

**REPRESENTATION OF THE CHARACTERS IN AGATHA CHRISTIE'S NOVELS  
"AND THEN THEY WERE NONE" AND "MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS"**

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*The article deals with peculiarities of characters in the novels "And then they were none"(1939) and "Murder on the Orient Express"(1934) written by Agatha Christie. In her novels the author describes the world of provincial England. Agatha Christie is an expert in the temperaments of people belonging to different nations. Her characters are ordinary people, with their advantages, but more often, disadvantages. The author is mainly interested in the system of views, estimates, mindsets, manners, especially thinking, interests and other social installations of her characters.*

The novels "And then they were none" and "Murder on the Orient Express" are considered to be the best works of Agatha Christie. They were filmed many times and translated into many languages around the world. The main author's merit is that she managed to develop extraordinary storylines which still got the readers' attention.

In her novels Agatha Christie describes England – mainly provincial, preserving the traditions of the Victorian era, with a standard set of characters (some owners of estates and castles, retired military, intellectuals – doctors, lawyers, youth) with the standard criminal interests (the struggle for inheritance, jealousy, lust for enrichment) [1, c. 85–86]. It is not the only field of the author's interest, but one of the most characteristic.

G.N. Mikhalskaya also notes that "the world of Christie's novels is a world of provincial England. Her pictures and scenes are very similar to the "sketches of manners". The characters of her books are doctors, lawyers, businessmen, sometimes actors or artists, owners of small estates, and retired military officers, footmen and maids" [2, c. 467]. That is to say, Agatha Christie writes mostly about the middle class of England. Her detective novels are useful for those who are interested in life, habits, lifestyle and behavioral norms of the British, who want to learn the peculiarities of daily life in England of the XXth century.

In her novels Agatha Christie managed to characterize a large part of English society quite critically. Such characters and manners can be found everywhere even today. For example, Anthony Marston is a young man, scorcher, who does not accept any rules. He ran over a couple of kids, because he was driving at a very high speed. Fortunately for him, he got away with it. And what is most important, he perceived it only as a nuisance. He doesn't know what is a feeling of remorse and admission of guilt: "Anthony Marston said in a slow puzzled voice: 'I've just been thinking-John and Lucy Combes. Must have been a couple of kids I ran over near Cambridge. Beastly bad luck. Had my licence endorsed for a year. Beastly nuisance' " [3, p. 59].

There are murders because of love. Here we can make an example of two characters of the novel "And then they were none" – John Macarthur and Vera Claythorne. Having learned that his subordinate was his wife's lover, John Macarthur sent him to a certain death. This feeling of acute jealousy and betrayal was stronger than the moral. John Macarthur knew no one would suspect him that he had deliberately sent the young man to death, because there was a war. People die during the war, and nobody will be surprised by this fact. The situation is a little bit different with Vera Claythorne. She let young Cyril Hamilton swim out to sea and drown so that his uncle, Hugo Hamilton, could inherit his money and marry her. He was just an obstacle that stood in the way of her lover Hugo to the legacy and, consequently, to her happy future with Hugo: "Horrid whiny spoilt little brat! If it weren't for him, Hugo would be rich . . . able to marry the girl he loved" [3, p. 188].

The problem of the relationship between the young and the older generation, the clash of their views and attitude to life is an eternal conflict of mankind. Emily Brent, a woman of advanced age, rebels against the younger generation and shows her contemptuous attitude towards it. She finds the youth disbanded, pampered, without any moral values: "She was sixty-five and she did not approve of lounging. The present generation was shamelessly lax-in their carriage, and in every other way" [3, p. 7]. But Miss Brent herself is a prim, cold-blooded and cruel woman. She dismisses her maid, Beatrice Taylor, as punishment for becoming pregnant out of wedlock. Beatrice then jumps into the river and drowns because of the unbearable feeling of despair.

Agatha Christie draws the reader's attention to the medical negligence that reigns worldwide. In the novel, Dr. Armstrong operated a woman in a drunken state, and then she died on the operating table. The writer points out the carelessness of medical workers, their scorn, dishonesty and inaccuracy in relation to human life. Armstrong also could easily invent a nonexistent disease for his patients. They, in their turn, paid him for this lie and

recommended him other people: "You ought to try Armstrong – quite a young man – but so clever– Pam had been to all sorts of people for years and he put his finger on the trouble at once!" [3, p. 11].

But such incidents happen not only in medicine. William Blore, a police officer, gave false testimony against an innocent man, James Landor, who was sentenced to lifetime imprisonment as a scapegoat. The prisoner could not bear such a fate, and died a year later after a stint in the prison. Again, the human greed for money and richness overrules even those who should protect people.

