

**UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS IN BRATISLAVA  
FACULTY OF APPLIED LANGUAGES**

106007/B/2016/36066205950429956

**Agatha Christie – The Queen of Crime**

Bachelor thesis

**2016**

**Edita Somogyiová**

**UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS IN BRATISLAVA  
FACULTY OF APPLIED LANGUAGES**

**Agatha Christie – The Queen of Crime**

Bachelor thesis

**Study program:** Foreign Languages and Intercultural Communication

**Field of Study:** Foreign Languages and Cultures

**Consultation centre:** Department of Intercultural Communication

**Tutor:** Mgr. Adriana Pápaiová

**Bratislava 2016**

**Edita Somogyiová**

**Affirmation**

I hereby affirm that this thesis represents my own original research and writing and that I have referenced all appropriate source materials.

**Date:**

.....

(student's signature)

**Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank Mgr. Adriana Pápaiová for her assistance in the preparation and writing of this paper, as well as for her guidance and support.

## ABSTRAKT

SOMOGYIOVÁ, Edita: *Agatha Christie – Kráľovná detektívky*. – Ekonomická univerzita v Bratislave. Fakulta aplikovaných jazykov; Katedra interkultúrnej komunikácie. – Vedúci záverečnej práce: Mgr. Adriana Pápaiová – Bratislava: FAJ EU, 2016, 47 s.

Cieľom bakalárskej práce je detailná charakteristika života a diel spisovateľky Agatha Christie. Práca sa zameriava na význam, princípy a opis detektívneho príbehu, ktorý predstavuje najväčší prínos spisovateľky pre literárny svet. Bakalárska práca analyzuje hlavné vplyvy, ktoré mali vysoký efekt na vyvíjanie štýlu písania spisovateľky. Tieto faktory sa prezentujú z dvoch rôznych hľadísk. V analýze na konkrétnych príkladoch sa dajú všimnúť najdôležitejšie okolnosti jej sociálneho a literárneho prostredia, ktoré sformulovali štýl písania Agatha Christie. Práca sa zaoberá štýlom písania spisovateľky a vybraným dielom od nej. Je rozdelená do troch kapitol. Práca obsahuje obrázky.

Prvá kapitola zahŕňa krátky prehľad života spisovateľky a poskytuje zhrnutie o dôležitých obdobiach jej života. Táto kapitola ďalej obsahuje krátky prehľad o Viktoriánskom období, ktoré tvorilo významné obdobie života spisovateľky.

Druhá kapitola sa zaoberá objasnením kľúčového pojmu práce, a tým je detektívny príbeh. Taktiež sa prezentuje krátky príbeh vyvíjania tohto žánru. Táto kapitola určuje hlavné faktory, ktoré ovplyvnili a inšpirovali spisovateľku v procese písania. Tieto súvislosti sa preskúmajú zo sociálneho a literárneho hľadiska. Okrem toho táto kapitola sa zameriava na štýl písania Agatha Christie, so zameraním na dejovú líniu a hlavné postavy.

Posledná kapitola sa venuje bližšej analýze diela *Vražda v Orient exprese*, ktoré nesie reálne životné skúsenosti spisovateľky.

### **Kľúčové slová:**

detektívny žánr, detektívny príbeh, kriminalita, kráľovná detektívneho príbehu, Vražda v Orient exprese

## ABSTRACT

SOMOGYIOVÁ, Edita: *Agatha Christie – the Queen of Crime*. – University of Economics in Bratislava. Faculty of Applied Languages; Department of Intercultural Communication. – The thesis tutor: Mgr. Adriana Papaiová – Bratislava: FAJ EU, 2016, 47 p.

The aim of the bachelor thesis is the detailed characterization of the life and works of the writer Agatha Christie. The thesis focuses on the description, meaning and principles of the detective story, which was the main contribution of the writer to the literary world. The work analyses the main influences, which had deep impact on the development of the writing style of the writer. These factors are described from two different aspects. In the analysis was highlighted on concrete examples the most important occurrences of her social and literary environment, which formulated the writing style of Agatha Christie. The bachelor thesis is concerned with the writing style of the writer and a selected work from the author. The thesis is divided into three chapters. The work contains pictures.

In the first chapter is described a brief overview about the author's life. It provides an overview about the writer's important life periods. This chapter also includes a brief summary about the Victorian era, which comprised an influential part of the life of the writer.

The second chapter deals with the explanation of the key term detective fiction. It defines and specifies the precise meaning of this term. A brief history of the development of the crime fiction is also presented. This chapter identifies the main factors, which influenced and inspired the writer in the process of writing. These relations are observed from the social and literary point of view. In addition this chapter focuses on the writing style of Agatha Christie, including the plot of the stories and its characters.

The third chapter is devoted to closer analysis of the novel *Murder on the Orient Express*, which carries real life experiences of the author.

### **Key words:**

detective fiction, detective story, crime, Queen of the crime story, Murder on the Orient Express

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1 Agatha Christie and Her Life .....</b>	<b>10</b>
1.1 Biography .....	10
1.1.1 Childhood .....	10
1.1.2 First literary attempts and The First World War .....	11
1.1.3 First novels .....	12
1.1.4 Disappearance .....	12
1.1.5 Second marriage and later life .....	13
1.2 The Victorian Era .....	13
<b>2 The Crime Story according to Agatha Christie .....</b>	<b>15</b>
2.1 The Explanation of the Detective Fiction .....	15
2.2 The Development of the Crime Fiction .....	16
2.3 Main Influences on her .....	17
2.3.1 Social Environment .....	17
2.3.2 Literary Environment .....	22
2.4. Writing style of Agatha Christie .....	27
2.4.1 The location .....	28
2.4.2 Process of investigation .....	28
2.4.3 Unexpected coup .....	29
2.5 Characters .....	29
2.5.1 Miss Marple .....	29
2.5.2 Poirot .....	30
2.5.3 The victim .....	30
2.5.4 A culprit .....	31
2.5.5 Background characters .....	31
2.5.6 Racism .....	32
<b>3 Murder on the Orient Express .....</b>	<b>33</b>
3.1 The Plot of the Story .....	33
3.2 Plot Analysis .....	35
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Resumé .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>43</b>

# INTRODUCTION

Agatha Christie, a famed and second most printed novelist in English next to Shakespeare is an important figure in the field of literature. The invention of the detective story in the first half of the nineteenth century by Edgar Allan Poe directly influenced the development of the literature and writing style of later eminent writers in significant way. Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Conan Doyle or Anne Catherine Green made contributions to the genre with their detective novels. The modern detective story reached its peak in the period between 1920s and 1930s which has since been deemed 'The Golden Age' of detective fiction. The popularity of the genre and the personal interest of Agatha Christie inspired her to write a similar work. After the first success she achieved with her first novel *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926) Christie continued in writing. However she wrote many radio and television plays, poems or short stories, she made the greatest contribution to the genre of detective fiction.

The bachelor thesis consists of three main chapters which are divided into subchapters. The first chapter offers a brief overview about the author's private life as well as the time period of the Victorian era, which comprised an influential part of the writer's life. Besides important life periods also Victorian values, habits or life conditions are presented. The Victorian era and its features reflects in numerous writings of Christie which demonstrates in later chapters the fact that this period influenced her personality and writing style to a great extent.

In the second chapter the definition and main principles of the term detective fiction are discussed. This explanation is supplemented with brief history of crime fiction. Many changes have taken place in the history of the detective story, from the first occurrence of some attributes of this art in the ancient literature to the contemporary version. Moreover, in this chapter we set out to identify and analyse the main factors, which influenced and inspired her in the process of writing. These relations are observed from two different aspects. The main influences from the social environment provide a coherent insight into the main factors which made significant impression on her writing style from the birth to the death. From the aspect of literature important connections between the works of Agatha Christie and other important world writers are described.

The third part of this thesis plays a pivotal role in the analysis of a selected work from the author. The *Murder on the Orient Express* is one of the best known Christie novels which carries real life experiences of the author.

The decisive factor for the choice and elaboration of this thesis was the importance of detective story nowadays. Agatha Christie belongs to the main leading characters in the world of literature and her works are highly valued also today. The purpose of the bachelor thesis was not just describe the life and works of the writer, but through deductive reasoning and comparative methods and analysis to demonstrate the importance of the writer in the literary world.

# 1 AGATHA CHRISTIE AND HER LIFE

## 1.1 Biography

*„Every murderer is probably somebody's old friend.“*

*Agatha Christie*

Dame Agatha Mary Clarissa Christie was an English writer of crime and romantic novels. She also wrote romances under the name Mary Westmacott, but she is best remembered for her detective novels and short story collections, that she wrote under her own name. Christie's most well-known detective stories are Hercule Poirot and Jane Marple. She is considered to be the best selling writer of all time. Her works have been translated into more languages than any other individual writer has ever been translated.



**Picture 1:** Agatha Christie as a girl, date unknown

### 1.1.1 Childhood

Agatha Christie was born 15 September 1890 in Torquay, England to Clarissa Margaret Boehmer and a wealthy American stockbroker. The youngest of three siblings, she was educated at home by her mother, who encouraged her daughter to write. Christie described her childhood as very happy, surrounded by lots of kind and lovely people. She started reading books from her early age, those were f. e. from the writer of children's books Mrs Molesworth: *The Adventures of Herr Baby* (1881), *The Magic Nuts* (1898) and the *Christmas Tree Land* (1897). She also read books from Edith Nesbit, including *The*

*Story of the Treasure Seekers* (1899), *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (1903) and *The Railway Children* (1906).

