

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Agatha Christie was and is still famous for her mystery and thriller novels until today. She is the best-selling fiction author of all time in the Guinness Book of Records (Geoghegan). Moreover, her books have been sold more than two billion copies around the world. These facts make her the most widely read novelist in history (Acocella). Agatha Christie's contribution in the world of literature has spanned more than 50 years. She wrote 80 novels and short story collections. She also wrote a dozen plays including *The Mousetrap*, which is now the longest continuously running play in theatrical history ("Agatha Christie"). All these facts are proofs that make her works worth reading. Another thing that makes Agatha Christie's books worth reading and interesting is her style of writing. "Christie's ability to combine period-specific subject matter with creative plot structures, psychology, and careful story development, cements her place in the canon of English popular literature" (Hepburn).

The novel that I choose to analyze in my thesis is one of the best works of Agatha Christie, entitled *And Then There Were None*. The novel was originally named *Ten Little Niggers* in 1939, but subsequently renamed *Ten Little Indians* as the island described in the novel is also being renamed Indian island. The title was later being changed again into *And Then There Were None* because the American publishers rejected the previous title.

The novel tells a story about ten people who come to an island and get killed one by one, which creates a building tension during the course of the story. Christie has stated in her autobiography that this novel is “a better piece of craftsmanship than anything else I have written” (“Ten Little Niggers, Ten Little Indians, And Then There Were None”). She also stated that she wrote the novel after tremendous amount of planning. She wanted the ten people to die without the murders becoming ridiculous or being obvious. She said that this novel really pleased her because “It was clear, straightforward, baffling, and yet had a perfectly reasonable explanation; in fact, it had to have an epilogue in order to explain it. It was well received and reviewed ...” (“Ten Little Niggers, Ten Little Indians, And Then There Were None”). All her statements above make the novel more interesting and worth analyzing.

Since this novel is a murder mystery novel, the story depends largely on the plot. That is why I choose to analyze the elements of plot in this novel by using formalism. There are three elements in plot, namely *suspense*, *surprise* and *artistic unity*. *Suspense* is the quality in the story that makes the readers ask “What’s going to happen next?” or “How will this turn out?” and impels them to read on to find the answers of these questions (Perrine 45). The second element of

plot is *surprise*, which is “proportional to the unexpectedness of what happens; it becomes pronounced when the story departs radically from our expectation.” (Perrine 47). The last element is the *artistic unity* which can be achieved when the events in the novels are “placed in the most effective order, which is not necessarily the chronological order, and, when rearranged in chronological order, should make a logical progression” (Perrine 49). The story can be called plausible and has a good artistic unity when the readers feel that “the plot has a quality of inevitability, given a certain set of characters and an initial situation” (Perrine 49).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1. What are the suspenses in the novel?
2. What are the surprises in the novel?
3. How is the artistic unity achieved in the novel?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purposes of the study are

1. to show the suspenses in the novel;
2. to show the surprises in the novel;
3. to show how the artistic unity is presented in the novel.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

I used library research in writing my thesis. First, I read Agatha Christie’s *And Then There Were None* as a primary text. Then I searched for some information from the Internet to support my analysis of the elements of plot in the novel. In the end, I draw some conclusions.

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

The thesis is organized into three chapters, which are preceded by the Table of Contents and the Abstract. Chapter One contains the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two contains the analysis of the elements of plot in Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None*. Chapter Three is the Conclusion. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendixes, which consist of the Synopsis of the Novel and the Biography of the Author.