PALACKÝ UNIVERSITY IN OLOMOUC

Department of English and American Studies

Marie Voždová

The Role of the Narrator in the British Detective Novels of the Golden Age Era

Diploma Thesis

Supervisor: Mgr. Pavlína Flajšarová, PhD.

Olomouc 2020

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci na téma "The Role of the Narrator in the British Detective Novels of the Golden Age Era" vypracovala samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucí práce a uvedla jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

V Olomouci dne 7. 5. 2020 Podpis: …………………..

Tímto bych chtěla poděkovat Mgr. Pavlíně Flajšarové, PhD. za vedení diplomové práce, za její podněty a trpělivost a také prof. PhDr. Michalu Peprníkovi, Dr. za konzultaci.

Table of Contents

Introduction 5

1 The Golden Age of Detective Fiction 6

1. 1 Issues Concerning the Terminology 6

1. 2 Characteristics of Detective Novels in the Times of the ‘Golden Age’ 7

1. 3 Critical Approach to the Detective Fiction 12

2 Notable Novelists of the Golden Age of Detective Fiction 17

2. 1 The Detection Club 18

2. 2 Agatha Christie (1890 – 1976) 19

2. 3 Anthony Berkeley / Francis Iles (1893 – 1971) 23

2. 4 Dorothy L. Sayers (1893 – 1957) 26

2. 5 Margery Allingham (1904 – 1966) 29

3 The Narrator as a Narrative Category 32

3. 1 Narrator from the Perspective of Narratology 32

3. 2 Unreliable Narration 35

3. 3 Focalized Narrative 37

3. 4 Narrative Levels 39

4 Heterodiegetic Narration in Selected Crime Novels 41

4. 1 Presence of a Narrator in Detective Fiction 41

4. 2 Heterodiegetic Narration as the Standard Element in Detective Fiction 42

5 The Use of a Homodiegetic Narrator in Detective Fiction 46

5. 1 The Homodiegetic Narrator as a Sidekick or a Side Character 48

5. 2 Autodiegetic Narration in Detective Novels of the Golden Age 51

5. 4 Narrative Levels and Focalization in the *Documents in the Case* (1930) 54

6 The Role of Unreliable Narrators in Detective Novels of the Golden Age 59

6. 1 Fallibility in Agatha Christie’s *Murder at the Vicarage* (1930) 59

6. 2 Analysis of Unreliability in the *Documents in the Case* (1930) 61

6. 3 Untrustworthy Narrator in the *Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926) 65

Conclusion 69

Resumé 73

Bibliography 74

Annotation 78

Introduction

Apart from the distinguished authors whose legacy survives to this day, crime fiction in the Golden Age became a means to an end for those of debatable talent. Consequently, detective novels are often overlooked in literary theory because of the stigma of shallowness and low literary quality. The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate that despite being primarily focused on entertainment, detective fiction as a genre does also have potential in terms of narrative techniques and the usage of complex narrative elements.

In the following chapters, it is suggested that the narrator plays a specific role in each Golden Age crime novel. With the use of narratological terminology, an analysis of seven selected works will be performed to illustrate the variety of effects caused by the choice of a narrator based on Gérard Genette's notions of homodiegetic, heterodiegetic and autodiegetic narration and focalization. In addition, Lubomír Doležel's narrative modes are valuable for the analysis. Next, the reliability of the narrative instances will be tested according to the terminology coined by Wayne C. Booth, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, and Greta Olson. Rimmon-Kenan's approach will be utilized with respect to the narrative levels as well.

For each narrative technique, there will be novels selected as its prototypical example. On the other hand, this thesis will discuss works the structure of which differs from the typical methods utilized by the particular type of narrator, for example, the case of literary experiments created to explore new possibilities of the genre or overcome its limitations.

In the chapter focused on the heterodiegetic narrator, the usual strategies will be demonstrated in the *Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* (1928) by Dorothy L. Sayers, and their slight innovation will be illustrated in Anthony Berkeley's *The Poisoned Chocolates Case* (1929). When it comes to the homodiegetic narrator, the traditional narrator-sidekick and the role of a narrator-side character indicated in Agatha Christie's *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920) and *The Murder at the Vicarage* (1930) will be spoken about. Autodiegetic narration will be analysed in *The Case of the Late Pig* (1937) by Margery Allingham, while a special case of homodiegetic narration will be shown in *The Documents in the Case* (1930) written by Dorothy L. Sayers in cooperation with Robert Eustace. The novel will also serve as an example of unreliable narration, the effects of which will be glossed over in the last chapter. The functions of unreliable narrators will be demonstrated on the *Murder at the Vicarage* and Christie's infamous *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926) as well.

1 The Golden Age of Detective Fiction

Most literary theorists associate the works of Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, Margery Allingham, and other such illustrious authors with the early-20th century literary phenomenon known as the ‘Golden Age of detective fiction’. Their novels share multiple features, such as structure, characters, and setting, which means they have in common not only the time span in which they wrote, but also what formed the basics of this genre, and they prepared the path for its further development.

1. 1 Issues Concerning the Terminology

Despite its widespread use in theoretical works concerned with the characteristics and development of the genre, the definition of the ‘Golden Age’ as a term appears to be unclear and it is difficult to set its boundaries specifically. In addition to that, the critics often differ in their account on the literary importance of the works which are being referred to by such a label.

The first to use ‘Golden Age’ as a term connected with its role in British literature is John Strachey, a journalist and a politician associated with the British Labour Party. His “Golden Age of English Detection” published in *The Saturday Review* in January 1939 is essentially an observation of the fact that detective fiction had suddenly emerged from its position on the periphery of literary interest to one of the three major phenomena in the fiction of the time.[1]

As suggested by P. D James in *Talking About Detective Fiction* (2009), the term applies above all to a time period covering the 1920s and 1930s, with the milestones being the end of WWI as its beginning and WWII as the end.[2] The aftermath of the Second World War is highly responsible for the decline of characteristic Golden Age-like features in the novels since the traditional views of the old Britain with its calmness and its morals did not coincide with the changes in mentality that both the readers and the authors went through. Similarly to the literature in America, where hard-boiled crime fiction became increasingly influential, British fiction gradually shifted towards the police procedural.[3] The themes, character archetypes and settings used in whodunits were abandoned or challenged by the new generation of crime fiction writers. For this reason, WWI is believed to be the point when the Golden Age of detective

[1] Strachey, “The Golden Age of English Detection”, *The Saturday Review* (1939), 12.
[2] P. D. James, *Talking About Detective Fiction* (New York: Random House, 2011), 50.
[3] John Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 29.

fiction was officially over on a larger scale, even though the features might have still occurred in later works of individual authors as a particularity of their style, or as a reflection of developments in their writing.

Even though the critics overall accept the timeframe, it is often indicated that to restrict the era into these two decades would mean to exclude works which show the same features but were published in the 1940s or before WWI.[4] For the purposes of our thesis, we will adhere to the definition provided by Julian Symons and analyse works that were published from 1920 to 1939, since the majority of the critics agrees upon such a period.

Apart from the unclear boundaries of the era, Stephen Knight expresses in *Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction* (2003) his concerns also about some of the detective fiction's subgenres lacking the idyllic atmosphere of the flourishing past that is implied by the usage of the term.[5] Taking into account what a golden age is generally defined to be – a "period in the past, sometimes imaginary, of great happiness and success"[6] – and that the origin of the expression reaches as far back as to Greek mythology, Strachey's choice of words mirrors the phrase frequently used in historical discourse, e.g. the Golden Age of Discovery. Thus, it appears that what John Strachey first used as a metaphorical expression, the critics later adopted into the field of literary terminology.

1. 2 Characteristics of Detective Novels in the Times of the 'Golden Age'

In the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century, crime fiction flourished predominantly in the form of a short story, with Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes and E. A. Poe's *Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841) as its greatest achievements in terms of both success and quality. The novel, however, became the prevalent form of the Golden Age, as it enabled the authors to construct more complex plots, more interesting puzzles to solve and more room for detection for the detective and the reader altogether. With regard to the greater possibilities in structure and narration, this thesis will focus solely on the novels, which will unfortunately lead to the exclusion of some important short story writers, such as G. K. Chesterton, from our analysis. Since this thesis aims to analyse the Golden Age as a

[4] P.D. James, *Talking About Detective Fiction* (New York: Random House, 2011), 50.
[5] Martin Priestman et al., *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 77.
[6] Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. "golden age," accessed February 17, 2020, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/golden%20age.

phenomenon connected mainly with British writers and the British environment, we will not include notable authors of other nationalities such as those from the United States. Most importantly, the reason for our decision includes the fact that in the US, works of detective fiction associated with the era differ in their features from the novels written in Great Britain.

Probably the most significant contribution of the Golden Age to the overall development of the genre lies in the establishment of the so-called rules of detective fiction, guidelines written down by the authors themselves. To follow them was generally preferred by both the writers and the readers, since they were originally formulated mainly with the goal to enable the readers to have a fair chance at recognizing the culprit, and thus engage in the mind game with the author. In September 1928, American mystery writer S. S. Van Dine published "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Fiction" in the *American Magazine*. He was among the first critics to call the detective story a mind game and claimed that, like any other game, it needs to have rules to obey. Especially important are the first two laws putting the readers into the centre of the attention of the author, elevating their position from mere spectators to the author's partners in the game:

1. The reader must have equal opportunity with the detective for solving the mystery. All clues must be plainly stated and described.
2. No wilful tricks or deceptions may be played on the reader other than those played legitimately by the criminal on the detective himself. (Van Dine, 1928) [7]

In his paper, Van Dine makes other specifications, namely that there should only be one central detective figure who must solve the mystery by the means of deduction based on science and rationality. The solution should not be reached due to a coincidence or the intervention of supernatural forces. Additionally, no romantic interests for the detective shall be introduced in the novel. Several requirements are placed on the culprit since the person shall be a character known to the reader: they should not be a professional criminal, they should be neither the servant nor the detective, they should not be a member of any secret society and their motives for the murder should be purely personal. When it comes to the overall impression the reader is about to have after finishing the novel, Van Dine summarizes his vision in law 15:

> The truth of the problem must at all times be apparent – provided the reader is shrewd enough to see it. By this I mean that if the reader, after learning the

[7] S. S. Van Dine, "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Fiction," in *The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Howard Haycraft (New York: Grossett & Dunlap, 1947), 189.

> explanation for the crime, should reread the book, he would see that the solution had, in a sense, been staring him in the face – that all the clues really pointed to the culprit – and that, if he had been as clever as the detective, he could have solved the mystery himself without going on to the final chapter. (Van Dine, 1928) [8]

Acknowledging the reader's effort to follow the plot and the clues, Van Dine proceeds to place the murder as the core event of the whole story, claiming that "three hundred pages is far too much pother for a crime other than murder. After all, the reader's trouble and expenditure of energy must be rewarded."[9] Expanding on the list with several specifications inspired by individual novels that had already been published, Ronald Knox also touches on the rules in "Ten Commandments of Detection", included in his introduction to *The Best Detective Stories of 1928* (1929).

According to the established guidelines, the narration of the detective novels is focused on the detection of the crime itself. The detection is performed by a detective figure, usually a police officer or somebody with close ties to the police, as is often the case for amateur detectives. Inspired by the tradition of Sherlock Holmes, the protagonist is often accompanied by a sidekick whose insight and skills are nowhere near those of the detective and who, in some cases, may even come across as gullible and easily fooled. Having been much closer to the readers in mentality, the 'Watson' character is frequently chosen as the narrator since the readers can identify with him more easily. Whether the detective works alone or not, his/her aim is to discover the clues along with the reader and afterwards find the culprit among a restricted group of suspects. More often than not, they are members of the upper classes, or they belong to the same social group or a family. The murderer is usually revealed at the end of the novel, which is followed by the punishment of his/her evil deeds. Interestingly enough, the culprit does not necessarily need to get arrested for justice to be served. Sometimes, the punishment for the murder is the death brought upon the perpetrator e.g. by the hands of somebody from the victim's close surroundings. In such cases, death is viewed as just another form of justice.

Despite being seen by the critics as a limitation to the creativity of the authors and a recipe for a generic novel without literary depth, the laws played an essential role in the establishment of the genre. Thanks to such outlines, the detective story was clearly defined in its features and it

---

[8] Van Dine, "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Fiction", 191.
[9] Van Dine, 190.

subsequently found its way to be treated more seriously by the literary theory. They serve as the basic framework with the help of which we are capable of making comparisons between the Golden Age novels and their predecessors, as well as the works which contributed from their tradition. And finally, on the premise that all rules are at some point meant to be broken, the authors can put public opinion on the test when they deliberately choose to break one of the laws. Experimenting with how much they can get away with, the authors revolt against the norm by breaking only few of the rules while maintaining the rest, which enables them to bring a breath of fresh air into the genre but at the same time remaining within its field. As an example, Agatha Christie's works are well known for disobeying Van Dine and Knox's lists.

With time, crime fiction further developed in various subgenres according to the narrative structure of the plot or according to the setting. The most frequently utilized is the subgenre of a 'whodunit', where the identification of the culprit becomes the long-awaited climax of the whole novel. Viewed as a classic form of the Golden Age, it is also seen as a subtype of crime fiction that is characteristic mainly within British literature since its representation in American works was not sufficient.[10] As the label itself implies, the main concern of the whodunit is the inquiry about who the character was that committed the murder. In the British environment, the whodunits are most notably represented by the works of Agatha Christie or Margery Allingham.

In cases when the culprit is known to the readers quite early on in the novel, the choices in building the structure are the opposite to those of the whodunit. The novel then deals not so much with the elements of surprise affecting the readers but the psychological aspects of crime. Here, the potential of suspense lies in the detective's chasing after the criminal. Such a subgenre is seen as enabling the author to add more complexity to the style and characterization. The representation of such an approach can be found in Anthony Berkeley's *Malice Aforethought* (1931). It is put into contrast with the whodunit, a form which is generally perceived as written in a plain style and which usually does not delve into the inner worlds of the characters too much as it would divert the reader's attention away from the puzzle.

Another subgenre typical for the Golden Age is the locked-room mystery. It depicts the detection of a seemingly unsolvable crime, a murder that was committed in a room that no one could have possibly entered and out of which no one could have possibly escaped.[11] Sometimes overlapping with the locked-room mystery, the country-house mystery came to be utilized

[10] Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 35.
[11] Scaggs, 146.

mainly with regards to its characteristic rural setting, although variations with the train or ship chosen as the location are frequent as well. Visualizing the image of the old English countryside, the rural setting plays a role in creating a specific atmosphere that is inseparably tied to the Golden Age pre-WWII era. The reason behind this lies in its connection to the idyllic pastoral.[12] Combining the idyllic images of a peaceful village with the sudden, horrifying effect caused by the murder, the contrast itself is enough to appeal to the readers on one hand and pique their interest on the other. It is the air of nostalgia for a Britain that no longer exists which brings a certain charm to the detective stories. And numerous readers, not only across Britain but especially those of different nationalities, are drawn to the atmosphere more and more as time passes.

There are, however, scholars whose preferences in literature are quite different, and what the admirers of Golden Age cannot get enough of, they see as a portrayal of snobbery. Moreover, their views are such that the image of the social classes feels artificial and the characters are not complex enough. Colin Watson is one of the critics of the aforementioned features, as he claims in his study *Snobbery with Violence: Crime Stories and Their Audience* (1971):

> In book after book they appear – the diffident, decent young pipe-smokers; the plucky girls with flower-like complexions; the wooden policemen, slow but reliable; the assorted house-party guests, forever dressing for dinner or hunting missing daggers […]; the ubiquitous chauffeurs, butlers, housemaids and the rest of the lower orders, all comic, surly or sinister, but none quite human. The world they inhabit is self-contained and never changing. (Watson, 1971)[13]

In addition to the nostalgia, the readers most likely indulged in detective novels due to the refreshment it provided to the troubled minds of many people. Looking back at the socio-political background of the 1920s and 1930s in Britain, it could be said with certainty that the difficult years following WWI together with the problems leading up to the future second world war also contributed, albeit indirectly, to the rise of crime fiction. Since the works rarely mentioned politics or events with international relevance, reading detective stories in one's leisure time was often interpreted as a form of escapism into a "fairy-tail like land"[14], where the problems of the real world do not exist. Even if there seems to be nothing that would resemble

---

[12] Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 50.
[13] Colin Watson, *Snobbery with Violence: Crime Stories and Their Audience* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1971), 101-102.
[14] Symons, *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*, 96.

a fairytale less than the danger brought into the lives of fictional characters by a crime, the criminal act itself represents difficulties which were, in the end, successfully overcome. Likewise, the subsequent punishment of the culprit restores the harmony initially destroyed by the act of evil.

The representation of the good and of the established order in the society is embodied in the detective figures, whose responsibility is nothing less than to find the truth, protect the innocent and bring the guilty to justice. It is the utmost trust in the police that is characteristic of the Golden Age novels, which is notably put in contrast with the later pieces of detective fiction admitting the existence of injustice and corruption within the system. In the 1920s and 1930s,

> individual officers might be portrayed as ineffective, plodding, slow-witted and ill-educated, but never as corrupt. Detective fiction is in the tradition of the English novel, which sees crime, violence and social chaos as an aberration, virtue and good order as the norm for which all reasonable people strive, and which confirms our belief […] that we live in a rational, comprehensible and moral universe. (James, 2011)[15]

As a result, the fictional world of detective novels provided the readers with a sense of stability that they were missing in their everyday lives. Along with that, the perspective we have today is that the prose dealing with the detection of a crime owed its success mainly to the pleasure of engaging in the mind game with the author. But even though the novels do provide entertainment, it does not automatically mean that the effects the texts have are restricted solely to such a function. The detective novels studied in this thesis suggest that even in such works, some authors are capable of implementing into their creations narrative elements worthy of literary analysis.

1. 3 Critical Approach to the Detective Fiction

Taking into account the undeniable success of the novels, the genre would soon attract the attention of literary criticism. The subject proved itself to be quite polarizing in its nature, as the discussion persisted above all between the crime fiction enthusiasts and scholars who failed

[15] James, *Talking About Detective Fiction*, 15.

to see the reasons behind the genre's popularity, let alone to acknowledge that the texts might have any literary assets.

