



Queen of Mystery: Cybernated

Nibedita Paul*

Department of English
Pondicherry University
nnibeeditapaul@gmail.com

“The artist is only the glass through which we see nature, and the clearer and more absolutely pure that glass, so much the more perfect picture we can see through it. Never intrude yourself.” - Was one of the advices that Eden Phillipotshad offered Agatha Christie. Following the advice closely, Christie had placed her novels at the edge of the looking glass from where the readers have to look deeper to solve the riddles of her whodunit novels. It would be a mere mistake to place Christie’s novels under the detective genre as underneath the sleuth lays the reflection of our soul. Her characters are varied and so common that one can be easily found around, yet their individual eccentricities tie them under the common banner of Agatha Christie.

“One little soldier boy left all alone; he went and
hanged himself and then there were none.”

(Christie, *And Then There Were None*)

The official website of Christie is welcomed by a swanky cover of the newly BBC released, *And Then There Were None*. One click and we are lead to the trailer of the episode and the story of how a group of visitors are invited to an isolated island off the Devon coast in England. One after the other is murdered in a mysterious way leading to the death of all the characters. A novel devoid of characters has been termed as “utterly impossible and utterly fascinating” by The New York Times. The need of every reader differs and this has been justly respected as only after a brief synopsis of the story are the details narrated, to hold the enigma of the plot.

Facts concerning the novel have been explored in detail with the new actors sharing their experiences on the set. The novel was originally published in the United Kingdom as *Ten Little*

Niggers and in the America as *Ten Little Indians*. Various blocks are made and according to the visitor's wish one can go for a sneak-peek to the 'behind the scenes of the episode' or explore untold details about Agatha Christie writing the novel. This section is exciting as quirky facts are let out, one says, as the novel was published in the times of the war so the denouement of the plot too changed to happier ones. Another fact says that the original home of the play version was St. James's Theatre which was bombed out during the World War II. The inclusion of the ten people is not only to build up the suspense but also to show the myriad facades of humanity. More than just giving enigmatic plots Agatha Christie laces the sociological angles to her novels.

The digitalizing of Agatha Christie has been done so smoothly that one does not get the feel of missing out on anything. The section of Featured Events covers the ongoing exhibition in Montreal, Canada. The exhibition showcase fragments of her imagination re-produced in the form of the Orient Express and rooms from her two houses. Among other products of Christie's possession the typewriter that Christie used for writing has also been put on display. A game based on *The ABC Murder* is set to be released in February 2016 on PC, Mac, Xbox and Playstation. It had been produced by the French gaming publisher Microids and Anuman Interactive and has been labelled as an adventure game. Often these forms of story narrating instigates the audience to read the novel as once playing they get curious about the original plot and its twists.

Every month the website chooses a novel as its Book of the Month, for the month of January it was the *Murder on the Orient Express* that grabbed the position. The reason for this choice was that the plot has a timeless quality about it which has been confirmed by Christie's grandson, James Prichard. The Fox adaptation of the novel is also set to release in 2017 where the director, Kenneth Branagh is also going to adorn the role of Hercule Poirot. Another note of information that the website endows us with is that, [Murder on the Orient Express](#) came second in a global vote to find the world's favourite Agatha Christie story which took place as part of the 125th anniversary celebrations of Agatha Christie in 2015.

Not to mention the website provides a detailed biography of the author, dividing her lifespan under various headings like 'The Early Years', 'Poirot is Born', 'A Difficult Time', 'A New Start', 'The War Years' and 'The Later Years' - to make the readers understand easily. Even though globally she is known as a writer, the website gives her the designation of a "Writer, Traveller, Playwright, Wife, Mother, Surfer" Each of the links takes one to various other zones to be enlightened and the search only gets deeper with every click. In the section termed as 'In Her

Own Words' Christie writes about how she disliked publicity, loved to cook, served as a nurse in the war time and that it was a pleasure for her to do flower arrangements and she marvelled at it. These inside details place Christie more as a reader's companion rather than a globally recognised author. Among her novels she chooses ten as her favourite with *Then There Was None* as the foremost followed by *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. With each of the nameslinks are provided with which leads on to the narration of plots and ways in which one can procure the novel in e-book format in Amazon and Harper Collins and listen to the audio sessions. If the novel link chosen by one falls under the Miss Marple series then automatically at the end of the page suggestions would come regarding other novels of that series or akin to it.

The Miss Marple series are marked by an icon of a woman in hat in a silhouetted form that of the Hercule Poirot is marked by a man with moustache and in a hat while those under Tommy and Tuppence comes with a male and a female figure put adjacent to each other. While the individual books are stamped by motives, hat for Miss Marple, moustache for Poirot and ring for Tommy and Tuppence. They are easily identifiable without getting the readers confused and add a childish charm to the whole experience of reading. Each of the sections comes with a Reading List which is in the PDF form and easy to download. The novels are put chronologically, adhering to their dates of publication. In the Reading List also contains additional information as to the other titles under which the same novels have been published.

