

UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLOMOUCI

Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Marie Voždová

Intertextuality in the Selected Works of Agatha Christie

Bakalářská práce

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Pavlína Flajšarová, PhD.

Olomouc 2018

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci na téma "Intertextuality in the Selected Works of Agatha Christie" vypracovala samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucí práce a uvedla jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

V Olomouci dne 17. 5. 2018

Podpis .....

Tímto bych chtěla poděkovat Mgr. Pavlíně Flajšarové, PhD. za vedení bakalářské práce a za její trpělivost.

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	5
1 Detective Fiction: Definition and Early Evolution of the Genre .....	6
2 Characteristic Features of Agatha Christie's Novels .....	9
3 Intertextual Approach to Literature and Devices in its Use.....	14
3.1 Definitions and Literary Theories Regarding Intertextuality .....	14
3.2 Dual Interpretation of Intertextuality.....	17
3.3 Allusion as a Device of Intentional Intertextuality.....	19
4 Intertextual Relations to British Poetry.....	21
4.1 <i>The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side</i> .....	21
4.2 Tennyson's <i>The Lady of Shalott</i> and Its Possible Sources .....	23
4.3 Intertextuality in <i>Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side</i> as the Means of Characterization	26
5 Intertextual Relations to British Prose .....	30
5.1 <i>The Sittaford Mystery</i> .....	30
5.2 Arthur Conan Doyle's <i>The Hound of the Baskervilles</i> and the Dartmoor legends....	31
5.3 Intertextually Affected Setting and the Tribute to Doyle .....	32
Conclusion.....	34
Resumé .....	35
Bibliography.....	35
Primary Sources.....	36
Secondary Sources.....	36
Annotation.....	38
Anotace.....	38

## Introduction

As one of the most popular authors of detective fiction, Agatha Christie is known for her untraditional, almost controversial approach to building the plot in the works that she created. Their titles alone strongly indicate that she tends to refer to other literary works quite frequently, which cannot be regarded as a standard technique in the field of detective fiction. Considering such a suggestion, our aim in this thesis is to demonstrate that Agatha Christie places these allusions into her texts intentionally and that they play a significant role in the structure of her novels and the plot. The analysis also deals with the ways the relations to preceding literary works affect the novels as a whole. Even though she alludes to a large range of authors including her own previous creations, we will focus on the references to British literature as it is the closest source of her targeted audience as well as the source of the highest amount of allusions in her bibliography. With Christie's publication history being more than 60 novels and 14 short story collections, we will analyse two selected novels: *The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side*, published in 1962, as a representation of intertextuality in British poetry. The example of alluding to British prose, *The Sittaford Mystery*, is on the contrary an earlier text from 1931.

In the first chapter, we begin by establishing the genre of detective fiction. Its definition and explanation of its features follows a short account of the development it has undergone from its traces in ancient literature to the Golden Age, the era when crime literature flourished. Then, in the second chapter, we focus on the author herself, how did her life shape her into a successful writer and what were the influences behind her beginnings. Later, we will perform the analysis on the basis of the intertextual approach to literature, and thus the third chapter serves mainly as a clarification of the theory and the terminology which is used to describe the approach. Since there are no preceding theses or essays dealing with intertextuality in Agatha Christie's novels, our arguments will be based on Gerard Genette's terms, particularly on the term of allusion. Chapters four and five focus on the analysis itself together with the original text to which it is alluded to. Our suggestion is that it is also important to consider what sources were the basis of these works since there are recurrent themes in literature connecting the classic works with the modern, forming chains of literary works related to each other despite their genre or the era they were written in.

## 1 Detective Fiction: Definition and Early Evolution of the Genre

Even though fiction revolving around crime and its consequences has been very popular with readers around the world for centuries, it took some time for the detective or sometimes also called crime fiction to evolve into a genre it is today. While the earliest hints could be found in ancient texts such as the Bible, namely in the Old Testament's Book of Daniel, many scholars try to trace the genre's journey through various works of 18<sup>th</sup> century. One of them, Martin Priestman, sees the parallels of writing about crime for example in *Moll Flanders* (1722) written by Daniel Defoe, Anne Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) or a novel of William Godwin named *Caleb Williams* (1794) which is believed to have influenced Edgar Allan Poe, generally perceived as the founder of the genre. The main difference between them and what Poe later created as the first official detective fiction was the absence of the police force in the legal system which changed in 1850s after it was established in London, and soon after, in the entire United Kingdom. Quite often, the culprit was known beforehand and, "when suspects were brought before a formal tribunal, rather than merely brought before the judgement of readers, [...] it was likely to be presented as a shabby and rather sordid affair, with no real sense of justice or closure achieved."<sup>1</sup>

Taking Poe's *Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841) into account, it is universally presumed that the essential notion of any detective fiction is the presence of a detective figure, be it a private eye, a policeman or an amateur investigator who has certain connections with the police, and a step-by-step description of the events preceding the main event in the plot and the crime itself, followed by a retrospective narration varying in a point of view each of the suspects is bound to describe. In his *Crime Fiction* (2005), John Scaggs defines the detective fiction as "a type of fiction which is centred around the investigation of a crime that focuses attention on the method of detection by structuring the story around a mystery."<sup>2</sup> The role of the detective consists in finding out which one of the possible suspects is the murderer and to punish his misbehaviour by arresting him later. Sometimes, instead of an arrest, death of the culprit occurs which is only seen as a different shape of justice. Other than Poe, notable authors of the period are for instance Wilkie Collins with his *Moonstone* (1868) and Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of probably the most famous detective in the history of literature, Sherlock Holmes with his debut in *Study in Scarlet* (1887). It is the point where the method of deduction was first used in detail, influencing

---

<sup>1</sup> Martin Priestman et al., *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 15.

<sup>2</sup> John Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 144.

future works. The name of Dr Watson, a clueless investigation side-kick of Holmes, also became an epitome of similar characters accompanying the detective figure.

In spite of its popularity, the sad reality the authors of crime fiction had to face was that it had scarcely been treated as something more than a literature of low artistic quality when compared to the works of world's famous classics and the only purpose of which was to provide an entertainment. The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought up a discussion among the contemporary culturally significant personalities concerning the place it holds in the field of literature not only in Britain but worldwide. W. H. Auden's *The Guilty Vicarage: Notes on the detective story, by an addict*, a text published in the Harper Magazine in May 1948, offers an interesting insight into how those stories were perceived in the past. He compares such a literature to his addiction to alcohol and cigarettes but, at the same time, he confesses his fancy for the "intensity of the craving"<sup>3</sup> it brings. The analysis contains an identification of the Aristotelian notions of concealment, manifestation and peripeteia in detective novels, mirroring similar opinions of Dorothy L. Sayers, whose novels he paradoxically tends to criticise, as expressed in *Aristotle on Detective Fiction* (1936). As a matter of fact, Auden finds the basic theme of the novels in "dialectic between innocence and guilt"<sup>4</sup>, between good and evil, which the society reflects on and subsequently banishes the murderer, the embodiment of evil, from its core. The opposite of Auden's thoughts was reflected in Edmund Wilson's essays *Why Do People Read Detective Fiction?* (1944) and *Who Cares Who Killed Roger Ackroyd* (1945) published in the New Yorker. Wilson says he found the novels too bland and superficial in terms of writing and characterization and thought people only read it to find an answer to a mystery and then throw it away.

Nevertheless, the genre kept on gaining wider and wider audience to the point scholars started to point their attention towards the theory behind the construction of crime investigation plot. It might be even argued that breaking the rules established by Ronald Knox in various creative ways and filling the gaps pointed out by critics in the past could serve as a great opportunity for the authors. In order to let the reader recognize the hidden artistic value of detective fiction, writers can alter the traditional system of construction by more or less subtle elements characteristic of their own style and add a new dimension to what seemed to be nothing more than a simple tale about searching for a murderer. Agatha Christie, whose works' analysis is the focus of this thesis, managed to fill the role of such an author thanks to her ability to bring

---

<sup>3</sup> Auden "The Guilty Vicarage: Notes on the detective story, by an addict", *Harper's Magazine* (1948): 1.

<sup>4</sup> Auden, "The Guilty Vicarage: Notes on the detective story, by an addict", 1.

wit, humanity and harmonious atmosphere of rural England into a mixture with the danger of crime, but most importantly by her affection for literature in general and the deep and complex connections she has subtly made between the imagery of the famous classics and her own.



