in the story" (Knox xi-xiv). It was the Golden Age of detectives that gave birth to the first samples of the genre, where humorous pathos made itself known. In particular, among the pioneers B. Shaw names E. C. Bentley and his work *Trent's Last Case* (1913) and based on the words of Symons notes that "success of *Trent's Last Case* is due to its being perceived by readers as 'light entertainment'" (Shaw 41).

Indeed, it is precisely in the 20s and 30s that there is a tendency to create not so much intellectual detectives like Holmes (although Conan-Doyle's character also resorts to jokes), but so-called fallible detectives, which at first glance cause surprise and laughter. After Bentley with his strange Philip Trent, it is worth mentioning at least the famous A. Christie's Hercule Poirot, who more than once misled criminals and became a reason for irony due to his non-standard appearance and obsession with "grey cells". This fallible detective tradition found its continuation in the work by Daniel Pennac. Although his Benjamin Malossen – the main character of the entire saga – is not a detective by profession and vocation, he is forced to investigate the case because he himself becomes a suspect and the object of a hunt for criminals. The hero-victim, the subjective character of

the works (the hero-narrator, through the prism of whose vision the events are depicted), naturalistic, sexually explicit details, coarse vocabulary, the gloomy image of the city, which fills the work with a sense of the inevitability of the catastrophe, the hopelessness of the hero's position, doom – all these features indicate the traditions of French noir.

The French noir novel positions itself as protest literature: continuing the traditions of the naturalistic novel, it demonstrates the world crisis and the changes caused by it. The pessimistic view of man in the novels of the “black series” is caused by the consequences of the Second World War, the echoes and painful wounds of which continue to make themselves present throughout the twentieth century: the sharp growth of minorities, the rapid development of cities that widen the gap between social classes, the development of banditry, etc. associated with prohibition, the atmosphere of anxiety caused by the economic crisis and the turbulent political climate between the two wars. For a person, war becomes a kind of trigger, and the feeling of disgust is a feature of the noir novel. In this context, Daniel Pennac's opinion that individual happiness should bring social benefits, otherwise society is just a predatory dream, seems to be correct.

Benjamin, together with his younger brothers (Jeremy and Kid) and sisters (Luna, Clara and Teresa), as well as the dog Julius, lives in Paris in the poor criminal district of Belleville. Their mother devotes all her time to her personal life, as a result of which she has a new child, whose main educator is Benjamin. He himself works in a large shopping centre in the position of a kind of scapegoat. By the way, the inspiration for writing the first work of the Malossen saga was an essay by the philosopher René Girard, which appeared at that time, *Le Boucémissaire*, literally – “scapegoat”. The original French title of the work is *Au bonheur des ogres*, but the English translation of the publication was published in 1998 under the name *The Scapegoat*, which is literally translated. Thus, the ironic subtext makes itself felt at the level of the title, hinting at the main character as a loser.

Benjamin's responsibilities include taking the blame for defective or broken merchandise. According to the legend invented by the director of the store, he seems to work in the control department, and when dissatisfied customers appear, the director shifts all the blame to the failed employee, promising to fine him and fire him. Ben's tears and apologies move the customers and they withdraw their lawsuit, agreeing to replace the product. However, on the eve of Christmas and during the next few months, unknown people arrange five explosions in the store and each time Benjamin is at the scene of the crime, which is why the police consider him the main suspect. In order to justify himself, the hero is forced to conduct his own investigation in parallel with the police.

The story is told on behalf of Benjamin, so the reader perceives all the events described through the prism of his worldview. One can feel the ironic attitude of the hero towards himself, others and the surrounding world as a whole. For example, the episode when he loses his hearing for a short time after the explosion reveals his optimistic nature: “I always thought that I would make a good deaf person, but a bad blind one. Take the world out of my ears, and I love it. Cover my eyes and I die. But all good things come to an end and the world is making its way into my eardrums again” (Pennac 49).