There was no shortage of scholars who were ready to defend detective fiction. One of the first intellectual figures who expressed themselves approvingly of it appeared as early as in 1901. It was none other than G. K. Chesterton, who, in his "A Defence of Detective Stories", declares that "not only is a detective story a perfectly legitimate form of art, but it has certain definitive and real advantages as an agent of the public weal."[16] Another contribution to the debate was made by R. Austin Freeman. Having published "The Art of the Detective Story" (1924), he believes that any literary form as favoured by the intellectuals as crime fiction is cannot be low in its value nor it can be downplayed as foolish or immoral. At the same time, he warns against classifying the whole genre only by the faults of the least literarily interesting pieces. [17] Freeman also argues that the expectations placed on good fiction in general are, in fact, placed on such texts too, with the addition of expectation that the reader's intellectual satisfaction will be fulfilled. It is the intellectual interest it creates in the readers which brings value to such stories. To oppose the critics of the plain style, Freeman claims that "the rigid demonstration was the artistic effect."[18]

W. H. Auden emerged as one of intellectuals who admitted to be in favour of detective fiction as well. Comparing his interest with an addiction that he feels somewhat guilty of, Auden's defence of the genre links the events occurring in a typical crime novel with notions described by Aristotle:

> As in the Aristotelian description of tragedy, there is Concealment (the innocent seem guilty and the guilty seem innocent) and Manifestation (the real guilt is brought to consciousness). There is also peripeteia, in this case not a reversal of fortune but a double reversal from apparent guilt to innocence and from apparent innocence to guilt. (Auden, 1948)[19]

Thus, as Auden claims, the cycle of events is created when the initial peaceful state before murder, or the 'False Innocence', transforms into a peaceful state after the arrest, the 'True Innocence'. On the other hand, Auden does not believe the texts to have anything in common

---

[16] G. K. Chesterton, "A Defence of Detective Stories," in *The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Howard Haycraft (New York: Grossett & Dunlap, 1947), 4.
[17] R. Austin Freeman, "The Art of the Detective Story," in *The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Howard Haycraft (New York: Grossett & Dunlap, 1947), 8.
[18] Freeman, "The Art of the Detective Story", 16.
[19] Auden, "The Guilty Vicarage: Notes on the detective story, by an addict", *Harper's Magazine* (1948): 1.

with art, placing them into opposition to the classic novels dealing with violence and punishment. The main point that he makes is that works of art have as their primary function the need of the reader to identify with the characters, which in his opinions is not the case for detective fiction[20]. Dorothy L. Sayers also recognizes the idea that Aristotelian principles are present in the literary works of this genre in *Aristotle on Detective Fiction* (1936).

There were, however, numerous critics, whose views on crime fiction ranged from sceptical to completely dismissive. Among the most prominent scholars resisting the charm that the novels had to offer was Edmund Wilson, author of two essays aimed at its faults and inadequacies – "Why Do People Read Detective Stories?" (1944) and "Who Cares Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?" (1945). Failing to be impressed by the skills of crime fiction authors including the well-known names, Wilson deems the novels dull and uninteresting in both of the essays. Additionally, he expresses his disappointment in the explanation of the mystery as it is often unconvincing, and therefore he as a reader feels cheated. The conclusion he arrives to at the end of the second text is that the genre does not deserve any attention and its devoted readers behave like addicts, relentlessly trying to convince others about the good qualities of crime stories, while, in fact, they feel guilty for reading them[21]. Wilson's evaluation, however, seems to be based upon the critic's subjective preferences in literature and the faults he sees in such stories are not supported by any theoretical background.

Opposing opinions on the importance of the Golden Age of detective fiction occur even in contemporary literary theory. While scholars such as P.D. James, Stephen Knight and John Scaggs comment on the era with a certain degree of respect, scepticism is still prevalent in the perspectives of Julian Symons or Colin Watson. Nonetheless, all of them agree on the interpretation of the Golden Age-like great prosperity relating to the high number of detective novels sold in Britain in the period between the wars as well as the increasing readership.

As pointed out by Colin Watson in *Snobbery with Violence*, it is, therefore, no surprise that, having the almost certain commercial success of a detective story in mind, crime fiction lured numerous authors and amateur writers, whose interest in literature was more financial rather than artistic, into trying their luck with the genre. Similarly, authors whose skills were recognized neither by the market or the literary criticism hoped to make a breakthrough, as the

[20] Auden, "The Guilty Vicarage: Notes on the detective story, by an addict", 3.
[21] Edmund Wilson, "Who Cares Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?" in *The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Howard Haycraft (New York: Grossett & Dunlap, 1947), 396.

story itself seemingly did not require more than an interesting puzzle followed by unexpected plot twists.

Seeing how scarce the quality detective novels and short stories were in comparison with the number of amateur texts that flooded the market, it is not surprising that detective fiction as a genre gained somewhat negative reputation and was admitted to be a guilty pleasure for many readers and critics alike.[22]

In the opinion of Colin Watson, the authors whose texts were lacking in quality might have been the motivation behind the papers questioning the literary worth of the genre as a whole. It is unfortunate that due to the tendency to regard it purely as a commercially oriented literature, the literary devices used in some of the novels, the structure of which is more complex and more well planned than may seem, are often left unnoticed by the readers and underappreciated within literary criticism.

The notions of prosperity and success included in the definition earlier, however, does also imply flourishing in terms of quality as it sets the expectation that in the said era, the genre and the authors' literary skills must have been at their peak.

> Those writers who are still read have provided something more than an exciting and original plot: distinction in the writing, a vivid sense of place, a memorable and a compelling hero and – most important of all – the ability to draw the reader into their highly individual world. (James, 2011)[23]

While the most renowned authors of the Golden Age are usually perceived as masters of their craft, there are critics such as Julian Symons, who, perhaps influenced by the deep-rooted view of the genre, do not hide their scepticism when it comes to the artistic value of the text written by the detection classics along with their contemporaries.

In *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel* (1972), he claims that if there is a certain brilliance to them, it lies exclusively in the entertainment provided by the reader's attempt to solve the mystery, while the other aspects which are supposed to be present in a work worth literary attention tend to be overshadowed by the puzzle to the point of them being neglected by the author.[24] For these reasons, Symons believes them to stray too far from reality and sees them as one-dimensional and artificial. Furthermore, the outlines made by figures like

---

[22] Watson, *Snobbery with Violence: Crime Stories and Their Audience*, 96 – 97.
[23] James, *Talking About Detective Fiction*, 61.
[24] Symons, *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*, 74.

Knox or Van Dine establishing what a piece of detective fiction should comprise of is seen by Symons as a construct that was artificially created only to be abandoned and forgotten in later works. He goes as far as to claim that the detective novels of the Golden Age era were "not the main highway of crime fiction that it looked at the time, but a minor road full of interesting twists and views which petered out in a dead end."[25]

On the other hand, Symons notes several authors whose literary ambitions were not satisfied by the restrictive nature of the genre and sensed the need for changes in their style in order to produce more complex texts. Namely, it is the case of Margery Allingham, Nicholas Blake and Michael Innes, all of whom decided not to risk losing their targeted audience by experimenting with their writing or breaking the rules.[26] He also acknowledged the efforts made by Dorothy L. Sayers to add more layers to her novels with respect to characterization and the fact that she tried to reflect on contemporary social issues, along the lines of what she herself described as her wanting to create a piece of detective fiction that in its nature comes close to a novel of manners.[27] However, Symon's disbelief in the literary potential of detective stories in 1920s and 1930s is evidently present even when it comes to those efforts of Sayers' since he observes a tendency in her works to exponentially digress from what a detective story is defined to be and even classifies her late work *Gaudy Night* (1935) not as crime fiction but a woman's novel.[28]

Based on statements such as these, it is possible to conclude that Symons does not by any means see a novel clearly identified as detective fiction to have the possibility of being written as a work containing literary devices, exploring themes other than those connected to the detection of a crime, or as a work whose structure might be constructed by the author with a certain goal in mind.

Considering Julian Symon's critical approach to the detective fiction written in the Golden Age, the aim of this thesis is to challenge the statement that these novels are lacking any literary complexity whatsoever. Specifically, the focus will be placed on the narrative elements used in the detective novels, namely the category of the narrator.

---

[25] Symons, *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*, 119.
[26] Symons, 120.
[27] Symons, 117.
[28] Symons, 117.

2 Notable Novelists of the Golden Age of Detective Fiction

The names of the authors that managed to attract the readers as well as to please the critics remain well known to the fans of the genre even today. In particular, Agatha Christie's (1890 – 1976) connection to the Golden Age is frequently highlighted. It was her debut, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920), which showed all of the typical features that were spoken about in the previous chapter. For this reason, it is often classified as the first Golden Age mystery novel.[29] Symons sees Christie as one of the three most important writers of the era, with the other two being Dorothy L. Sayers (1893 – 1957) and Anthony Berkeley (1893 – 1971).[30]

Even though Dorothy L. Sayers does not outshine Christie when it comes to the number of works published, she is praised as "an innovator of style"[31] whose unique approach to the genre influenced many of her followers. According to Barbara Reynolds, detective novels written by Sayers are the "most widely read".[32] On the other hand, Anthony Berkeley Cox is one of the lesser-known writers. In the works written under the pseudonym Francis Iles, he explores the limits of crime fiction in terms of narration. It is interesting that, in contrast with Symons, P. D. James does not mention him at all in *Talking about Detective Fiction* (2009).

The third most significant woman of the Golden Age is Margery Allingham (1904 – 1966). Similarly to Sayers, she focuses on psychology of the characters and the questions regarding their motivation for the crime. Her importance was recognized by John Strachey since the journalist believed her to have potential for further success.[33] Allingham is considered one of the four illustrious female mystery writers of the era, with the others being Christie, Sayers and Ngaio Marsh (1895 – 1982),[34] a New Zealander whose stay in the United Kingdom was long-term. Given that the UK was a second home to her[35] and she was even awarded the title of a Dame, her novels are included in the British literary heritage. The settings for her crime fiction reflect the experiences she gained due to her involvement in theatre, an example of which is *Enter a Murderer* (1935).

[29] Symons, *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*, 91.
[30] Symons, 97.
[31] James, *Talking About Detective Fiction*, 107.
[32] Barbara Reynolds, "Sayers, Dorothy L[eigh]" in *The Oxford Companion to Crime and Mystery Writing*, ed. Rosemary Herbert. With the assistance of Catherine Aird and John M. Reilly (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 396.
[33] Strachey, "The Golden Age of English Detection", *The Saturday Review* (1939): 2.
[34] Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 26-27.
[35] James, 115.

The streak of female novelists whose writing made an impression continues with Josephine Tey. A pseudonym of a Scottish author Elizabeth Mackintosh (1896 – 1952), it was used by her when publishing *The Man in the Queue* (1929). Tey's career as a novelist reached its peak in the 1940s, but by this time, the Scottish writer had already modified the features in her crime stories to such an extent that they are no longer fulfilling the criteria for detective fiction.[36]

A pseudonym used for writing crime fiction turned into an opportunity also for the Poet Laureate Cecil Day-Lewis (1904 – 1972). With the pen name Nicholas Blake, he published *A Question of Proof* (1935) and *Thou Shell of Death* (1936), novels interesting for being "more literary with a left-wing attitude."[37] Similarly, John Innes Mackintosh Steward (1906 – 1994), a professor of English, chose a pseudonym for his works. As Michael Innes, he is notable for *Death at the President's Lodging* (1935), *Stop Press* (1939) and *Hamlet, Revenge!* (1937). There are also several other names worth mentioning, for example Ronald Knox (1888 – 1957), Cyril Hare (1900 – 1958), Patricia Wentworth (1977 – 1961), Gladys Mitchell (1901 – 1983) or Josephine Bell (1897 – 1987).

2. 1 The Detection Club

Most of the renowned authors became members of the Detection Club, a literary group serving as "a social and intellectual/ideological meeting ground"[38] for the authors of detective fiction. The club was founded in 1930. Despite the fact that all the members were originally British, writers of different nationalities had started to enter the group by 1936 with John Dickson Carr as the first citizen of the United States. Every single member had to swear an oath upon his/her admission to the group, and, after the admission ceremony, was permitted to attend regular meetings with the group. Striving for improvement of the genre and cooperation between one another, each of them committed to adhering to the rules formulated by S. S. Van Dine and later summarized by Raymond Chandler. The main principle promoted by the Detection Club was the idea of fair play between the author and his/her readers, in other words, that the clues must be inserted into the plot in such a way that it enables them to reach the conclusion on their own.

Other than that, the club's associates produced theoretical works on crime fiction. They completed multiple joint works, with the *Floating Admiral: A Detective Novel of All Talents*

[36] James, *Talking about Detective Fiction*, 68.
[37] Symons, *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Fiction to the Crime Novel*, 114.
[38] Malcolm J. Turnbull, *Elusion Aforethought: the life and writing of Anthony Berkeley Cox* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1996), 12.

published in 1931 by Hodder & Stoughton being the most striking of them because each of the authors provided his/her own solution to the crime in a separate chapter. As time went by, more and more members were admitted to the club. By 1937, there were altogether 39 of them, including Agatha Christie, G. K. Chesterton, E. C. Bentley, Anthony Berkeley, Freeman Wills Crofts, Dorothy L. Sayers, Ronald Knox, Margery Allingham, and Nicholas Blake. If we take into consideration that the club exists to this day, it is safe to say that the interest in detective fiction successfully stands the tests of time. The main difference, however, lies in the fact that due to the developments after WWII, the rules are no longer taken into account and it is not restricted to the crime fiction authors only. After the 1940s, it was no longer associated exclusively with the Golden Age.

In sections 2.2 onwards, we will discuss in more detail the literary features characteristic of those authors on whose works the narratological analysis will be performed. To be specific, the narration in the novels written by Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, Anthony Berkeley and Margery Allingham are at the focus of this thesis. As their biographies will reveal, their personal lives were full of mystery as well.

2. 2 Agatha Christie (1890 – 1976)

Considering that Agatha Christie's novels are almost synonymous with the Golden Age of detective fiction, it is interesting that it is also her who is the most profound rule-breaker among all of its representatives. With the number of her books published worldwide being higher than that of Shakespeare, and with *The Mousetrap* (1952) as the play staged in London for the longest time ever,[39] it may be safe to assume that, in her case, writing according to rules of her own works more than well.

Although Christie is now recognized as one of the most successful novelists in terms of sales, the field of literature had not always been prioritized by her. Since she was born into an intellectual family, Christie's interests were primarily artistic from as early as childhood. Nevertheless, despite making some attempts at publishing poetry, the main field she initially planned to invest her life in was music. It was around that time when, having abandoned her dream career as an opera singer, Christie conversed with her sister about Laroux's *Mystery of the Yellow Room* (1908).[40] The result of their discussion was that they made a bet whether or

[39] James, *Talking About Detective Fiction*, 95.
[40] Agatha Christie, *Vlastní životopis* [An Autobiography] (Praha: Knižní klub, 2013), 200.

not would Christie be capable of writing her own detective novel. She subsequently managed to prove her sceptical sister wrong and published the *Mysterious Affair at Styles*, which was met with success shortly after its introduction.

Here, the readers encounter the Belgian detective Hercule Poirot for the first time, as he uses his little grey cells to solve the murder. Since his investigation is based on deduction and logic, he is the embodiment of the prototypical Golden Age detective figure. Considering also the presence of his easily deceivable sidekick Captain Hastings, it might be concluded that the character was influenced by Sherlock Holmes while Hastings represents Dr Watson. However, the role is sometimes given also to Ariadne Oliver,[41] Poirot's acquaintance who happens to be an author of mystery books. Because of her profession, she is believed to represent Christie's alter ego.

Poirot is the first among the many eccentric detectives created in the Golden Age. It is therefore plausible that the stereotype of a detective with an odd, quirky personality started with Christie's Poirot. For the reason that it was successfully used in other works influenced by both Christie and Doyle, it became the standard for the genre. The particularities of Poirot include perfectionism, obsession with details and a peculiar fondness of his moustache. It is often him who leads the investigation in those instances when the author decides to break the rules of detective fiction, e.g. in the *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934).

Due to his unusual traits and humorous appearance, for example his head being shaped like an egg, he became highly recognizable in literature as well as in films. The latter increased the readers' already strong endearment with the detective. In particular, the ITV adaptation *Agatha Christie's Poirot* is appreciated in for its faithfulness to the books and for the casting of David Suchet as Poirot. Suchet's skilful portrayal of the character may be attributed to his resolution to be as familiar with the novels as possible, which he was doing in order to grasp the detective's personality.[42]

Thanks to the length of her literary career, Christie is one of the few to introduce more than one significant detective figure. Miss Marple represents a unique example of an elderly female amateur detective. Relying on her knowledge of human nature, intuition and the wisdom gained throughout her life, she is the person to uncover the truth while cooperating with the police.

---

[41] Ariadne Oliver accompanies Poirot f. e. in *Cards on the Table* (1936) or *Elephants Can Remember* (1972).

[42] Michal Sýkora et al., *Britské detektivky: od románu k televizní sérii* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2012), 68-69.

Starting with the *Murder at the Vicarage* (1930), the novels strengthen the idyllic atmosphere of Golden Age by them being set in a picturesque English village St Mary Mead. In such a setting, the readers encounter a handful of character prototypes traditionally connected with the countryside, such as the vicar or the local spinsters.

The Secret Adversary (1922) revolves around other detective characters, this time a couple. Thomas Beresford and Prudence Cowley, nicknamed as Tommy and Tuppence, establish an agency 'Young Adventurers Ltd'. Together, they face the dangers of crime and solve murders. Owing to their complementary personalities, they prove to be an efficient team. Tommy prefers facts to intuition but seems not to be so bright. Tuppence, on the other hand, is always ready to act but, at times, does so without thinking ahead. The two get married, get older with each novel and start a family.

The works written by Agatha Christie are known to have surprising, at times almost shocking, resolutions to the crime. The element of surprise is strong as the culprit is often revealed to be the least likely suspect. In addition to that, she makes the game more challenging by utilizing false clues, or red herrings, in attempts to confuse the readers and shift their attention from the right direction. The reader's chances to guess the culprit lie in their ability to pick up details, as the clues are often verbal and may be found in the dialogues. More often than not, it also requires some additional knowledge on the reader's part. In light of the fact that she tends to overstep the boundaries of Knox's rules, it might be argued that her strategy is on the borderline of the fair play propagated by the Detection Club.

Christie often utilizes her knowledge of poisonous drugs as the cause behind the victim's death. It is always specifically stated what drug was used in the murder. The symptoms of the poisoning, as well as of several diseases, are described realistically and with precision, which was applauded by the *Pharmaceutical Journal*.[43] Her expertise comes largely from the experience she gained in WWI when she joined the nursing service as a volunteer.[44] Another feature reflecting her personal life is the choice of setting. Apart from the English countryside, she often set her novels in exotic destinations such as the Middle East as she was keen on traveling to faraway places. As an example, we may point out *Death on the Nile* (1937), *Appointment with Death* (1938) or *Death Comes as the End* (1945).

[43] Christie, *Vlastní životopis*, 318.
[44] Christie, 234.