## 2 Characteristic Features of Agatha Christie's Novels

Scaggs claims 1920, the publication year of Agatha Christie's *Mysterious Affair at Styles*, might be considered as the beginning of a new era in writing detective fiction. Having introduced authors whose works became fundamental with respect to development of the genre and whose names do not fail to leave an impression on readers today, it is referred to by literary theorists as the Golden Age. Scaggs defines it as "the period between the First and Second World Wars ... usually used to refer to the flowering British talent and to the mysteries written in Britain during this time."<sup>5</sup> Writers associated with this era include, for example, another major female writer, Dorothy L. Sayers known for *Whose Body?* (1923), the introductory novel for Lord Peter Wimsey; G. K. Chesterton, whose detective mysteries are thanks to his authority and knowledge of human personalities solved by an unusual amateur investigator Father Brown in *The Blue Cross* (1910); or a British citizen Ngaio Marsh born in New Zealand, author of Inspector Roderick Alleyn of London's Metropolitan Police from *A Man Lay Dead* (1934). The latter, together with Dorothy L. Sayers and Agatha Christie, is considered as one of the three Queens of Crime.

As her autobiography revealed, Christie felt a strong inclination towards arts and apart from singing, her primary ambition, she also wrote poems later published in *The Poetry Review* and occasionally won a financial prize<sup>6</sup>. After she gave up her dream of pursuing a career as an opera singer, she engaged in discussion with her sister Madge regarding Gaston Leroux's work of detective fiction, namely *The Mystery of the Yellow Room* (1908)<sup>7</sup>. Eventually, this led her to bet she would write her own book of the same genre. Despite Madge's scepticism and disbelief in her sister's ability to construct such a complicated plot Christie managed to produce a text later known as the *Mysterious Affair at Styles*.

The aforementioned title also ended up being the first out of tens of novels where her most popular character, a slightly eccentric Belgian detective Hercule Poirot appears. As a fan of Arthur Conan Doyle, she most likely wanted to create her own major detective figure just like him. Indeed, Poirot does share some similarities with Sherlock Holmes, for example, he has a rather interesting, almost humorous physical appearance, and has odd little quirks such as an obsession with tiny details or his moustache. Captain Hastings, Poirot's side-kick in numerous investigations, mirrors Dr Watson in the inability to understand the way of thinking his friend

---

<sup>5</sup> Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 145.

<sup>6</sup> Agatha Christie, *Vlastní životopis* [An Autobiography] (Praha: Knižní klub, 2013), 200.

<sup>7</sup> Christie, *Vlastní životopis*, 221-222.

displays, fails to see the clues essential to solving the crime and cannot recognize the culprit even if he or she is right under his nose.

Hercule Poirot's perfectionist personality, together with occasional French utterances, made him one of the most beloved crime fiction characters ever made. But from the genre evolution point of view, it may be suggested that Miss Marple, in spite of being less well-known, became an even more influential character than Poirot. The first novel she appeared in as the main character was the *Murder on the Vicarage* (1930). Her personality is summarized as follows:

Miss Marple, an elderly woman of independent means in the tiny village of St. Mary Mead, uses the spinster stereotype to her advantage. Indeed a lifetime of nosiness – which might also be called close observation – constitutes her special power as a detective. (Priestman et al., 2003)<sup>8</sup>

Miss Marple's talent for observation made Josef [ describe her in *Reading Detective Stories* (1965) as some kind of visionary that is able to see through people and their intentions.<sup>9</sup> The choice of a female character performing the crime investigation is seen as unique compared to the rest of the authors of Golden Age as their detective figures were predominantly male. They also, with the exception of Chesterton's Father Brown, seemed to prefer professional police investigators instead of an amateur whose conclusions are more accurate than those of the police. Miss Marple is, unlike Poirot and most fictional detectives, not accompanied by a 'watson' thus she solves every mystery on her own<sup>10</sup> which could be understood as breaking the rule of a 'side-kick's presence as a necessary notion of detective stories. In addition to Miss Marple, another notable woman performing the fictional investigation in the novels is Ariadne Oliver, universally interpreted as the author's alter-ego judging by her occupation as a crime fiction writer.

However, the appeal of Agatha Christie's creations does not rest solely on the main characters' shoulders. It is Christie's unique approach to her own work paired with willingness to explore new possibilities in the field of the genre. The setting plays a pivotal role in constructing the plot as it represents a background image which is subsequently temporarily shattered by a crime. Sometimes she was inspired by her travels to set her novels in faraway exotic lands, at other times she decided to use English harmonious countryside as a platform for contrasting dramatic events. The peaceful atmosphere of an English village filled with domestic figures

---

<sup>8</sup> Priestman et al., *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*, 193.

<sup>9</sup> Josef Škvorecký, *Nápady čtenáře detektivek* [Reading Detective Stories] (Praha: Československý spisovatel, 1965), 101.

<sup>10</sup> P.D. James, *Povídání o detektivkách* [Talking about Detective Fiction] (Praha: Motto, 2011), 55.

drinking their tea must, without a doubt, bring nostalgic feelings to British readers. At the same time, it also meets Auden's requirements for a detective story rather perfectly. This goes for the society of St. Mary Mead in particular:

(2) It must appear to be an innocent society in a state of grace, i.e., a society where there is no need of the law, no contradiction between the aesthetic individual and the ethical universal, and where murder, therefore, is the unheard-of act which precipitates a crisis (for it reveals that some member has fallen and is no longer in a state of grace). The law becomes a reality and for a time all must live in its shadow, till the fallen one is identified. With his arrest, innocence is restored, and the law retires forever. (Scaggs, 2005)<sup>11</sup>

In *Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*, Stephen Knight favours the idea of the society's role in the process of the investigation and its consequences.

Christie's criminals are traitors to the class and world which is so calmly described, and their identification, through the systems of limited knowledge and essentially domestic inquiry, is a process of exorcising the threats that this society nervously anticipates within its own membership: the multiple suspect structure has special meaning in a competitive individualist world. (Priestman et al., 2003)<sup>12</sup>

Another way of Christie utilizing the setting might be equally argued thanks to her works being often included into the country-house mystery subgenre "in which a crime takes place in the restricted setting of a country house. This provides a means of containing the action within a self-contained setting and limiting the number of suspects to a closed circle of guests."<sup>13</sup> Instead of a country house, all the suspects might as well be stuck on the boat like in *Death on the Nile* or a train unable to continue the journey due to a snowstorm as in *The Murder on the Orient-Express* scenario.

In addition to that, the fiction she wrote is highly recognizable due to the frequent occurrence of a poisonous drug as the means of eliminating a certain victim. Christie owes her good knowledge of poisons to a first-aid course she attended in 1913, as well as years of voluntary nursing service during WWI<sup>14</sup>, and to working as a Torquay pharmacist since 1915<sup>15</sup>. Her medical knowledge and experience is evident for in those instances where she accurately depicts symptoms of an illness some of her characters are suffering from. These descriptions,

---

<sup>11</sup> Auden "The Guilty Vicarage: Notes on the detective story, by an addict", 1.

<sup>12</sup> Priestman et al., *The Golden Age in Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*, 82.

<sup>13</sup> Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 144.

<sup>14</sup> Christie, *Vlastní životopis*, 234.

<sup>15</sup> Andrew Norman, *Agatha Christie: The Finished Portrait* (Dublin: Tempus, 2006), 53.

along with the consequences of drug poisoning were regarded as realistic to the point where the *Pharmaceutical Journal* praised her skills. Shortly after her detective fiction debut, a review was published there suggesting she differs greatly from the other contemporary authors as she does not feature an unidentifiable substance device in order to let the murder happen.<sup>16</sup>

If there is something that is even more characteristic, it is without a doubt using the element of surprise that the author has mastered. Having chosen the least probable suspect as the culprit, readers must pay attention to details in order to uncover the mystery and yet they fail many times as the descriptions made by Poirot or other detectives may seem to be on the borderlines of what Ronald Knox's rules consider a fair-play. Nevertheless, in case of *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* Christie went as far as to break a vital point since the culprit, Dr Sheppard, was not only the detective in charge of the investigation, but also the narrator. The revelation was shocking as no reader would ever suspect a character who takes an active role in the author-reader communication.

As both a doctor and the narrator of the investigation, Sheppard represents the two pillars of societal and textual reliability, and his identification as the murderer is therefore doubly threatening, Sheppard clearly demonstrates that the treat of social disorder as coming from within, Golden Age emphasises the necessity, embodied in the figure Miss Marple, of a society that maintains the social order through self-surveillance. (Scaggs, 2005)<sup>17</sup>

With the publication of Agatha Christie's last creation *Postern of Fate* in 1973 followed by the *Curtain* (1975), the *Sleeping Murder* (1976) and fairly recent *Hercule Poirot and the Greenshore Folly* (2014), three posthumously published works originally written in 1940s and 1950s, Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple's incredible mystery-solving abilities have not vanished from the contemporary world of literature under a label of past and forgotten. However, it is undeniable the film adaptations and their popularity is what greatly contributed to the fact the readership worldwide is still very well aware of their names and what helped Christie gain a presumably unshakable position in detective fiction spotlight.