In the novel "Murder on the Orient Express" Agatha Christie makes an example of a human society of different nationalities who gathered under one roof. There is an Italian chauffeur, an English governess, a Swedish nanny, a French maid, a married couple of Hungarians, and so on. The author describes the characters from different angles, first of all, paying attention on their nationality.

For example, an Englishwoman Miss Debenham is depicted as a cold-blooded and very calm woman, even to some extent emotionless. Christie knows what kind of behavior is typical for Englishwomen and says it through Poirot: "You are very Anglo-Saxon, Mademoiselle. Vous n' é prouvez pas d' é motion" [4, p. 79]. Miss Debenham is an elegant woman, everything in her appearance is thoroughly planned: from the movements to the hairstyle. Christie draws readers' attention to Englishwomen restraint by saying that they are sometimes difficult to understand.

The Colonel Arbuthnot is also an Englishman, and he is described as an impressive and forthright person: "I like to see an angry Englishman," said Poirot. "They are very amusing. The more emotional they feel, the less command they have of language" [4, p. 124]. As a true Briton he also has the brevity of speech: "Colonel Arbuthnot, uninterested in what a pack of foreigners called anything, replied with true British brevity" [4, p. 68].

In the novel, we can find a lot of replicas from other characters about the British nation, and to trace their attitude to the British people: "A miserable race, the English - not sympathetic. He sits in the corner, very stiff, reading a book, Then the conductor comes and makes our beds" [4, p. 78]. Sometimes, on the contrary the characters accept the existence of good qualities of the British, for example, that it is impossible to bribe them. There are also stereotypes about England. One of the most common is that Englishmen drink tea in all cases.

Miss Greta Ohlsson is a sensitive, shy, Swedish missionary with a good-natured look. The rest of the characters note her kindness, harmlessness many times and say that she is "a nice simple-minded woman." Other characters even find similarities between her and a sheep. Miss Olson is extremely sensitive, soft, confused and sometimes even pathetic: "She's like a sheep, you know. She gets anxious and bleats" [4, p. 81].

The following is mentioned about Hildegarde Schmidt: "She seemed a placid creature altogether - eminently respectable, perhaps not over-intelligent" [4, p. 82]. She is a German lady's maid to Princess Dragomiroff who appreciates the loyalty and devotion of Hildegarde, noting that today one can find such qualities in people very rarely. Hildegard is also described as a soft, supple and kind girl. The very same the Russian princess Dragomiroff is a fabulously rich woman with an extraordinary character. She is imperious, smart, energetic and insightful. The Russian woman stands out among other by her bright personality, aristocracy and great will-power.

The conductor Pierre Michel, decent and honest Frenchman, is also partially described in the novel as well as a couple of Hungarians the Earl Count and Countess Andrenyi. They are shy, calm, quiet and silent people. But there are much more references about America and American society. More often it is described not from the best side. For example, there is an opinion about the extravagance of Americans: "<...> and Americans, as all the world knows, do not care what they pay" [4, p. 106]. Some characters talk about the impracticality and the sensitivity of American society: "That's the worst of Americans-they're so sentimental and idealistic" [5, p. 69]. Others on the contrary say that they are noble and generous people: "They are very good, the Americans. They give much money to found schools and hospitals. And they are very practical" [4, p. 59].

In the novel, the American woman Miss Hubbard is portrayed as a talkative and rather unremarkable, a bit crazy and funny mother and grandmother, who cannot stop talking. Each passenger on this train knows, whether he wants it or not, all the details of the life of her daughter and herself. The very same Miss Hubbard looks at foreigners with some mistrust and dislike: "There isn't anybody knows a thing on this train. And nobody's trying to do anything. Just a pack of useless foreigners" [4, p. 24].

Thus, in her novels Agatha Christie reveals herself a true expert in the temperaments of people belonging to different nations. One of her artistic device is detailing of the novel's world. Every detail is very important as well as every thing, which helps to disclose the purpose of the novel and the characters' nature better. Through characters' speech and actions, one can understand the attitude of the writer to a particular mentality. She describes some characters with irony, sometimes with humor; she exposes the vices in other characters. The system of views, estimates, mindsets, manners, especially thinking, interests and other social installations distinguish one community from another. Agatha Christie often describes the mode of life, peculiarities of people's appearance, their inner world, and stereotypes about this or that country. All the characters are ordinary people, with

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their advantages, but more often, disadvantages, to which Christie refers ambiguously. She ridicules some of them and accepts others good-naturedly. The problems which are described in the novels were current for British society in Agatha Christie's time and they also remain relevant even now. Crimes because of jealousy, medical negligence, imperfection of the judicial process, a lavish lifestyle and problems between two generations are still widespread.

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