Shortly after publishing the *Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926), the life of Agatha Christie suddenly transformed into a mystery. It was at that time when she learned that her husband had had an affair with his secretary, feeling very upset upon hearing the news. In December 1926, her car was found at Newlands Corner in Surrey. Although there was a coat and a suitcase left inside, the novelist herself was nowhere to be found. Naturally, the husband immediately became the prime suspect.[45] Her disappearance took the public by storm as everyone was coming up with their own theories. Apart from her being murdered by her husband, some suspected her to have escaped from the public eye. Others, on the contrary, believed that she did so to gain more publicity that would increase the sales of her novel.[46] In the end, she was found alive and well after she was recognized by a guest of a hotel in Harrogate, where she had been staying under a false identity.[47] Although Christie went back to her everyday life of an author, Edwards claims that the incident affected her for the rest of her life:

> "[…] not only was she genuinely modest, she was fanatical about preserving her privacy. She had always been shy, but the media frenzy that surrounded her disappearance left her with a lifelong detestation of the Press." (Edwards, 2015)[48]

In comparison with Dorothy L. Sayers or Anthony Berkeley, Christie's prose is simple in style to the point of minimalism. P. D. James describes it as "workmanlike"[49] while praising the subtlety with which she is able to "fuse character with clues."[50] James also attributes the success of her novels to such a style as follows:

> It does what it is required of it. […] her villains and suspects are drawn in broad and clear outlines and, perhaps because of this, they have a universality which readers worldwide can instantly recognize and feel at home with. (James, 2009)[51]

While appraised and well respected in general, Christie's works are downplayed by the critics in terms of the lack in variety of literary features. They are seen as a mere puzzle to be solved which leads to overlooking some of their qualities. For example, many of her novels contain intertextual references to other literary works, the knowledge of which gives the reader an advantage in solving the mystery. It may also add new layers to the narrative in terms of

---

[45] Martin Edwards, *The Golden Age of Murder: The Mystery of the Writers Who Invented Modern Detective Story* (London: Harper Collins, 2015), 53.
[46] Edwards, *The Golden Age of Murder: The Mystery of the Writers Who Invented Modern Detective Story*, 54-55.
[47] Edwards, 56.
[48] Edwards, 57.
[49] James, *Talking About Detective Fiction*, 97.
[50] James, 103.
[51] James, 97 – 98.

characterization, or it can significantly change the overall atmosphere of the novel. For these reasons, we cannot agree with P. D. James when she states that "she wasn't an innovative writer and had no interest in exploring the possibilities of the genre."[52]

Although it is true that Christie did not publish essays on the theory of the genre, it does not mean that she was disinterested in it. On the contrary, the analysis performed in this thesis suggests that her way to explore the genre is to implement the new strategies directly in her writing. The novels published by her from the beginning of 1920s to the end of 1930s are narratologically diverse, which shows that she is consciously experimenting with various types of narrator and utilizes the category to achieve certain effects.

2. 3 Anthony Berkeley / Francis Iles (1893 – 1971)

A significant part of the analysis performed in this thesis will focus on the works of Anthony Berkeley Cox, an author who published his crime novels under the pseudonyms Anthony Berkeley and, later, Francis Iles. In is time, he was both successful and critically acclaimed. With the passing years, however, readers' familiarity with his name faded until it reached the point today where his contributions to genre seem to be mostly fogotten. Due to such circumstances, his novels rarely appear in editions that are more recent. Many of the lesser known titles physically only exist as they were originally printed in the 1930s, attracting the interest of crime fiction enthusiasts as collector's items.

Before his literary career started, the graduate of Oxford University College served in WWI. In 1918, he returned to civilian life as his health was severely affected because of exposure to noxious gas. The 1920s were the beginning of his career in journalism. He created comic sketches for *Punch*, *The Humorist* and *London Opinion*, which were in 1925 collected as a *Brenda Entertains* and *Jugged Journalism*. The latter includes satirical essays, some of which are a mockery of detective stories, and commentaries on writing fiction.[53] Due to his social standing, most of his income came from overseeing properties.[54]

The personality of A. B. Cox was distinctive and it only grew more peculiar with age. Being a critic of bureaucracy and the government, he disagreed with the tax policy and was generally

[52] James, *Talking about Detective Fiction*, 101.
[53] Turnbull, *Elusion Aforethought: the life and writing of Anthony Berkeley Cox*, 10.
[54] Turnbull, 14.

careful about his money. Once, he had to attend a court since he had refused to pay a motoring fine.[55] As Turnbull says, "he delighted in trying to outwit the Inland Revenue, secreting cash under floorboards and stowing silver in false cupboards […]."[56]

At the beginning, Berkeley did not give a serious thought to crime fiction and, like many others, was seeking the financial benefits of the genre as the literature that sells. Yet, it is apparent that his views changed given that he later showed interest in the theoretical aspects as well. Together with Dorothy L. Sayers, Berkeley was one of the founding figures of the Detection Club, participating in the collective titles produced by the club and proceeding with its activities long after he stopped producing his own fiction.

The first novel, *The Layton Club Mystery* (1925), was published anonymously. Encouraged by the positive feedback it received, he wrote 10 novels depicting the investigations of an amateur detective Roger Sheringham. Favoured especially among readers was the *Poisoned Chocolates Case* (1929), because it satirizes the Detection Club. One of the members of the Rainbow Club receives a box of chocolates as a gift, but since he does not like it, the box is given to another member. It turns out that the chocolates were poisoned and the other member's wife dies as a result. Each of the Crime Circle members is then asked to provide their own theory for solving the crime, out of which only one is correct. Here, the detective fiction enthusiast might be reminded of a similar device used by Agatha Christie in *Peril at End House* (1932) and a short story "The Chocolate Box" (in *Poirot's Early Cases*, 1974), where the poisoned chocolate also has its significance.

It is the touch of humour that is distinctive about Berkeley's crime novels. The influence of satire is also apparent in the characterization of Sheringham. Inspired by an acquaintance of the author whom he found irritating,[57] the sleuth is overly confident, vain and rude in general. The most interesting trait of his, however, is the fallibility of his judgement regarding the investigation, which results in the detective solving the mystery only in some of the novels. In others, the truth needs to be revealed by another character. Such a fatal flaw is without any doubt unheard of in any of the narratives of this genre. At the same time, it makes him comically entertaining and more believable as a character.

[55] Turnbull, *Elusion Aforethought: the life and writing of Anthony Berkeley Cox*, 15.
[56] Turnbull, 17.
[57] Turnbull, 35.

To appease the readers who treated Sheringham, just like any other detective in the genre of mystery, very seriously, Berkeley changed the character's behaviour in the later novels to be more calm and decent. Yet, his eccentric manners were the same since his introduction. He displays his unconventional ways in *Top Storey Murder* (1931). In the course of the investigation, he tries to interpret the clues in such a manner that the blame would be shifted to an innocent woman, who rejected his romantic pursuits. This reveals another feature typical of Berkeley's work, and that is a very conservative portrayal of women based on negative stereotypes. It is reflected both in the mindset of Sheringham as well as in the high number of unpleasant, sly or irrational female characters in his fiction. For the audience of the 21st century, such portrayal may significantly affect the readers' enjoyment of the story and, understandably, discourage them from finishing the novel in the first place. Perhaps it is for this very reason that, despite its undeniable literary assets, Berkeley's work stands little chance of succeeding in at the contemporary market. It is especially evident in comparison with Dorothy L. Sayers or Agatha Christie, whose female characters are not only sympathetic but also independent, brave and highly competent.

Two notable characters assist Sheringham, first of them being Chief Inspector Moresby of the Scotland Yard. The two first collaborate in the *Vane Mystery* (1927). Moresby is characterized as the polar opposite of an amateur detective due to him preferring traditional police work in contrast with the protagonist's emphasis on psychology. Their relationship is competitive in nature as Sheringham strives to outshine him, but, at the same time, they respect each other. Then there is Mr. Ambrose Chitterwick, a humble and quiet amateur who makes an impression in the *Poisoned Chocolates Case*. The reason for that is that he identifies the culprit despite being only a secondary character.

In the 1930s, Berkeley started to feel dissatisfied with the direction that the evolution of detective fiction was taking. Having spent years implementing the same patterns, he felt a need to transform his style in order to refresh the genre, even if it meant going against its core principles.[58] As a result, the strategy was to break the rules intentionally as a means to explore new possibilities that the narrative can offer. Revealing who is the murderer early on, he abandoned whodunit and its element of surprise. Instead, he attempted to achieve the effect of tension by exploring the motives behind the crime and the psychology of the characters. With

[58] Turnbull, *Elusion Aforethought: the life and writing of Anthony Berkeley Cox*, 77.

such a creative process in mind, he adopted Francis Iles as his pen name and subsequently published three crime novels.

In *Malice Aforethought* (1931) and *Before the Fact* (1932), the plans of Iles came into fruition where they were highly praised for the innovative form in which they were written. They are perceived as the finest works ever written by Anthony Berkeley Cox. Critics often claim the two novels to be masterpieces and list them among the most important works of the genre as a whole. *Before the Fact* is sometimes compared to Henry James's *Turn of the Screw* (1898).[59] Moreover, Alfred Hitchcock made its film version named *Suspicion* in 1941. Unfortunately, the third novel *As for the Woman* (1939) also became Iles's last because it was not received well.

Interestingly, the identity of Francis Iles was initially secret at and it took years for the public to trace the real author. Before an anonymous source pointed towards Anthony Berkeley Cox in the Irish Independent, names such as that of Aldous Huxley, E. M. Forster or H. G. Wells were considered.[60] Among the clues leading to the truth were the aforementioned negative stereotypes of women, the representation of which Cox failed to leave out even when writing as Francis Iles. However, it was not until the 1950s that he finally officially admitted that it was, indeed, his penname. After the failure of *As for the Woman*, Cox never returned to writing mystery novels in spite of the fact that he still participated in the activities of the Detection Club. The only texts he published were book reviews for the *Sunday Times* and the *Manchester Guardian*.

2. 4 Dorothy L. Sayers (1893 – 1957)

Dorothy Leigh Sayers is often described as a witty, independent woman full of energy who was scared of monotonous life and routine more than anything else.[61] She was born in Oxford to a religiously oriented family. Her father was the headmaster of the Christ Church Cathedral Choir School. Until the age of 15, she was home-schooled by a governess. She attended Somerville College, Oxford, where she studied Old French. Given that her studies took place before 1920 when Oxford University began admitting women as full members, it was without any doubt a great achievement on her part. After that, she worked as a teacher in west London and at Clapham High School. Later, she was a copywriter for an advertising agency lead by S. H.

---

[59] Turnbull, *Elusion Aforethought: the life and writing of Anthony Berkeley Cox*, 87.
[60] Turnbull, 80.
[61] Robert Allen Papinchak, "Dorothy L. Sayers," in *Mystery and Suspense Writers: The Literature of Crime, Detection and Espionage*, ed. Robin W. Winks. With the assistance of Maureen Corrigan. Vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1998), 806.

Benson. During the 9 years that she stayed, Sayers gained valuable experience in the world of advertising, which she successfully utilized in *Murder Must Advertise* (1933). Her bibliography contains 16 novels in total. The first of them, *Whose Body?* (1923) was an immediate success. It is also the first time the detective Lord Peter Wimsey is looking for the solution to the crime.

As a character, Wimsey has always been popular with readers. Like many other detectives, his personality is quite eccentric as he is an amateur investigator of an aristocratic origin. He represents the image of a well-educated English gentleman. Apart from his intelligence and elegance, his wealth and contacts in the upper classes are what helps in solving the cases. It is also evident that he knows how to appreciate music and art in general. In order to make the detective feel more human, the author made him more vulnerable than is usual for such a character. With the skills of this detective including code-cracking and self-defence, he sometimes behaves in an arrogant fashion. When searching for the clues, Wimsey is assisted by Bunter, with whom he served in WWI, and by Parker, an inspector with Scotland Yard.

In *Strong Poison* (1930), the first appearance of Harriet Vane, Peter Wimsey's love interest, takes place. As claimed by Robert Allen Papinczak, Sayers initially planned the novel to be the last case for Wimsey and wanted to marry him off to Harriet as a conclusion. Before finishing the novel, she decided to keep him a bit longer.[62] The result of this was that Harriet's existence in the fictional world created a challenge for Sayers as it meant for her to break a significant rule of detective fiction not only in one novel, but also in the rest of the Wimsey novels to come. In contrast to Agatha Christie, Sayers is not a rule-breaker by design, so she tried to transform Harriet into a recurring character by making her as important for the plot as possible. Overall, it would seem that she succeeded, the only exception being the *Gaudy Night*. Here, the plot is so much focused on the developing relationship between Wimsey and Harriet that the crime feels secondary to that.

Besides other novels featuring the famous detective figure, such as *Unnatural Death* (1927), *The Unpleasantness as the Bellona Club* (1928) and *The Nine Tailors* (1934), she also co-authored several others. A notable example is *Documents in the Case* (1930) which was written in cooperation with Robert Eustace, an author of medical mystery short stories, such as *The Brotherhood of the Seven Kings* (1899) created with L. T. Meade.[63] While the clues and the medical knowledge essential for constructing the plot was provided by Eustace, Sayers was the

---

[62] Robert Allen Papinchak, "Dorothy L. Sayers", 814.
[63] Priestman et al., *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*, 47.

one to create the characters and the plot. Thus, Sayers is seen as the main author and Eustace as more of an advisor.[64]

It is believed that her private life was reflected in the novels through Wimsey's character, as his traits are thought to be a compilation of several friends and acquaintances of hers. Considering her relatively rich love life, the detective was based mostly on the men she deeply admired and harboured affectionate feelings towards them.[65] Mention may be made of her love affair with John Cournos, a novelist of Russian-Jewish origin. The relationship eventually turned sour because of their conflicting values in life. Cournos emigrated to the US and married a different mystery author, Helen Kestner Satterthwaite also known as Sibyl Norton. Both then took literary revenge on each other - Dorothy L. Sayers thanks to the character of Philip Boyes in *Strong Poison*, John Cournos in a novel titled *The Devil is an English Gentleman* (1932).[66]

It was, however, another lover with whom Sayers had a child. She kept it a secret from everyone except for her cousin into whose care she entrusted her son as soon as he was born. Even though the author was concerned with his health and happiness, providing him with financial support, he did not know who his real mother was. In the end, Sayers got married to a travel journalist Atherton Fleming.[67]

Sayers was also the editor of the three volumes of *Great Short Stories of Detection, Mystery and Horror* (1928 – 1934). Apart from her works of detective fiction, she was behind the creation of 12 religious plays, *The Man Born to Be King: A Play-Cycle on the Life of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (1941). Due to her being educated in languages, most of her efforts were invested in translations, namely *The Song of Roland* or *Dante's Divine Comedy*. The latter she was unfortunately unable to finish as she had only completed two thirds of it when she died.[68]

As far as her position among other crime fiction authors goes, the reception of her works is somewhat divisive. P. D. James comments on the opposing views as follows:

> To her admirers she is the writer who did more than any other to make the detective story intellectually respectable, and to change it from an ingenious but lifeless sub-literary puzzle into a specialized branch of fiction with serious claims to be judged as a

[64] Robert Allen Papinchak, "Dorothy L. Sayers", 813.
[65] Barbara Reynolds, "Sayers, Dorothy L[eigh]", 396.
[66] Papinchak, 807.
[67] Papinchak, 807.
[68] Papinchak, 809.

> novel. To her detractors she is outrageously snobbish, intellectually arrogant, pretentious and occasionally dull. (James, 2009)[69]

Criticism is also expressed regarding the implausibility of some solutions to the crime or to the improbability of some clues to reveal the culprit. In order to come up with a refreshing, interesting crime fiction, Sayers indeed sacrificed realism for the sake of originality, but conversely, the process of finding the body is depicted quite faithfully in her novels, as she did not omit the gruesome details. Such a portrayal of death is in opposition to Christie's avoidance of blood and violence.[70] Overall, it might be concluded that the future generations of mystery writers owe a lot to Dorothy L. Sayers, not only due to her efforts to alleviate crime fiction's standing among other literary genres, but also her skills in style, characterization and construction of the plot.

2. 5 Margery Allingham (1904 – 1966)

Since her bibliography contains more than 30 works, Margery Allingham is another prolific author of the Golden Age whose mystery novels and short stories are still read to this day. Despite publishing 5 pieces of detective fiction with different detective figures, she achieved her greatest literary success thanks to the popularity of the detective character Albert Campion.

Allingham was a graduate of Regent Street Polytechnic in London, where she studied drama and speech training. For many years, she resided in Tolleshunt D'Arcy in Essex, a village that is said to be the inspiration behind some of the settings in her novels.[71] She wrote her first work, a historical novel *Blackkerchief Dick* (1923), at the age of 19. In spite of it receiving a warm welcome, Allingham was hesitant in what direction should she take her future works. For that reason, she decided to shift her efforts towards mystery, the safe choice.[72] In 1928, she published her first detective story *The White Cottage Mystery*, and the next year, she introduced the Albert Campion in *The Crime at Black Dudley*. His appearance became the turning point in Allingham's career, as the Campion series continued for years with high recognition. Although his role in the first novel is restricted to a secondary character, he takes over as a protagonist in the next novel. To name several of Campion-centric novels from the 1930s, there are the

[69] James, *Talking about Detective Fiction*, 105-106.
[70] James, 109.
[71] Paula M. Woods, "Margery Allingham" in *Mystery and Suspense Writers: the Literature of Crime, Detection and Espionage*, ed. Robin W. Winks. With the assistance of Maureen Corrigan. Vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1998), 3.
[72] "Biography," The Margery Allingham Society, WordPress.com, accessed March 16, 2020, https://margeryallingham.org.uk/biography/

Mystery Mile (1930), *Sweet Danger* (1933), *The Case of the Late Pig* (1937), *Dancers in Mourning* (1937) or *The Fashion in Shrouds* (1938).

Compared with the rest of the well-known main characters of British crime fiction, his real identity remains hidden, as Albert Campion is the pseudonym the character had chosen in order to dedicate his life to fight crime. It is hinted that he is a man of high social standing and that he is perhaps tied to an aristocratic family. He is most noticeably characterized as a noble man who values loyalty and believes fighting the crime to be his duty. Thanks to his calm and inoffensive manner, Campion often gives the public the impression of a seemingly harmless and gullible man. This leads to him misleading the criminals as they underestimate his abilities. A master of disguise, he can also blend in easily and stay unnoticed.

From *Mystery Mile* onward, a sidekick butler Magersfontein Lugg accompanies him. As a former convict, he still has numerous contacts that frequently prove valuable in the investigation. Their relationship is mostly that of a master and a servant, with the exception of occasional bickering and mutual insults. From his debut in the *Crime at Black Dudley*, in which he is described as a young investigator, Campion ages with each passing novel. In spite of what the rules of detective fiction say, he encounters multiple love interests, meets his future wife Amanda Fitton and starts a family.

The year 1940 was, apparently, the time when Allingham realized that she needed to take a break from the detective figure she had created. Consequently, she produced mystery novels without any recurring characters and returned to Campion's adventures in the following years. Among Allingham's later works, *The Tiger in the Smoke* (1952), *The Beckoning Lady* (1955) and *The Mind Readers* (1965) are recognized the most. She also wrote three novels under the pseudonym Maxwell March. Allingham's husband Philip Youngman Carter, an artist and a writer, is believed to be the person to whom she turned for advice and with whom she discussed some of the plots.[73] When she was diagnosed with breast cancer, she gave him her consent to continue with her unfinished novel after she died. Due to Carter's efforts, the *Cargo of Eagles* was published in 1968.