Her father, suffering from a series of heart attacks, died in November 1901. After that tragedy, the family find themselves in an uncertain economic situation. Later Agatha considered her father's death for the end of her childhood.

### *1.1.2 First literary attempts and The First World War*

After her mother fell ill in 1910 they decided to spent certain time in warmer climate of Cairo. During her illness, recovering in bed she wrote her first short story *The House of Beauty* (later *The House of Dreams*). Her later shorts with the topic of spiritualism and paranormal were *The Call of Wings* and *The Little Lonely God*. The first novel written by her under the pseudonym Monosyllaba was *Snow Upon the Desert*, but it was never published.

Later she met Archibald Christie, an army officer, who served at the Royal Flying Corps in April 1913. After outbreaking of World War I in August 1914, Archie was sent to France to fight the German forces. They married on 24 December 1914. In 1918 Archie was sent back to Britain and promoted to a colonel in the Air Ministry. During the war, Agatha joined the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD), and served as an unpaid nurse at a hospital in Torquay. In that year she had a flu, and after it congestion of lungs, she was unable to work in a hospital. Later when she went back she started to work in a dispensary and had stayed there for two years. She qualified as an 'apothecary's assistant', but she enjoyed working as a nurse much better. She acquired a knowledge of poisons, what she used in her novels.



**Picture 3**

### 1.1.3 First novels

Agatha Christie loved the detective stories and was influenced by Sherlock Holmes, Maurice Leblanc, who created Arsène Lupin, a fictional gentleman thief and Gaston Leroux with his character Rouletabille. During her work in the dispensary she conceived the idea of writing a detective story. In those times quite a colony of Belgian refugees was living in a parish of Tor and Christie decided to create a main character of a Belgian police officer. She wrote her own detective novel *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920). It was sent to a publisher Hodder & Stoughton, Methuen and Bodley & Head, but it was not accepted. Later the publisher Bodley & Head offered to accept it provided that Christie change the ending. Meanwhile, she gave birth to her only child, daughter Rosalind Margaret in August 1919. At the end of the war Archie left the Air Force and started working in the City financial sector. She wrote her second novel, *The Secret Adversary* (1922) with new detective couple Tommy and Tuppence. Later she created her third novel, *Murder on the Links* (1923), again with main character Poirot.

One day a friend of Archie invited them to join him on the British Empire Mission, what meant travelling around the world and promoting the British Empire Exhibition. They travelled to South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Hawaii.

### 1.1.4 Disappearance

In 1926 Christie's husband, Archie asked Agatha for a divorce because he was in love with Nancy Neele. On the evening of 3 December 1926 the Christies quarrelled and Archie left their house. The same evening Christie disappeared from her home. She left behind a letter for her secretary saying that she was going to Yorkshire but her car was found at the edge of a quarry, not far from her home, abandoned with its hood up and lights on. Even Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of Sherlock Holmes, and Dorothy L. Sayers, author of the Lord Peter Wimsey series, helped to find her. Then on 14 December, after 11 days she was found at the Swan Hydropathic Hotel in Harrogate, Yorkshire under the pseudonym Theresa Neele. A local musician spotted her, having recognized her face. This ending shocked the public, largely negative, supposing a publicity stunt or attempt to frame her husband for murder. Christie herself said very little about the disappearance and it does not appear in her autobiography.

### 1.1.5 *Second marriage and later life*

In 1930 Christie married archaeologist Sir Max Mallowan, she met him during an archeological dig. Their marriage was happy and lasted until Christie's death in 1976. Her travels with Mallowan in the Middle East contributed background to several of her novels. She wrote *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934) in Istanbul, Turkey in 1934. Later she created one short story, *The Adventure of a Christmas Pudding* (1960) at Abney Hall, owned by her brother-in-law and where she often stayed, and the novel *After the Funeral* (1953). During the Second World War she worked in the pharmacy at University College Hospital in London. Dame Agatha Christie died on 12 January 1976 at age 85 from natural causes. She was survived by her only child, Rosalind Margaret Hicks.

## 1.2 **The Victorian Era**

The Victorian era was the period of Queen Victoria's reign from 1837 until her death in 1901. It was a long period of peace, prosperity, refined sensibilities and national self-confidence for Britain, which was the world's most powerful nation. The Victorian era was characterized by rapid change and developments in nearly every sphere - advances in technological, medical, scientific knowledge, population growth and location.

19th century Britain was characterized by a huge population. Available housing was scarce and expensive and it resulted in overcrowding. Lot of workers lived in slums, or in vacated old decaying upper class houses. The occupants of slums had no sanitation, no water supply, no schools, no decent food or new clothing. Young children were employed in factories and mines and as messengers, mudlarks, ratcatchers or chimney sweeps.

For women was the right to vote denied and they could not hold a political office. But they won rights such as custody a minor children and the ownership of property in marriage. By the end of the Victorian era women could take degrees at twelve universities. Hundreds of women worked in factories under appalling conditions, and many were driven into prostitution.

Families of the nineteenth century were large, with an average of five or six children, and patriarchal. They preferred hard work, respectability, social deference and religious conformity. The father was the head of the family, mostly strict and obeyed by

everyone. In most cases, children were brought up by nannies, and the mother would educate them at home. The boys were expected to work hard, while the daughters had to stay home and get married as soon as possible.

Etiquette was very important in Victorian society. There was a rule of etiquette for almost everything they did in a day, both for men and women. For women f.e. there were rules what kind of jewelry one should wear, who to walk with, whom to dance with, how and when to speak to a stranger. For men, there were rules about bowing, hat tipping, chaperonage, where to sit and next to whom.

Every household had at least one servant for the everyday chores, servants were a sure sign of wealth. The most important ones were the cook and the butler. A small household could afford a maid-of-all-work, a girl who cooked, cleaned, mended, scrubbed and looked after the children. The cook did the shopping and was operating the kitchen. Housemaids cleaned the rooms and footmen did the heavy work. Nannies had to watch over the kids, dress them and teach them.

Agatha also grew up with servants, but it was not particular luxury at the time. Having servants was not something, what only rich people could have afforded. The Miller family had three servants, which was considered the minimum at that time. Rich families had more servants.

In large number of her books the plot of the story is set in country houses. She wrote about the society she was born into and in which she lived. In almost all of her works play servants an important role, blending into the background and usually a vital source of information from overheard conversations.

Lot of contemporary events were sources for setting some of her books. She decided to make her main character, Poirot, a Belgian because a colony of Belgian refugees was living in a parish of Tor, following the invasion of Belgium by the Germans. She used another important events in her books, f.e. a German measles epidemic, which occurred at the time of writing *The Mirror Cracked* and it played an important role in the plot of the story.

## **2 THE CRIME STORY ACCORDING TO AGATHA CHRISTIE**

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the genre and the conception of the detective fiction. It is described a detailed overview of the main influences according to the development of writing style of Agatha Christie. The focus is particularly on the influences from the social and literary environment. Then the main elements of Christie novels are presented.

Agatha Christie was one of the main leading characters in the world literature, her whole life work is highly valued also today. In november 2013 was published that an Agatha Christie novel has been voted the best novel ever written get ahead of like a famous novelists as Stieg Larsson and Jo Nesbo. The Crime Writer's Association of professional novelists concluded that *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* was the finest example of the genre ever written.

The best-known detective writer died thirty seven years ago but even today she is considered to be the most admired. We can say the the best reason of her fame is her outstanding talent for writing such books which can attract millions of readers.

### **2.1 The Explanation of the Detective Fiction**

Before we starting to concern with a detective fiction, we have to define and specify the precise meaning of this term.

The detective fiction of the mystery type includes some consistent elements: it usually contains a detective, an unsolved mystery and an investigation by which the mystery is solved. Another possible element can be the so-called 'puzzle element': the mystery is presented as an ongoing problem, which has to solve the reader and it requires his own reasoning abilities. The three basic elements of the detective fiction – the detective, mystery and investigation – appear early in the history, however the fourth, the 'puzzle element' is absent during this early period (Rzepka, 2005).

The two basic types of crime novels are 'whodunits' and 'howcatchems'. A 'whodunit or whodunnit' is an abbreviation of who had done it. It is a novel about a murder where we do not know who committed the murder until the end. The 'howcatchem' is an inverted detective story, in which the crime is committed at the beginning of the story and the detective gradually tries to reveal the real perpetrator.

The ten principles of the detective fiction according to Bargainnier (1980) are:

1. The classic detective fiction has a form and structure.
2. The main characters of detective fiction are the victim, the criminal, suspects and the detective. The main deeds of the story are the crime or murder, investigation and solution.
3. The classic detective fiction has a logical construction, which needs logical thought from the side of the author, detective and reader.
4. Beside of the 'puzzle' element the process of discovering the solution is very important.
5. The author of the story has to be fair, he should available for the reader whatever is needed to solve the mystery.
6. The reader has to suspect everybody, he can not be trustful of nobody.
7. The author of the classic detective fiction has to use verisimilitude, realistic and plausible details.
8. The detective fiction in its original sense is a form of comedy. All ends well, the evil is punished and the good defeats him.
9. The classic detective fiction is conservative in the field of politics, society and morality. The society is described as fundamentally good. When a member disturbs this order of society, he should be rejected by the members of community and expelled from it.
10. The successful writer of detective fiction has a good narrative ability.

