

Modus Operandi of Femme Fatale in Crime Fiction writer Peter Robinson's A Dedicated Man

Ms. Sanmati Vijay Dhanawade

Ph. D. Research Student
Shivaji University,
Kolhapur, Maharashtra.

Abstract:

Every single writer of any genre tends to utilize several narrative techniques to brand his piece of writing or work to make it more significant and widespread. Indeed, this penchant is supportive in constructing every writing draft different from the preceding one. There are numerous categories of narrative techniques and Femme Fatale is longstanding and still newfangled. Peter Robinson, British born Canadian Crime Fiction author in his second book of DCI Alan Banks' novel series has exploited this modus operandi in his peculiar manner. The present narrative system is peculiar in the regard of crime, detective, mystery, suspense thrillers. There are various versions of this narrative manner in several genres of writing. The employment of this practice in entertainment industry is common in present-day. Concerning Canadian writer Peter Robinson, this Femme Fatale is not mere tool for writing; he has developed, modified and painted in different bravura in his works.

Keywords Femme Fatale, crime fiction

It is said that Femme Fatale means 'An attractive and seductive woman, especially one who will ultimately cause distress to a man who becomes involved with her.' As per general consideration in the realm of the literary world, a femme fatale is a run-of-the-mill personality or a systematic persona, or an archetype of literature and art. Normally, it represents an enigmatic and glamorous woman whose charisma sets up situations for her lovers or to the detective of the story along with readers to often lead them into negotiating, perilous, and terminal status quo.

The Femme Fatale phrase is French for a fatal female. In previous literary works, this character is penned with the note of mystical clouts. Femme Fatale character was imitated as a vampire, witch, or demon, which has eccentric authority over men, by various writers. Femme Fatale persona with the assistance of her prettiness, emotions and brainpower attempts to spellbind her target. In some circumstances, she can practice her mendacious verbatim and in some cases, she can use her bodily magnetism. This character may perhaps utilize certain ordnance such as sleeping gas, drugs and guns.

The usage of the Femme Fatale narrative technique in the literary world is deep-rooted. Cleopatra and Messalina are the Historical examples from Classical times as well as the Biblical figures

Delilah, Jezebel and Salome are also there to firm their presence. Pre-Raphaelite painters habitually formed femme fatale as a subject in their works.

Apart from physical attraction and brainpower, there are other features of the femme fatale. Femme fatale is characteristically villainous as narrated by several authors. This character is imprisoned with a note of treachery. At one time, she can play and ploy with plenty of male characters. Denial of maternity in spite of being a female creature is a bizarre feature of this character in a general way. As per the tradition, Femme fatale was a dancing young girl alluring older male characters of the literary work with her beauty only. However, now a days she has an altered side, more cognitive sort of female figure.

Peter Robinson has prepared this formulaic character to perform in his second novel, in DCI Banks series of novels, A Dedicated Man first published in 1988. It was short-listed for the Crime Writers of Canada's Arthur Ellis Award.

In present novel, Emma Steadman, wife to Harold alias Harry Steadman embodies a femme fatale. 'She's a woman with dreams – travel, excitement, wealth, a social life...' (278). With all her mental and physical magnetism she gets succeeded in enchanting Michael Ramsden. 'Emma seduces young Michael' and soon 'developed a powerful hold over Michael' (276) The extra wedded

affair started ten years back when Michael Ramsden was only eighteen and Emma was twenty-eight. In reality, Michael was courting sixteen years young beautiful and artistic Penny Cartwright. But then the aura of Femme Fatale Emma entangled Michael and broke young pair. The character of Emma is painted in the novel in such a way that nobody would think of her as the treacherous wife or cold-blooded slaughterer. Her transformation 'from the drab housewife into the sexy siren with Michael Ramsden.'(288) was stirring and difficult to digest for all in the novel.

As a matter of fact, Michael Ramsden and Harry Steadman both were associates. 'In a way, Steadman was his bread and butter, an important client as well as an old friend.'(98) They shared pleasant personal and professional bonds. But Michael deceived the kith and kin and followed Emma's commands. Emma arranged her physical beauty as her armament to con young Michael. In the romantic hypnotic situation and fatal web of love, he obeyed Emma and murdered his innocent mate. Besides promising youth Sally Lumb also got slain by these evil spirits to hide the previous crime. Michael Ramsden is a well-educated young man. But under the dark influence of Emma, he didn't use his intelligence.