Allingham's literary legacy is praised by the critics due to her skilful development of the characters and her focus on psychology.[74] The plots that she had constructed not only deal with the questions about who committed the crime but also with the motivations behind the acts

---

[73] Woods, "Margery Allingham", 3.
[74] Woods, 3 – 4.

committed by the culprit. The psychological aspect is not neglected in the case of the victims either. Unlike the other authors, she does not strictly adhere to the genre of a whodunit, since some of the novels display features typical of thrillers, and some even lack a murder as the central event of the plot. In her later works, she is also notable for the references she makes to WWII, its aftermath and the problems British society had to face, which shows that the atmosphere of the Golden Age was no longer present in said novels.

3 The Narrator as a Narrative Category

3. 1 Narrator from the Perspective of Narratology

The theory behind the approach to the category of a *narrator* is largely based on Gérard Genette's *Discourse du Récit* (*Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, 1972). In this influential work, he claims that the analysis of a narrative consists of three main components, which are *tense*, *mood*, and *voice*. He thus identifies the narrator as the voice, or, in other words, a narrative instance that speaks, and who is the source of the information provided to the readers.[75] Drawing on Genette's definition, Manfred Jahn specifies the narrator as "the agent who […] manages the exposition, who decides *what* is to be told, *how* it is to be told […] and *what is to be left out*."[76]

Genette says that to analyse the *narrative situation*, it is necessary to point out its categories of the *time of narration*, *person*, and *narrative levels*. When it comes to the person, two types of the narrator are distinguished. First, there is the *heterodiegetic narrator*, who does not take part in the narrated events. Second, the *homodiegetic narrator*, on the other hand, does partake in the events as one of the characters.[77] In such circumstances, the narrating agent may either play the role of a mere spectator or be in the focus of the narrative as the protagonist. If the latter is the case, we speak of an *autodiegetic narrator.*[78] What helps with the identification is the presence of linguistic markers, namely first-person pronouns in the homodiegetic and third-person pronouns in the heterodiegetic narration.

The textual signals may also establish the type of the narrative instance. They can indicate whether the narrator is *overt* or *covert*. It is possible to find the overt narrator in the text as he/she is "presenting situations and events with more than a minimum narratorial mediation."[79] In the text, the personal pronouns such as "me" or "I" may reveal overt narration, as well as expressions or phrases that indicate the narrator's emotional state, evaluations of the fictional world or show signs of subjectivity.[80] The covert narrator is thus defined in the absence of such

---

[75] Gérard Genette, *Discourse du récit* [Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method] (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 213.
[76] Manfred Jahn, *Narratology: A Guide to the Theory of Narrative* (n. p.: University of Cologne, 2017), N3. 1. 1. http://www.uni-koeln.de/~ame02/pppn.htm
[77] Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, 244.
[78] Genette, 245.
[79] Gerald Prince, "overt narrator," in *A Dictionary of Narratology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 68.
[80] Jahn, *Narratology: A Guide to the Theory of Narrative*, N3. 1. 4.

textual features. Without addressing anyone or interrupting the narration with any comments, the narrating instance's "discourse fulfils no obvious conative, phatic, appellative or expressive functions."[81]

Another scholar to work with the narrative situation is Franz Stanzel. As an alternative to Genette's terminology, he speaks of a *first-person narrative situation*, in which the narrator participates in the narrated events.[82] The *figural/personal narrative situation* is the opposite; meaning that the narrator does not take part in the events, but the narrative is internally focalized at the same time.[83] The third type of Stanzel's take on the narrative situation is the *authorial narrative situation*. It is the case when a narrator does not participate in the events and his knowledge of the fictional world is not limited.[84]

As discussed in *Narrative Modes in Czech Literature* (1973), Lubomír Doležel describes the narrator as a medium corresponding with the narrator's discourse, the variants of which he calls the *narrative modes*. The theory suggests that the analysis of the narrative shall be performed according to the *functional* and *verbal models*, with the former assigning obligatory *primary* and optional *secondary functions* to the category.[85]

The narrator is allocated the primary function of *representation*, since the element is the "verbal medium of narrated events".[86] As for the other primary function, the *control*, Doležel claims that the narrator is in control of the narrative structure, specifically the "introductory phrases, specification of the intonation, tone of the characters' speeches, etc."[87] On the other hand, *action* and *interpretation* is obligatory for the characters but optional for the narrator. If the narrator's description of the events contains any comments or evaluations, we speak of the interpretation, while the action function refers to the situation where the narrator actively participates in said events as one of the characters. Subsequently, three narrative modes can be identified with respect to the function, or lack thereof, in the narration.

The characteristics of the *objective*, *rhetorical* and *subjective* narrative modes are outlined in Doležel (1973).[88] As it is revealed, the objective narrative mode lacks the function of interpretation and action while displaying the function of representation. The rhetorical

---

[81] Jahn, N3. 1. 4.
[82] Prince, "first-person narrative situation," in *A Dictionary of Narratology*, 31.
[83] Prince, "figural narrative situation," in *A Dictionary of Narratology*, 30.
[84] Prince, "authorial narrative situation," in *A Dictionary of Narratology*, 9.
[85] Doležel, Lubomír. *Narrative Modes in Czech Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 4 – 6.
[86] Doležel, *Narrative Modes in Czech Literature*, 6.
[87] Doležel, 6.
[88] Doležel, 8.

narrative mode only lacks the action and has both the representation and interpretation functions. The subjective narrative mode is, however, characteristic for all three functions, representation, interpretation and action.

According to Doležel's theory of narrative modes, the establishment of a structurally based typology depends on said verbal features present in the text, as well as on the three functions accounted for by the functional model. He distinguishes between a narrative written in the first person, the *Ich-form*, and a third-person narrative, the *Er-form*.[89] In order to take another step towards a more specific distinction, among the features to be considered are also the presence of personal deixis, subjective semantics or allocution. The Er-form can thus be divided into three subcategories – *subjective*, *objective* and *rhetorical Er-form*, while the Ich-form varies from *personal* and *rhetorical Ich-form* to *observer's Ich-form*.[90]

There are also other Czech narratologists, whose studies deal with the topic of narration. Tomáš Kubíček, formerly associated with the Palacký University in Olomouc, focuses on the narrator in *Vypravěč: Kategorie narativní analýzy* (2007). Together with Jiří Hrabal of Palacký University and Petr A. Bílek, they published a joint work *Naratologie: Strukturální analýza vyprávění* (2013). Apart from that, Hrabal is concerned with the theory of focalization in *Fokalizace* (2011).

In order to illustrate the different views expressed on the international scene of narratology, it is possible to mention Richard Walsh's take on the category. In his essay "Who Is the Narrator?" (1997), he confronts the idea that a narrator is a notion inherent to the narrative.[91] Challenging the generally accepted distinction between a narrating agent and the author, he claims that the narrator can only be a character written into the story or the voice of the author himself/herself.[92] Based on this claim, Walsh rejects the heterodiegetic covert narrator, as the voice of the instance is indistinctive, and concludes that some narratives do not have a narrator, only a narrating author.[93]

---

[89] Doležel, *Narrative Modes in Czech Literature*, 7-9.
[90] Doležel, 10.
[91] Walsh, "Who Is the Narrator?", *Poetics Today* 18, no. 4 (1997): 495.
[92] Walsh, "Who Is the Narrator?", 505.
[93] Walsh, 507.

3. 2 Unreliable Narration

Since the narrator is the medium on which the establishment of the fictional world depends, we generally rely on his/her information and accept the narrative as it is presented to us. There are, however, instances in which the ability of a narrator to report the events sufficiently may be questioned. If features indicating the narrator's untrustworthiness are present, we speak of *unreliable narration*.

The term is first mentioned by Wayne C. Booth in the *Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961) where it is connected with the *implied author*, an instance that is to be distinguished from both the author and the narrator. The implied author is defined as

> the author's second self, mask or persona as reconstructed from the text; the implicit image of an author in the text, taken to be standing behind the scenes and to be responsible for its design and for the values and cultural norms it adheres to. (Prince, 1987)[94]

In contrary to *reliable narrator*, the unreliable does not "speak or act in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say the implied author's norms)."[95] Considering that the narrator's insufficiency is taken into account alongside the fallibility of human knowledge, the unreliable narration is almost exclusively used in connotation with the homodiegetic narrator. The covert heterodiegetic narrator is usually reliable, but with his overtness increasing in the text, "his chances of being fully reliable are diminished, since his interpretations, judgements, generalisations are not always compatible with the norms of the implied author."[96]Ansgar Nünning, on the other hand, believes the unreliability to be dependent on the readers themselves and their interpretation of the narrative, which is based on how they inferred the textual signals.[97]

Phelan further specifies what was outlined by Booth, stating that an unreliable narrator fails to fulfil the role assigned to each narrator, namely the roles of interpreting, reporting, and evaluating. Based on the three roles, Phelan identifies unreliability in terms of the *axis of facts*, the *axis of knowledge and perception*, and the *axis of values/ethics*. He emphasizes the difference between the narrator providing the wrong information and his/her inadequacy, which

---

[94] Prince, "implied author," in *A Dictionary of Narratology*, 42.
[95] Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), 158 – 159.
[96] Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Routledge, 1989), 103.
[97] David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan, eds. *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Narrative Theory*, s. v. "reliability" (London: Routledge, 2005), 646 – 647.

may also be caused by his/her limitations in knowledge. In the case of the former, the unreliability is classified as *misreporting*, *misinterpreting/misreading*, and *misevaluating/misregarding*. The latter results in unreliability defined as *underreporting*, *underinterpreting/underreading* and *underevaluating/underregarding*.[98]

In order to determine the unreliable narrator successfully, Rimmon-Kenan's approach to the notion consists of the search for its textual signals. According to her, unreliability comes either from limitations in the narrator's knowledge (e.g. lack of knowledge because of his/her young age), from the narrator's value system that is to some extent problematic, or from the narrator being personally involved.[99] Those are labelled as the three sources of unreliability.

One of the signals mentioned above is the situation where information given by the narrator in some form conflicts with the facts. Another would be when the outcome of the narrative logically stands in opposition to what was implied or explicitly stated by him/her. Next, it is the clash between what is said by other characters and the character performing the act of narration, which suggests inconsistencies in his/her perception of the fictional world.[100] The last signal points towards the unreliability when "the narrator's language contains internal contradictions, double-edged images, and the like."[101]

To reformulate the terminology affected by the contradictions of Booth's and Nünnings's views, Greta Olson suggests distinguishing between two subtypes of unreliability – a *fallible* and an *untrustworthy narrator*.[102] She describes the untrustworthy narrator as a narrating agent whose contradictory narrative information stems from his/her "inherent characteristics"[103] or personal interests, meaning that it is the narrator's intention to deceive the readers. She further emphasizes that eventually, the unreliability needs to be exposed in the narrative.[104] In contrast, it is not the fallible narrator's intention to make mistakes in the narration. In agreement with Booth and Phelan, she emphasizes that the inconsistencies created by them are explainable by the limitations imposed on them externally, e.g. by the lack of education, experience or the narrators' highly subjective view of the world. An example of such fallibility is a narrative of a child whose understanding of his/her surroundings is not necessarily reflected realistically.

[98] Dan Shen, "Unreliability," in *the living handbook of narratology*, ed. Peter Hühn (Hamburg: Hamburg University), Paragraph 4. http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/unreliability
[99] Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, 100.
[100] Rimmon-Kenan, 101.
[101] Rimmon-Kenan, 101.
[102] Olson, "Reconsidering Unreliability: Fallible and Untrustworthy Narrators", *Narrative* 11, no. 1 (2003): 101.
[103] Olson, "Reconsidering Unreliability: Fallible and Untrustworthy Narrators", 102.
[104] Olson, 104.

Since Olson's study of unreliability brings valuable insight into the category, we will utilize her terminology, along with Phelan and Rimmon-Kenan's, in this thesis.

3. 3 Focalized Narrative

Focalization as a term was coined by Gérard Genette. First, it was explored in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. The theory represents his attempt to reformulate the already existing notions of *perspective* and *point of view*.[105] It is also a reaction to the confusion which came about between the voice and the mood. In other words, he says it is necessary to distinguish between the questions "*who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective?* and the very different question *who is the narrator*?"[106] Focalization as such can thus be defined as "as a selection or restriction of narrative information in relation to the experience and knowledge of the narrator, the characters or other, more hypothetical entities in the storyworld."[107]

In his analysis, Genette differentiates between three subtypes of focalization – *zero*, *internal* and *external*. With the zero focalisation, the events of the story are not perceived by any of the characters nor by a specific entity. There is no restriction in the narrative information since the narrative voice provides the readers with an extensive knowledge surpassing human cognitive abilities. For example, the narrator has access to the thoughts of the characters. Such a narrative is also called *non-focalized*.

When the fictional world is seen through the eyes of a *focal character/reflector* existing in said world, we speak of the *internal focalization*. In this case, the information is restricted by the perception of the character. The narration is filtered by the focal character's evaluations and beliefs. Nothing that is beyond his/her consciousness is revealed to the readers. The internal focalization may appear in three different arrangement patterns. If there is only one focal character, the focalization is *fixed*. To use *variable focalization* means to create a narrative with several reflectors with the role shifting from one character to another. Those instances where the same event is "told two or more times, each time seen through a different reflector"[108] are

---

[105] Burkhard Niederhoff, "Focalization," in the living handbook of narratology, ed. Peter Hühn (Hamburg: Hamburg University), Paragraph 2. http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/focalization
[106] Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, 186.
[107] Niederhoff, "Focalization," in *the living handbook of narratology*, Paragraph 1.
[108] Jahn, *Narratology: A Guide to the Theory of Narrative*, N3. 2. 5.

referred to as *multiple focalization*. The last of the three subtypes, *external focalization*, may be described as events narrated through the perception of a witness.[109]

Even though Gérard Genette is the first scholar to speak about a focalized narrative and his works are still considered as fundamental among studies in narratology, the terminology he coined is profusely criticized by other narratologists. Notable modifications to the theory are made by Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan in *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (1983). She draws on Mieke Bal's notions of *the focalizer*/*the subject of focalization* whose "perception orients the representation,"[110] and *the focalized* /*the object of focalization*, which is everyone and everything that the focalizer perceives.

In order to illustrate this, Jahn introduced a *mental model of vision* that works with the notions of a *field of vision*, an *eye*, and a *world*. In the area of *focus*, there is a perceived object corresponding with the focalized, which exists within a fictional world. The object is seen by an eye and it is in its field of vision. The eye belongs to the perceiving subject, or the focalizer.[111]

With respect to the position of the focalizer to the story, Rimmon-Kenan works with two of Genette's terms, external focalization and internal focalization. The focalized used in the cases of external focalization is identified as an instance "closer to the narrating agent" and therefore referred to as the *narrator-focalizer*. It can also appear in texts written in the first person when the narrating self prevails over the experiencing self in the narrative.[112] In the case of internal focalization, we label the focalizer as the *character-focalizer*. If we return to the focalized, it is possible for them to be perceived by the focalizer either on the outside or from within. That means that the readers do have access to the motives, thoughts and emotions of the characters seen by the focalizer.[113]

In addition to Genette, Bal and Rimmon-Kenan's views regarding focalization, we will consider also another concept in this thesis. It is David Herman's notion of hypothetical focalization, which he describes as

[109] Genette *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, 189 – 190.
[110] Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, 74.
[111] Jahn, *Narratology: A Guide to the Theory of Narrative*, N3. 2. 12.
[112] Rimmon-Kenan, 75.
[113] Rimmon-Kenan, 76.

> the use of hypotheses, framed by the narrator or a character, about what might be or have been seen or perceived – if only there were someone who could have adopted the requisite perspective on the situations and events at issue. (Herman, 1994)[114]

Niederhoff explains that, as a theory in narratology, focalization is criticized by numerous scholars because of several inconsistencies in the theory. For this reason, the term point of view is not completely substituted by focalization.[115] Rather than that, they co-exist in the discourse and the scholars adopt either of them according to their academic purposes. He claims that each is suitable for different approach to the narrative. Since he classifies focalization as a construct useful in the study of "elections of narrative information that are not designed to render the subjective experience of a character but to create other effects such as suspense, mystery, puzzlement, etc.,"[116] this thesis contains analysis based on focalization instead of point of view.

3. 4 Narrative Levels

Special narrative circumstances arise where there is a narrative embedded in an already existing narrative, often executed as a character performing the action of narration. In such situations, we speak of the *narrative levels*. Their existence is first recognized by Genette since he claims in *Narrative Discourse* that narrative situations might differ from each other in such an aspect. As explained by Rimmon-Kenan, who later expanded on the topic, the "narratives within narratives create a stratification of levels whereby each inner narrative is subordinate to the narrative within it is embedded."[117]

Such a hierarchy of levels thus consists of the primary, *first-degree narrative*, the *second-degree narrative* inserted in the first-degree narrative, *third-degree narrative* that is embedded in the second-degree narrative and so on. Correspondingly, the narration can be performed by *first-degree*, *second-degree*[118] and *third-degree narrators*.[119] Genette also establishes the distinction between the *extradiegetic*, *intradiegetic* and *metadiegetic narrators*. Extradiegetic is the narrating instance in the first-degree narrative, the intradiegetic narrator is a character narrated in the first-degree narrative and the producer of the second-degree narrative. Finally, the metadiegetic narrator narrates the third-degree narrative.[120]

---

[114] Herman, "Hypothetical Focalization", *Narrative* 2, no. 3 (1994): 231.
[115] Niederhoff, "Focalization", in the *living handbook of narratology*, Paragraph 18.
[116] Niederhoff, Paragraph 18.
[117] Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, 91.
[118] Rimmon-Kenan, 91.
[119] Rimmon-Kenan, 94.
[120] Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in method*, 227.

In combination with the way the narrator participates in the story, the typology based on narrative levels constitutes Genette's further specification of four types of the narrator. First, there is the *extradiegetic-heterodiegetic* narrator, the narrating agent of the first-degree narrative that does not participate in the events. Second, it is possible to identify the *extradiegetic-homodiegetic* narrator, who might be identified as a first-degree narrator sharing his story with the readers. Third, there is also the *intradiegetic-heterodiegetic* narrator narrating the second-degree narrative in which he does not take part. To be more specific, the term applies to the situations when a fictional entity is present in the first-degree narrative as a character. Subsequently, he/she takes over the narrative with their own narration of events in which he/she did not participate. The last type to be mentioned is the *intradiegetic-homodiegetic* narrator. In this case, the narrative agent is a second-degree narrator recounting something that he had experienced and therefore is a part of the narrative as one of the characters.[121]

Additionally, the notion of narrative levels to some extent corresponds with the term *narratee*, or "the agent addressed by the narrator."[122] It is especially emphasized in the structure of a second-person narrative and in epistolary novels. It is necessary not to confuse it with the *implied reader*, the intended audience of the implied author, since the narratee shares its level of diegesis with the narrator.[123] There can be multiple of them in a single narrative. They can be extradiegetic or intradiegetic, depending on whether or not they play a role in the events described by the narrator. Similarly to the distinction made in the case of the narrating agent, narratees are covert if their function lies solely in being the addressee and they do not have any indication of their own voice. Overt narratees are represented in the narrative via the narrator's hints about what would the narratee answer or think, or by a direct reference to what he/she said or did in the past.[124]

[121] Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in method*, 248.
[122] Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, 104.
[123] Prince, "narratee," in *A Dictionary of Narratology*, 57.
[124] Rimmon-Kenan, 104.