Attempts to create an adaptation faithful to the novels date back as far as to 1931 when *Alibi*, a stage play version of *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, became the first film that featured Hercule Poirot. Austin Trevor was the first actor to portray the role of the eccentric detective. In the end, six actors in total replaced him in later films and television series, one of which was also Alfred

---

<sup>16</sup> Christie, *Vlastní životopis*, 318.

<sup>17</sup> Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 46.

Finney who appeared in Sidney Lumet's version of *Murder on the Orient-Express* in 1974, appreciated both by the viewers and the critics. In 1989, David Suchet was cast as Poirot in ITV channel adaptation named *Agatha Christie's Poirot*. Television series produced by London Weekend Television stood out from its predecessors by paying close attention to the plot and its execution, as well as the setting, historical context of the era and its costumes, by which it differs from its Miss Marple counterpart *Agatha Christie's Marple* that has been criticised heavily for its changes to the plot. Thanks to Suchet's efforts to understand Poirot's character by reading the novels carefully<sup>18</sup>, he may be considered as the perfect embodiment of the detective in the eyes of contemporary readers.

---

<sup>18</sup> Michal Sýkora et al., *Britské detektivky: od románu k televizní sérii* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2012), 68-69.

### 3 Intertextual Approach to Literature and Devices in its Use

#### 3.1 Definitions and Literary Theories Regarding Intertextuality

Because of the fact that the concept of intertextuality, which is recently becoming a very popular approach to literature of all forms and genres, still intrigues scholars of a rich variety of liberal arts, it is not so surprising it originally sprung from linguistics. Ferdinand de Saussure's structural views of a sign as a part of a large linguistic system were what inspired Mikchail Bakhtin and the term's inventor, Julia Kristeva, to write their essays on the topic. Drawing from philosophy and psychology, the theory of intertextuality implies that a text does not exist on its own but as a part of a large system of texts written in the course of the centuries. Each text forms a specific textual relation with another preceding or succeeding it. It may mention different work, stand in a contrast with it, incorporate parts of it into its structure or incorporate them elsewhere in order to create a new, collage-like content assembled from the original text and the pre-existing fragments, the presence of which is meaningful with respect to the overall structure.

Despite the fact that intertextuality as a fully accepted scientific approach appeared as late as in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the thoughts of theorists had wandered in its direction way earlier than it may be expected. As pointed out in *Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept* (1996) by Martínez Alfaro, Ancient Greek scholars Plato and Aristotle are one of the oldest sources. Both of them acknowledged the existence of imitation in art. Plato's theory implies that a "poet always copies an earlier act of creation, which is itself already a copy. For Aristotle, dramatic creation is the reduction, and hence intensification, of a mass of text known to the poet and probably to the audience as well."<sup>19</sup>

Considering the development of intertextuality throughout the history, it is important to note how crucial were the ways audiences perceived the concept of originality and authorial creativity. In Plato's and Aristotle's times, imitation wasn't regarded as something unusual nor was it seen in a negative light. In the same fashion, the art created in Middle Ages seemed to be almost always connected to religious concepts already existing for years in the Bible. Taking into account the literary diversity at the time, not only the audience did not strive for a new, original content, but went as far as to actually demand established genres or forms, and, as seen in case of Biblical stories, incorporation of the same characters and well-known plots into a

---

<sup>19</sup> María Jesús Martínez Alfaro, "Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept", *Atlantis* 18, no. 1/2 (1996): 269.

newly formed text. As a commentary on later stage of development, Martínez Alfaro then mentions that “it is the Renaissance literature that showed, perhaps for the first time in Western culture, a conscious awareness of discourse as open, unfinished, and subject to an infinite number of interpretations. The textual past is always present through quotations or allusions in the work of such writers as Bacon, Shakespeare [...] etc.”<sup>20</sup> The tradition managed to keep its importance up to the era of Romanticism, when the perspective changed drastically. It introduced the values of individualism and, in opposition to preceding cultural movements, the attention switched from the text alone to the author’s persona and the effort was made to create as original content as possible.

While the modernist criticism did not abandon the idea of intertextuality completely, the crucial moment for the evolution of this approach came in the 1960s when Julia Kristeva, a French literary theorist of Bulgarian origin, introduced the thoughts of Russian scholar Mikchail Bakhtin to the Western audience. Apart from literary criticism, Bakhtin occupied himself with philosophy of language and, in particular, the ‘dialogic nature of language’. In short, pondering on Socrates’ dialogues, Bakhtin says the texts exist in a constant parallel with each other and thus engage in a dialogue which is, just like human communication, underlined by socio-cultural context. In *Word, Dialogue and Novel* (1966) and *The Bounded Text* published in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Language and Art* (1980), Kristeva coined the term ‘intertextuality’. She “envisaged texts as functioning along two axes: the horizontal axis determines the relationship between the reader and the text whilst the vertical axis contains the complex set of relations of the text to other texts. What coheres these axes is the framework of pre-existing codes that governs and shapes every text and every reading act.”<sup>21</sup>

The third point of view that helped to form the basics of the concept is Gerard Genette’s, a follower of structuralism, trilogy *Palimpsests: Literature in the second degree* (1982), *Paratexts* (1987) and *The Architext* (1992). Among the relevant terminology he coined, an ‘architext’, a term for “basic, unchanging (or at least slowly evolving) building blocks which underpin the whole literary system”<sup>22</sup>, can be named. To describe the relations between texts, he uses the term ‘transtextuality’. In *Palimpsests* (1982), he distinguishes between five types of transtextuality, namely architextuality, hypertextuality, intertextuality, metatextuality and paratextuality. What Genette sees as an ‘intertextuality’, is in fact a subtype of what he labelled

---

<sup>20</sup> María Jesús Martínez Alfaro, “Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept”, *Atlantis* 18, no. 1/2 (1996): 270.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Childs et Roger Fowler, *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms* (New York: Routledge, 1987), 121.

<sup>22</sup> Allen Graham, *Intertextuality* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 100.

as transtextuality, explained as when a text is present in a different text. Genette pays attention to concrete realizations of such a presence and subsequently invents terms ‘quotation’, ‘allusion’ and ‘plagiarism’, which will be glossed over in section 3.3. Another type, ‘metatextuality’, is a notion present in a text that is a direct commentary of other texts. A paratext “marks those elements which lie on the threshold of the text and which help to direct and control the reception of a text by its readers.”<sup>23</sup> Paratextuality is formed by a combination of a ‘peritext’, a headline, title etc. that was created in order to organize a certain text, and an ‘epitext’, the text itself.

The fifth type, hypertextuality, summarizes the relation between a ‘hypotext’ and ‘hypertext’. As Graham explains, “what Genette terms the hypotext is termed by most other critics the intertext, that is a text which can be definitely located as a major source of signification for a text.”<sup>24</sup> The hypotext then signifies the original text to which the work written subsequently, a hypertext, refers. The hypertext usually encompasses the hypotext as a whole in order for the previously written content to undergo a process named ‘transformation’ by Genette. Being a part of the hypertext, the hypotext’s meaning may be shifted as the result of immediate context, or the hypertext might in fact represent a remastered version of hypotext in terms of different setting or era. It is not unusual when the only aspects that the hypertext shares with its hypotext are striking similarities of the plots and the characters’ physical or personality features. Apart from other numerous processes, a hypertext may also consist of a hypotext that was altered either by expansion or reduction of the material. In a similar way, the notion of ‘transmotivation’ sometimes alters the character’s motivation from the source. Other times it may expand on the source and add a motivation that was absent from the hypotext as a means of the author’s own variation of the narrative.<sup>25</sup>

Intentionally fusing the two fictional worlds together, in Genette’s theoretical view the author counts on the reader’s textual knowledge on which the proper understanding of the hypertext relies heavily. However, as Graham reminds us<sup>26</sup>, the readers’ knowledge of literary discourse is reshaped throughout the course of time and therefore some of the hypotexts are no longer vivid in their minds or are not, in some cases, even accessible. In such instances, the hidden meanings practically disappear from what was supposed to be a hypertext. In the end, the

---

<sup>23</sup> Graham, *Intertextuality*, 103.

<sup>24</sup> Graham, 108.

<sup>25</sup> Graham, 108-112.

<sup>26</sup> Graham, 114.



relation of hypertextuality ceases to exist causing the autonomous reading of the text to be canonical.