## **2.2 The Development of the Crime Fiction**

The beginnings of this art extends to the ancient literature. Historians suggested that certain ancient religious texts contain similar attributes of the detective fiction, f.e. the story of Susanna and the Elders in the Old Testament. The two lustful elders falsely accuse Susanna, then a young man named Daniel occurs and rescues Susanna from the death. Despite of that the author Julian Symons do not consider it for a form of a detective fiction. Another example is the play *Oedipus Rex* (around 429 BC.) by the ancient Greek tragedian, Sophocles. In this play Oedipus discovers the truth by questioning the witnesses. Later were certain attempts of writing a detective story. In the Arab culture we can mention *The Three Apples* by Scheherazade. In the Chinese culture the first genre of detective

fiction was the Gong'an fiction involving government magistrates to solve the criminal case.

The detective story in English-speaking world was invented by Edgar Allan Poe. He created his detective figure Auguste Dupin, who first appeared in Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841). Poe was influenced greatly by Charles Dickens, who made contribution to the genre with his 'whodunit' novel, *Bleak House* (1852) or *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870). Wilkie Collins, under the nickname the 'grandfather of English detective fiction' deserved his reputation with his novel *The Woman in White* (1859). Another great symbol of the detective fiction is Sherlock Holmes, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's detective figure, first occurred in *A Study in Scarlet* (1887). In 1878 Anna Katherine Green published her first and best known novel, *The Leavenworth Case*. She has been called 'the mother of the detective novel', because she was one of the first detective writers in America.

The period between 1920s and 1930s is called as the Golden Age of Detective Fiction. Lot of British, American and also New Zealand writers emerged. For the four original „Queens of Crime“ of the Golden Age are considered: Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, Ngaio Marsh and Margery Allingham. Except Ngaio Marsh, who was New Zealander, they were British.

## **2.3 Main influences on her**

Agatha Christie wrote in her life lots of detective novels, but also plays, radio and television plays, short story collections, she produced nonfiction writings, poems and also fairy tales. However from these genres prevail detective novels. In this chapter we going to find an answer to a question: why did she write detective novels? What were the main social and literary influences that conducted her life and also her career.

### **2.3.1 Social Environment**

The main reason for writing a detective story was it's popularity in the early twentieth century when she began to write. It was also became acceptable among the middle class reading public, and Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes was making literary

history.

Secondly it may be explained as an escape from staunch Victorian values and it was a need for creating fictive worlds (Maida, Spornick, 1982).

Her first meeting with the detective fiction was at her childhood. Her sister Madge told her the first Sherlock Holmes story, *The Blue Carbuncle* (1892). According to her *Autobiography* (Christie, 2008) Madge had a great talent for interpreting a story and before her marriage she also wrote some short stories. They read a lot of detective stories together, including *The Mystery of the Yellow Room* by Gaston Leroux, Arsene Lupin<sup>1</sup> books and also Paul Beck stories. Inspired by these works she decided to write a detective story:

„I don't think you could do it, „said Madge. „They are very difficult to do. I've thought about it.“

„I should like to try.“

„Well, I bet you could'nt,“ said Madge.

... *From that moment I was fired by the determination that I would write a detective story. It didn't go further than that. I didn't start to write it then, or plan it out; the seed had been sown. At the back of my mind, where the stories of the books I am going to write take their place long before the germination of the seed occurs, the idea had been planted: some day I would write a detective story.*“ (Christie, 2008, p.248)

Agatha's relationship with her mother was very close. She educated her at home and also encouraged her to write stories. She read Agatha works from Dickens, Sir Walter Scott and Thackeray aloud. One winter's day she was lying in bed recovering from influenza. She was bored and her mother said her to write a story. In this way emerged her first story called *The House of Beauty*.

The environment of the Devon countryside became the prototype in most of her stories. Towns and villages were adopted and the town of Torquay was the basis for the environment of most of her works (Maida, Spornick, 1982). During her girlhood Torquay was a beautiful well-made seaside resort, which was visited by a lot of vacationers from all parts of the world – for it was accepted as the Riviera of the British Isles. Visitors from

---

<sup>1</sup> Arsene Lupin is a fictional gentleman thief and master of disguise created by French writer Maurice Leblanc

british and american cities came here to relax and enjoy the sunshine. It was a time period, when nobody ever hurried.

One result of her home education was that sometimes she was bored and she did not have a lot of friends to play with. For that reason she began to play with imaginary friends: the Kittens, Mrs. Green with her hundred children and also a school. The figure of Mrs. Green later appears with a sex change as part of little Vernon's fantasy visitors in *Giant's Bread* (1930). I presume this imaginary school can be translated as a personal desire to meet or have some contemporary friends, which was not possible because her education was realized only at home. Despite of that, she enjoyed this way of life and she developed her imagination. Also in later times she used to speak herself to improve some dialogues in her stories.

Her step-grandmother, Margaret West Miller, and her friends – old ladies from Ealing – were the prototypes for the development of Christie's female detective, Miss Jane Marple. In those times one of the favourite activities, mostly by women, were visiting by each other, drinking tea and to gossip. Agatha in her childhood often met with them. Her grandmother had a great sense to know what is going to happen and usually it proved right. She used this interesting and also terrifying quality of her grandmother in character of Miss Marple.

After 14 years of marriage her first husband, Archie Christie asked for a divorce. She was devastated and a bitter time period followed. Despite of that she overcame this crisis. She started to travel, in the next year she visited the Canary Islands and wrote there *The Mystery of the Blue Train* (1928) but she was never satisfied with that novel. Her ex-husband was her 'primary inspiration' and she wrote six romance novels under the pseudonym Mary Westmacott (Thompson, 2007).

After the divorce with Archie she travelled also to the Middle East countries, for example to Damascus or Baghdad, which were at that time calm, peaceful and charming countries. She travelled on the famous Orient Express and met the British archaeologist Leonard Woolley, best known for his excavations at Ur in Mesopotamia. His wife became Agatha's best friend, who already read her novel *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. Agatha visited many excavations which she later used in lot of her novels as the main background.

Then she met Max Mallowan, a prominent British archeologist, to whom she married in 1930 and helped with his work. One interesting fact is that she was brought up in the era of staunch Victorian values, which refused divorce and remarriage. Despite of that she got divorced however it was a request of Archie. This new way of thinking can be explained as the change of her social thinking about the marriage and as the result of significant political or economic changes. The outcome of her travels were many novels with Middle Eastern settings, f. e. *Murder in Mesopotamia* (1936) or *Death on the Nile* (1938).

Money is the central motive for murder in a lot of Christie novels. The social status of the Miller family in the late Victorian society was determined by the money of Nathaniel Miller, Agatha's paternal grandfather. The first financial problems appeared when Agatha was five years old and this crisis remained an unsolved problem in the whole life of the family. The main problem was that the estate was mismanaged by the trustees and also by their successors. The constant financial uncertainty marked the health of Agatha's father, who died when she was eleven, and also her youth. The lack of money and the problems associated with that, could involve fear in her that once she can lost everything. Money is something for what people are prepared to kill. Agatha survived this depressed situation and this bitter experience reflects in lot of her novels.

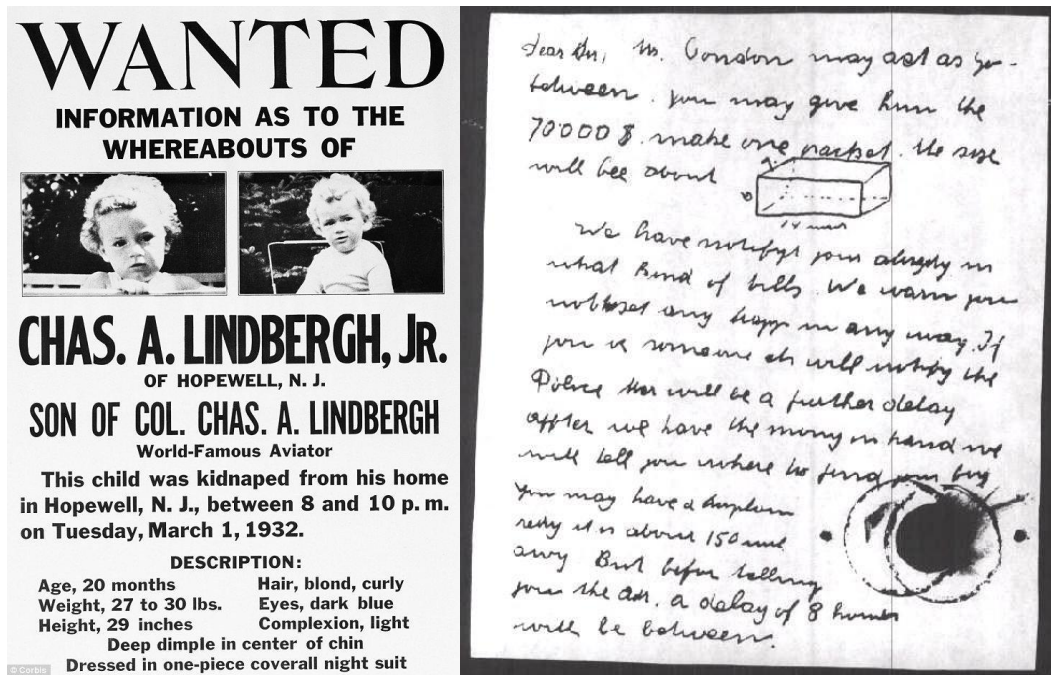
During the first world war she joined the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD), and worked at a Red Cross hospital in Torquay as a nurse. Later she studied for the Apothecaries Hall exam and spent time learning from a chemist and pharmacist. She gained a detailed knowledge of drugs and poisons. She was working in the dispensary when she first conceived the idea of writing a detective story. This work offered her a great opportunity because she had a lot of free time and she acquired a great knowledge of poisons. Because of this fact she decided to write a novel in which she selected the method of death by poisoning. She began her career with a detective novel, especially with *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, for which she got many reviews. One appeared in the *Pharmaceutical Journal*, where they praised the good knowledge of the writer about the poisons.