4 Heterodiegetic Narration in Selected Crime Novels

4. 1 Presence of a Narrator in Detective Fiction

When examining the structure of a detective novel written in the Golden Age, it is impossible to overlook the fact that in comparison with other genres in fiction, the narrative sections are textually not as complex as the lengthy, ever-present dialogues. In contrast to the flowery speech emulating the English upper-class conversations, the language used by the narrator usually consists of simple expressions that carry subtle hints towards as many interpretations as possible. It is the stylistic minimalism that makes it seem like the reader's attention should be fixed solely on what is stated in the reported speech of the characters.

Even though many important clues may be found in the dialogue, the narrator is the one who is in power over the narrative, since he is endowed with what is most essential when dealing with a puzzle – the information. With the ability to provide it, or, on the contrary, to withhold it, the narrating instance serves as the element that shapes the detective story as to the order of the events and the amount of detail described to the audience, which may result in significant changes in the overall interpretation of the narrative.

In order to arrive at the understanding of the role that the narrators play in a structure of a crime novel, Doležel's functional model can be of particular value. As far as the primary functions are concerned, the function of representation is fulfilled by the narrator recounting both the events surrounding the crime as well as the progress of the investigation; therefore, it is a function essential to all of the types of narrators present in the novels.

The narratives start to differ from each other in terms of the function of control. Despite it being displayed by both heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narrators, the heterodiegetic one controls the narrative as a force hidden behind the scenes. The readers are usually aware of it once the narrative is internally focalized on one of the characters, e.g. the detective figure. However, the control function might become evident in the comments uttered by a homodiegetic narrator. As we will see in the upcoming chapters, it is especially strong in the cases when a self-conscious narrator performs the narrating act, adjusting the plot points to suit the purpose of why he/she recounts everything.

Considering that an overwhelming majority of detective novels depends on heterodiegetic narration, from Dorothy L. Sayers[125], Margery Allingham, Ngaio Marsh or Anthony Berkeley to, on several occasions, Agatha Christie[126], it is certainly less difficult to point out all the texts that do not belong to this category rather than those that do. With that being said, it may be suggested that such a narrator is the standard choice for a crime narrative of the interwar period. Consequently, the features described in the following sections apply to them rather universally.

For the narratological analysis, two works were selected as the examples. *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* (1928) written by Dorothy L. Sayers will represent the typical narrative structure of a classic British detective novel, as well as the reasons why the techniques are generally expected by the readers of the genre. Next, this chapter will deal with Anthony Berkeley's *The Poisoned Chocolates Case* (1929), where the method is slightly modified.

In the *Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club*, Lord Peter Wimsey investigates the death of the elderly General Fentiman. He was found in his favourite armchair at the Bellona Club and everyone thought that he had fallen asleep. As it turns out, his sister, the wealthy Lady Dormer, died on the same day. Her will includes the statement that if she dies, General Fentiman inherits all her money. Robert Fentiman and his brother George would get all the inheritance of their grandfather after he dies. But if General is the one to die first, the conditions of the will make Dormer's friend Ann Dorland the heiress. Because there are problems with the specification of the time when the death of the General really occurred, Wimsey is called to uncover who is the rightful inheritor. Later, it is discovered that the General was actually murdered.

4. 2 Heterodiegetic Narration as the Standard Element in Detective Fiction

As far as the traditional whodunit goes, after the murder occurs and the detective begins his search for potential clues, the audience is served with the individual pieces of the puzzle by covert heterodiegetic narrators. They are not a part of the fictional world and they do not interrupt the narration with their comments or views, which is only to be expected seeing the simplicity in style. Moreover, their covertness ensures that the provided information remains the narrative's focus. Anthony Berkeley's fiction is an exception to this since he prefers to use an overt heterodiegetic narrator. Without any further interference, his narrating instance

[125] Holger Klein, "Narrative Technique and Reader Appeal in Dorothy Sayers' Fiction," *AAA: Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 19, no. 1 (1994): 45.

[126] For example, heterodiegetic narrator is used by Christie in the novels with Tommy and Tuppence as the protagonists, namely *The Secret Adversary* (1922) or *Partners in Crime* (1929).

occasionally inserts a sarcastic remark in between the events. This way, the novel acquires a unique light-hearted, humorous atmosphere. The example of this is the following commentary in parentheses:

> "But you've got so much more experience than us on the practical side, Mr. Sheringham," pouted Mrs. Fielder-Flemming (yes, pouted). (Berkeley, 2016)[127]

The sarcastic tone also contributes to the characterization of Berkeley's amateur detective Roger Sheringham, since the narrator's objective assessment of his personality is the opposite to how he sees himself. It may be noticed in the introduction to the Crime Circle, where the narrator establishes Sheringham as its President and a novelist at the same time.

> It was the intention of the club to acquire eventually thirteen members, but so far only six had succeeded in passing their tests, and these were all present on the evening when this chronicle opens. There was a famous lawyer, […] the most intelligent (if not the most amiable) of living detective-story writers, Roger Sheringham himself […] (Berkeley, 2016)[128]

In the *Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club*, Lord Wimsey's characterization is approached in the traditional way without any comments on the narrator's part. Because of the fact that there is no sidekick or any other side character to describe him from the outside, the readers infer his personality traits from his indirect characterization. Especially in a series with recurring characters, the narrator does not include any introductory sections on the detective at all.

The heterodiegetic narrator is most notable for his function of representation. Since the narrator in detective novels usually does not have the function of interpretation, it fits the classification of Doležel's objective narrative mode. Most frequently, the information is provided to the readers through dialogues. Other times, the relevant background on the characters, especially the suspects, is given in a narrated sequence. Like this, the search for clues and the inquiry itself is generally depicted. In the *Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club*, the narrator is the one to describe the clues found by Wimsey at the Club. The following excerpt shows what the description looks like.

> The corner of a sheet of paper protruded slightly. […] It bored a few scrawls relating to sums of money, very carelessly and shakily written. Wimsey looked at it attentively for a moment or two, and shook the blotter to see if it held anything further. Then he folded

[127] Anthony Berkeley, *The Poisoned Chocolates Case* (London: British Library Publishing, 2016), loc. 170 of 3252, Kindle.
[128] Berkeley, *The Poisoned Chocolates Case*, loc. 103 of 3252, Kindle.

> the sheet, handling it with extreme care by the corners, put it in an envelope and filed it away in his note-case. (Sayers, 1936)[129]

Berkeley's *The Poisoned Chocolates Case* approached the narration a bit differently. Here, the novel contains passages which depend solely on the dialogue. It happens in those moments when members of the Crime Circle gather to share their insights on the murder. Successively, each of them presents his/her version of the events to the rest, and thus all the clues are hidden in the reported speech. However, the individual steps made by Sheringham in hope if arriving at a conclusion are recounted in long heterodiegetic narration. For example, the process of investigation is narrated when Roger pursues a specific clue. It is that the letter enclosed with the poisoned chocolates was written on a particular type of typewriter. He then proceeds to visit shops pretending to be interested in buying a typewriter and tries to determine whether the assistants recognize his suspect.

> Roger was very particular that his typewriter should be a Hamilton no. 4. When the salesmen tried to induce him to consider other makes he refused to look at them, saying that he had had the Hamilton no. 4 so strongly recommended to him by a friend, who had bought a second-hand one just about three weeks ago. Perhaps it was at this very shop? No? They hadn't sold a Hamilton no. 4 for the last two months? How very odd. (Berkeley, 2016)[130]

Probably the most important feature connected to the notion of heterodiegetic narration is the limitation imposed on the narrator. Having a puzzle at the core of its interest, the characteristics of a detective novel suggests the narrator not having access to the thoughts of the characters. For instance, the narrator in the *Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* provides the information objectively, focuses on the actions performed by the characters, and only hints at their emotional state by outer description of their face. When the moment comes that Wimsey deduces something from the events, the readers are never told. Rather, the detective is shown to be executing his plan without the audience knowing what it is or what his reasons are. The effect of this is the increase in suspension. The impersonality and concealment of his motives are illustrated by Wimsey's visit to the Bellona Club:

> Wimsey thought for a moment; then strolled across to the smoking-room, exchanged a mute greeting with one or two of the assembled veterans, picked up the "Morning Post," and looked round for a seat […] A veteran close at hand looked angrily at him and

[129] Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* (London: Penguin Books, 1936), 30.
[130] Berkeley, *The Poisoned Chocolates Case*, loc. 2011 of 3252, Kindle.

> rustled the "Times" loudly. Wimsey ignored these signals, barricading himself behind his paper. The veteran sank back again, muttering something about "young men" and "no decency." (Sayers, 1936)[131]

Considering the restrictions imposed on the narrator, it would seem that access to the thoughts of the characters is strictly prohibited in whodunits. Despite the technique not being used on a regular basis, Anthony Berkeley proves that it is plausible to equip the narrator with knowledge surpassing human cognition without undermining the purpose of a puzzle. The key to this is what Doležel calls the function of control. Since the narrator is the one who creates the structure of the narrative by choosing the events and the dialogues, it also depends on him which thoughts of the characters he reveals, when, and why. In the *Poisoned Chocolates Case*, primarily the emotions of the Crime Circle are included. The thoughts are chosen that express their relationships with other members, but not others. To adhere to the principles of fair play, the thoughts are controlled in such a way that none of them would spoil the final reveal.

Because of the above characteristics, the heterodiegetic narrative may be focalized either on the detective figure or on a witness. Nonetheless, the conventional detective fiction narrative is non-focalized. But even in instances like those, there can be short passages focalized on the detective or his side-kick. To compare, Francis Iles' thriller *Before the Fact* is narrated by a heterodiegetic narrator, but the narrative is focalized on the victim. Due to the lack of detective figure or police in general, the novel does not deal with the investigation of a crime but with the psychology that determines a possible motive for committing one. Unlike the impersonal narration in the works of Berkeley and Sayers, the thriller is filtered through the highly subjective perception of the victim, and the audience needs to test the character-focalizator's information.

Overall, the heterodiegetic narration is the most widely used form of narration in the Golden Age. The reasons for this are probably the advantages tied to the impersonal tone achieved through the narrator in combination with the absence of focalization. Without any comments or subjective filtering of the characters, the narration provides the audience with relevant information, and no extra processing effort is required from the readers. In this fashion, the aspect of solving a puzzle is accentuated. The non-focalized narration represents the standard from which the later literary experiments purposefully deviate.

[131] Sayers, *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club*, 33.

5 The Use of a Homodiegetic Narrator in Detective Fiction

Compared with the works discussed in the previous chapter, homodiegetic narrators are present in the interwar detective novels rather scarcely. Such an observation suggests that their use as a narrative element is not the standard for the strategies implemented in the Golden Age. However, if we consider the history and evolution of crime fiction, the homodiegetic narration of Arthur Conan Doyle's Dr Watson and the narrator in the *Murders in the Rue Morgue* serve as a reminder that the narratives written in the first person are more rooted in the tradition of the genre.

In this chapter, our analysis will focus on the novels that may be perceived as a representation of how such traditionally structured narratives endure in the Golden Age era. It will deal with features characteristic of them together with the question of how the usage of homodiegetic narrator influences the reader's perception of the narrative. The characteristics of the traditional strategy will be demonstrated in three works, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* and *The Murder at the Vicarage* by Agatha Christie, and *The Case of the Late Pig* by Margery Allingham. In 5.4, a special case of narration will be analysed. Namely, it is the joint work of Dorothy L. Sayers and Robert Eustace, *The Documents in the Case*.

Out of the major authors of the era, Agatha Christie is the only one to utilize the technique consistently in her works. Continuing with the pattern established by Sherlock Holmes, she chooses the detective's sidekick as the narrator in all the novels in which Captain Hastings appears as a character. Apart from her debut, the same type of narration is therefore also adopted in *The Murder on the Links* (1923), *The Big Four* (1927), *Peril at End House* (1932), *Lord Edgware Dies* (1933), *The A. B. C. Murders* (1936) and *Dumb Witness* (1937).

There are, overall, three distinctive roles that the homodiegetic narrator may play in Golden Age detective fiction. First, it is the familiar situation of a sidekick as the character-focalizer. From such a role we need to distinguish a narrator who, as a side character, happens to witness the crime or for some reason finds himself at the centre of the investigation. Nonetheless, his position in the narrative is so independent with respect to the detective that he cannot be seen as a figure officially assisting him in solving the crime. When it comes to the third role, the detective himself is in charge of the narration.

In all of them, the personal pronouns used throughout the text imply that, using Stanzel's terminology, it is the case of a first-person narrative situation. They are a part of the fictional

world they narrate and they actively intervene in the events by searching for clues or, sometimes, conducting an interrogation. Their presence in the narrative is easily identified by the comments they make, thus they may be classified as overt narrators. As is common in such cases, the focalization is internal and usually remains fixed on one narrator only. There are exceptions to this tendency as the narration may occasionally be interrupted by a letter from another character. When that happens, the internal focalization shifts from one character-focalizer to another, albeit only for a short moment.

In contrast to the impersonal heterodiegetic one, this type of narration is associated with the subjective narrative mode, as the narrator performs the obligatory functions of representation and control, but also the optional functions of interpretation as well as the action. Having acquired so many functions in a single narrative, it is safe to conclude that he/she has a strong influence on the novel as a whole.

For this reason, the readers usually tend to trust the character-focalizer, since one of the effects caused by internal focalization is that it "invariably generates empathy for the focalizer, no matter how problematic or criminal."[132] Nevertheless, it should be noted that due to the intradiegetic nature of the narrator, a certain degree of subjectivity is always to be expected. Even though the narrative largely relies on reporting and interpreting, the narrator still has to be written as a believable character and so not all information provided has to be completely objective. This is illustrated by Hastings' subjectivity, which is evident in his description of a woman whom he finds beautiful and very charming:

> I shall never forget my first sight of Mary Cavendish. Her tall, slender form, outlined against the bright light; the vivid sense of slumbering fire that seemed to find expression only in those wonderful tawny eyes of hers, remarkable eyes, different from any other woman's that I have ever known; the intense power of stillness she possessed, which nevertheless conveyed the impression of a wild untamed spirit in an exquisitely civilised body – all these things are burnt into my memory. I shall never forget them. (Christie, 1983)[133]

Considering that there is no specific romantic subplot concerning Hastings and said woman, the meaning of the melodramatic passage is mainly to emphasize his highly subjective filtering of the events. On the other hand, it does not cause any inconsistencies in the narration. As long

[132] Kathy Mezei, "Spinsters, Surveillance, and Speech: The Case of Miss Marple, Miss Mole, and Miss Jekyll," *Journal of Modern Literature* 30, no. 2 (Winter 2007): 107.
[133] Agatha Christie, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (New York: Bantam Books, 1983), 5.

as subjectivity does not disrupt the logic of events correlated with the crime, there is no reason to doubt the narrator's reliability.

5. 1 The Homodiegetic Narrator as a Sidekick or a Side Character

As the example of a narrator in the traditional position of a sidekick, we will look at the narration from the perspective of the aforementioned character, Arthur Hastings. In the *Mysterious Affair at Styles*, the readers encounter Hastings staying at Styles with the family of his friend John Cavendish. Even though the novel is set during WWI, the events take place at the Styles estate and the international situation is very rarely mentioned. John's wealthy step-mother, Emily, who inherited the estate, had recently remarried the much younger Alfred Inglethorp.

After several conflicts that result in the dismissal of Evelyn Howard, Emily's companion and close friend, the atmosphere in the house is tense. Later that night, Emily passes away due to someone poisoning her with strychnine. Hercule Poirot, who came to the place as a Belgian emigrant, is asked to conduct the investigation. The behaviour of Dr. Bauerstein provokes suspicion since he specializes in poisons. Hastings' friend John himself profits from Emily's death the most as he inherits the estate. Although it seems that he must have been the killer and is even temporarily arrested by the Scotland Yard, John is proved innocent in the end and Poirot reveals the real murderers.

With the publication of the *Murder at the Vicarage*, we are introduced to a narrating instance whose position in the events is more of a witness of the village life changed by a murder. As hinted by the title itself, the *Murder at the Vicarage* deals with the murder of Colonel Protheroe, whose body was found nowhere else than at the vicarage where Clement, the narrator, lives together with his young wife Griselda. Protheroe is an unpleasant rich person, so it seems as if almost everyone in his surroundings had a motive to shoot him. The obvious choice is the Colonel's second wife Anna because she had an affair with Lawrence Redding, the local artist. The circle of suspects is enlarged by Protheroe's daughter Lettice, a mysterious new neighbour Mrs Lestrange, the suspiciously behaving curate Mr Hawes, the archaeologist Dr Stone, and his secretary Gladys Cram. Among the peculiar village characters, a group of spinsters attracts the most attention, especially the insightful Miss Marple. Village life is centred around gossip. As admitted by the narrator himself, it is for this very reason that it is difficult for anybody to escape from the elderly women and their sight.

> Miss Marple sees everything. Gardening is as good as a smoke screen, and the habit of observing birds through powerful glasses can always be turned to account. (Christie, 2000)[134]

Interestingly, this particular work of Christie's lacks a central detective figure. Even though it might be argued that it is Miss Marple, it needs to be noted that, most of the time, she is absent from the narrative and appears only to reveal the truth. It is also debatable whether or not Christie had in mind any future plans with the character by the time of the novel's publication. Although the two real investigators, Inspector Slack and Colonel Melchett, are in charge, their personas do not have any greater effect in the narrative. Clement, due to him literally living at the crime scene, accompanies the two quite often, but his own search for clues is not dependent on them. With the villagers all being more than eager to find the culprit, it feels as if half of the residents of St Mary Mead suddenly become amateur detectives. In the end, only Miss Marple lives up to such a standard, even though she admits to being mistaken at one point of the story.

Her only mistake becomes a way to mislead the readers since they had learned to trust Marple. At the same time, it is possible that Christie was aware that in her novels, the culprit is often the least expected suspect. Having that in mind, she subverted her own trope by choosing the most probable ones. However, it is revealed only after the readers were lead to think that the two characters had already been cleared of suspicion. Like this, she broke the unwritten rule that once a suspect is ruled out from the investigation, the possibility of them being the murderer is no longer taken into account.

The choice of the narrator and the type of focalization affect how the potential suspects are presented to the audience. In the case of the *Murder at the Vicarage* and the *Mysterious Affair at Styles*, the other characters come from the narrator's social circles and he describes them according to his own knowledge and his own evaluations about their personality. As is usually the case, their thoughts are inaccessible, and so we are left with the narrative medium's outward descriptions of the expressions visible in their faces. Typically, the narrator points at several details that might be considered, for example the exact time of the murder, etc. The specialty of Hastings is that he as the narrator asks himself rhetorical questions as the means to give a specific direction to the reader's interest.

---

[134] Agatha Christie, *The Murder at the Vicarage* (New York: Signet, 2000), 13.