As a terminological concept, intertextuality was shaped throughout the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century on the basis of the essays written by Mikchail Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva or Ronald Barthes. While the modern view of intertextuality retains some of the characteristics laid out by them, the usage and meaning of the term has recently shifted slightly. Many critical studies present intertextuality not in its original sense of a broader literary discourse but as a narrow, more specific relation between texts as it was suggested by Gerard Genette. The widespread usage of the modern approach later convinced Julia Kristeva to rename her own term as ‘transtextuality’ to differentiate between the two.

### 3.2 Dual Interpretation of Intertextuality

Thanks to the increase of the media’s influence on culture at the beginning of the 21<sup>th</sup> century, the theory of intertextuality started to slowly come back to its former spotlight as the boundaries between the media’s individual branches were getting blurry. Since then, both films and music videos were gradually adding references to well-known literary masterpieces and vice versa. It is possible to argue that their no longer subtle existence within a standalone piece of art has made the audience realize that their intertextual connections are in fact significant and worth taking a theoretical interest in.

With so many different theoretical approaches to an intertextual analysis in existence, it is not surprising that the scientists’ effort to precisely express the relationships in the author-text-reader/audience triangle has brought with it an amount of terminology into the field. Having examined the approach from every possible point of view, each of the scholars uses various terms that might come across as ambiguous and therefore incorrectly interchangeable with terms belonging to the other theories. Attempts were made to organize the mess through numerous essays dedicated to clarification of the terminology, one of which was, for example, *Intertextuality: Interpretative Practice and Textual Strategy* written by Brian Ott and Cameron Walter in 2000. According to the research carried out by them, there is an important difference between the intertextuality Julia Kristeva or Mikchail Bakhtin were talking about and the contemporary intertextual analysis that focuses on references found in a certain narrative.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Brian Ott et Cameron Walter, “Intertextuality: Interpretative Practice and Textual Strategy”, *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 17, no. 4 (2000): 429.

The first one is based on the audience's role which refers to Roland Barthes's views presented in *The Death of the Author* (1972). Similarly to Julia Kristeva's aforementioned arguments (see 3.1), intertextuality as an interpretative practice is a notion pointing to the idea of the author's inability to create a new, original content. Building his/her fictional worlds on the basis of hundreds of fictional predecessors, the author subconsciously imitates other works. The reader thus becomes the central figure to make a connection with the art he has encountered in the past and establish the intertextual relation.<sup>28</sup> Barthes himself claims that "the reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination".<sup>29</sup> Ott and Walter expand this point of view by distinguishing between horizontal and vertical intertextual relations of two or more texts out of which the horizontal clearly describes the notion of intertextuality as an interpretative practice.

"Horizontal relations are those between primary texts that are more or less explicitly linked, usually along the axes of genre, character, or content. Vertical intertextuality is that between a primary text ... and other texts of a different type that refer explicitly to it."<sup>30</sup>

On the other hand, the vertical suggests that to create a connection between texts is the author's intentional addition into the narrative structure. Although identifying the relation as a textual strategy is being labelled by the word intertextuality as well, it opposes the previous view in several points. In other words, instead of the author's so called death it establishes him/her as the ultimate force that places the connections into his/her work and also wields the power over the narrative completely. At the same time, it restores faith in his/her creative freedom. The audience does seem to actively participate in such a type of communication even though their field of knowledge is restricted by the author beforehand: "The intertextual allusions found in postmodern texts allow viewers to exercise specialized knowledge and to mark their membership in particular cultures."<sup>31</sup>

To distinguish between the two opposing intertextualities even further, it is suitable to mention these essays: William Irwin's *What is an Allusion?* (2001). What Irwin proposes is that intertextuality in the modern sense is deeply connected to the notion of 'allusion', to which it could be referred to as the basic building block for creating specific cases of intertextuality.

---

<sup>28</sup> Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 146.

<sup>29</sup> Barthes, 147.

<sup>30</sup> Ott et Walter, "Intertextuality: Interpretative Practice and Textual Strategy", 433.

<sup>31</sup> Ott et Walter, 440.

### 3.3 Allusion as a Device of Intentional Intertextuality

Defined as “an indirect or passing reference to some event, person, place, or artistic work, the nature and relevance of which is not explained by the writer but relies on the reader's familiarity with what is thus mentioned”<sup>32</sup>, an allusion is an individual realization of intertextual relations between two texts. The relation between the texts is one-directional in the sense that the text which was produced later alludes to its predecessor, not vice-versa. Since a single written work may contain a large number of allusions, they tend to be brief and very specific, although it is possible for an author to allude to another text by utilizing larger units, for example the same form, style or even structure, the latter being recognized as structural allusions. When we analyse genres fully relying on an already existing works such as parody or satire, imitative allusions can be found there<sup>33</sup>. Identifying allusions as referential devices brings into consideration of Genette’s previously mentioned terms quotation and plagiarism, of which especially the latter needs to be distinguished from an allusion because of its derogative effects on the evaluation of artists’ creativity.

Quotation is, unlike allusion, a direct reference overtly placed in a text, often differentiated from it in terms of font, italicization or quotation marks. More notably, the title and the name of the quoted work follows it immediately. Allusions, on the other hand, are rather covert in their nature, stating only a couple of words, sometimes sentences, linked to it in supposedly recognizable way.

Even though an allusion does not state said information for the reasons of fluidity in expression, differs from plagiarism in its clear intent to remind the readers of another cultural content without trying to steal the original idea, let alone claiming it as its own. The content itself may have become so deeply rooted in certain culture that it makes the author believe that it shall be known to his/her readers in general, therefore the title is absent. In most cases the circumstances are that the author’s use of allusion is covert, which results in the readers approaching the text in accordance with the extent of their knowledge.

The authors’ intention is the crucial force behind the process indeed. Provided that they wish the readers to understand additional layers to the narrative, instead of using personal allusions comprehensible only to them alone or their family and friends, it is necessary for them to

---

<sup>32</sup> Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 7.

<sup>33</sup> Childs et Fowler, *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 7.

consider the cultural heritage and available knowledge that they share with the readers. Because intentions can often be traceable in the work but not clearly, this can prompt the readership to engage in discussions at best, and in wrong interpretation at worst. The main reason why an allusion can fail lies in the process itself. In order to understand it, after the readers correctly recognize the source, they also need to make the right associations with it, since the allusion “calls for associations that go beyond mere substitution of a referent.”<sup>34</sup> If the process fails in this stage, the readers are bound to make what Irwin named an accidental association, which leads to a misunderstanding of the work. As Irwin further explains, “that understanding, however, if it is to be genuine, must be in accord with the author's intent. If it is not, the reader is not understanding the allusion but creating something else.”<sup>35</sup>

It may seem unusual to search for intertextual relations in detective fiction, which is, in contrast with satire or parody, not constructed on the basis of a preceding text. Provided the plot Agatha Christie constructed has a complex, fully elaborated structure, we can consider all its elements, including allusions, in it as intentional, necessary pieces building the narrative, many of them being subtle hints for the readers to solve the crime. It suggests she added them to the text with a specific purpose in mind. Considering the nature of detective novels, intertextuality in Agatha Christie's works substitutes artistic values that crime-driven narratives often lack due to their preferably shorter length. The following sections show and explain the examples of the three most common uses of intertextuality with respect to the specific functions they serve. In order to uncover the additional layers to the novels, we draw on the view of intertextuality established by Gerard Genette in *Palimpsests* and Ott and Walter's terminology, followed by the definitions of allusion as presented in Irwin's essay.

---

<sup>34</sup> William Irwin, “What is an Allusion?”, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 59, no. 3 (2001): 288.

<sup>35</sup> Irwin, 293.

## 4 Intertextual Relations to British Poetry

To make a contrast with the previous chapter, we have chosen a work written in the later years of Agatha Christie's career. It is probably one of the most intertextually affected novels that were written by her, *The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side* (1962). The title itself heavily implies its connection to British literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, namely Alfred Tennyson's poem *The Lady of Shalott* (1842). The readers who are familiar with British classics can easily identify the reference to a verse from Part III of said poem and it is further emphasized by a quotation of following four lines as an epigraph of the novel:

Out flew the web and floated wide;  
The mirror crack'd from side to side;  
"The curse is come upon me," cried  
The Lady of Shalott.<sup>36</sup>

Christie's references to Tennyson do not stop after the narration itself begins. In order to let the readers realize that there is a specific significance to these words, the words *Lady of Shalott* seem to come into the characters' mind a bit too often. They quote its verses many times throughout the story themselves and compare its lyrical object to the central character of those fictional events, actress Marina Gregg, whose personality and therefore her motives are essential to solving the crime. Again, Christie chose a work from the literary canon of her own nation, a source culturally familiar to the intended audience, but this time, she no longer draws on prose but poetry.

