

UNDERSTANDING OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS

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The purpose of the article is to examine the extent to which the novel *Murder on the Orient express* by A. Christy confirms the hypothesis that in the XXI century the crime novel has become a platform suitable for the examination of national identity and the nature of violence in given social surroundings.

The implementation of this goal involves the **task:**

- 1) to explore the national origin in the sense of stereotypical traits supposedly belonging to certain nationalities in *Murder on the Orient Express*
- 2) to reveal A. Christie's critique of such narrow nationalist thinking.

The theoretical basis of the study were the following works by S. Henstra, M. Popova, L. Tsapenko which demonstrate the detecting as a more democratic national identity, illustrating a greater shift away from the detective genius as the prescriber of national values towards a greater recognition of cross-national connection.

Conclusions and prospects for further research. All the performances, which themselves rely on stereotypes based on national origin, show how the belief in the truth of such stereotypes can blind people, including criminal investigators, to the truth of individual identity. The theme of national identity and international connections can be traced in modern television adaptations of *Murder on the Orient express*.

Came from an affluent background in England, Agatha Christy wrote most of her novels about and in England, almost intentionally stressing how people

within certain statuses dealt with outsiders, in terms of class, race, and gender. But *Murder on the Orient Express* isn't a typical Christie's mystery. Published in January 1934, the Queen of Crime pulled parts of her story straight from the headlines, moving outside the culture in which it was produced, and highlighting author's willingness to engage with the world beyond the England with which she and her work have become so intimately aligned [3].

The Orient Express in Agatha Christie's novel was a transcontinental railroad (it's greatly visible method of stylishly crossing borders began in 1876) that knit together the passengers from various countries across Europe [3]. In addition, all of the characters have spent time in America, where Ratchett's original crime of murdering Daisy Armstrong took place [4, p. 30]. When Mr. Ratchett is murdered, some of the investigators initially see national origin (stereotypical traits supposedly belonging to certain nationalities) as a likely explanation for the crime. However, as the true nature of the murder was an elaborate conspiracy among many people to take revenge on an amoral gangster. Thus the novel reveals a critique of such narrow nationalist thinking [4, p. 44].

By attributing guilt to every passenger, *"such an assembly was ever likely to be collected under any other conditions ... an Italian chauffeur, an English governess, a Swedish nurse, a German lady's-maid, and so on"*[1], Agatha Christie ends up telling an unexpectedly utopian story about people of many different nations working together. *"All around us are people, of all classes, of all nationalities, of all ages. For three days these people, these strangers to one another, are brought together"* [1].

How else could all these random people on the train at the same time and witnesses to a mastermind murder. The novel serves as Christie's commentary on America, its diversity, and its troubled idea of justice [2]. If the actual American justice system couldn't ensure that justice be served for the murder of a child, why not take matters into their own hands? The people on the train are, in essence, the jury of peers on which American justice theoretically relies – a justice that the criminal system can rarely be trusted to provide [3].

It is no accident that the man who solves the crime, Hercule Poirot, exists outside of this network of national identities and prejudices . Poirot is from Belgium, a European country distinguished by its neutrality in many of Europe's conflicts [4, p. 65]. And, beyond that, his outlook determinedly international. When asked about his identity, Poirot retorts : *"I am not a Jugo-Slavian detective, Madame. I am an international detective. I belong to the world, Madame"* [1], unwilling to be defined even by his native Belgium. This outlook allows him to more effectively pursue his investigation. *"I saw a perfect mosaic"* [1], says detective Hercule Poirot, discussing the passengers (and suspects). The implication is that, on this train, he can see America.

By locating the source of their connection in the United States (*"Only in America there might be a household composed of just such varied nationalities"* [1]), Agatha Christie suggests that America is a place that falsifies the common purpose, particularly among people divided by ethnicity, class, and language [4, p. 77]. This, in turn, takes to pieces the idea that national origin is destiny in a way true to American ideals, if not practice. English, as the *"melting pot"* language of America, serves as the medium for cross-national connection that both Poirot and the passengers share [5].

In this regard, the American title, *Murder on the Calais Coach*, is significant. The reference to the train's destination – Calais, a city noted for its proximity to England – points the way in which the novel falls short of being English. Agatha Christie attacks the primacy of national identity by presenting theories about the case based on national origin, only to expose them as limited or irrelevant.

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