Peter Robinson has used this stoic character with a novel touch. This character is penned as a beautiful female character as per tradition, also the character is embellished with wittiness. '...it wasn't just looks, it was attitude, too' (277)

Emma is playing an excellent twofold part in the novel. At the outset, she is an ordinary housewife without any power of beauty or brain. However, on the inside, she has a shrewd brain and gorgeous good looks. Although this stoical character is time worn in literature across the whole world, Emma is presented to readers in diverse apparel. As the narrator has narrated the story using DCI Banks as his representative:

'Over the years, Emma developed two distinct personalities. Now I'm not suggesting for a moment that she's mentally ill – there's nothing at all clinically wrong with her – all her actions were deliberate, willed, calculated. But she had one face for the world and another for Ramsden. If you think

about it, it wasn't that difficult for her to change her appearance...' (277)

Emma's fraudulent behaviours came every character in the novel along with readers. Even DCI Alan Banks, bright and brilliant detective was deceived at her first appearance. DCI Banks revealed at the end of the novel that it took him a long time to realize Emma Steadman as a belle dame (287). 'Belle dame' is a French word and the full phrase is 'la belle dame sans merci'. The term is used for the beautiful lady without mercy. Towards the end of the novel, DCI Banks has expressed:

'...Like everyone else, I was taken in by Emma Steadman's outer drabness. I just couldn't picture her as a woman of passion and power. I didn't even try. But she had the most dangerous combination of all, a passionate and calculating nature.'(285-286)

Peter Robinson is skilled enough to generate every character life-real and to persuade his readers to have confidence in them wholeheartedly. His every character encounters the reader with diverse shade. As mentioned earlier the convention of a femme fatale is a long-standing maneuver, nonetheless, Robinson has succeeded to represent it with innovativeness. Robinson's femme fatale figure in this novel is physically and mentally solid. Her character is novel and captivating. The innocent impression made by her on all people of the town hinders to suspect her as a devious life partner and slaughterer of her spouse. It was difficult to digest her as an evil spirit who took the life of a juvenile named Sally, who has not done anything off beam to her. As DCI Banks has expressed:

'Most people probably thought of Emma Steadman as a married woman going quickly to seed, but Michael made her feel wanted, and then she began to see definite advantages in not being thought particularly attractive. That way, nobody would think of her as the type of to be having an affair.'(276)

Sally felt that Emma needs support to save her life from somebody who slayed Harold. 'She misread the situation.' (280). In this manner, a fake impression of the femme fatale took the innocent girl's life. A practical, professional policeman like DCI Banks was startled by Sally's untimely, unnatural death but Emma being a polished and matured lady didn't get moved. Even her male partner

in the evil plot, Michael was the frightened cause of Sally's homicide. Furthermore, vicious Emma took initiative to murder and hides the dead body of Sally underneath the packhorse bridge. It dumbfounded her partner Michael and he started feeling frightened of her.

Not only Michael but also other characters of the novel were also deceived by Emma's appearances, for instance, her husband in first place, then his colleagues and friends from the University of Leeds, for example, Darnley, and certainly neighborhood people of the Helmthorpe, Swainsdale. In the concluding part of the novel, DCI Banks has remarked that 'Emma Steadman was far more powerful than any of us had imagined.' (285). Additionally, Banks disclosed that he felt Claustrophobic with her and he 'couldn't see beneath the surface.' (286). He admits that 'All I had to do then was go and push even harder', to solve the murder mystery of Harold Steadman and Sally Lumb. It indicates that Robinson's manufacture of a femme fatale has command over the chief character also. As per DCI Banks, as narrated by the writer, 'Murder is the one crime that can't be restored like stolen property; death doesn't heal like physical or emotional scars left by assault or rape. It's final. The end.' (284) and this delinquency of murdering someone were done by Emma Steadman that also for two times. The whole Chapter 12, part Two is committed to discussing the revelation of crime and criminals, and it unknowingly discourses about the character of Emma Steadman and her capabilities.

Conclusion:

Femme Fatale character type is long-standing in literature. Various writers have tried this

narrative technique some or the other time especially in the crime fiction genre this technique has exploited in a widespread tactic. Peter Robinson has utilized this modus operandi as per tradition but with his innovative aura. Hence the whole milieu in the novel becomes more hypnotic. The femme fatale named Emma Steadman is powerful and has deceived all male and female characters of the novel along with the main male character that is DCI Alan Banks. It indicates that this stoic figure is vital and handling of female phenomena in Peter Robinson's book realm is not of baser type.

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