### 4.1 *The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side*

The detective figure that this novel revolves around is Miss Marple. To handle the necessities of everyday life properly, Miss Marple now needs help of her two neighbours Cherry and Mrs Knight. Despite her age, Miss Marple's abilities are still as good as they have always been. When Marina Gregg, a popular American actress, moves to Gossington Hall with her husband

---

<sup>36</sup> Alfred Tennyson, *The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. Christopher Ricks (London: Longmans, 1969), 359.

Jason Rudd, they organize a beneficial party for St John Ambulance Association. One of the guests is Heather Badcock, a simple-minded yet kind admirer of Marina. Thrilled to meet her idol and taste a daiquiri offered to her by the actress, she proceeds to tell Marina a story about how she, against her doctor's orders, secretly went to see her in Bermuda while she had been ill with German measles. It is at this moment that the host suddenly freezes and stares at a picture hanging on the wall as if she were in a deep shock. Mrs Bantry, the former owner of Gossington Hall, is also present at the party and later describes it to Miss Marple as the 'Lady of Shalott look'.

After the actress seems to recover from this state, Heather accidentally spills her daiquiri on her dress. Marina hands to Mrs Badcock her own drink and Heather takes a few sips. Later, Heather does not feel well and subsequently dies, overdosed by the calming anti-depressant Calmo. It is therefore assumed by Craddock that it was Marina who was the intended target of the murder as the anti-depressant was found in her drink. Throughout the investigation, it becomes evident that Marina is emotionally unstable and reacts hysterically to people around her. She survives the attempt to be poisoned, but other deaths, of Ella and Giuseppe, occur later.

The readers also learn that her mental problems arose after one of her unsuccessful marriages. She wished to be a mother but when she finally got pregnant, her child turned out to be mentally disabled. Marina has never recovered from such a revelation and ended up using the Calmo anti-depressants. When she heard Heather's story, she understood that Heather was the one who infected her during the pregnancy and thus caused the child's disability. The frustration on the actress's part was so overwhelming that she decided to avenge her child immediately. Since that moment, everything the actress has done was a part of an act which was supposed to keep her away from suspicion, leading her to also kill Ella and Giuseppe. Once her arrest is inevitable and Miss Marple and inspector Craddock arrive to Gossington Hall, it is too late since Marina had already taken her life before she could have been arrested.

The sight of her brings a streak of melancholy to Miss Marple as she reacts to her fate by silently reciting the last lines of the *Lady of Shallot*, quoting Lancelot's farewell speech to the maiden: "He said: 'She has a lovely face/ God in his mercy lend her grace, /The Lady of Shalott."<sup>37</sup> Considering the traumatic experience she had and lack of self-control, Marina Gregg is

---

<sup>37</sup> Tennyson, *The Poems of Tennyson*, 361.

portrayed as a complex character whose decision changed her role from a victim to a murderess. Feeling that she had already been lost since long time ago. Miss Marple pities her:

“She had such a wonderful gift. She had a great power of love and hate but no stability. That's what's so sad for anyone, to be born with no stability. She couldn't let the past go and she could never see the future as it really was, only as she imagined it to be.”<sup>38</sup>

She also explains: “She didn't realize, perhaps, the seriousness of what she'd done and certainly not the danger of it until afterwards. But she realized it then.”<sup>39</sup> Thus it may be concluded that Marina is a controversial culprit who, similarly to the *Murder in the Orient-Express*, tried to achieve some kind of very twisted form of what she perceived as justice.

The reason behind Christie's decision to build the plot on the basis of the Lady of Shalott's fate may be hidden in the overall atmosphere of the novel. Being published in early 1960s, *The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side* represents Christie's late crime fiction. Together with the author herself, the detective figure Miss Marple is getting old and finds it difficult to adjust to the changes in the modern, post-WWII society of Great Britain, therefore the literature of the past may be seen as something that connects them to the old era, the time of their younger days. It is stated by Mrs Bantry that “people laugh at Tennyson nowadays, but the Lady of Shalott always thrilled me when I was young and it still does.”<sup>40</sup> The way Christie made the poem relevant in her own plot gives the readers a big advantage in the form of additional information on Marina Gregg's psychological disposition. In case they aren't familiar with Tennyson very much, the frequent allusions may inspire the readers to search for the source on their own.

#### 4.2 Tennyson's *The Lady of Shalott* and Its Possible Sources

In the aforementioned novel, the four lines that Agatha Christie had chosen to quote for the purposes of her narrative strategy can be identified specifically at the end of Part II of Tennyson's second, re-written version of *The Lady of Shalott* published in 1842. Tennyson provides to the readers a poetic insight into a tale inspired by the maiden of Astolat, whose tragic fate was linked to the figure of sir Lancelot, a celebrated knight of the Round Table. Being first adapted by Thomas Malory, it still remains an artistically appreciated theme associated with the Arthurian legends of Old England.

---

<sup>38</sup> Christie, *The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side*, 307.

<sup>39</sup> Christie, 306.

<sup>40</sup> Christie, 78.

The first and second parts out of four in total describe a rather dull, lonely life of a young lady who cannot leave her loom in a grey castle due to a curse that had been cast upon her. She lives in Shalott, an island located by the road in the direction of Camelot from which her curse is supposed to come. The lady spends her days by weaving a web and the only sight of the outside world she has an access to is via a mirror that is hanging on the wall. Isolated in the shadows, the third part shows the readers that she sees Lancelot's reflection in the mirror, which awakens a deep longing for love, affection and a better life in her. It leads the maiden to abandon the web. It flies out of the window, leaving her to face the unavoidable fate. Part four concludes the tale with the lady of Shalott descending from the tower and floating in a boat towards Camelot. There she is found by the Camelot's nobility as she froze to death on her way here, leaving them only with a short message, an inscribed 'The Lady of Shalott', that she wrote herself. Upon seeing her, Lancelot expresses his pity over the maiden's death as she had 'a pretty face'.

To be able to uncover the possible underlying messages and make the necessary connections to Christie's murder-driven plot, we shall take a look at what might have been an inspiration for Tennyson to compose the poem in the first place. Being a curious case of intertextuality itself, *The Lady of Shalott*'s origins have been found in multiple narratives and since none of the supposed sources cover the tale in its entirety, it remains a subject of discussion to-day. Even though the maiden's actions in Tennyson's version are more likely motivated by her desire for company and freedom rather than love for a specific man, all the adaptations seem to agree with respect to the lady's romantic feelings for Lancelot. Excluding the love being unrequited due to Lancelot's unshakable devotion to the queen Guinevere, the king Arthur's wife, each adaptation starts to differ from here.

Surprisingly, as the source of a legend, which became an irreplaceable part of British culture, is recently seen an Italian novella *La Donna di Scalotta*. It can also be found in Novella LXXXI ('We here learn how the Damsel of Shalot died for love of Launcelot of the Lake') originally published in Milan as a part of collection *Il Novellino: Hundred Old Tales*.<sup>41</sup> Since Thomas Roscoe's English translation was included in his *The Italian Novelists* (1824), there is a possibility of Tennyson having and access to it as well. It is the fact that instead of Astolat, the

---

<sup>41</sup> Louise Pond, "Notes on Tennyson's Lancelot and Elaine", *Modern Language Notes* 19, no.2 (1904): 50.



original name of the maiden's residence as referred to by Malory, Tennyson uses an anglicized version of Italian Scalotta, what points to this source most specifically.<sup>42</sup>

There are, however, differences that bring us to without a doubt the best known source for the Arthurian legends, Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485). Tennyson probably had a good reason why he did not specify the name of the lady since it looks like he fused two legends recorded by Malory. The maiden residing in Astolat was Elaine, the daughter of Sir Bernard of Astolat. She fell in love with Lancelot, whom she had met while he was staying at their castle, preparing himself for Sir Bernard's tournament in which he decided to participate because of his host's insistent pleading. On account of King Arthur and Queen Guinevere's presence on the tournament, Lancelot disguises himself and fights under a shield of Elaine's brother, accepting her scarlet token as it had been known about him that he never does so to any maiden. He later receives bad injuries during the tournament, to which Elaine responds by selfless dedication to nursing him back to health and later is found dead in a boat because of Lancelot's unreciprocated feelings<sup>43</sup>.