> My brain was in a whirl. What was this complication of a will? Who had destroyed it? […] But how had anyone gained admission? All the doors had been bolted on the inside. (Christie, 1983)[135]

On the other hand, the vicar benefits from the knowledge he has about his parishioners and his insight about how they treat each other. Right after Colonel Protheroe is murdered, he recounts everybody's conflicts with the victim. Because it is his duty to speak to the people of St Mary Mead, gossip finds its way to him on a daily basis. Here, the audience needs to decide what is just a rumour and what has a certain truth to it.

The reason why many find the homodiegetically narrated detective fiction to be their preferred is the undeniable advantage it has when it comes to the characterization. Through the view of the sidekick, the readers learn of the detective's traits from his observations. Upon Poirot's first entrance, it is already established that he is a famous private detective and all the characters are his acquaintances. Hastings reveals Poirot's real profession accordingly:

> "You've been entertaining a celebrity unawares," I replied. And, for the rest of the way home, I recited to them the various exploits and triumphs of Hercule Poirot. (Christie, 1983)[136]

Hastings' comments further strengthen the intended image of Poirot as he praises him, which builds trust in his abilities and sets high expectations for the character. As the story progresses, the sidekick begins to lose track of the detective's intentions. Since the thought processes of both Poirot and Miss Marple are concealed from the readers, the astonishment of Clement and Hastings is often expressed at their deductions. Due to their capabilities, they often correctly assume what the narrator does not say aloud. It seems as if both Poirot and Marple were mind-readers.

> It had seemed natural enough at the time, but now – Miss Marple seemed to read my thoughts, for she nodded her head shrewdly. "Yes," she said, "it must have been a very nasty shock for him to come across you just then. […] (Christie, 2000)[137]

[135] Christie, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, 38.
[136] Christie, 17.
[137] Christie, *The Murder at the Vicarage*, 237.

As a result, it may be concluded that the main purpose of putting the side character in charge of the narration is to show the intellectual superiority of the core character in a whodunit, the detective.

5. 2 Autodiegetic Narration in Detective Novels of the Golden Age

If we take into account the advantages of the heterodiegetic narrator and the outside view of the sidekick/side character, it is not surprising that autodiegetic narration is hard to come by. One of the few examples is *The Case of the Late Pig*. In addition, the autodiegetic narration performed by the detective figure is also practiced in Christie's *Man in the Brown Suit* (1924) and the *Sittaford Mystery* (1931), both of which have a previously unintroduced female protagonist as an amateur investigator. The difference between their novels lies in the fact that Allingham did not create a standalone detective for these purposes. Instead, she incorporated the switch in narration into her Campion series.

In the *Case of the Late Pig*, Albert Campion receives an invitation to the funeral of his childhood nemesis, R. I. Peters, nicknamed Pig. An anonymous letter arrives, implying that there is something wrong about his death. At the funeral, Campion meets his school friend Whippet, Pig's fiancée Effie, the local doctor Kingston and a mysterious elderly man Hayhoe. Five months later, a man named Harris is found murdered in a hotel in the village of Kepesake. As we learn, he was universally disliked because he got the hotel on a mortgage and intended to build a racetrack at the village. When Campion sees the body, he immediately recognizes that it is the same R. I. Peters, who had allegedly died months ago. Later, he is identified as such by the fiancée. In the end, it is revealed that Harris was Peters' new identity. Towards the end, the events take a dramatic turn when Lugg goes missing. Because of his worries that Lugg may become the murderer's next victim, Campion himself falls into a trap and his life is in danger. With the help of Whippet, he manages to outsmart the culprit.

Having no other character or narrating instance to establish him as the detective figure, the autodiegetic narrator begins the narrative by introducing himself. A few traits of his may also be indirectly inferred by the readers from the confidence he exudes and his self-praise. Campion also sets the atmosphere by anticipating what is to come on the following pages.

> The adventure is mine, Albert Campion's, and I am fairly certain that I was pretty nearly brilliant in it in spite of the fact that I so nearly got myself and old Lugg killed that I hear a harp quintet whenever I consider it. (Allingham, 1964)[138]

As the story progresses, he characterizes himself directly, especially the methods he employs while investigating. In the traditional technique, such a commentary would be uttered by the sidekick. The difference between the two is that the latter is based on experience with the detective and outside observation, while the former depends on self-evaluation, which may not necessarily be accurate. Such a description may be seen in the example below:

> I am not one of these intellectual sleuths, I am afraid. My mind does not work like an adding machine, taking the facts in neatly one by one and doing the work as it goes along. […] I collect all the odds and ends I can see and turn out the bag at the lunch hour. (Allingham, 1964)[139]

In the specific case of Margery Allingham's Campion, there are moments in the novel when the detective is mistaken. If a homodiegetic narrator were in charge of the narrating, Campion's erroneous steps in the investigation would have an effect of irony. But since it is not the case, he is the one to admit his mistakes. The result of this is that instead of irony, the passage has its impact in terms of anticipation.

> Perhaps I ought to mention here that at that moment I was absolutely wrong. I was wrong not only about the position of the snag but about everything else as well. However, I had no idea of it then. (Allingham, 1964)[140]

In contrary to the narration performed by a sidekick, the autodiegetic narration enables the readers to see into the detective's thoughts and the processes that take place in his mind. All the evaluations of the evidence acquired are verbalized and the important events are summarized:

> So far, I had netted one of two things. I had satisfied myself that Pig had been murdered; that is to say, whoever killed him had done so intentionally, but not, I thought, with much premeditation. This seemed fairly obvious, since it was not reasonable to suppose that anyone could have insisted on him sitting just in that one spot […] (Allingham, 1964)[141]

---

[138] Margery Allingham, *The Case of the Late Pig* (New York: Avon Books, 1964), 1.
[139] Allingham, *The Case of the Late Pig*, 33.
[140] Allingham, 34.
[141] Allingham, 33.

However, that does not mean that there is no puzzle left for the audience. In fact, the narrator only expresses how he contemplates on the crime, but never shares his conclusion as to who the murderer is. The discussion above therefore suggests that the use of an autodiegetic narrator in a detective novel shows the puzzle in a different light. Even though it is a pleasant change amidst the other types of narration, the disadvantages of such a technique outweigh the advantages. While the strategies in autodiegetic narration certainly are effective, they are more efficient when the heterodiegetic or homodiegetic narrators/sidekicks are implemented.

5. 3 The Narrator and His Self-Consciousness

Another interesting feature of several homodiegetic narrators in detective fiction is that they are aware of their role in the narrative. Specifically, it is the case in the novels of Agatha Christie, where the narrators tend to understand the fact that they are narrating a story. Accordingly, it is present both in the *Murder at the Vicarage* and the *Mysterious Affair at Styles*. In our analysis, they serve as the example of a self-conscious narrator, an instance that "discusses and comments on his or her narrating chores."[142]

At the very beginning of the novel, Hastings clarifies that he was asked by Poirot and his friends to write an account of what had happened at Styles. The reason behind him doing so is the publicity the crime received and his task is, by telling the truth, to silence any speculations. Likewise, the vicar's self-awareness as the narrator is claimed in the opening sequence:

> It is difficult to know quite where to begin this story, but I have fixed my choice on a certain Wednesday at luncheon at the Vicarage. The conversation, though in the main irrelevant to the matter in hand, yet contained one or two suggestive incidents which influenced later developments. (Christie, 2000)[143]

Aside from anticipating future events and framing the time covered by the narration, their self-consciousness is also indicated by meta-narrative comments. In a short inconspicuous statement, vicar Clement says that he includes a plan of the room where Colonel Protheroe had been murdered, all "for the convenience of my readers."[144] Similar concerns are expressed by Hastings who utilizes the meta-narrative comment to make the orientation easier for the audience as there is a time skip in the story.

---

[142] Gerald Prince, „self-conscious narrator," in *A Dictionary of Narratology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 84.
[143] Christie, *The Murder at the Vicarage*, 1.
[144] Christie, 37.

> I come now to the events of the 16th and 17th of that month. For the convenience of the reader I will recapitulate the incidents of those days in as exact a manner as possible. They were elicited subsequently at the trial by a process of long and tedious examinations. (Christie, 1983)[145]

Interestingly, Hastings' comments in the excerpt above may be interpreted in two ways. First, they are aimed at the implied reader, and thus they are indeed of a meta-narrative nature. The second interpretation is that the comment is aimed at the curious people because of whom the events are narrated, in which case they would represent extradiegetic covert narratees.

As we have seen in this section, Agatha Christie's homodiegetic narrators have the tendency to comment on the act of their narration. The self-consciousness displayed by them indirectly point towards the narrator's control over the narrative. By their effort to make the events easier to follow for the sake of the audience, it once again proves that the reader stands in the centre of detective fiction as a genre.

5. 4 Narrative Levels and Focalization in the *Documents in the Case* (1930)

This section will deal with a work that is by all standards unique. With the assistance of Robert Eustace, Dorothy L. Sayers decided to try a new approach to writing crime fiction. Having been written in the form of an epistolary novel, the narration consists of letters addressed to the characters, but it also includes their notes and statements. The text is further divided into two parts, "Synthesis" and "Analysis". As will be shown, there are multiple layers to this narrative, and its structure is quite intricate.

Paul Harrison writes a letter to Gilbert Pugh, the Director of Public Prosecution, because he has doubts about the circumstances of his father's death. Implying that he might have been murdered, Paul encloses some correspondence as evidence of what was happening before George Harrison had died. It reveals the unhappy married life of George, a rather grumpy man, and Paul's stepmother Margaret, who does not find fulfilment in her life with him. The middle-aged Agatha Milsom lives with them as her companion. Criticized by others for her irrationality, she is generally disliked. She detests George and believes that he purposefully mistreats his wife. Miss Milsom also cannot stand one of their young neighbours, the novelist John Munting, while she absolutely adores his roommate Harwood Lathom, an artist.

[145] Christie, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, 13.

Later, an incident occurs when Munting is accused of trying to seduce either Miss Milsom or Margaret. In fact, John was actually helping Lathom to conceal his love affair with Margaret. One day, after Munting gets married to his fiancée Elizabeth, George is found dead in his cottage, where he was working on a cookbook. He specialized in recipes containing unusual fungi. It is found out that he was poisoned by muscarine, a substance contained by poisonous fungi, and it is assumed that he might have made a mistake. Thanks to an experiment performed by James Lubbock, the muscarine is proven to be synthetic, and the culprit added it into George's meal. The information provided by the correspondence suggests that Margaret manipulated Lathom into killing her husband. As Lubbock's acquaintance, Lathom stole the synthetic muscarine from the lab and used it.

With the narration being divided between the individual characters, the usage of the epistolary form leads to the establishment of hierarchy between each narrative, and thus it is possible to identify multiple narrative levels. In the text, there are eight homodiegetic narrators in total. There are only six addressees of their letters, or in other words, the overt narratees. In the narrative, their voice can be recognized by the sender's hints at what they had previously said. In Table 1 below, the narrators and the narratees that appear in the *Documents in the Case* are listed:

Table 1

Overview of the narrators and the narratees in the *Documents in the Case* (1930).

NARRATORS	NARRATEES
HOMODIEGETIC	Gilbert Pugh
Paul Harrison	Olive Farebrother
John Munting	Elizabeth Drake
Agatha Milsom	Paul Harrison
George Harrison	John Munting
Harwood Lathom	Harwood Lathom
Margaret Harrison	
Elizabeth Drake	
James Lubbock	
HETERODIEGETIC	

Due to the narration jumping from one character to another, the focalization in this narrative is variable. There is, however, a considerable variation in focalization since, apart from the eight homodiegetic narrators being character-focalizers, we can also notice cases of multiple focalization. An example of this is the conflict between John and Agatha. Miss Milsom describes that she wanted to take the delivery of milk, but as it was still early in the morning,

she went out in her night kimono. On the stairs, she crossed paths with John who happened to be dressed in his shorts. The ridiculous situation leads to a misunderstanding between the two, where both think of the other as indecent. Miss Milsom's version is as follows:

> I had to say something to the man, so I said: "Where are you off to?" and he said he was going to run round the Square to keep his figure down. I'm sure it doesn't want keeping down, for it is all joints and hollows, and I think he only said it to attract my attention to his charming person, for his eyes were looking me up and down all time in the most unpleasant way. (Sayers and Eustace, 1995)[146]

In comparison, John Munting interprets the whole situation a bit differently, showing how the focalization in this narrative changes the overall interpretation of the events:

> I dawdled on the stairs as long as I could, to give her a chance to run to cover, but as she appeared to be determined, and the situation was becoming rather absurd, I marched out, and was, of course, involved in a conversation. I made myself as repellent as I could, but the good lady's curiosity would take no denial. (Sayers and Eustace, 1995)[147]

The Documents in the Case may also be treated as a good material for the analysis of narrative levels. The epistolary form is a tool to establish three narrative levels. The first-degree narrative deals with Gilbert Pugh, who had received a case of documents and a letter from Paul Harrison. Having acquainted himself with its contents, he finds the evidence sufficient for charging Harwood Lathom with murder. He then proceeds to call the Chief Commissioner. If we apply Genette's terminology, the narrator is extradiegetic-heterodiegetic. Paul is the second-degree narrator, whose letter creates the second-degree narrative. In this level, the intradiegetic-homodiegetic narrator acts on his suspicions about his father's death, encloses the documents he had collected and sends them to the Director of Public Prosecutions. Apart from the letters addressed to Gilbert, the second level also includes Paul's notes, his statements, and points he believes to be important. The documents themselves belong to the third-degree narrative. As we can see in Table 2 below, John, Elizabeth, George, Margaret, Lathom, and Lubbock are all third-degree narrators. On the third level, the narration deals with the murder of George Harrison and the events leading up to the crime. Since the excerpts from The Morning Express represent only a shift in perspective, they do not constitute a new narrative level. For this reason, these sections are still classified as third-degree.

[146] Dorothy L. Sayers and Robert Eustace, *The Documents in the Case* (New York: HarperPaperbacks, 1995), 14.
[147] Sayers and Eustace, *The Documents in the Case*, 17 – 18.

The novel itself, surprisingly, does not open with the primary level but with the second-degree narrative, continuing with the individual third-degree narratives performed by the rest of the characters. As is illustrated in Table 2, the narration regularly switches between the second and the third level. It is right at the end when the pattern is suddenly disrupted by the first-degree narrator. Such a switch is unexpected since, up until this point, it would seem that there are only two dimensions to the story. The shift from one level to another is demonstrated in the following excerpt, where Paul concludes his letter and points out that there is a chance to find Lathom:

> I re-open this parcel to add that I have received a message from Mrs Cutts. […]This may mean everything or nothing, but prompt action seems advisable.
>
> *Sir Gilbert Pugh, Director of Public Prosecutions, turned the last page of the manuscript, and sat for a few minutes in silence*. (Sayers and Eustace, 1995)[148]

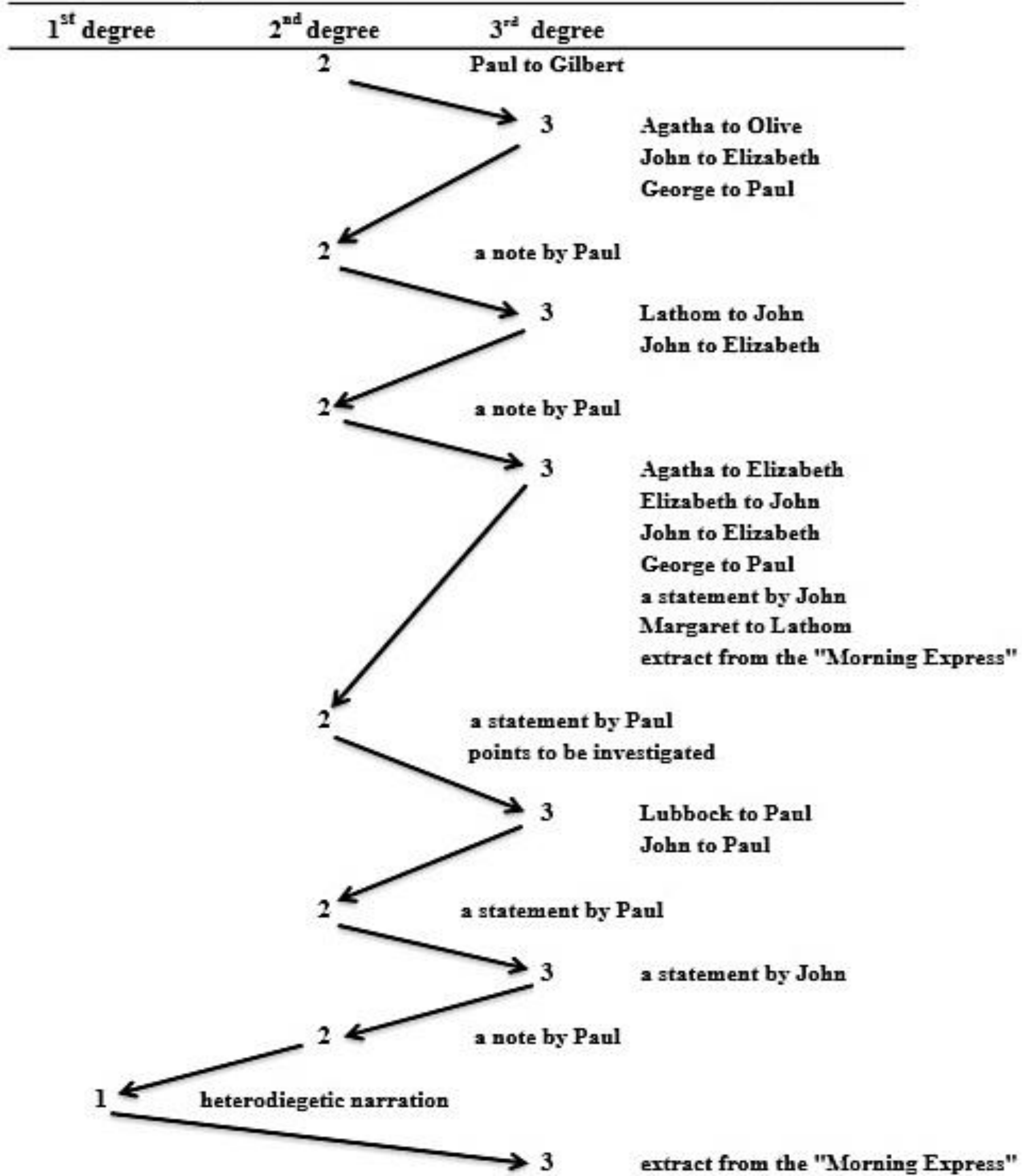
However, the *Documents in the Case* could not have concluded with Gilbert's phone call as the whodunits generally do not permit open-endedness. For this reason, there is another shift, this time to the third-degree narrative represented by the extract from the Morning Express. Another argument for the classification as the third level is the fact that it takes the attention from Paul and Gilbert back to the crime narrative. It serves its purpose as it informs that Lathom was convicted, and thus confirming that he is the culprit.