Christie is not the only among crime fiction writers in using poisons in her novels. The difference is that she used poisons to kill her characters more often and more accurately than any other writer. Peter and John Gwilt, staff at the School of Pharmacy at Ferris State College, Michigan, put together a chronological list of Christie stories that

involved poison. Their paper summarises the use of 33 different compounds in 41 novels and 24 short stories.

But after the second world war seemed she lost her taste for writing novels. For the certain time she turned to drama and began to create film and television adaptations. It is more than possible that she was exhausted of the second world war which had a deeper impact on her.

The next very decisive influence for her was the famous Lindbergh kidnapping case, from which she formulated the popular novel, *Murder on the Orient Express*. Only a twenty month old baby was kidnapped from his nursery of the Lindbergh home on March 1, 1932. There was a ransom note left on the windowsill of the nursery requesting \$50,000 for the child to be returned. This crime captured the attention of the entire nation. The baby was the son of Charles Lindbergh, the famed American aviator, inventor and military officer, and Anne Morrow Lindbergh, the daughter of a diplomat. Later a new letter occurred, this time demanding \$70,000. The family delivered the ransom for the kidnappers and were told they will get back their child. Soon after, the baby's body was discovered near the Lindbergh mansion. He was killed and found less than a mile from home. The case was unsolved until September 1934, when a marked bill from the ransom turned up. The police tracked a person, named Bruno Hauptmann, a German immigrant and carpenter. They found in his home the rest of the ransom and was condemned to death. Another circumstance for the birth of the novel was the writer's own travel experience. Christie herself traveled on the Orient Express and had an incident similar in this novel. The train was on stuck for 24 hours due to rainfall.



**Picture 3:** The Lindbergh kidnapping and the ransom note

### 2.3.2 Literary Environment

From the literature we have to mention some important literary persons, who influenced the development of the writing style of Agatha Christie.

In the first line it was the creator of the crime fiction, Edgar Allan Poe. We can notice some similar features between Auguste Dupin, the main character of Poe, and Poirot. Poe created a memorable and interesting character, who similar to Poirot is an analytic character and has a great talent for detailed observation. Dupin is a great symbol of an 'armchair detective'. He does not personally visit a crime scene or interview witnesses, but he reads about the crime in a newspaper or hears about it from another person. We can notice this feature primarily by Miss Marple, Christie's female character, who is in most cases sitting next the fireplace, she is observing the surroundings.

Poe used three main motives in his novels. The first is the 'locked room' motive, when the murder occurs in a locked room, where is seemingly no chance to escape and the detectives had no potential suspects. Good examples for such novels from Christie are *Murder on the Orient Express* or *Murder in Mesopotamia*.

Another device used by Poe is the small village setting, which constantly emerges in Christie novels, but as I mentioned, she was surrounded by the Devon countryside, which obviously influenced her to a large extent.

Poe became famous for his novel *The Purloined Letter* (1845), in which he used one other device: an important document placed to an obvious place in a disguised form. Christie used the same device in her first novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, in which the evidence is disguised as a paper used for starting the fire (Maida, Spornick, 1982).

We can see some parallels between the works of Poe, Agatha Christie and Émile Gaboriau, a French writer, novelist. The most characteristic features of Gaboriau's style are maps and diagrams of the murder scene. Lot of writers use similar techniques or they try to explain and discover something through science. A good example is in the *Murder on the Orient Express* discovered clue, a piece of burnt paper. Poirot tried to track the original text of the paper with a help of a small spirit stove and a pair of curling tongs. Another symbol of Gaboriau's style is the ability to disguise. His detectives disguise themselves very often and successful, as well as Sherlock Holmes, and the environment can not notice anything. Christie uses it to lesser degree and sooner her murderers are those, who use this method. Though are novels in which the detective disguise oneself, for example in the novel *The Big Four* (1927) Poirot misleads even his friends that he is dead in order to catch the murderer.

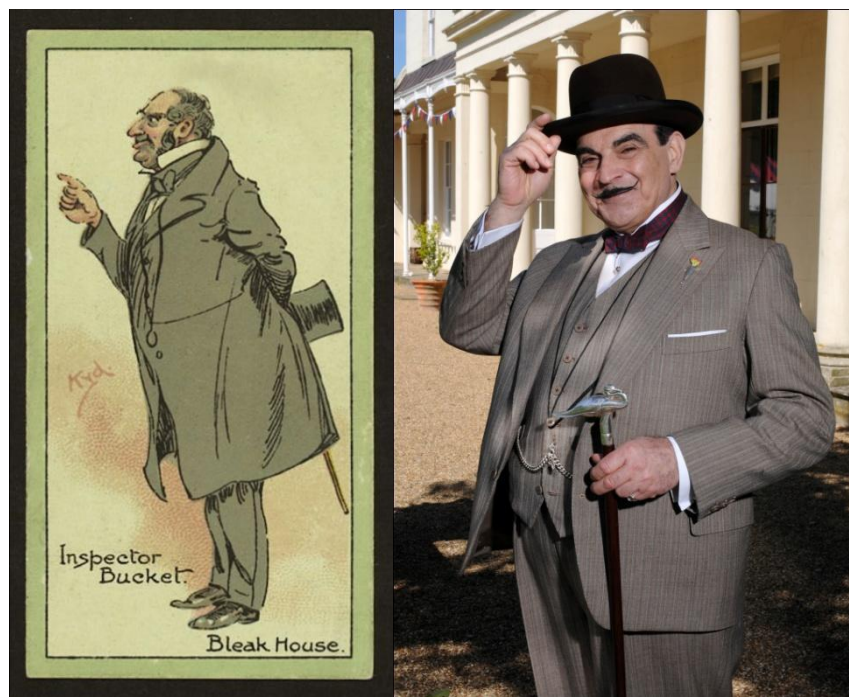
Gaboriau wrote for newspapers and this experience, including police courts, enabled him to learn the method of the crime writing. Therefore the use of precise trial scenes in his writings is very specific. Similar work of Christie is the short story *Witness for the Prosecution* (1933). In this work is not a detailed and precise trial scene such in novels of Gaboriau but she tried to describe in a most professional way.

Christie's mother often read to her daughter works from Dickens, the first was *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-1839), which she found very interesting and she enjoyed it: „...my favourite character was the old gentleman who courted Mrs Nickleby by throwing vegetable marrows over the wall. Can this be one of the reasons why I made Hercule Poirot retire to grow vegetable marrows? Who can say?“ (Christie, 2008, p.176).

The Scotland Yard (officially New Scotland Yard) was established in 1829 as the police force of London. They sent out its first police agents in 1842, which was for the public a great sensation and it also caught their fantasy. The people thought the agents are

insuperable and they can solve any problem which is proved in a lot of books written about them. As well as in numerous Christie novels appears the Scotland Yard, notably in Hercule Poirot series, for example Inspector Japp. Dickens was also attracted by the London police force. He visited the police, collected material from them to publish in his magazine *Household Words*. He was interested in Inspector Field and created his own fictional sleuth, Inspector Bucket, who solves the mystery of the novel *Bleak House* (1852-1853). I presume there are some similar attributes between the character of Hercule Poirot and Inspector Bucket: both detectives are skilled and highly respected persons and both of them had something 'mysterious' or eccentric. Bucket arrives on stage always mysteriously and there is something terrifying about his appearance. It is very often, he arrives and leaves without any noise. Poirot's character is based on his pedantry, need for order, elegance and precision. Both characters emerges always with a hat and stick in their hands, another feature is keeping the hand behind them.

The very common feature of these two figures is that neither Poirot, nor Bucket is not a type of an 'armchair detective'. Both detectives like to study the evidences closer or they observe people in their homes.



**Picture 4:** Inspector Bucket and Hercule Poirot

The American literature was gifted by another great novelist, Anna Katherine Green. Her main character is detective Ebenezer Gryce of the New York Metropolitan Police Force, but in three novels he is assisted by the nosy society spinster Amelia Butterworth. When we observe it closer, we can notice, that some attributes of Amelia Butterworth applies also to Miss Marple. Both ladies have no family and have a lot of free time. Their secret weapons are spying and overhearing others.

However there are some sharp contrasts between them. In the temperament of both characters is a great difference: Amelia Butterworth has a nosy personality and she always interfere in personal things, what is not so typical for Miss Marple, who is sooner a nice and friendly person. The most notable thing about Miss Butterworth is that she can excellent empathize with women. Gryce describes it as 'woman's eyes for women's matters'.

What we have to still mention is the setting of the environment. Miss Marple is in most novels situated in her own home in St. Mary Mead, or in another nice countryside, what opposes to an environment of Amelia Butterworth. Her home is made up of the dark apartment blocks and shadowy streets.