Interestingly, the legend does not mention Elaine ever being locked up in a tower or cursed, but as the theme of inevitable fate is crucial, it was probably inspired by the beginning of a legend tied with another lady described in *Le Morte d'Arthur* whose first name is incidentally Elaine as well, but this time it is the daughter of King Pellès residing in the proximity of pont Corbin. This Elaine is the one who had to stay in a tower due to a curse that was cast on her, as Malory says: "by enchantment Queen Morgan le Fay and the Queen of Northgalis had put her there in that pains, because she was called the fairest lady of that country; and there she had been five years, and never might she be delivered out of her great pains unto the time the best knight of the world had taken her by the hand."<sup>44</sup> Lancelot is thus destined to be the one knight who rescues her from her suffering. It may be argued that, in a psychological sense, Tennyson's Lady of Shallot is freed from her pain by Lancelot as well, although instead of escaping the curse she brings upon herself the doom awaiting for her.

Despite the source's focus, the poem itself is usually not interpreted in terms of the theme of romantic love. Frequently, it occurs as a depiction of inner conflict between one's desired way of life and the fact that the person is tied by his/her current life circumstances, constantly failing

---

<sup>44</sup> Thomas Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur* (Urbana: Project Gutenberg, 2014), 500.

his/her attempts to improve them as if cursed. Another interpretation, as presented by Lionel Stevenson, views the lady as “an artist, weaving beautiful pictures which are supposed to reproduce real life but which are derived entirely at second hand through the mirror, ... perfectly happy with her artificial, lifeless creations”<sup>45</sup> until she starts to yearn for something real, making it a life-long struggle of the artists to live their personal lives according to what they wish for.

#### 4.3 Intertextuality in *Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side* as the Means of Characterization

Based on the importance she bears in the fictional events, the way the whole St Mary Mead is affected by her sole presence and its inhabitants admire her, it is safe to assume that the central character of the whole novel is nobody else than the culprit, Marina Gregg. As will be revealed in following paragraphs, she evidently shares quite a number of parallels with the Lady of Shalott. On account of the fact that Miss Marple's main method to solving a crime is not to approach the suspects with a cold-hearted logic, but trying to uncover their motives by realizing the underlying psychology, or, in other words, seeing their true colours as human beings. A certain way a person behaves often seems to be a recurring pattern in the society. It was therefore thanks to these similarities that the association made by Mrs Bantry with what she called the ‘Lady of Shalott look’ on Marina's face helped Miss Marple, who understood the analogy, to become aware of the actress's state of mind and the possible directions it may take.

The first aspect where Marina resembles the lady, or her Malory's counterparts named Elaine, is her background as an extraordinary person. With her notable acting skills gaining her recognition and fame, being an actress as Marina's life-long occupation may be seen in the eyes of the ‘ordinary’ people as a quality that sets her apart from the crowd just like Elaine's noble origin and wealth did from the peasants.

In accordance with Stevenson's theory, Marina is the artist struggling with her identity, only instead of a physically existing castle she is metaphorically entrapped by her career and the fake image of her to please the audience. This interpretation explains Elaine looking towards Camelot as an image of unfulfillable wishes and desires, the artist's inability to lead a normal life. Equivalently to Part II, Marina longs for a peaceful life in a place where she can hide from her sadness. Having moved to Gossington Hall, she believes that she finally found what she has been searching for. Then Heather Badcock's words cause that she suddenly realizes the truth.

---

<sup>45</sup> Lionel Stevenson, “The ‘High-Born Maiden’ Symbol in Tennyson”, *PMLA* 63, no. 1 (1948): 237.

The Lady of Shalott sees the travellers passing to Camelot, Lancelot among them, when she realizes that she had been stuck at one place her entire life. For Marina, the revelation is associated with her inner freedom. She isn't capable of overcoming her pain and the lives of other people change while she is stuck at one place in hers.

Her presence is also emphasized when readers learn about her from literally every characters' narration, but Marina herself does not appear until fourth chapter. Even though she was the main figure connected to the murder because it both took place at her party and she interacted with the victim, it was difficult for inspector Craddock to make an appointment with her, and thus he had to interview her surroundings. Nobody else than the few people surrounding her every day, for example the husband Jason Rudd or the secretary Ella Zielinsky, know about her struggles and problematic past. This could be compared to the end of Part I, where the only ones to hear the lady's songs are the reapers:

Only reapers, reaping early  
... Hear a song that echoes cheerly  
... Listening, whispers "Tis the fairy  
Lady of Shalott."<sup>46</sup>

Speaking figuratively, Ella and her husband as the producer may also be compared to the reapers because her fame is the source of their income, and thus they reap what she sows as an actress. By this time, the readers already could have identified the resemblance and so they may pay start paying closer attention to Marina's actions.

For the narrative, the most important part is without a doubt the sequence when the lady, upon seeing Lancelot, realizes how restrictive the life she leads is. The moment of decision to abandon everything she had known up to this moment is emphasized by Christie many times, but in Marina's character development it stands for the decision to commit the crime. She suffered from the trauma caused by her child's mental disability for many years, feeling helpless, trapped in the hands of a bad fate, as if she was cursed. When she learns about Heather's side to the story, she stares at the picture of a Madonna with little Jesus, an image of a happy mother with her new-born son. Mrs Bantry described the Lady of Shalott look "as if the doom was about to come upon her", but Miss Marple later corrects her that the doom was directed towards Heather as the result of her actions.

---

<sup>46</sup> Tennyson, *The Poems of Tennyson*, 356.

If we look at the culprit character from another point of view, there is an alternative interpretation of what the doom may be comprised of. In the same manner as Elaine, Marina's actions were fuelled by intense emotions. Both decided to pursue their desires in spite of the knowledge it involves pointing an inevitable destruction towards themselves. Considering Marina's initial efforts to make a comeback into the film industry and her position in the society, it was not just her physical existence that was destined to perish, but mainly her whole identity and connections to the outside world, resulting in the dream of peaceful life to crumble and be gone forever.

At this point, significant differences between Tennyson's *Lady of Shalott* and Marina come to surface as the means to create the moral that detective fiction brings with it. Elaine remained the victim of the forces that are beyond human comprehension, through a supernatural element, and bravely raised herself to experience pure, innocent emotions of freedom and being part of the real world. She managed to escape the shadows of her life for a brief moment, even if it meant losing her life in the process. However, the culprit in *Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side* brought the doom on herself by actions caused by the darkest emotions of the human psyche, hatred, frustration and the wish for a revenge. Instead of freedom, she entrapped herself in those emotions and became a cold-blooded murderess who deserves nothing but to be punished by the law, just like the rules of detective fiction dictate.

If we identify the *Lady of Shalott* with Malory's Elaine and add the element of unrequited love into the picture, the prevailing motivation would for both be fear instead of bravery. In Part IV of Tennyson's poem, Elaine would enter the boat with the direct intent to end her life out of fear of living without sir Lancelot. Believing broken heart is a worse fate than death, she refuses to recover from her unrequited love. In Malory's version, before she dies of a heartbreak, she says that she wants to be placed in a boat with a letter she wrote herself, revealing the reason of her fate. Marina seems to be a bit more similar to this version of Elaine since she transforms all of her post-Heather's death scenes into an act in order not to be exposed by Craddock or other people. Miss Marple later claims it to be Marina Gregg's last act, referring to the lines "The willowy hills and fields among, / they heard her singing her last song."<sup>47</sup> The act was successful for the majority of the novel since it was assumed that the actress was the intended victim. Had Malory's Elaine or Christie's Marina Gregg been mentally stronger, they could have changed their lives for better as they were not threatened by any supernatural element. In the end, the

---

<sup>47</sup> Tennyson, *The Poems of Tennyson*, 360.

only thing Marina achieved was gaining Miss Marple's pity over what such an excellent actress has become. From Stevenson's theoretical point of view, Marina never reached her goal to taste what the real life is like, thus her identity as an artist never ceased. Moreover, the fact that she brought the doom upon herself by acting the role of a victim, it is implied she died as a corrupted person but the death of hers was that of an artist.

*The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side* may thus be regarded as a novel that was without any doubt intended by Christie to be wholly based on intertextuality. Alluding to its pretext, Tennyson's poem *Lady of Shalott*, not only in its usual place in the title, but also at various moments connected to the overt culprit's characterization and multiple quotations, the author places pieces of information as clues. Since the first quotation clearly states Tennyson's name, it can by no means be regarded as plagiarism. The characters often state the author of the verses is Tennyson. Several moments of the novel, for example the dying scene being placed towards the end or the decision to abandon the current approach to her problems placed directly before the arrival of the doom, suggest there is also structural intertextuality involved.

Even if the novel is full of red herrings and other seemingly important remarks, the reader whose knowledge of said poem is solid may have never lost the thread tied to the truth. Ideally, it might actually lead him/her to uncover the mystery quite early in the novel, concluding that finding the culprit in Christie's work was surprisingly easy this time. They might as well predict her fate because of the foreshadowing which the connection to Elaine offers. Taking the similarities between Marina and Elaine of Astolat as written by Malory, it could also be implied Christie may have alluded to the sources of *Lady of Shalott*, and thus activate the whole intertextual chain of written works dedicated to the tale of Lancelot and the maiden.