Ben is no less ironic about his position as a scapegoat: “It is clear in the child’s eyes that the slaughter of defenceless squirrels for the sake of fur is the work of my hands” (Pennac 10).

The ironic detective genre allows us to combine the elements of a classic, “serious” detective and an ironic context. Therefore, violent murders, deaths and frauds are evaluated as evil, but the power of their emotional impact is weakened due to ironic characteristics, stereotypes, and the narrator’s attitude to the surrounding world. For example, Benjamin’s reaction to the case when a coffin was mistakenly brought to his house: “Just like that last week, three porters with strained faces carried a white wooden coffin into the corridor for Julius and me. The palest of the three said: – This is for you. Julius quickly retreated under the bed, and I, head cocked, portholes darkened, apologetically pointed to my pajamas and said: Come in fifty years, I’m not quite ready yet” (Pennac 23).

Here it is worth talking about the author’s irony, where the main character is exposed to a kind of author’s mockery, but this is only at first glance. Author’s irony in general is a rather complex phenomenon, because it requires more context and appears at different levels of the work. Throughout the novel, it is often noticeable that the author does not ironize his character, but the readers, misleading them with a similar characterization of a loser when they first meet him.

Pennac’s ironic style provides an opportunity to explore and expose the absurdity of consumer society. Irony can be a determinant of a work in absurdism, it constitutes an independent mode of art. From the very first pages of the novel, Benjamin Malossen is depicted as a young man from the technical control department, on whose shoulders the absurdly important responsibility for the quality of all goods of a large shopping centre lies. Such work, according to Ben, is “complete fiction”. The hero becomes part of the system of consumption, but his whole inner self rebels against this deception: “The pay is too high for what I do, but too little for how sick it makes me” (Pennac 25). The world system needs such Benjamins not as sincere and responsible citizens, but as a means of deception and manipulation of other people.

Irony in the novel plays the role of an artistic study of the European society of the late 80s, the society of falsehood and total consumption. Even, it would seem the most terrible actions can be presented with the help of humour – so strong and pervasive is the irony. It performs a therapeutic function, because cannibalism, which is the basis of the crime in the novel, is difficult to imagine, and not something to describe. Therefore, irony becomes a means of expression and exposure. As C. Glicksberg rightly remarked: “By resorting to the face-saving device of irony, he can contemplate the image of the universal absurd without being defeated by it. Irony enables him to picture life as comedy or farce or chaos and seems to justify his speaking out at all instead of relapsing into nirvanic silence” (Glicksberg 4).

The epicentre of the system is a large supermarket – the Store. In this temple of commerce, in 1942, during the German occupation, six paedophiles, representatives of the “Chapel 111” sect, committed bloody orgies: infanticide, cannibalism, as evidenced

by old photographs found after the explosions. They were guided by the rejection of moral codes and ideological guidelines, confidence in permissiveness, worship of the mysticism of the Moment and the belief that everything is possible: “Add to this a harsh criticism of materialism, which makes a person preoccupied and cautious – the buying and selling of things, which reveal a vile hope for a better future. Let’s forget about tomorrow! Let this moment live!” (Pennac 221). Here it is worth saying that the Second World War changed the mode of artistic life and demonstrated the reverse side of human development – chaos and death. However, it is also impossible to remain silent about this experience, because a person must “live” it creatively in order to never repeat it. Artists began to look for new ways of writing, among which irony took an important place, but not in the usual “pre-war” form. New realities demanded new approaches, thus black irony, black humour arise, which become the leading tool of postmodernism.