The favourite detective figures of Mary Roberts Rinehart are Hilda Adams, a nurse who does undercover work for the police and who is known as Miss Pinkerton and a young policeman. Miss Pinkerton similarly to Miss Marple is a good observer, she reflects some features of Amelia Butterworth. Both are youthful, independent, strong-minded characters. They are rich and highly placed spinsters. Christie's aim was the creation of the same strong female character.

However the most common line between the works of Rinehart and Christie is the use of the environment. Christie's love for the countryside and the most remembered servants from her childhood can be found as a main background in works of Rinehart. They are working hard and of course in case of murder they are the chief suspects. It is a very frequent phenomenon in her stories among various characters older women, who are social outsiders. To Rinehart's trademark belong also upper floors of the big house, servant's quarters, nurseries, bedrooms or storage areas. In a lot of stories are used medical subjects.

Miss Pinkerton cooperates with Inspector Patton. Their methods of investigations are different. Hilda follows her instincts and Patton follows the official police line, which is very similar to the relationship of Miss Marple and Inspector Japp.

As I mentioned, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes had a great impact in the field of literature. Christie was fascinated by his works from her early childhood. The long history of Sherlock Holmes begins in the detective novel *A Study in Scarlet*. Here the public meets the highly intelligent master sleuth who often makes various scientific experiments in the drawing room and solves complicated cases, however, he has his own faults. He suffers from depression accompanied by use of cocaine, pipe smoking and violin playing. He is often untidy and practises shooting in his house. Despite of that he is accepted by the public.

The most decisive models for the creation of this detective figure were Dr. Joseph Bell, Doyle's surgeon teacher at the Edinburgh Infirmary and Doyle himself. Holmes's method of observation, deductive reasoning or gathering evidences is very similar to Bell's method of diagnosing a patient's disease and Doyle's own life career as a physician taught him the technique of observation.

The other most used elements of Doyle's novels are: Holmes's bachelor house at 221B Baker Street, his informers - a group of 'street Arabs', the ubiquitous Mrs. Hudson - his housekeeper and the inevitable Inspectors from Scotland Yard.



**Picture 4:** The old building of the Scotland Yard

Doyle, as well as Christie, had a certain time period when he considered he should eliminate the character of Holmes. This act was not successful, because the public was outraged in a great measure and Doyle was forced to resurrect him.

Doyle's works served as a model for Agatha Christie and she created a similar detective couple. It always occurs a doctor or a relative of Miss Marple and Poirot who helps in their work or functions as an ally who observes the actions and helps to solve it.

Dr. Watson is Holmes's faithful friend who in comparison with Holmes has not a perfect ability to solve a whole criminal act and he seems to be a little bit dull. For that reason he is often an object of ridicule. The most important role of Watson is his function of a 'narrator' who translates for the reader what is happening. His constant dialogues with Holmes serve not just for the public but also helps Holmes to reveal the hidden details.

Both Poirot and Holmes are eccentric persons. They have their own strange habits, f. e. Poirot's pedantry, neatness or Holmes's crazy behaviour. The background of both is vague and they are brilliant detectives. Important element is in Doyle and Christie novels the presence of the Scotland Yard. Holmes often uses the help of Inspector Lestrade. On the other hand beside Poirot or Miss Marple often occurs Inspector Japp or Captain Hastings but they are not their only assistants, young people or servants help them to solve the case. Both like to be praised but Poirot is chagrined when people do not recognize his name or they think he is of french origin.

The novels of both writers are filled with bizarre and unexpected reversals, strange happenings and situations when the detectives let to run a murderer.

Beyond the already mentioned writers we have to emphasize another great icons of literature and their works, which had great impact on Agatha Christie. Here belongs the works of Alexandre Dumas: *The Three Musketeers* (1844), *Twenty Years After* (1845) and *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1844-1845). From Maurice Hewlett *The Forest Lovers* (1898), *The Queen's Quair* (1904), and *Richard Yea-and-Nay* (1900). Later she started to read May Sinclair by which she was much impressed. Christie considered her to one of the finest and most original novelists (Christie, 2008).

## **2.4 Writing style of Agatha Christie**

As we can see many influences can have deep impact on the writing style of an author. Christie's writing and style differs from any other writers. Her incredible life experiences, personal character and power of imagination make her novels unique.

### 2.4.1 *The location*

The location of most Christie novels is based on her own life experiences – the Middle East countries, the Mediterranean, Europe or London – however the most stories take place in England. She visited many archeological digs with her second husband Max Mallowan and also worked many times with him. Certainly for that reason she voted in many her novels as a main background or as an addition an archeological dig. For a certain time she lived with her mother in Egypt and later visited it with Max. The outcome of this destination was *Death on the Nile*. Her traveling in Iran or Petra is deeply connected with her short stories: *The Pearl of Price* or *The House at Shiraz*. Christie was always surrounded by gorgeous and luxurious houses and they served as models for creation of similar houses in the stories.

One of the features of her writings is that the same place is used in many novels, f. e. St. Mary Mead – the home of Miss Marple, the fictive village of Chipping Cleghorn in *The Murder is Announced* (1950) or the country houses of Styles and Chimneys in *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* or in *The Secret of Chimneys* (1925).

The most specific local setting in Christie novels is the isolated one or the 'closed circle': foreign, in transit, London, the village and the country house. This enables to reduce the number of possible suspects from outside, however all persons present on a specific place can become suspects. On the other hand it can produce a feeling of abnormality of the crime because of the isolation from the everyday matters of the world around it (Bargainnier, 1980). An example of such 'closed circle' is *Murder on the Orient Express*. The train is stopped by a snowdrift and the possible murderer must be on the train because the investigators can not find any indication that the murderer escaped – and it is possible only through the snow.

### 2.4.2 *Process of investigation*

In Christie novels at first we usually meet the characters then in unexpected moment the crime is committed. After that the detectives begin to examine the body and they have to decide whether it is a murder or not. In lot of stories a murderer makes effort in order to divert the public's attention. They have to consider it for a suicide or an accident. The most important questions of a detective are: Is it really a suicide/accident or

a murder? What was the possible motivation for him? Who is the victim? Is he the real person who other think is he? Of course the detective has to question the suspects and has to discover where they were in the time of the murder. The detectives of Christie – mostly Poirot or Miss Marple – have a good intuition to suspect those who have a firm alibi. They give also some clues or signals for the reader so they have the chance to solve the crime themselves.

#### 2.4.3 *Unexpected coup*

Writers often use tricks in their stories, a classical one is the 'red herring'. The aim is to mislead the reader's attention. One 'red herring' trick occurs in one of my favourite Christie novel. In *Towards Zero* (1944) Nevile Strange, the murderer, deliberately hides an evidence by himself and everybody start to suspect him. Later (seemingly) shows up that he can not be the murderer, because the maid saw Lady Tressilian – the victim – alive after Nevile's visit. This trick used the perpetrator to show his innocence. However Miss Marple later discovers the real truth and she proves Nevile is a real murderer.

The confusion of the reader may be realized by the 'double bluff'. On the beginning of the story a crime is committed and we have an obvious culprit. In *Murder at the Vicarage* (1930) a town vicar arrives home and he sees Lawrence Redding, a local painter. He is running out of the vicarage and seems to be pale. When Colonel Protheroe is found murdered, the chief suspect is definitely Redding. The clues indicate that he is the real murderer then occurs Anne Protheroe, the colonel's wife. She is the lover of Redding and tells he only tried to protect her. At the end of the story Miss Marple finds that the perpetrators are indeed Redding and Anne.

## 2.5 Characters

### 2.5.1 *Miss Marple*

Christie's main female detective is Miss Jane Marple. She appears in 12 novels and 20 short stories from the writer. To summarize the above mentioned features of her she is a character of a nice, old lady, sitting next the fireplace and knitting. She is not a professional detective in comparison with Poirot but she is an excellent spinster. The first

appearance of her is in the novel *The Murder at the Vicarage*. She is here described as a gleeful and not very nice woman, who likes to collect gossips. This character differs on a large scale from the later pleasant Miss Marple. The TV and film adaptations were also very popular among the public. The character of Miss Marple was portrayed by Gracie Fields, Margaret Rutherford, Inge Langen, Angela Lansbury (best known for her starring in the TV series *Murder, She Wrote*), Helen Hayes or Ita Ever. Another very popular 'Miss Marples' were Joan Hickson, Julia McKenzie or Geraldine McEwan, my favourite character from all. However Joan Hickson is considered by the public for the best of them.

### 2.5.2 *Poirot*

Hercule Poirot as a Belgian detective solved numerous curious cases. He had a long career on the pages of Christie novels. He appeared in 30 novels and 50 short stories. The presence of Belgian refugees in England had a decisive influence for the creation of his character as well as in those times very popular Sherlock Holmes stories. Poirot is a retired detective who has come to England as a war refugee. However his mother language is French he do not like it when somebody says he is a Frenchman. His age is arguable, Christie herself considered it later for a big mistake to start with him so old, because she should eliminate him after the first three or four books (Christie, 2008). The most characteristic features of the elegantly clothed Poirot are his moustache, for which he uses a curling tong, his tiny Russian cigarettes, a cane and his egg-shaped head. The most popular character of Poirot in film adaptations is undoubtedly David Suchet, then Albert Finney and Peter Ustinov.

### 2.5.3 *The victim*

The victim is predominantly a negative character, somebody who is not a nice person or is a little bit 'curious' (of course not in any case). As soon as the crime is committed the public's attention is attracted and they focus on him. In every Christie novel a murderer has a strong motivation for murder, there are not any accidental deaths even it seems to be a suicide. In the gradual process of investigation lot of secrets and suspenseful circumstances from the life of the victim are revealed. At the end of the story the reader's public is shocked when they realize the seemingly innocent victim is not so innocent.