## 5 Intertextual Relations to British Prose

The initial impulse for us to make an assumption that Christie's works might be allusive comes as soon as we look at the titles of the novels. While it contains expressions usual for titles dedicated to detective fiction, from time to time we may encounter phrases which are known to us from a certain literary field. The example of Christie's usage of allusions to prose we are going to analyse is *The Sittaford Mystery* (1931), a work the title of which reveals an indirect, less obvious reference to a well-known case of Sherlock Holmes, this idea being confirmed through incorporating several elements of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902) into the detective fiction narrative.

### 5.1 *The Sittaford Mystery*

The novel is set in winter when heavy snowfall is expected. A few hours before the murder happens, there is a séance held at the residence in a fictional village of Sittaford. The residents and their guests see it as interesting entertainment and start to supposedly communicate with a spirit named Ida. Meanwhile, Captain Trevelyan who moved to a secluded Hazelmooor house, decides to return home. At the séance, another spirits supposedly reveals Trevelyan was murdered at 5:25, which is later discovered to be true as somebody killed him by hitting his head.

The inspector in charge of the case is Narracott, but the real detective figure of the novel is not him. It is surprising that this time, Christie did not choose Poirot or not even Miss Marple, but a completely unknown young lady Emily Trefussi. She appears in Chapter 8 after the suspicion falls on her fiancé Jim Pearson. Determined to prove his innocence, she uses her natural charm as a means to get information from the people around her. Enderby, a journalist seeking for a good story, agrees to help her and disguises himself as her cousin in order for both to gain access to the Sittaford residence. We do not know much about Emily's background, but describes herself accordingly:

You see I have been on my own pretty well since I was sixteen. I have never come into contact with many women and I know very little about them, but I know a lot about men. And unless a girl can

size up a man pretty accurately, and know what she's got to deal with, she will never get on. I have got on. I work as a mannequin at Lucie's, and ... to arrive there is a Feat.<sup>48</sup>

It is the rumour that Mrs Bellington heard what helped Emily solve the mystery. Trevelyan's boots were nowhere to be found. Emily then found them hidden in a chimney. After she noticed that those were skiing boots, she searched for the skis which made the culprit, Burnaby, arrive at Hazelmoor faster and kill Trevelyan. He imitated the sounds during the séance so he would free himself from suspicion and gain more time. After losing a big amount of money, the motivation behind his actions was the desire to get the financial prize of £5000 that Trevelyan won in a competition.

## 5.2 Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and the Dartmoor legends

With respect to the intertextual relations between the two texts, in the centre of our focus is the curse of the Baskervilles. At the beginning, retired doctor Mortimer shows Sherlock and Watson an old manuscript containing the legend about a hound that is fated to kill the head of the Baskerville family. The curse was brought on them because of Hugo Baskerville's evil deeds. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Hugo kidnapped a daughter of a farmer and locked her up in the residence. The desperate maiden managed to climb down the ivy on the wall and escape. Hugo followed her on a black mare, seeking revenge. In the end, Hugo's men found both dead in the middle of the Sittaford Tor stone circles. Near Hugo, there was a giant, terrifying hound who apparently tore his neck apart. Since then, every time a Baskerville heard the howling of a hound, he died. It seems to be the same case with Charles Baskerville until Sherlock proved that it was the culprit's pet hound instructed to kill him and which later terrified him to death.

The character of Hugo Baskervilles was inspired by the evil squire Cabell of the Dartmoor legends. Similarly to Doyle's version, he lived in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and was rumoured to kill his unfaithful wife. Hounds were gathering to his grave near the Holy Trinity Church in Buckfastleigh and howled into the night. The legend says that Cabell is wandering through the moors at night, leading the pack of black hounds.

---

<sup>48</sup> Agatha Christie, *The Sittaford Mystery* (London: Harper Collins, 2002), 119-120. Kindle.

### 5.3 Intertextually Affected Setting and the Tribute to Doyle

The choice of Dartmoor as a setting for Christie's next detective novel may be seen as a clear attempt to incorporate elements of Doyle's story into her own. Since the text belongs to the same genre as its source, it is suitable to label it as intertextuality on the level of genre. Even the setting itself may be understood as an allusion indicating it was chosen by the author for a certain purpose. Because of the fact that Sherlock Holmes's position in the field of detective fiction is iconic, we may argue that *The Sittaford Mystery* was Christie's reaction to the themes that Doyle presented. It also might be her way how to honour the memory of his work, which was so significant in the development of detective fiction. Although there are no quotations of the pretext, Arthur Conan Doyle's name is directly pronounced by one of the characters. Like this, Christie acknowledges the original author and establishes the intertextual relation without committing an act of plagiarism.

To make a contrast with Sherlock Holmes, Christie's detective figure is a woman acting as an amateur detective in order to free her fiancé from suspicion. Emily is however similar to Sherlock in certain aspects as she is described as a person unable to believe anybody else's impressions than her own and she always thinks she is right. Captain Trevelyan mirrors members of the Baskerville family by his enormous wealth while it is also said that he was scared of dogs. His former residence in Sittaford is also a reference to the one owned by Baskervilles, Hazelmoor on the other hand is located in isolation from Sittaford, surrounded by the Dartmoor landscape and the dreaded moors. Readers who are fond of Sherlock Holmes can experience déjà vu when Enderby and Emily hear about the Princetown prisoner's escape. Upon hearing the news, Emily complains that they cannot reveal him to be the culprit since it took place three days after the murder was committed. Throughout the novel, the murderer Burnaby is depicted as a figure walking through the snow with a lantern. This image may allude to the legend of squire Cabell leading the hounds at night, thus serving as an indirect clue. When Trevelyan's body is discovered, the window is open and the floor is stained by boots covered with snow, similarly like there were the hound's footprints near Charles Baskerville's body. In the figurative sense, Burnaby also acts like the hound of death itself since it was him who announced Trevelyan's death at the fake séance.

Dartmoor is the exact same area where *The Hound of Baskervilles* was set in, thus the allusions that the setting makes play the role of a connector of the two texts. The author depicts mainly the places with a legendary background, such as the fictional Sittaford being in the proximity



of Sittaford Tor, and adding the element of snow to the effect of the mist. Dartmoor's rich ancient heritage dating as far as the Celtic civilization in Britain makes the area an ideal environment for supernatural events.

The séances' function in the plot is to deceive the readers that supernatural forces may in fact announced the murder beforehand. According to S. S. Van Dine's rule of detective fiction number 8, no supernatural element should ever interfere with the investigation:

8. The problem of the crime must be solved by strictly naturalistic means. Such methods for learning the truth as (...) mind-reading, spiritualistic se'ances, crystal-gazing, and the like, are taboo. A reader has a chance when matching his wits with a rationalistic detective, but if he must compete with the world of spirits and go chasing about the fourth dimension of metaphysics, he is defeated ab initio.<sup>49</sup>

But the readers know very well that the rules of detective fiction probably did not make Agatha Christie worry too much, so there still may be a possibility of her breaking the rule just for the sake of her creative freedom. Fortunately, even Christie understood such an execution would ruin the whole purpose of the narrative and did not break it, utilizing the supernatural theme as a false lead. As Emily said, they would then just have the ghost tell them who the culprit was.

---

<sup>49</sup> S. S. Van Dine, "Twenty Rules For Writing Detective Stories"(New York: Narcissus.me, 2015): 2. Kindle.

## Conclusion

Our aim in this thesis was to identify to which previously created works were the two Agatha Christie's novels, *The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side* and *The Sittaford Mystery*, tied intertextually. Interestingly, the detective figures in both novels are amateur female investigators. Christie thus emphasizes Emily's and Miss Marple's ability to solve the crime with the help of logic, empathy, psychology and the ability to read between the lines.