Considering the work's unique characteristics, it is suitable to say that the *Documents in the Case* are a literary experiment. The unorthodox narrative methods show that detective novels can comprise of various narrative elements without decreasing the entertainment provided and that it is possible to achieve this within the subgenre of a whodunit. Despite all of this, Dorothy L. Sayers herself was rather disappointed with the outcome of her literary efforts ¨due to her being unable to put her thoughts on paper as precisely as she had planned to.[149] Initially, she had been optimistic for the experiment, especially the scientific method to expose synthetic muscarine.[150] Judging from the fact that Sayers did not engage in any other unconventional projects, she preferred the established techniques she felt comfortable to write.

[148] Sayers and Eustace, *Documents in the Case*, 261.
[149] Barbara Reynolds, *Dorothy L. Sayers: Her Life and Soul* (n. p.: Hodder and Stoughton, 1993), 252.
[150] Reynolds, *Dorothy L. Sayers: Her Life and Soul*, 251 – 252.

Table 2

The Hierarchy of Narrative Levels in the *Documents in the Case* (1930)



6 The Role of Unreliable Narrators in Detective Novels of the Golden Age

6. 1 Fallibility in Agatha Christie's *Murder at the Vicarage* (1930)

The features displayed by the homodiegetic narrator in the *Murder at the Vicarage* are another example of how important the relationship between the intradiegetic narrating medium can be with respect to the characters present in the novel. Similarly to Hasting's portrayal of Poirot and his skills, it contributes to the establishment of a major detective figure, Miss Marple, and it creates the basis for characterization. However, unlike the sidekick's direct observations, the unreliability of vicar Clement's narration characterizes Marple with subtle indirectness while building the authority of her judgement gradually with each narrated event.

Before performing the analysis, it is necessary to note that the work introduces Marple as a mere side character. At the time of its publication, the audience did not know (in contrast to contemporary readers) that the sympathetic spinster was about to become the focus of numerous future crime novels. Initially, the text is formulated in such a way that Miss Marple seems about as significant to the plot as the other elder side characters, Miss Hartnell and Miss Wetherby, and no one expects more from her than to be mostly in the background.

From the very beginning, the vicar is treated as the primary source of all information about the events as well as the fictional world. With him being the character-focalizator at the centre of the investigation, the narrator and a vicar, the tendency to accept his perception is very strong. It is also strengthened due to his position being similar to that of Chesterton's Father Brown, of whom we might be reminded and, on that account, place our trust in his words. Nevertheless, when it comes to knowledge, Marple is revealed to be on a par with the narrator as early as in Chapter 2. As if this was not enough of a twist, it takes only a few pages for her to surpass the narrator. At first, Clement does not believe that Anna Protheroe could have had an affair with Redding and that Lettice has no suspicions about where his heart lies. But when he accidentally sees them together, he has no choice but to admit he was wrong:

> I felt positive that she had no idea of the artist's feelings for her stepmother. A nasty tangle. I paid a grudging tribute to Miss Marple. She had not been deceived, but had evidently suspected the true state of things with a fair amount of accuracy. I had entirely misread her meaning glance at Griselda. (Christie, 2000)[151]

[151] Christie, *The Murder at the Vicarage*, 20 – 22.

With the narrator first admitting that his perception had been incorrect, Marple suddenly becomes the voice of reason whose insight is the most reliable source of information. It is the signal that in order to arrive at the solution, she is the one to be trusted. From here onwards, the features of Clement's narration consistently point towards unreliability. Utilizing Phelan's terminology, there are clear signs of underreporting in the narrative. It is evident when the narrator finds himself astonished at the things that never occurred to him, e.g. that he had been one of Miss Marple's seven suspects the whole time.[152] We can classify that as the narrator's inadequacy as it was beyond his knowledge.

Next, he is guilty of underinterpreting. Griselda's alibi for the time of the murder relied on her departure to London, but when we learn that she might have returned earlier, the vicar completely overlooks the possibility and does not comment on what could have been an important clue.[153] Underevaluation is also frequently shown in the narrative as every single event is filtered through his highly subjective view of everyone around him. He interprets the actions of other characters based on his beliefs about them, ignoring his intuition. To add to the uncertainty, he sometimes even questions his own senses. Here, it is the case when he visits Anne Protheroe at the Old Hall and she thinks that she heard someone in the garden:

> I went over to the window, which I had not closed, as I had thought. I stepped out and looked down the garden but there was no one in sight. Yet I was almost convinced that I, too, had heard someone. Or perhaps it was her certainty that had convinced me. (Christie, 2000)[154]

In most situations, he thus presents himself as a fallible narrator whose sources of unreliability are mainly his personal involvement in the events as well as his lack of knowledge. Another indicator of his status is the fact that other characters often express their doubts about his evaluation regarding the current situation. The first warning against the vicar's subjectivity comes, of course, from Miss Marple herself.

> "Dear Vicar," said Miss Marple, "you are so unworldly. I'm afraid that, observing human nature for as long as I have done, one gets not to expect very much from it. […]" (Christie, 2000)[155]

---

[152] Christie, *The Murder at the Vicarage*, 233.
[153] Christie, 146 – 147.
[154] Christie, 23.
[155] Christie, 15.

Another reason why the unreliable narration was chosen is that the narrator's subjectivity misleads the readers. In many cases, underinterpretation is the cause behind confusing real clues and false leads/red herrings. It is particularly evident towards the end of the book when Clement finally realizes how strangely Griselda has lately been behaving. At that moment, he starts to link it to the murder, which suggests that she should be held under suspicion for committing the crime.[156]

Clement's narration thus serves its main purpose in externally characterizing the figure of Marple. Based on the contrast between his fallibility and her reliability, her image is elevated from a barely noticeable background character to the persona that completely 'steals the spotlight'. Her position in the investigation changes from a witness to the only one who can see the truth. The effect of this is that Marple, even though she is present only occasionally, becomes the highlight of the whole novel.

As pointed out by Mezei, elderly unmarried women have usually been portrayed negatively in British literature, but in Christie's work, they are highly regarded for their experience and wisdom.[157] In the narrative, a spinster thus represents "a dialectic between seeing and being seen, omniscience and invisibility."[158]

It is no coincidence that the author introduces such a character into *Murder at the Vicarage*, since it also deals with the topic of human nature. In order to understand it properly, one needs to master the skill of reading people, their motivations, and hidden emotions. Both the old unmarried woman and the vicar are figures typically connected to the social life in an English village and both gain their knowledge from their encounters with its residents. The use of the fallible narration is another way for Christie to demonstrate that the spinsters tend to read people better. In other words, it is the elderly lady who has the strongest authority in the rural setting. We may thus conclude that in this work, Christie explores new possibilities in the genre by placing the authority on the shoulders of a side character, and the narrator is a potential suspect.

6. 2 Analysis of Unreliability in the *Documents in the Case* (1930)

Each of the overt homodiegetic narrators in the epistolary novel naturally displays a high degree of subjectivity. As the focus shifts from one of the eight narrators to another, the narrative is

[156] Christie, *The Murder at the Vicarage*, 234.
[157] Kathy Mezei, "Spinsters, Surveillance, and Speech: The Case of Miss Marple, Miss Mole, and Miss Jekyll," *Journal of Modern Literature* 30, no. 2 (Winter 2007): 104.
[158] Mezei, "Spinsters, Surveillance, and Speech: The Case of Miss Marple, Miss Mole, and Miss Jekyll," 104.

presented to us like a mosaic. Even though some appear more often than others, for example Agatha Milsom and John Munting, the changes are so frequent that we cannot see any of them as the protagonist. In addition to that, there is no heterodiegetic narrator until the very last page. Consequently, the narrative lacks a central narrative voice that would be in charge of providing information, and thus lay out the truth of the narrated events. It is up to the readers themselves to distinguish the important observations hinted at in the letters from the character's assumptions, or, sometimes, delusions.

To search for the facts is not an easy task, as there could be various understandings of the text. Instead, the narrative contains passages that may serve as the points where the audience's theory may be confirmed or disproved. When an event is recounted in the same fashion by two or more characters, the interpretations might be accepted as true or close to the truth.

Taking into account that the individual narratives may differ from each other by the degree of fallibility or untrustworthiness, the audience may pay the closest attention to those who are subjective into a lesser extent. Based on such a feature, we can group the characters into the narrators whose information tends to be reliable, and the narrators that fulfil the criteria for either fallibility or untrustworthiness. The three groups are outlined in Table 3 below.

The first group consists of John Munting, his fiancée Elizabeth Drake, the Home Office analyst James Lubbock and Paul Harrison. As the second-degree narrator, he is the one who encloses the documents that his narratee Gilbert is supposed to read. Trying to find the truth behind the death of his father, Paul collected the letters and extracts from the Morning Express. He interprets the events as something that raises suspicion, and that is the motivation behind the creation of the second-degree narrative. Sir James Lubbock agrees with him, which means a lot considering that he is a first-rate scientist consulted by the police. Their understanding of the case is hinted to be correct by Lubbock's experiment. Finally, the last extract from The Morning Express confirms that the murderer was convicted thanks to the evidence. This leads to the identification of both Lubbock and Harrison as reliable narrators. A less straightforward example is the character of John Munting, whose narration is down-to-earth and thus more likely to be grounded in reality. Furthermore, he was never proved wrong about any of the significant plot points of the story and neither about the personality of other characters.

Elizabeth is the narrator in a single letter containing two simple questions. Miss Milsom goes as far in hating Munting as to write to Elizabeth and persuade her to leave him because he is a bad person.

> You may believe me because I have the best right to speak of what I know. I have no doubt he will tell you that this is all false and try to pull the wool over your eyes, but I have proof of what I say […] (Sayers and Eustace, 1995)[159]

Elizabeth's reaction to this is the letter to John:

> Dear Jack,
> What on earth is all this about? Is the woman mad?
>
> YOURS, IN ALL CONFIDENCE AND LOVE,
> E (Sayers and Eustace, 1995)[160]

If we take into account her no-nonsense attitude described in John's letters, her short reply functions as the antithesis for Agatha Milsom's delusions. The simplicity contrasts with Milsom's long flowery sentences and her clarity is in opposition to Milsom's clouded judgement.

The extract above suggests that Agatha Milsom is probably the least reliable narrator in the novel. Her interpretations are consistently doubted or completely denied by the rest of the characters. It appears that none of them ever listen to her advice. Moreover, the second-degree narrator Paul Harrison openly bids his narratee to ignore the presumptions expressed by her in the letters, as her mental state prevents her from seeing clearly:

> Indeed, it is obvious that nothing which Miss Milsom says *later* than April, 1929, is of any evidential value whatsoever, and that *all* her statements, without exception, must be received with extreme caution […]. (Sayers and Eustace, 1995)[161]

The information provided by her conflicts with other narratives, therefore we can identify her as unreliable in terms of the axis of facts and the axis of knowledge and perception. She is guilty of misinterpretation, a sign of which is her belief that Mrs Harrison needs her, even though it is mentioned by George that Margaret keeps her in the house because she feels sorry for her. Despite the fact that she is the most unreliable narrator, we will place her into the fallible category since she genuinely believes in everything she says. Fallibility is also characteristic of the narration of Margaret. In her letters, she refuses to admit that there could be anything wrong with her affair with Lathom:

---

[159] Sayers and Robert Eustace, *The Documents in the Case*, 70.
[160] Sayers and Eustace, 92.
[161] Sayers and Eustace, 71 – 72.

> God must be sorry for us. I can’t believe it was sin – no one could commit a sin and be so happy. Sin doesn’t exist, the conventional kind of sin, I mean – only lovingness and unlovingness – people like you and me, and people like him. (Sayers and Eustace, 1995)[162]

When it comes to the victim, George Harrison, all three Rimmon-Kenan’s sources of unreliability are being met – in the lack of knowledge about the hatred Margaret has for him, his blindness towards her behaviour caused by his love for her, and his old-fashioned values that the others do not share.

He is inadequate in interpreting and evaluating. There are, however, also instances when he misinterprets and misevaluates. For example, after Miss Milsom wrongly accuses John Munting of trying to seduce her, George’s jealousy prompts him to assume that Munting must have been after Margaret.

> [Margaret] is too innocent to see – what I, of course, saw very plainly – that this shameless attack was directed against herself and not Miss Milsom. (Sayers and Eustace, 1995)[163]

As we know from both other letters and his own narration, John himself is loyal to his fiancée Elizabeth and nothing romantic is going on between him and Margaret. John is unable to defend himself against Milsom’s accusation because he is helping to hide Lathom’s affair with Margaret. On the other hand, he is reliable in the matters not concerning Margaret, particularly when narrating about events connected with science and the business world. He also fulfils the function of reporting sufficiently as his narration is never unreliable on the axis of facts. Considering that the mistakes he commits are mainly caused by his affection for Margaret and his delusion with respect to her character, we can classify him as a fallible narrator.

Harwood Lathom displays the features of an untrustworthy narrator since he conceals essential information in his letter. He writes to John about what happened in Paris where he was spending the New Year’s Eve with the Harrisons. Lathom tries to hide the fact that he is Margaret’s lover but his choice of words reveals that there is more to their relationship, e.g. when he calls her “la belle Marguerite.”[164] Because of his feelings, George Harrison is portrayed in a very unpleasant light in his narration and his negative personality traits are being exaggerated.

---

[162] Sayers and Eustace, *The Documents in the Case*, 132.
[163] Sayers and Eustace, 96.
[164] Sayers and Eustace, 73.

Table 3
Overview of the narrators in the *Documents in the Case* according to their reliability.

RELIABLE	FALLIBLE	UNTRUSTWORTHY
Paul Harrison	Margaret Harrison	Harwood Lathom
John Munting	George Harrison	
James Lubbock	Agatha Milsom	
Elizabeth Drake		

6. 3 Untrustworthy Narrator in the *Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926)

In this section, we will analyse Agatha Christie's novel, which is known for its unreliable narrator even outside the field of crime fiction. It became famous due to its shocking resolution with an unprecedented twist, since the character who is revealed to be the culprit is the narrator himself. Considering the fact that the role of the narrator automatically comes with the tendency to gain the reader's sympathy, the element of surprise is even greater. Before the *Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, the narrator's authority was so strong that he could never be the murderer.

The narrative begins with the death of Mrs Ferrar, an elderly lady who is rumoured to have poisoned her late husband. The gossip is vehemently denied by Dr Sheppard, the narrator and the local doctor. One day, he meets his new neighbour, who happens to be the retired detective Hercule Poirot. Mrs Ferrar's fiancé is the wealthy widower Roger Ackroyd. When he learns that Ferrar probably committed suicide due to blackmails, he is very upset and confides in the doctor. When Sheppard leaves the room, he is about to read a letter from her. Later that evening, the doctor receives a call that Acroyd had been murdered, and he subsequently finds his body together with the secretary Raymond and Ackroyd's friend Blunt. Sheppard decides to write down the whole story and then he gives his manuscript to Poirot.

Right after the tragedy, Ackroyd's stepson Ralph Paton goes missing, which implies his guilt. Other suspects are the butler Parker, Roger's sister that had returned from Canada, his nephew Flora Ackroyd, the former housekeeper Miss Russell, the maid Ursula Bourne and a mysterious stranger whom the narrator met on his way home. In fact, the whole incident was orchestrated by Dr Sheppard. Despite the fact that his plan is clever, Poirot manages to uncover that he is guilty. To spare his sister Caroline from being ashamed by the arrest, he decides to commit suicide. The narrator admits that he wanted to create the manuscript as a testimony of Hercule Poirot's failure. Instead, he is the one who loses. Poirot's triumph is sealed by the last sentence:

> […] I wish Hercule Poirot had never retired from work and come here to grow vegetable marrows. (Christie, 1991)[165]

Even though Christie did break a rule of detective fiction by this decision, there are enough clues present in the narrative to uncover the truth. It is, however, important to note that, without prior knowledge, there is a high chance for the readers to miss them and re-discover while re-reading. Olson explains that upon the knowledge of the narrator's unreliability, the reading strategies are significantly altered:

> […] readers attribute internal inconsistency and self-contradiction to narrators they judge to be lacking in trustworthiness. We predict that they will continue to contradict themselves and take on a reading strategy that questions and revises all that they say." (Olson, 2003)[166]

In addition to that, she also claims that "cases of unreliable narration invite the reader to depart from a literal meaning."[167] For this reason, the reading experience of novels such as the *Murder of Roger Ackroyd* will probably be different on the first and second reading.

From the moment Dr Sheppard becomes acquainted with Poirot, he accompanies him in the investigation and provides him with medical knowledge; he is in the position of the homodiegetic narrator/sidekick. Similarly to the narrators analysed in the previous chapter, Sheppard also helps to characterize the detective Poirot and he is a self-conscious narrator. Taking this into account, it possible to conclude that the doctor represents a subverted trope of the sidekick. The fact that he is a doctor also points to such a suggestion as it reminds us of Dr Watson. Furthermore, Poirot claims that Sheppard reminds him of his friend Hastings.[168] The difference lies in the fact that, instead of helping Poirot, he secretly acts as his adversary, misleads him and does not want him to find the truth. As shown by the following excerpt, he even wishes to outsmart him:

> It is a straightforward narrative of what occurred, as presented to Hercule Poirot. I was at Poirot's elbow the whole time. I saw what he saw. I tried my best to read his mind. As I know now, I failed in the latter task. (Christie, 1991)[169]

---

[165] Agatha Christie, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (New York: HarperPaperbacks, 1991), 277.
[166] Olson, "Reconsidering Unreliability: Fallible and Untrustworthy Narrators," 104.
[167] Olson, 105.
[168] Christie, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, 22.
[169] Christie, 151.

Using Phelan's terminology, it is suitable to describe Dr Sheppard as an unreliable narrator in terms of multiple functions that he fails to fulfil. First, it is the function of interpreting. When Sheppard discovers that Hercule Poirot is his neighbour, neither he nor Caroline have any background information on the stranger. At that moment, the siblings start wondering what his profession might be. Although his underinterpretation is quite unrelated to the crime plot, the effect it has is quite humorous as the readers know more than the narrator does. In answer to the siblings' question as to what the subject of his profession is, Poirot speaks about human nature:

> "The study of human nature, monsieur!"
> "Just so," I said kindly.
>
> Clearly a retired hairdresser. Who knows the secrets of human nature better than hairdressers? (Christie, 1991)[170]

By the time this novel was published, Poirot was already a well-established character; therefore, almost every single reader must have been aware that the narrator's interpretation was incorrect and thus unreliable.

The rest of his narrating mistakes are not so harmless. Throughout the whole narrative, Sheppard purposefully omits important facts. For example, he never mentions that after Ackroyd's body was found, he went to the Three Boars. We learn the truth through the words of Flora.[171] The narrator conceals this as, in fact, the Three Boars is the place where Ralph is hiding. As a result, he hides the knowledge of Ralph's whereabouts. This is a failure in the reporting function – underreporting. At the end of the narrative, Sheppard goes as far as to boast his reporting skills because, in some instances, he managed to formulate the sentences cleverly enough to mislead Poirot and the audience:

> I am rather pleased with myself as a writer. What could be neater, for instance, than the following:
> *"The letters were brought in at twenty minutes to nine. It was just on ten minutes to nine when I left him, the letter still unread. I hesitated with my hand on the door handle, looking back and wondering if there was anything I had left undone."*
> All true, you see. But suppose I had put a row of stars after the first sentence! Would

[170] Christie, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, 21.
[171] Christie, 73.