The frequent way of death among the victims is certainly by poison. Christie's experiences from her profession during the first world war contributed to creation of her trademark. However in a lot of novels the victim is strangled, stabbed or shot she preferred poisons and in a most various forms. She 'used to kill' her victims with more than thirty types of poisons and among them the most used are cyanide, barbiturates, arsenic, atropine, digitalis, morphine and strychnine.

#### 2.5.4 *A culprit*

A culprit is mostly a person who we would never suspect. In comparison with the victim a culprit is somebody with whom we sympathize and the public would never dream of it that he could be the murderer. The culprit blends in with the background, once it is a child, once a dead man and in another novel it is surprisingly Poirot himself.

The most common motivations for murder belongs the revenge. In *Appointment with Death* (1938) a sadistic and from everyone hated Mrs. Boynton is suddenly found dead with a needle puncture in her wrist. Poirot solves the mystery and the murderer is revealed to be Lady Westholme whose aim was to be revealed. The second frequent motivation is the money. In this case a victim is a rich person, who accuses everybody around him they try to kill him for his inheritance.

#### 2.5.5 *Background characters*

Agatha Christie belonged to the upper middle class. We can notice she wrote about what she experienced, for that reason she chose her characters mainly from the English upper middle class or upper class. They are mostly conservative, surrounded by everyday problems, f. e. the lack of money, scandals, social relationships or etiquette.

During her childhood Christie had an exceptional good relationship with the servants. Keeping servants was not a luxury or something what only the rich people could afford. The only difference was that rich people had more servants. She herself said, their various servants were more real for her than her mother's friends or other relations (Christie, 2008). Butlers, housemaids, footmen, parlour maids or kitchen-maids make her novels colourful.

### 2.5.5 Racism

Joan Acocella, an American journalist, who is the dance and book critic for *The New Yorker* describes that racism, antisemitism and xenophobia are always parts of Christie novels. In one story f. e. a hostess serves a dessert called Nigger in His Shirt (chocolate pudding covered with whipped cream). In another novel, *The Secret of Chimneys* a person named Herman Isaacstein, a Jewish financier, is invited to a political meeting. When the host, Lord Caterham heard who Isaacstein is, he says: „*Curious names these people have.*“ (Christie, 1976, p.11). Caterham because of his big nose started to call him Nosystein and the others shorted it to Nosy.

Further she stated that after the Second World War some readers criticised Christie's characters in her novels, because they had various views on ethnic differences. Her publishers also received letters from them, one from the Anti-Defamation League. Her agent decided not to forward them to her and the publishers deleted any offensive references to Jews or Catholics.

### **3 MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS**

The aim of this chapter is to present a detailed overview of the novel *Murder on the Orient Express*, written by Agatha Christie. Additionally, this part is engaged in presenting the main characters of the story as an integral part of Christie novels.

*Murder on the Orient Express* is one of the best known Christie novels, first published on 1 January 1934. The book was made into a movie three times. The first film adaptation in 1974 was directed under Sidney Lumet, starring Albert Finney then the second film version emerged in 2001. The last version was made in 2010, in which David Suchet reprises the role of Hercule Poirot. It is a perfect work of the writer with a detailed background story and with various interesting characters. It is a typical Christie story in which is very hard to discover the real murderer. The author maintains the reader's attention till the end of the story and it contains lot of unexpected reversals. As the story continues everything is more and more complicated.

The circumstances of the birth of this novel are discussed in the second chapter. There is mentioned Christie's travel on the Orient Express and the Lindbergh kidnapping case as the basic influences and inspirations for the creation of this writing.

#### **3.1 The Plot of the Story**

Hercule Poirot, a retired Belgian private detective, boarded the Taurus Express in Syria. Lieutenant Dubosc had a duty of seeing off Poirot the train oriented to Istanbul. He traveled together with only two other passengers – Colonel Arbuthnot and Miss Debenham. Both were English. On the train Poirot overheard a curious conversation between them, involving a feeling that they can hide something. The train arrived in Istanbul and Poirot found an accommodation at the Tokatlian Hotel. At the hotel Poirot received an unexpected telegram and he had to immediately return to London. He decided to travel in that day with the Simplon-Orient-Express to London. Surprisingly it did not remain any ticket for the first-class sleeping berth, but Poirot had met his good friend, Monsieur Bouc. He is a director of the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons Lits and he tried to find him a place on the train. During the trip Poirot met Mr. Ratchett who was very

unsympathetic for him. Ratchett said his life is threatened and he wanted to Poirot to protect him against his enemies. Poirot despite of the promised money refused the offer.

During the night Poirot heard several noises and on the next day he was informed that Ratchett is murdered. M. Bouc asked him to investigate the crime and he accepted it. The train meantime stopped because of the snowdrift. They began to examine the body and they discovered twelve wounds in his chest. The wounds were very different, they stated the murderer can be also left-handed, it can be a woman or a man.

On the train traveled also one Greek doctor, named Dr. Constantine. He had an important role during the investigation. Because of his profession he can determine the time of the murder and other important details.

They found lot of clues in this case however the weapon, which caused the victim's death, was not found. The window in the room of Mr. Ratchett was open when they found him. It seemed that the murderer escaped through the window but they could not found footprints in the snow. The most likely explanation was that the murderer tried to suggest that he escaped through the window but he did not take into consideration that it could be snow. They discovered a woman's handkerchief with the initial H, a pipe-cleaner and pieces of burnt papers. They tried to read the original text from the paper with help of a small spirit stove and a pair of curling tongs. They ascertained Ratchett's real identity. His real name was Cassetti and he was the murderer of the kidnapped five-year-old baby, named Daisy Armstrong. It was an old and grievous case. However the ransom was paid out, Cassetti killed the child. This tragedy destroyed the whole family. After that the murderer was found but he bribed the influential persons and the police released him. Poirot stated that probably he changed his name and escaped from America.

Hector MacQueen was interrogated first. He was the secretary of Ratchett for more than one year. MacQueen said Ratchett get a lot of threatening letters before and Poirot noticed that the letters are written by more than one person. The young man tells the truth that he did not like his employer but they had a good relationship.

They interrogated the other passengers on the train:

- the wagon lit conductor,
- the valet - Masterman,
- the American lady - Mrs. Hubbard,
- the Swedish lady - Greta Ohlsson,

- the Russian princess Dragomiroff,
- the count and countess Andrenyi,
- colonel Arbuthnot,
- Mr. Hardman,
- the Italian man,
- Miss Debenham and
- the German lady's maid.

Based on the conversations with them, Poirot stated that the most passengers have firm alibis. After that was very difficult to suspect somebody. The most interesting question was: Where is the real murderer? How could he escape without any clue? After that they started to presume that maybe he is still on the train and he had to be among the passengers. Lot of deceptive circumstances occurred and Poirot's detailed observation was needed.

At least he ascertains that each passenger had some connection with the Armstrong family: one was the aunt of the murdered baby, another was a governess in the Armstrong family etc. He created two possible solutions. The first possible theory is that the real murderer boarded the train in Belgrade and wore a conductor's uniform. He had a conductor's key which could open Ratchett's door. He committed the crime and escaped through Mrs Hubbard's compartment. The second solution doubted the innocence of the passengers. It stated that all the passengers are guilty. Except countess Andrenyi they all stabbed once the body of Ratchett, alias Cassetti, to revenge him and his horrible deed in the past. Poirot let M. Bouc and Dr. Constantine to decide and they stated the first solution is the right one.

### **3.2 Plot Analysis**

This novel is one of the masterpieces of Agatha Christie. My personal interest and remarkableness of this writing was the main influential factor for the choice of this novel. As in other Christie novels various interesting characters emerges which makes the story more vital. The whole journey is full of unexpected reversals and deceptive circumstances which makes more difficult to discover the real murderer. This novel is one of her many writings which is based on real-life events.

Similarly to Sherlock Holmes stories, Poirot do not solves the case alone. He has two main assistants: M. Bouc - his old friend and Dr. Constantinos - a Greek doctor. The presence of both helpers is very important but in any case they are not suspects. In this case Bouc has a primary function of a 'narrator', who translates for the reader what is actually happening. Similarly to a reader he has no idea what has Poirot in his mind and he often asks him for more information. Dr. Constantinos on the other hand has an important role in the examination of the dead body and he determines the approximate time of the murder. His statement about the difference of the wounds led to Poirot's theory that it exists more than one murderer.

The most palpable thing in the whole story is the strong naivety. The novel was written in 1934 when a honest or a high-ranked person could not be suspected of a murder. His honesty was the strongest alibi. The count and countess Andrenyi who have diplomatic passports or the old Russian princess Dragomiroff could not commit the murder. Or could they? In one scene the investigators wanted to make a search of all the baggage on the train, including the baggage of the count and countess. But one problem occurs, they have diplomatic passports and their baggage is exempt. Here is the reaction of M. Bouc:

*"She is truly grande dame<sup>2</sup>. These two are also of the same position (...) suppose—eh?—we omit them. After all, they can have nothing to do with the matter. Why should I stir up needless trouble for myself?"* (Christie, 2011, p.192). The same reaction of him is involved when Poirot discovers the real identity of the countess and he ascertains she lied about her name and other details: *"On my part, I should never have dreamed of suspecting Count and Countess Andrenyi. I will admit I thought them quite hors de combat<sup>3</sup>."* (Christie, 2011, p.242).