The explosions in the store bring back the past and expose the satanic activities of the old men. Next to the victim of the third explosion, the friend and colleague Ben Theo found a black-and-white photograph, “very black,” in which Professor Leonard was “bare from the feet to the sharp top of his skull, his eyes burning, his mouth twisted into a demonic grimace” (Pennac 125). In this form, he stands over the body of his victim – a dead child. The photography acts as a tool of self-affirmation. The cannibals turned cannibalism and lust into a ritual, capturing it in photographs: “... a naked man, muscles tensed, flashed like lightning (flashes of light in drops of sweat, I think). On something that looks like a table, a white mass of a child...” (Pennac 126). The photo allows you to record the prostrate, forbidden, and predatory things. In this way, according to the French researcher Marie-France Roir, the author plays on two levels – realistic and symbolic: “... he separates the peaceful symbol from reality and the sign from the signified in order to give an idea of the anti-historical truth: there is no other father or a grandfather, except for the mythical one, that is, a man-eater” (Rouart 212).

Daniel Pennac uses a mythological code in the novel, giving the myth of man-eaters new cultural meanings. After the Second World War, the image of a man-eater interested many Western European writers. For example, the Swiss Jacques Schesse in the work *Man-eater. A Novel About a Lost Life* (1973) reinterprets this image in an autobiographical context, touching on the problem of father-son relations. In the novel *The King of the Forest* (1970), M. Tournier used a Germanic myth about a man-eater who stole children from their families and took them to the forest. His hero, Abel Tiffoz, is an allegory of cannibalism: he kidnaps children in order to raise them and subject them to the will and ideas of German fascism. The unconcealed allusion of M. Tournier’s novel to the ‘Hitler Youth’ is also connected with Pennac’s cannibals. He picks up on Abel Tiffouje’s fascination with the child’s body, drawing an analogy between love and devouring.

Following the canon of the mythological image of the man-eater, Pennac created not just murderers, but serial maniacs who, at first, allegedly guided by the idea of saving children, lured them into the store with toys, killed and arranged ritual devouring. All this was accompanied by photographing the victims and their killers. The photo becomes a

form of cannibalism, a kind of model of consumerism, a material carrier of the “Chapel 111” sect. As a part of the myth, it reflects the surrounding world of the man-eater, mythologically outlines all the phenomena of life that are significant for him, maintaining a relatively stable field of mythological meanings around each object that is important to him. Thus, the photo not only captures, but also mythologizes what is photographed.

The favourite picture of Kid, Ben’s younger brother, is Francisco Goya’s painting *Saturn Devouring His Children*, and he himself draws man-eating Santa Clauses: “He has cherry lips. He has a white beard. He has a nice smile. Children’s legs stick out from the corners of his lips” (Pennac 7). The Greco-Roman myth of Kronos-Saturn, the father god who devours his own children, is connected with the folklore image of cannibals. The Titans appear as mythic figures of collective violence, modernized as Christmas cannibals, who support the Store’s vaults and participate in the killing of the infant Dionysus. Based on this, Pennac depicts an ambivalent image of the father: according to the legend, Kronos devours all his children except for Zeus, who was saved by the Curetes, but it is Zeus who resurrects the son of Dionysus, who was killed by the Titans. Thus, Benjamin in the novel is the image of a surrogate father who fights death, violence and confronts cannibals. Marie-Franz Rouart’s opinion about Pennac’s desire “to force his contemporaries to recognize the permanence of transgressive violence hidden under secular, degraded, masked garbage” (Rouart 216) seems to be quite correct.

Many elements in the novel are in antinomic or complementary relationships. As a result, in an ironic context, peculiar pairs are created that are opposed or complementary. For example, Professor Leonardo is photographed naked, on the other hand, Theo likes photo sessions in exquisite and elegant suits. The motif of doubleness is also connected with the image of the dog Julius (whose epileptic seizures are the embodiment of sweet madness) and its double in the photo of Doctor Leonardo. Old man-eaters believe in the magic of numbers just as Teresa calculates their birth dates to predict the day of their death. By the way, the image of Teresa is close to the mythological image of the seer Cassandra, whom no one believed either. The “doubleness” of the image is also revealed in the way of narration – from the first person (the main narration in the novel is conducted on behalf of Benjamin Malossen) and from the third, when Ben tells the story of the explosions investigation in the store to his siblings.