Drawing on the knowledge of detective fiction and its features described in the first chapter, Christie's own narrative techniques shown in the second chapter and the theory of intertextuality and allusiveness as described in the third, we arrived to a conclusion that Christie shaped the culprit in *The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side*, Marina Gregg, according to Tennyson's version of maiden Elaine in his *The Lady of Shalott*. A verse of this poem appears in the novel's title, the whole sequences from Part III are later quoted to describe Marina with whom the maiden shares a unique position in the society and an emotional personality. Their emotiveness made them commit an act against their fate, bringing the doom upon themselves as a result. The basis of Tennyson's maiden of Shalott also emphasizes how flawed Marina became. Her actions were motivated by fear instead of bravery and, compared to Elaine who managed to free herself before she died, Marina only entrapped herself even more. The analogy shows that in this case, Christie uses allusion as a means to deeply characterize Marina in the limited amount of pages a detective novel requires. On the other hand, *The Sittaford Mystery* is connected to Arthur Conan Doyle's famous detective novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles* with Sherlock Holmes as the detective figure. Apart from individual events directly alluding to the source such as the prisoner from Princetown escaping or the importance of the moment when the victim's shoe suddenly went missing, it is the fact that the plot is set in Dartmoor, which is traditionally associated with Celtic culture and magic, what creates the mysterious atmosphere in the novel. Together with the element of spiritism, Christie uses the setting to play with the readers' calculations as to whether some kind of supernatural forces were actually involved or not. Caught up in the mood and Sherlock Holmes nostalgia, the readers are easily deceived as the most important clues seem compared to the detailed depictions of Sittaford Tor as short, forgettable remarks.

## Resumé

Téma, kterým se tato bakalářská práce zabývá, je uplatnění teorie intertextuality na textech a titulech vybraných děl britské autorky Agathy Christie. Přestože se svou podstatou detektivní romány běžně zaměřují spíše na naraci a řešení případu než na intertextuální vztahy k jiným literárním dílům, v dílech Christie se kromě těchto důležitých aspektů detektivní tvorby často objevují reference na texty, které již v minulosti vyšly. Cílem této práce je tedy prokázat, že Agatha Christie aluze vědomě využívá jako nástroje ke konstrukci děje, každé z nich přisuzuje nějakou funkci a nenápadně jimi poskytuje čtenářům stopy k odhalení zločinu. Součástí analýzy je odhalit aluze jak v titulu, tak i v románu samotném, určit, které dílo je jeho pretext, a za využití základních pojmů vysvětlených v prvních třech kapitolách zanalyzovat, jak se v návaznosti na jiná díla mění či prohlubuje význam témat prezentovaných v románech Agathy Christie. Jelikož ideální cílovou skupinu čtenářů této autorky představují samotní Britové, nalezneme v jejich románech největší množství aluzí právě na britskou literaturu. Z tohoto důvodu mají dva analyzované romány, *Prasklé zrcadlo* (1962) a *Sittaforfská záhada* (1931), představovat příklady aluzí na britskou poezii a na britskou prózu. Při analýze samotné je použita terminologie Gerarda Genetta, a to především pojmy aluze, citace a plagiátorství.

Teoretická část práce se skládá z kapitoly věnované definici detektivek a jejich hlavních znaků, seznámení s autorčíným postojem k literatuře a technikami, které při psaní detektivek používá, a v neposlední řadě též ze sekce o teorii intertextuality a terminologii, s níž se v průběhu literární analýzy pracuje.

Poslední dvě kapitoly již slouží k analýze dvou již zmiňovaných děl. V té čtvrté vycházejí najevo těsné vazby mezi *Prasklým zrcadlem* a *Paní ze Šalotu*, básní napsanou Alfredem Tennysonem, jejíž inspirací byl Malorym zaznamenaný příběh panny Elainy z artušovských legend. Aluze směřují především ke třetí části básně, kdy na sebe paní ze Šalotu svým rozhodnutím přivede zkázu, která jí byla předpovězena. Christie použila tuto premisu nejen jako základ dějové linie, ale především přirovnáváním k Elaině vykreslila charakter postavy Mariny Greggové, na což by v rámci běžného rozsahu detektivního románu neměla prostor. *Sittaforfská záhada* se naproti tomu otevřeně hlásí k odkazu Arthura Conana Doylea a *Psa baskervilského*, konkrétně zejména prostředím anglického Dartmooru známého jako místo s bohatou keltskou historií a záhadnou atmosférou. Výběrem tohoto tématu mohla Christie mít v úmyslu vyjádřit respekt staršímu autorovi detektivních příběhů. Častými popisy tajuplných míst v okolí a motivem (falešného) spiritismu se také snaží čtenáře zmást a znejistit.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

Christie, Agatha. *The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side*. London: Harper Collins, 2002. Kindle.

Christie, Agatha. *The Sittaford Mystery*. London: Harper Collins, 2002. Kindle.

Conan Doyle, Arthur. *The Hound of Baskervilles*. London: Penguin English, 1981.

Malory, Thomas. *Le Morte d'Arthur*. Urbana, Illinois: Project Gutenberg, 2014. <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/46853>.

Tennyson, Alfred. *The Poems of Tennyson*, Edited by Christopher Ricks. London: Longmans, 1969.

### Secondary Sources

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/>

Baldick, Chris. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Barthes, Roland. *Image, Music, Text*. London: Fontana Press, 1977. Kindle.

Childs, Peter and Roger Fowler. *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms*. New York: Routledge, 1987.

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

Collins, John Joseph. *Daniel: a commentary on the Book of Daniel*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993.

Dillard, Raymond B. et Longman III., Tremper. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. Translated by Vilém Schneeberger, Pavel Jartim and Pavel Štička as *Úvod do Starého Zákona* (Praha: Návrat domů, 2003).

Graham, Allen. *Intertextuality*. New York: Routledge, 2000. Kindle.

Irwin, William. "What is an Allusion?" *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 59, no. 3 (Summer 2001): 287-297. <http://jstor.org/stable/432325>.

James, P. D. *Talking about Detective Fiction*. London: Faber and Faber, 2009. Translated by Petra Diestlerová as *Povídání o detektivkách* (Praha: Motto, 2011).

Lucas, Ernest. *Daniel*. Leicester, England: Apollos, 2002.

Martínez Alfaro, Maria Jesús. "Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept." *Atlantis* 18, no. 1/2 (Junio-Diciembre 1996), 268-285. <http://jstor.org/stable/41054827>.

Pond, Louise. "Notes on Tennyson's Lancelot and Elaine." *Modern Language Notes* 19, no.2 (February 1904): 50-51. <http://jstor.org/stable/2917476>.

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.

Ott, Brian and Cameron Walter. "Intertextuality: Interpretive Practice and Textual Strategy." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 17, no. 4 (December 2000): 429-446.

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

Stevenson, Lionel. "The 'High-Born Maiden' Symbol in Tennyson." *PMLA* 63, no. 1 (March 1948): 234-243. <http://jstor.org/stable/459415>.

Steward, Victoria. "Spiritualism, detective fiction, and the aftermath of war." *Clues* 27, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 75-84. <https://literature.proquest.com>.

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

Škvorecký, Josef. *Nápady čtenáře detektivek*. [Reading Detective Stories] Praha: Československý spisovatel, 1965.

Van Dine, S.S. *Twenty Rules For Writing Detective Stories*. New York: Narcissus.me, 2015. Kindle.

## **Annotation**

Author: Marie Voždová

Faculty: Philosophical Faculty of Palacký University in Olomouc

Department: Department of English and American Studies

Title of the Diploma Thesis: Intertextuality in the Selected Works of Agatha Christie

Supervisor: Mgr. Pavlína Flajšarová, PhD.

Number of Pages: 38

Number of appendixes: CD

Key words: British literature, Agatha Christie, Alfred Tennyson, Thomas Malory, Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side*, *The Sittaford Mystery*, *The Lady of Shalott*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, detective fiction, intertextuality, allusion, Dartmoor

In order to make her novels more complex, Agatha Christie intentionally used allusions in their titles or other parts of the text. The aim of this thesis is to analyse the intertextual relations of her two novels, *Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side* (1962) and *The Sittaford Mystery* (1931), to their sources in British poetry and prose, and to conclude how did intertextuality affect the novels in terms of plot, characterization and setting.

## **Anotace**

Autor: Marie Voždová

Fakulta: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Palackého v Olomouci

Katedra: Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Název bakalářské práce: Intertextualita ve vybraných dílech Agathy Christie

Vedoucí: Mgr. Pavlína Flajšarová, PhD.

Počet stran: 38

Počet příloh: CD

Klíčová slova: britská literatura, Agatha Christie, Alfred Tennyson, Thomas Malory, Arthur Conan Doyle, *Prasklé zrcadlo*, *Sittafordská záhada*, *Paní ze Šalotu*, *Pes baskervilský*, detektivní román, intertextualita, aluze, Dartmoor

Agatha Christie v titulech svých detektivních románů a jejich dalších částech záměrně používala aluze. Cílem této bakalářské práce je zanalyzovat, jaké jsou intertextuální spojitosti mezi detektivkami *Prasklé zrcadlo* a *Sittafordská záhada*, které napsala, a jejich zdroji v britské próze a poezii. Soustředí se na jejich vliv na děj, charakterizaci a prostředí těchto románů.