Poirot never discloses his potential suspects at the beginning of the story. His trademark is the presentation of the whole story at the end of the investigation. In this case he invited all the passengers to the restaurant car when he had a certain conception about the case. He clarified the crime step by step and in the end came the revelation of the real murderer. Finding the real murderer means the revelation of the sin through which the sinful world can purify. The detective at the same time represents the order because he brings the small clues and signs together. The detective story is a literature and a logical play at the same time.

---

<sup>2</sup> grande dame is a highly respected elderly or middle-aged woman

<sup>3</sup> literally meaning „outside the fight“, is a French term used in diplomacy and international law to refer to persons who are incapable of performing their ability to wage war

The works of Agatha Christie are famous not just for their literary values but for her brave ideas and apposite solutions. She is the creator of many murders, thefts and other criminal acts. Despite of that we could not find any fragmented human bodies, spilled brains, machine guns, tortured or raped victims in her novels. Her writings are the reflection of the conservative world and the old England from the beginning of the twentieth century.

## CONCLUSION

Agatha Christie was not just one of the many writers on the world, she was a great symbol in the history of the detective fiction. With her works she was able to acquire millions of readers and thanks to her unique writing style and own personality, she deserved the title Queen of the Crime. As the creator of numerous mysteries, attractive background stories and colourful characters represented the Golden Age of detective fiction. We stated the primary reason for writing a detective story it's spreading in the nineteenth century by Arthur Conan Doyle.

We focused on the analysis of the major influences on the development of Christie's writing style. These facts and occurrences were clarified from two different points of view. One of the most inspirational effect from the social environment of the writer was the presence and the influence of the family in her writings. Her sister Madge introduced her the genre of the crime fiction, and Christie's grandmother served as the model for the writer's female detective. Moreover, we interpreted that the bitter experience according to lack of money in her own family is another parallel in her novels. Money is the central motive for murder in lot of her novels, it represents an important part in the life of people for what they are prepare to kill. Besides these factors the own life, and travel experiences played a pivotal role in creating detective novels.

From the literary environment we introduced the most significant features in the literature of Edgar Allan Poe, Émile Gaboriau, Charles Dickens, Anna Katherine Green or Rinehart and compared with the wiring style of Agatha Christie. Throughout this comparison we found certain common lines between their works,also lot of identical values and worldviews. Further we closely observed the particular attributes of Christie's works involving the plot of her stories and characters. We found out that the most used and specific motifs in her stories were the so called 'double bluff'and 'red herring' and to her trademark belongs also the death by poison.

All the mentioned attributes she used in her novels are integral parts of the novel *Murder on the Orient Express*, which was the main object of our analysis in the third chapter. The writer applied the same construction of the novel as in her other works: at the beginning the crime is committed, then follows the process of investigation and at the end the whole crime is presented and the murderer is revealed.

To sum it up Agatha Christie was not just an outstanding literary figure but an extraordinary personality who with her own philosophy, positive worldview and great contribution to the literature made a deep impact on the world. The bachelor thesis was written with the aim of introducing the genre of detective fiction and to highlight her exceptional talent.

## RESUMÉ

Prvotným cieľom tejto bakalárskej práce bolo nielen popísať a charakterizovať život spisovateľky Agatha Christie, ale aj zvýrazniť jej dôležité postavenie v literárnom svete a stručne charakterizovať detektívny žáner. Prvý detektívny román sa objavil v roku 1841 pod názvom *Vraždy v ulici Morgue*. Americký básnik Edgar Allan Poe položil tým základy tohto žánru, ktorý sa odvtedy neustále zmenil a vyvíjal. Mnohí autori sa inšpirovali písaním podobného diela ako aj Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Conan Doyle alebo Anne Catherine Green. Najvýznamnejšie obdobie tohto žánru bola tzv. Zlatá éra detektívok, obdobie medzi 1920 a 1930, keď detektívne romány dosiahli svoj vrchol. Najväčší prínos v tomto období mali Dorothy L. Sayers, Ngaio Marsh, Margery Allingham a Agatha Christie. Inšpirovaná slávnymi románmi spisovateľa Conan Doyle, Christie sa rozhodla vytvoriť podobné dielo. Výsledkom tejto snahy bola detektívka *Vražda na zámku v Styles*, ktorú prvýkrát publikovali v roku 1920. Spisovateľka odvtedy získala svoju reputáciu s mnohými výnimočnými dielami, ktoré dodnes upútajú milióny čitateľov.

V prvej kapitole tejto práce sme sa stručne venovali životu spisovateľky Agatha Christie, pričom sme sa zamerali na jej detstvo, obdobie prvých literárnych pokusov a prvej svetovej vojny, jej záhadné zmiznutie, druhé manželstvo a život v neskoršom veku. Slávna spisovateľka opisuje svoje detstvo ako veľmi šťastné obdobie, jej vzorom bol dobrý vzťah rodičov. Neskôr sa však v rodine objavili finančné problémy, ktoré zničili zdravie jej otca. Následkom neustálych obáv nad stratou majetku bol jeho skorá smrť keď Christie mala iba jedenásť rokov. V čase prvej svetovej vojny Christie pracovala v nemocnici a získala vedomosti o jedoch. Svoje poznatky použila aj vo svojich detektívnych románoch, v ktorých najčastejším dôvodom smrti je otrava jedom. Ďalej sme uviedli informácie o jej tajomnom zmiznutí v roku 1926. Skutočný dôvod a okolnosti jej záhadného zmiznutia nie sú dodnes známe, isté je však skutočnosť, že zmizla tesne po tom, ako jej prvý manžel oznámil, že sa chce rozviesť. Po jedenásť dňovom pátraní ju objavili v blízkom hoteli, k tejto udalosti sa ale neskôr nevyjadrila. Neskôr sa znovu vydala za archeológa a veľa času venovala objavovaniu vykopávok.

V druhej časti prvej kapitoly sme sa sústredili na charakteristiku Viktoriánskeho obdobia, ktorého bola súčasťou aj Agatha Christie. Bližšie sme preskúmali život, zvyky a hodnoty tohto obdobia, ktoré boli neoddeliteľnou súčasťou života spisovateľky hlavne v jej mladom veku. Vyrástla so sluhami, s ktorými mala vždy dobré vzťahy a na ktorých

mala vždy dobré spomienky. Tieto milé osobnosti tvorili hlavné pozadie v neskorších jej dielach.

V druhej kapitole sme sa venovali širšej analýze faktorov, ktoré neustále ovplyvnili jej štýl písania po celom živote. Tieto vplyvy sme preskúmali z dvoch rôznych hľadísk. Na základe analýzy vplyvov sociálneho prostredia sme zistili, že najväčší efekt na ňu mali rodina a rodinné prostredie. Jej sestra Madge už v skorom detstve ju oboznámila s dielami Sherlocka Holmesa a jej matka jej nahlas čítala z románov rôznych spisovateľov, ako napr. Dickens, Sir Walter Scott alebo Thackeray. Na začiatku sa vzdelávala doma a keďže nemala priateľov, postupne vytvárala svoj imaginárny svet a svojich fiktívnych priateľov. Táto okolnosť ju prinútila použiť svoju fantáziu a získala tým cennú schopnosť písania nápaditých príbehov v neskoršom veku. Christie vyrástla v krásnom okolí anglického Devonu, ktoré tvorilo vzor pozadia rôznych detektívnych príbehov. Hlavnými príkladmi tvorby jej detektívky slečny Marple bola jej stará mama a jej kamarátky - staré dievky, ktoré neustále riešili zamotané prípady a tajomstvá ostatných rodín. Ďalšou inšpiráciou písania detektívnych príbehov boli jej cestovateľské skúsenosti na Blízkom východe. Destinácie rôznych románov boli napr. Damask alebo Bagdad, ktoré boli v tých čias pokojné a pôvabné mestá. Už spomínaný nedostatok peňazí v rodine spôsobil trpké skúsenosti v jej mladom veku. Istá obava, že sa zrazu všetko môže stratiť ju naďalej sprevádzala. Na základe poznatkov sme zistili, že peniaze sú jedným z hlavných motívov vraždy v jej dielach.

V ďalšej časti druhej kapitoly sme zoradili najdôležitejšie osobnosti literárneho sveta, ktoré do istej miery pôsobili na písanie spisovateľky. V prvom rade to boli Edgar Allan Poe, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Émile Gaboriau, Charles Dickens, Anna Katherine Green a Mary Robert Rinehart. Medzi najčastejšie používaný znak týchto spisovateľov patrí forma detektívu, ktorý vedie vyšetrowanie z pohodlia svojho kresla. Táto vlastnosť je typická skôr pre detektívku slečnu Marple, ktorá najčastejšie sedí pri kozube, pletie a pozoruje svoje okolie. Druhým neraz použitým znakom v jej dielach je motív uzatvorenej izby, ktorý znamená, že vražda bola spáchaná v uzatvorenej miestnosti, kde je zdanlivo nijaká šanca pre vraha na útek. Tento motív sa objaví aj v diele *Vražda v Orient exprese*, ktoré sme bližšie analyzovali v tretej kapitole. V dielach spomínaných autorov, ako aj v dielach spisovateľky Agatha Christie, je dôležitá prítomnosť Scotland Yard-u. Ich významnou úlohou je pomáhať detektívom v riešení prípadu ako aj tlmočiť proces vyšetrowania čitateľovi. Hlavným detektívom spisovateľky Agatha Christie je Poirot. V rozbore osobnosti Poirota a Sherlocka Holmesa sme si všimli výrazné paralely, nakoľko

obidvaja sú inteligentní a vysoko ctení, osobnosti ktoré neustále pracujú na nevyriešených a ťažkých prípadoch. Obidvaja majú svoje zvláštne črty a zvyklosti a vždy majú nejakých pomocníkov v blízkom okolí.