If we talk about the ironic stream in the detective story, then it is worth distinguishing the elements of irony in the work and irony as a principle of text construction. Of course, not every detective where the author resorts to elements of humour and satire, in particular at the level of vocabulary, tropes, descriptions, and artistic details, becomes ironic by definition. An ironic detective must violate the most important rule of the genre – to parody the very essence, the procedure of conducting an investigation, the peculiar stamps of a detective work. This largely concerns the main protagonist – the detective. “Critical work on the genre has overwhelmingly concentrated on the detective story, defined by the adoption of the investigator as protagonist,” *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* notes. It is clear that the author in this case expects that the reader is familiar with the basic rules of constructing a detective

story, because irony will be successful and obvious only in the case when its subject and object, and in the case of literature also the recipient of the work, is in the same cultural and intellectual field. That is why intertext is an important means of creation for an ironic detective. Often, precedent phenomena are presented in the title of the work, setting the reader to a certain mood from the very beginning, as we can see in the studied work.

The author introduces the name Benjamin Malossen into the title of the saga, which includes an ironic play on words. Benjamin is translated as younger brother or “happy son.” This name is related to the story of the Old Testament about the youngest son of the biblical patriarch Jacob Benjamin. From the very beginning, the name suggests his small stature, so it is difficult to take him seriously. It also contains double semantics: infinite youth or immaturity of spirit. Thus, Pennac finds a contradiction in his name, since his name is Benjamin, although he is the elder brother, and the surname: Malossen is literally translated from French as mal-au-saint, that is, the evil saint. In the novel, the hero is generous; his ironic and humorous view of the world is a defence mechanism against a hostile environment. According to Marie-Franz Rouar, Benjamin “simultaneously embodies the everyday sins of a secularized society and the innocent, even Christ-like victim of the Judeo-Christian myth” (Rouart 219). The researcher rightly notes that he “returns to our contemporaries the image of a world where innocence, even relative, becomes fate” (Rouart 220). The last, sixth old man from the “Chapel 111” sect helps Ben to fully understand and accept the role of the scapegoat: “... the eradication of absolute evil had to take place in the eyes of its opposite, the personification of solid good, the scapegoat, a symbol of persecuted innocence [...] the destruction of the demons was to take place in the presence of the Holy One” (Pennac 197).

Ben acts as the righteous hero who takes the guilt of humanity upon himself. Ben’s self-irony emphasizes his purity and sincerity. Therefore, the publishing house of Queen Zabo offers him, after his dismissal from the shopping centre, twice the salary of any offered to him. In the end of the novel, Ben, sacrificing his conscience, yielding to his principles, giving up his dreams, for the sake of his family, agrees to the offer to remain a salesman, but not in a big store, but in a publishing house.

The emergence and formation of the ironic detective also have an impact on the gender processes taking place in literature during the last decades. Thus, S. Filonenko emphasizes that “[t]he introduction of a melodramatic line to the plot caused the appearance of “feminine,” “cozy,” “ironic” detectives, “pink and black” opuses – criminal melodramas, romantic suspense” (Filonenko 9). And indeed, the image stereotype of the investigator is formed in such a way that a person of the male gender is immediately imagined, because the first samples of the genre were created when society would hardly have allowed a woman to this profession. However, already in the novels by Agatha Christie, Miss Marple appears – a character who could be hardly imagined in the role of a detective: a lonely elderly woman. However, the middle of the twentieth century is a time of active women’s movement, emancipation processes; therefore, social changes gradually affect the literary process as well. Such experiments enriched the detective genre system and contributed to the emergence of its ironic variety. Over time,

the transformation of the classic intellectual investigator into a strange marginal is more and more common in the texts, setting a certain fashion in the system of this genre, and gender experiments lead to the appearance of a female detective. It is this which is most often classified as ironic.