> somebody then have wondered what exactly happened in that blank ten minutes? (Christie, 1991)[172]

To modify the narration deliberately in the way above is a sign of narrative manipulation and misleading of the audience. Nevertheless, Sheppard is also guilty of misreporting. In order to shift the suspicion towards Ralph, he selects the narrative information in such a way that it suggests the guilt of Ackroyd's stepson. Taking into consideration that the blackmail of Mrs Ferrar is the motive for the crime, knowledge about the matter is significant. It is for this reason that Sheppard tries to deny his connection with Mrs Farrar's mental state. Despite being well aware that Mr Ferrar was indeed poisoned by his wife, he lies about possessing any information of such kind.

> Mrs Ferrar's husband died just over a year ago, and Caroline has constantly asserted, without the least foundation for the assertion, that his wife poisoned him. She scorns my invariable rejoinder that Mr Ferrars died of acute gastritis, helped on by habitual over-indulgence in alcoholic beverages. (Christie, 1991)[173]

The narrator employs all of these techniques intentionally and does so for his own benefit, hence he is a clear example of the untrustworthy narrator. Actually, it would probably be difficult to find a more prototypical example of unreliability in any other crime novel of the Golden Age. We may thus establish the *Murder of Roger Ackroyd* as the model representation when it comes to the use of an unreliable (or, more specifically, untrustworthy) narrator in detective fiction. That being said, the narrator's evident and undeniable untrustworthiness suggests that it was Christie's objective to try what no other crime fiction author dared to do. Furthermore, the techniques utilized to achieve the planned effect show that she consciously applied the methods of unreliable narration. Likewise, she was testing the boundaries of the genre, which makes her an innovator in narrating techniques of crime fiction.

---

[172] Christie, Christie, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, 276.
[173] Christie, 151.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to demonstrate that, despite its status as literature intended only to entertain, crime fiction as a genre is not shallow in its narrative structure. The narrator in the seven selected works was analysed in terms of several narratological theories. First, it is the analysis of the narrator based on the views of Gérard Genette and Lubomír Doležel; then, it is Genette and Rimmon-Kenan's theory of focalization, unreliability according to the definitions provided by Booth, Phelan and Olson, and Rimmon-Kenan's approach to the narrative levels.

To examine the narrator's influence on the main features of the genre was the objective as well. To be specific, the features in question are the reporting of narrative events, the characterization, presentation of clues, the provision of background information about the suspects, the accessibility of the characters' thoughts, and the narrator's reliability as the source of information. Accordingly, the effects of each method on the audience was taken into account along with the question of which strategies are advantageous for the purposes of the novel's structure.

In this thesis, the detective novels published during the Golden Age era, the time when detective fiction flourished, are discussed. In the course of the two decades between 1920 and 1939, the basics of the genre were established. Chapter 1 deals with the definition of the Golden Age of detective fiction and the description of its fundamental features. In the second chapter, the life, and work of four major writers, Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, Anthony Berkeley, and Margery Allingham, are explored. The narratological approach to the narrator as a category is outlined in Chapter 3, together with the notions of an unreliable narrator, narrative levels, and focalization.

The analysis begins with Chapter 4, which focuses on the role of the heterodiegetic narrator. As was illustrated in *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club*, the impersonal reporting in the non-focalized narration is beneficial as it emphasizes the information required to solve the puzzle. In the narrative passages, the description of the investigation is included, the suspects are introduced and if there is a clue, it will be mentioned. None of the thoughts are accessible and so the only indication of the characters' emotions is in the outward descriptions of their face. It is also beneficial for the readers as it does not require them to put any excessive effort to infer the narrative information. With the covert heterodiegetic narrator being the most widely used among the novels of Golden Age, it is possible to conclude that it is the standard method

used in the era. Consequently, all the literary attempts to create a new form naturally diverge from this conventional technique.

With regard to the puzzle as the core of the genre, the inaccessibility of thoughts might be automatically assumed as the rule. However, the use of a narrator in Anthony Berkeley's *The Poisoned Chocolates Case*, surprisingly, proves that it is not true. Not only does the overt narrating instance insert sarcastic comments into the narration, but it also includes the thoughts of the characters. The function of control connected with Doležel's narrative modes enables the narrating medium to select the narrative information. According to what suits the purposes of the narrative, it exposes the thoughts in such a way that it would not disclose the solution.

The homodiegetic narrator is the main object of the analysis in Chapter 5. As the subjective narrative mode proposes, its functions are that of representation, interpretation as well as action. Continuing the tradition started by E. A. Poe and A. C. Doyle, it is the traditional technique that uses the sidekick as the character-focalizer. Alternatively, the Golden Age introduces the side character narrator who is independent on the detective figure. The examples of *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* and *The Murder at the Vicarage* confirm that the greatest asset of the homodiegetic narration is its influence on the characterization. Owing to it, the detective's quirky personality is emphasized.

Moreover, the contrast between his insight and the narrator's gullibility cements the intellectual superiority of the former. Even though *The Murder at the Vicarage* does not have a main detective figure, the characteristics apply to Miss Marple since she is the character that solves the mystery. Both of the aforementioned narrators display a certain degree of subjectivity, but since it does not cause any conflict in the narrated events, they are considered reliable.

Allingham's *The Case of the Late Pig* serves as the representation of the autodiegetic narration, and it is the counter-example to the two Christie's novels. In the analysis, it is demonstrated that the choice to employ Albert Campion as the narrator has its consequences in the narrative. As a result, Campion needs to introduce himself, explain his methods to the audience and has to admit his own mistakes. Although his thought processes are accessible, Campion never shares the final solution until the time is right. Without the advantages of the sidekick's perspective, the characterization is not as striking and is affected by his subjective view of himself.

Unlike in most cases, Campion and Hastings are the only recurring characters to be used as homodiegetic narrators. In the case of Hastings, the same technique is applied in all novels in

which he appears. On the other hand, Campion-centred narratives are normally heterodiegetic but Allingham changed that in *The Case of the Late Pig*. Another interesting observation is the fact that, even in crime fiction, the detective figure is not always the all-knowing creature whose investigation is flawless. After all, Miss Marple and Campion did at one point make a mistake in their deductions. It is, however, the final revelation and the overall superiority of their insights that builds their position.

As a part of this chapter, the joint project of Dorothy L. Sayers and Robert Eustace, *The Documents in the Case*, was also discussed. With its eight homodiegetic narrators, six narratees, and one heterodiegetic narrator, the epistolary novel creates a complex hierarchy of narrative levels. There are three of them in total and the work opens with the second-degree narrator. Then, there is a recurring pattern where the second-degree narrator shifts to the third-degree narrators, until an unexpected first-degree narrator appears towards the end. Changes between the letters are also changes in focalization, and thus it is an example of variable focalization. When a single event is narrated by two different character-focalizers, it is the confirmation of multiple focalization.

The last chapter deals with the instances where the readers cannot rely on the narrator's information. In *The Murder at the Vicarage* and the *Documents in the Case*, they are unreliable as they are guilty of underreporting, underinterpreting or underevaluating due to their lack of knowledge or personal involvement in the events. Vicar Clement is written as a fallible narrator as his role is to elevate the status of Miss Marple in terms of her reliability. At the same time, his views mislead the audience as a false clue. There are four reliable narrators in the *Documents in the Case*, three fallible and one untrustworthy. As for the fallible narrators, they also misinterpret and misevaluate. Harwood Lathom is classified as an untrustworthy narrator because he conceals important information.

The third example of unreliability is Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, which is a clear demonstration of the technique that was intended by the author. Since the narrator is shockingly revealed as the culprit at the end, the character spends the whole narrative misleading Hercule Poirot and hiding the truth. Likewise, he represents a subverted version of the sidekick, Hastings. Apart from one case of underinterpreting, his narration displays underreporting, misreporting, and manipulating the narration. Dr Sheppard does so for his own benefit, and, therefore, he is an untrustworthy narrator. It may be suggested that the author used the method not only to create an unprecedented twist but also to try something that had not been done before.

Overall, the analysis performed in this thesis proves that, in detective fiction, there are many possibilities for literary experiments. Thanks to the goal of the aforementioned authors to explore its limits, it is evident that even as early as in the Golden Age, there was a considerable variation in the techniques utilized. Without causing any discrepancies in the genre's definition, a crime narrative also works well with the usage of unreliable narration, narrative levels, or focalization.

As demonstrated by the narrative element of the narrator, the reason behind the employment of such methods is primarily the reader and his/her perception of the novel. For this reason, it is suitable to conclude that in the narrative communication between the implied author and the implied reader, the interests of the latter are of the greatest importance. Every single strategy is used to affect the audience in some way – to surprise them, to make the narrative more accessible to them, or to increase the element of suspense. Detective fiction is, thereby, a reader-centric genre. Furthermore, the analysis supports the idea that in literature, entertainment does not need to stand in opposition to advanced techniques grounded in literary theory. On the contrary, it suggests that the methods may be employed to enhance the readers' enjoyment of the novel.

Resumé

Jelikož Zlatá éra detektivního románu představuje období, kdy tento žánr vzkvétal, věnovali se mu kromě význačných spisovatelů i tací, jejž vábila představa snadného úspěchu. Tito autoři často postrádali talent, a tak se kvůli jejich množství začala detektivka zařazovat mezi umělecky podřadné žánry. V této diplomové práci se věnujeme vyvrácení tohoto zažitého vnímání detektivního románu. Na základě naratologické analýzy sedmi vybraných děl vydaných v letech 1920 – 1939 dokládáme, že se již tenkrát v detektivkách objevovaly promyšlené narativní strategie.

Konkrétně se zabýváme kategorií vypravěče definovanou Genettem, Doleželovou teorií narativních způsobů, dále fokalizací podle Genetta a Rimmon-Kenanové, vypravěčskou nespolehlivostí podle Bootha, Phelana a Olsonové, a v neposlední řadě také narativními úrovněmi taktéž podle Rimmon-Kenanové.

Naše analýza odhaluje, že výběr vypravěče má na romány tohoto žánru zásadní vliv, protože na něm závisí jeho základní znaky. Mezi ně patří např. charakterizace ústřední detektivní postavy, výběr narativní informace spojené s událostmi kriminálního příběhu, přístup k myšlenkám postav a další. Vzhledem k množství detektivek, které používají skrytého heterodiegetického vypravěče, představují takovéto narativy standardní podobu detektivního románu Zlatého věku. V této kapitole se soustředíme na *Nepříjemnost v klubu Bellona* od Dorothy L. Sayers a *Případ otrávené bonboniéry* od Anthonyho Berkeleyho.

Nejrůznější varianty užití homodiegetického vypravěče jsou představeny na základě analýzy dvou románů Agathy Christie, *Vraždy na faře* a *Záhady na zámku Styles*, *Případu nebožtíka Hrocha* od Margery Allingham a románu *The Documents in the Case*, který vznikl jako společný projekt Dorothy L. Sayers a Roberta Eustace. Dalším aspektem, jenž nás při odhalení role vypravěče zajímá, je vypravěčská nespolehlivost. Různé druhy tohoto narativního elementu lze nalézt ve *Vraždě na faře*, *The Documents in the Case* a ve *Vraždě Rogera Ackroyda*.

Užití narativních elementů jako je nespolehlivost nebo narativní úroveň dokazuje, že lze tyto postupy bez problémů použít v detektivním románu a nenarušit tím jeho podstatu. Zároveň také můžeme říci, že je možné použít složité narativní postupy za účelem upřednostnění čtenářových potřeb, co se týče kvalitního čtenářského zážitku.

Bibliography

Allingham, Margery. *The Case of the Late Pig*. New York: Avon Books, 1964.

Auden, W. H. "The Guilty Vicarage: Notes on the detective story, by an addict." Harper's Magazine (May 1948). https://harpers.org/archive/1948/05/the-guilty-vicarage/

Berkeley, Anthony. *The Poisoned Chocolates Case*. London: British Library Publishing, 2016. Kindle.

Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968.

Chesterton, Gilbert Keith. "A Defence of Detective Stories." In *The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Howard Haycraft, 3 – 6. New York: Grossett & Dunlap, 1947.

Christie, Agatha. *An Autobiography*. London: Harper Collins, 1977. Translated by Marta Staňková as *Vlastní životopis* (Praha: Knižní klub, 2013).

Christie, Agatha. *Murder at the Vicarage*. New York: Signet, 2000.

Christie, Agatha. *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*. New York: Bantam Books, 1983.

Christie, Agatha. *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. New York: HarperPaperbacks, 1991.

Doležel, Lubomír. *Narrative Modes in Czech Literature*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973.

Edwards, Martin. *The Golden Age of Murder: The Mystery of the Writers Who Invented Modern Detective Story*. London: Harper Collins, 2015. Kindle.

Freeman, Richard Austin. "The Art of the Detective Story." In *The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Howard Haycraft, 7 – 17. New York: Grossett & Dunlap, 1947.

Genette, Gérard. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Translated by C. K. Scott Moncrieff. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983. Originally published as *Discourse du récit* (Paris: Seuil, 1979).

Herman, David. "Hypothetical Focalization." Narrative 2, no. 3 (1994): 230 – 253. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20079641

Jahn, Manfred. *Narratology: A Guide to the Theory of Narrative*. n. p.: University of Cologne, 2017. http://www.uni-koeln.de/~ame02/pppn.htm

James, P. D. *Talking About Detective Fiction*. New York: Random House, 2011.

Klein, Holger. "Narrative Technique and Reader Appeal in Dorothy Sayers' Fiction." AAA: Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik 19, no. 1 (1994): 41 – 61. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43023659

Margery Allingham Society. "Biography." WordPress.com, accessed March 16, 2020, https://margeryallingham.org.uk/biography/.

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. 11th ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2003. Continually updated at https://www.merriam-webster.com/.

Mezei, Kathy. "Spinsters, Surveillance, and Speech: The Case of Miss Marple, Miss Mole, and Miss Jekyll." Journal of Modern Literature 30, no. 2 (Winter 2007): 103 – 120. https://www.jstor.org/stable/4619330

Niederhoff, Burkhard. "Focalization." In *the living handbook of narratology*, edited by Peter Hühn. Hamburg University, 2013. http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/focalization

Olson, Greta. "Reconsidering Unreliability: Fallible and Untrustworthy Narrators." Narrative 11, no. 1 (January 2003): 93 – 109. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20107302

Papinchak, Robert Allen. "Dorothy L. Sayers." In *Mystery and Suspense Writers: The Literature of Crime, Detection and Espionage*, edited by Robin W. Winks, 805 – 828. Vol. 2, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1998.

Priestman, Martin, Ian A. Bell, David Glover, Martin A. Kayman, Stephen Knight, Laura Marcus, Nickianne Moody et al. *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Kindle.

Prince, Gerald. *A Dictionary of Narratology.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987.

Reynolds, Barbara. *Dorothy L. Sayers: Her Life and Soul*. n. p.: Hodder and Stoughton, 1993.

Reynolds, Barbara. "Sayers, Dorothy L[eigh]." In *The Oxford Companion to Crime and Mystery Writing*, edited by Rosemary Herbert, 396 – 397. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith. *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*. London: Routledge, 1989.

Routledge Encyclopaedia of Narrative Theory. Edited by David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan. London: Routledge, 2005.

Sayers, Dorothy L. and Robert Eustace. *The Documents in the Case*. New York: HarperPaperbacks, 1995.

Sayers, Dorothy L. *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club*. London: Penguin Books, 1936.

Scaggs, John. *Crime Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2005. Kindle.

Shen, Dan. "Unreliability." In *the living handbook of narratology*, edited by Peter Hühn. Hamburg University, 2013. http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/unreliability

Strachey, John. "The Golden Age of English Detection." The Saturday Review (January 1939). https://www.unz.com/print/SaturdayRev-1939jan07-00012

Sýkora, Michal et al. *Britské detektivky: od románu k televizní sérii*. Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2012.

Symons, Julian. *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*. New York: Penguin Books, 1972.

Turnbull, Malcolm J. *Elusion Aforethought: the life and writing of Anthony Berkeley Cox*. Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1996.

Van Dine, S.S. "Twenty Rules For Writing Detective Stories." In The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Howard Haycraft, 189 – 193. New York: Grossett & Dunlap, 1947.

Walsh, Richard. "Who Is the Narrator?" Poetics Today 18, no. 4 (Winter 1997): 495 – 513. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1773184

Watson, Colin. *Snobbery with Violence: Crime Stories and Their Audience*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1971.

Wilson, Edmund. "Who Cares Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?" In *The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Howard Haycraft, 390 – 397. New York: Grossett & Dunlap, 1947.

Woods, Paula M. “Margery Allingham.” In *Mystery and Suspense Writers: The Literature of Crime, Detection and Espionage*, edited by Robin W. Winks, 1 – 12. Vol. 1, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1998.

Annotation

Author: Marie Voždová

Faculty: Faculty of Arts of University Palacký in Olomouc

Department: Department of English and American Studies

Title of the Diploma Thesis: The Role of the Narrator in the British Detective Novels of the Golden Age Era

Supervisor: Mgr. Pavlína Flajšarová, PhD.

Number of pages: 79

Number of appendixes: CD

Key words: British literature, detective fiction, narratology, Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, Anthony Berkeley, Margery Allingham, The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club, The Poisoned Chocolates Case, The Mysterious Affair at Styles, The Murder at the Vicarage, The Documents in the Case, The Case of the Late Pig, The Murder of Roger Ackroyd, narrator, unreliability, focalization, narrative levels, narratee, Robert Eustace

Considering their narrative structure, the detective novels written in Golden Age come in a variety of narratives. In this thesis, the aim is to analyse crime novels in terms of the category of the narrator and consequently identify his/her roles and functions. Accordingly, the effects caused by the choice of the narrator are being taken into account as well. It is also suggested that the techniques are employed with respect to the implied reader and his/her perception of the narrative.

Anotace

Autor: Marie Voždová

Fakulta: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Palackého v Olomouci

Katedra: Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Název diplomové práce: Kategorie vypravěče v britském detektivním románu Zlaté éry

Vedoucí: Mgr. Pavlína Flajšarová, PhD.

Počet stran: 79

Počet příloh: CD

Klíčová slova: britská literatura, detektivní román, naratologie, Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, Anthony Berkeley, Margery Allingham, Nepříjemnost v klubu Bellona, Případ otrávené bonboniéry, Záhada na zámku Styles, Vražda na faře, The Documents in the Case, Případ nebožtíka Hrocha, Vražda Rogera Ackroyda, vypravěč, nespolehlivost, fokalizace, narativní úrovně, narativní adresát, Robert Eustace

Detektivní romány vydané v průběhu Zlatého věku se od sebe navzájem svou strukturou velmi liší, a tak se v rámci tohoto žánru vyskytuje mnoho různých variací ve vyprávění. Cílem naší práce je provést naratologickou analýzu kategorie vypravěče a následně odhalit, jaké má v narativu role a funkce. Dále se zabýváme tím, jaké účinky jednotlivé druhy vypravěče způsobují, jak působí na čtenáře a jak ovlivňují jeho/její čtenářskou zkušenost.