V poslednej časti druhej kapitoly sme analyzovali vlastný spôsob a štýl písania samotnej spisovateľky. Najdôležitejšími bodmi skúmania boli dejová línia a postavy príbehov. Na základe poznatkov sme zistili, že obeťou v najčastejších prípadoch je osoba s negatívnym alebo zvláštnym charakterom, samozrejme nie v každom prípade. Vrahom je na druhej strane obyčajne niekto, koho by sme nikdy neobviňovali. Väčšinou ide o sympatickú a nenápadnú osobu. V románoch má vrah silnú motiváciu pre vraždu, aj keď sa zdá, že sa jedná o samovraždu. V postupnom procese vyšetrovania sa odhalia rôzne tajomstvá ako aj skutočná identita vraha alebo obete. Typickou črtou v jej románoch sú nečakané prevraty a široká škála zaujímavých postáv.

V tretej kapitole sme sa zaoberali charakteristikou a analýzou diela *Vražda v Orient exprese*. Vybrané dielo je jedným z najznámejších a najúspešnejších románov Agathy Christie, a hlavne tieto aspekty nás viedli k samotnému výberu. Hlavné okolnosti vzniku príbehu boli spisovateľkine cestovateľské skúsenosti na Orient exprese ako aj skutočná udalosť.

## Bibliography

### Books

CHRISTIE, A. 2008. *Életem*. Budapest: Partvonal Könyvkiadó. 2008. 652 p. ISBN 978-963-9644-95-3.

CHRISTIE, A. 2011. *Gyilkosság az Orient Expresszen*. Budapest: Európa Könyvkiadó. 2011. 282 p. ISBN 978 963 07 9175 5.

CHRISTIE, A. 2009. *Murder on the Orient Express*. Edinburgh: Pearson Education Limited. 2009. 78 p. ISBN 978-1-4058-9214-8.

### Online sources

ACOCELLA, J. 2010. *Queen of Crime*. [online]. 2010. Available at URL:<<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/08/16/queen-of-crime>>.

*Agatha Christie*. 2016. [online]. Available at URL:<[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agatha\\_Christie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agatha_Christie)>.

*Agatha Christie Biography*. [online]. Available at URL:<<http://www.biographyonline.net/writers/agatha-christie.html>>.

*Agatha Christie – Books, Life and Characters*. [online]. Available at URL:<<http://www.english-online.at/literature/agatha-christie/agatha-christie-queen-of-crime.htm>>.

*Agatha Christie: Her Books*. [online]. Available at URL:<<http://www.christiemystery.co.uk/reviews.php>>.

*Armchair detective*. [online]. 2015. Available at URL:<[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armchair\\_detective](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armchair_detective)>.

BARGAINNIER, E. 1981. *10 Women of Mystery*. [online]. 1981. Available at URL:<[https://books.google.sk/books?id=YMx64DyDMtsC&printsec=frontcover&hl=sk&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.sk/books?id=YMx64DyDMtsC&printsec=frontcover&hl=sk&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)>.

BANERJEE, J. 2013. *Inspector Bucket Points the Way*. [online]. 2013. Available at URL:<<http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/bleakhouse/bucket.html>>.

*Bezár a Scotland Yard*. [online]. 2012. Available at URL:<[http://kivultagasabb.blog.hu/2012/11/04/bezar\\_a\\_scotland\\_yard](http://kivultagasabb.blog.hu/2012/11/04/bezar_a_scotland_yard)>.

C. *Auguste Dupin*. [online]. 2016. Available at URL:<[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C.\\_Auguste\\_Dupin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C._Auguste_Dupin)>.

CENICOLA, L.; AUMANN, M. *Introduction into Victorian Morality – What exactly was the Victorian Era?*. [online]. Available at URL:<<http://www.laura-cenicola.de/brithist2/brithist/8-1-introduction-into-victorian-morality-what-exactly-was-the-victorian-era.html>>.

CHRISTIE, A. 1976. *Királyok és kalandorok*. [online]. 1976. Available at URL:<[http://staub-site.honlapepito.hu/tarhely/staub-site/dokumentumok/letoltesek/konyvpdfmegtek/agatha\\_christie\\_\\_\\_kiralyok\\_es\\_kalandorok.pdf](http://staub-site.honlapepito.hu/tarhely/staub-site/dokumentumok/letoltesek/konyvpdfmegtek/agatha_christie___kiralyok_es_kalandorok.pdf)>.

CHRISTIE, A. 1991. *Murder on the Orient Express*. [online]. 1991. Available at URL:<<https://www.ma.utexas.edu/users/ahughes/pdfs/books/motoe.pdf>>.

*Detective fiction*. [online]. Available at URL:<[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Detective\\_fiction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Detective_fiction)>.

*Emile Gaboriau*. [online]. Available at URL:<<http://www.online-literature.com/gaboriau/>>.

FLOOD, A. 2015. *Agatha Christie's 'forgotten' Syrian memoir gets new lease of life*. [online]. 2015. Available at URL:<<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/may/20/agatha-christie-syrian-memoir-to-be-republished>>.

FREEMAN, K. 1997. *English Victorian Society*. [online]. 1997. Available at URL:<<http://kspot.org/holmes/kelsey.htm>>.

HARKUP, K. 2015. *Agatha Christie, the queen of crime chemistry*. [online]. 2015. Available at URL:<<http://www.rsc.org/chemistryworld/2015/08/arsenic-agatha-christie-poisons>>.

HARKUP, K. 2015. *Agatha Christie's Toxic Tally*. [online]. 2015. Available at URL:<<http://harkup.co.uk/blog/agatha-christies-toxic-tally>>.

*Házasság és válás*. [online]. Available at URL:<<http://mek.oszk.hu/02100/02185/html/185.html>>.

KEATING, P. *Jane Marple and Amelia Butterworth*. [online]. Available at URL:<<http://pjkeating.co.uk/janeamelia.php>>.

*Krimi íróók: Baroness Orczy*. [online]. 2014. Available at  
URL:<<http://ekonyvespolc.hu/krimi-konyvek-szerzok-regenyek-novellak/krimi-ironok-baroness-orczy/>>.

*Lady Vanishes: The Mysterious Agatha Christie Disappearance*. [online]. Available at  
URL:<<http://www.the-line-up.com/agatha-christie-disappearance/>>.

MAIDA, P.; SPORNICK B. 1982. *Murder She Wrote: A Study of Agatha Christie's Detective Fiction*. [online]. 1982. Available at  
URL:<[https://books.google.sk/books?id=PoNmBplXH6sC&printsec=frontcover&hl=sk&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.sk/books?id=PoNmBplXH6sC&printsec=frontcover&hl=sk&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)>.

MARLING, W. *Anna Katherine Green*. [online]. Available at  
URL:<[http://www.detnovel.com/Green\\_Katharine\\_Ann.html](http://www.detnovel.com/Green_Katharine_Ann.html)>.

*Murder on the Orient Express*. [online]. 2016. Available at  
URL:<[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder\\_on\\_the\\_Orient\\_Express](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder_on_the_Orient_Express)>.

*Murder on the Orient Express*. [online]. Available at  
URL:<<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/orientexpress/summary.html>>.

*Rinehart, Mary Roberts*. [online]. 2010. Available at  
URL:<<http://gadetection.pbworks.com/w/page/7931424/Rinehart,%20Mary%20Roberts>>.

RZEPKA, CH. 2005. *Detective Fiction*. [online]. 2005. Available at  
URL:<[https://books.google.sk/books?id=iYq7D2VCmc0C&printsec=frontcover&hl=sk&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.sk/books?id=iYq7D2VCmc0C&printsec=frontcover&hl=sk&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)>.

SHEPHERD, A. 2001. Overview of the Victorian Era. [online]. 2001. Available at  
URL:<<http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Victorians/article.html>>.

*Summary and Analysis "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"*. [online]. Available at  
URL:<<http://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/p/pires-short-stories/summary-and-analysis/the-murders-in-the-rue-morgue>>.

*Susanna (Book of Daniel)*. [online]. Available at  
URL:<[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Susanna\\_\(Book\\_of\\_Daniel\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Susanna_(Book_of_Daniel))>.

*The Victorian Age*. [online]. Available at  
URL:<<https://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/victorian/review/summary.htm#6>>

.

THOMPSON, L. 2007. *Agatha Christie*. [online]. 2007. Available at URL: <[https://books.google.sk/books?id=dOJApx-xoC&printsec=frontcover&hl=sk&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.sk/books?id=dOJApx-xoC&printsec=frontcover&hl=sk&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)>.

*Victorian era*. 2016. [online]. 2016. Available at URL:<[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victorian\\_era#Poverty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victorian_era#Poverty)>.

WESTON, P. *Victorian Society*. [online]. Available at URL: <<http://www.fashion-era.com/victorians.htm>>.

WILSON, P. 2014. *Sherlock Holmes Fictional character*. [online]. 2014. Available at URL:< <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Sherlock-Holmes>>.