



Language and Identity Construction in Agatha Christie's "The ABC Murders" and "And Then There Were None"

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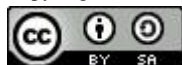
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Abstract

In this study, the construction of identity through language and stylistic elements in Agatha Christie's The ABC Murders and And Then There Were None is examined to identify how characters and readers are influenced. Drawing on paradigms from narratology, stylistics, gender studies, and psycho-literary analysis, the paper analyzes Christie's deployment of narrative voice, pronoun choice, dialogue, and hidden cultural codes as serving not only the mystery plot, but also building and subverting character identity. The research also examines the socio-cultural context in which language is invested with anxieties surrounding gender, race, and morality, and in which text interacts with broader British society.

Keywords: language and identity construction, narrative voice and focalization, pronoun use and point of view, stylistics and discourse analysis, characterisation and psychological depth

Introduction

Agatha Christie's status as the "Queen of Crime" is only equalled by her ability to play games with linguistic form and reader expectation. Her novels are famously renowned for complex plots, but no less essential are the stylistic and linguistic devices that direct suspicion in the reader, build up unreliable narrators, and build the psychological and social identities of her characters. This essay explores how these strategies function in *The ABC Murders* and *And Then There Were None*, two of the most renowned works of Christie. Stylistics and Narrative Strategies Voice, Perspective, and Manipulation

Christie's signature is the use of various viewpoints—from the confident Belgian detective

Hercule Poirot to third-person omniscience and untrustworthy narrators. In *The ABC Murders*, to take just one example, the alternating voice between Hastings and Poirot creates gaps and partiality, and the killer's confessional sections produce layered irony and uncertainty. These changes in perspective make it difficult for both characters and readers to form an identity, since interpretive power is invariably subverted.

Dialogue and Lexical Choices

Both novels' dialogue is carefully written to imply more than it states. Ambiguous declarations and bluff posturing not only serve as clues but as glimpses into



the psychology of character. Lexical choices, especially those that testify to class and region, also place characters within unstated social hierarchies, enabling Christie to query Britishness and respectability as cover for crime.

Identity, Anonymity, and Social Roles Identity Performance in *The ABC Murders* The title character Alexander Bonaparte Cust illustrates fragmented identity—a man tormented by anxiety, marginality, and self-doubt. Christie's text inscribes these psychological cracks through ambivalent speech, truncated thoughts, and other voices. The narrative justification—a figure terrified by his own mind—solicits readers to interrogate the composition of guilt, agency, and social identity performance.

Guilty Selves in *And Then There Were None*

The ingenious setup (ten guests on an isolated island, accused of hidden crimes) foregrounds the tension between public persona and private guilt. Internal monologues and confessions, often couched in defensive or accusatory language, make the characters' struggles with identity explicit. The reduction of characters by the nursery rhyme mirrors their psychological unravelling. Christie's careful balance between dialogue, silence, and repetition further reveals underlying guilt and moral ambiguity.

Gender, Pronouns, and Power in Language

Both English and translated versions of *And Then There Were None* confirm that masculine pronouns are more in favor, projecting a "masculine-as- norm" ideology even within supposedly gender-neutral environments. This linguistic trend influences readers' perceptions of authority figures or perpetrators of violence. Christie's examination of masculinity (active, logical, emotionally constrained) and femininity (compliant or transgressive) mirrors, but also slightly challenges, the gender constructs of her time.

Race, Morality, and Colonial Discourse

Both novels, especially *And Then There Were None*, have the mark of British colonial states of mind in their language regarding class, "foreign" others, and

moral judgment. The countdown to murder based on a nursery rhyme with racist undertones is at once a plot device and foray into the horrors that lie beneath civil society. Morality is encoded in language through form of confession, explanation, and reference to legal or imperial justificatory frames.

Discussion

Christie's crime fiction controls the reader's perception of character and narrative by using a sophisticated interplay between revelation and concealment. Stylistic analysis indicates the technical skill with which Christie builds upon unreliable identities, and psychological and sociological readings disclose the anxieties woven throughout the novels about gender, class, and race. In language, Christie questions the solidity of identity, implying that under duress, both self and society disclose painful truths.

Conclusion

Language in Christie's fiction is no simple vehicle for plot, but an energetic power of identity construction. By using pronoun indeterminacy, dialectical range, and changing points of view, Christie writes mysteries in which the most puzzling question is not merely who killed whom, but who her characters really are. Both *The ABC Murders* and *And Then There Were None* offer the reader a collaborative act of identity-making, mirroring the instabilities of British life during the inter-war years.

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