Irony makes it possible to look at the world from the other, postmodernist perspective, where usually there are the laws of traditions rejection, carnivalization and parody. C. Glicksberg notes that “twentieth-century literature is in many ways committed, for better or worse, to the ironic mode. Though the modern writer inherits a cultural as well as artistic tradition, he is often in opposition to it or at least to that part of it which assumes the existence of a meaningful world” (Glicksberg 3). In addition, mass literature, to which the detective belongs, is also mostly entertaining, although this is not its only function. Thus, the author, building a detective story, transforms the genre even at the level of language. Ironic detective involves many concepts of everyday life, reduced vocabulary, precedent texts, because as a genre of mass literature, they are aimed primarily at the mass reader. And the latter gets additional pleasure from “recognizing” the sense of the author’s irony in the work, starting from individual dialogues, to ironizing the genre structure of the detective story as a whole. Although certain peculiarities of perception are also possible here. Frankly, the understanding or misunderstanding of irony in the work is a kind of marker of “one’s own and another’s,” not privy to the essence of ironization. So, irony here can become a way of classifying characters.

The roots of the ironic detective genre go back to the 10-20s of the 20th century, in particular the work of the aforementioned Bentley. However, the ironic detective story crystallized as a genre variety in the work by the Polish writer Joanna Chmielewska. She is best known for her works *The Wedge* (1964), *The Forefathers’ Wells* (1973), *All in Red* (1977), in which the protagonist is often a female detective, witty and resourceful, who destroys the laws of criminal investigations. Gradually, the ironic detective developed so much, that it became a successful project of publishing houses and today occupies a prominent place in the system of popular literature. In the future and to this day, the ironic detective story is a popular genre of popular literature, and many works have been adapted into films. *The Scapegoat* by Pennac also has a film version: *Au bonheur des ogres*, the 2013 French comedy film directed by Nicolas Bary.

Conclusions

Therefore, the appearance of the ironic detective, where the laws of the genre are transformed under the influence of external factors, became a logical continuation of the detective development. The post-war reality required new forms of understanding and experiencing events, and irony proved hugely helpful for authors. The traditional detective matrix is transformed under the influence of irony to such an extent, that a separate detective genre is born – the ironic detective. It destroys virtually all ten rules of a real detective proposed by R. Knox. The detective turns from a conceptual intellectual

into a strange and, at first glance, not very intelligent and confused loser. But it is he who has the right to solve the crime. Daniel Pennac depicts such a detective in his novels. The ironic subtext of the author is revealed in the constant appeal to literary works and mythology, the traditions' inversion of realism and naturalism in the works by Emile Zola. Even the fabulous image of man-eaters, which illustrates the horrors of history, suggests to Pennac that the ugliest monsters are always equivalent to childishness (in the store, little old man-eaters play in the toy department). Irony in the novel *Everything for Cannibals* is expressed in various forms: the author's irony, the self-irony of the heroes, the opposition of incompatible concepts (childhood/death, decency/deception), irony as exposure and as insight. Thus, irony becomes a characteristic feature of Pennac's individual style and determines the genre specificity of his detective works.

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ORCID

Hanna Aleksandrova  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7687-2188>

Hanna Tabakova  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9687-6290>

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Notes on Contributor(s)

Hanna Aleksandrova is Associate Professor at the Department of Ukrainian and Foreign Literature and Comparative Literature of Berdyansk State Pedagogical University, and a Doctor of Philosophy. She is currently vice-rector for scientific and pedagogical work of Berdyansk State Pedagogical University. She has authored more than 40 publications: monographs, training manuals, conference articles. Her research interests include foreign modernist literature, and modern Antiquity.

Hanna Tabakova is Associate Professor at the Department of Ukrainian and Foreign Literature and Comparative Literature of Berdyansk State Pedagogical University, and a Doctor of Philosophy. She has authored more than 20 publications: monographs, training manuals, conference articles. Her research interests include the theory of literature and Ecocriticism.

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