Christie had sent a letter to her American publisher in 1936, signed by the name of Hercule Poirot. In an autobiographical way, Poirot goes on to talk about himself starting with the fact that he began working as a member of the detective force in Brussels on the Abercrombie Forger Case in 1904 and for many years was a proud member of the detective service in his native land of Belgium. After moving to London he began to establish himself as a private detective. He frankly says how he abides by the technique of order and method which includes his breakfast eggs to be of identical size when cut into halves. Physically he describes himself as a man of five feet four inches, with the finest moustache of London, head of egg size titled to one side. His watch is large, stick embossed with gold and boots are of leather- every detail about him and around him are put up neatly to concoct his character as a perfectionist.

The nearest link brings in the page showing how Christie wanted her Poirot to be a Belgian, a tidy and neat man arranging things but above all he must be very brainy. In the Extras that are provided one gets to know, how Poirot's last story, *Curtains* was written in 1940s but was

locked away till 1974. The famous on-screen Poirot, Davis Suchet took around twenty five years to film seventy Poirot stories. The Reading List of Poirot gives a warning of how the readers must at no cause read the last story, *Curtains* before finishing the others. The last of Poirot's case has Christie's little Belgian detective dead due to complications of the heart. In *The Big Four* Poirot had feigned his dead to attack the murderer, making that the extreme that he had gone to solve a case. He had been featured in almost thirty three novels and fifty four short stories, making him a well over hundred years to Christie's astonishment.

Among the other updates and story covers, the Marry Westmacott is of importance as under this banner Christie published six romance novels exploring human psychology and relationships. The Detection Club included major British mystery writers who could help each other with technical aspects and under this club were published three novels. Some of the interesting facts include, how after the publication of *N Or M*, a Tommy and Tuppence mystery Christie was investigated by the Security Service of Britain for using the name Bletchley, the code-breaking centre of Britain. *The Mousetrap* is the longest running show in the world and in 2016 it celebrated its sixty fourth year of record-breaking.

The digital story telling app has Mr. Haley Quin in the digital drama, the experience becomes lively as the audience can share and comment on the story. He has a website to his name 'mrquin.com' which showcases the one hour episodes. Of the recent research, Kathryn Karkup had written the book *A is for Arsenic*, which investigates fourteen of the Christie novels celebrating the use of science. A friendly tete-a-tete with the author is posted on the website which reveals how she came across Christie's book in the first place and how her interest in the detective works and toxicology led to the writing of the novel. Apart from the YouTube channel, Christie's Greenway home in Torquay had been given to the National Trust and since then has been open to the fan. Greenway is a getaway destination for any traveller and makes every visitor feel at home, it has a linked website, 'nationaltrust.org.uk/greenway'. The link 'Shop' lets the buyers to explore the novel, experience the synopsis in audio and then select at their own pace. The covers of the paperback editions come in TV tie-in edition, while the other variants include CD-audio unabridged edition, audio book, e-book, hardcover leaving the buyers spoiled for choice. Critical reviews from various journals, magazines and newspapers are incorporated in the page while the audio synopsis is compelling enough to make the readers buy. There is also a list of retailers other than Harper

Collins and Amazon and an additional html link to locate the nearest bookstores where the selected novel would be available, however this is restricted within the periphery of the United Kingdom.

In the digitalized world where we all live more in the virtual than in the real, Agatha Christie does not linger on to the old-school ways, her website is well developed and packed with information and wonderful audio and visual clips. The Community Forum bridges the gap between the readers and the enthusiasts as one does not stay restricted to any geographic domain but can interact with people from across the globe. The digitalisation of Christie was first started by Professors of University of Toronto who made fourteen of the novels into e-books and made available on Gutenberg (Gutenberg.org). The journey of her work has been long starting with the Bodley Head publication to the present Amazon e-book app and it promises to carry its journey further as long as the human timeline prevails. The timeless quality has made Christie the third best-selling novelist of all time, to be outsold only by the Bible and works of Shakespeare. The seamless nature of her plots though gripping transcends topography and ranges from Egypt to England. In every age, Christie's work establishes herself as the Queen of Mystery and Crime in a newer dimension, where her earlier images do not get distorted but the newer one only gets added.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Web Source:

Agatha Christie: The World's best-selling author of all time. Web.

<<https://www.agathachristie.com/>>

Secondary Web Sources:

Mr. Quinn. 25 January 2016. Web.

<<https://app.mrquinn.com/>>

Agatha Christie. 25 January 2016. Web.

<<http://www.gutenberg.org/>>

Greenway, Torquay. 25 January 2016. Web.

<<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/greenway/>>

The once and future e-book: on reading in the digital age. 26 January 2016. Web.

<<http://www.nytimes.com/projects/magazine/ideas/2009/#I-1>>