

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Crime fiction is “a genre that deals with detection of crimes, criminals, and their motives” (“Crime Fiction – Sub-Genres”). There are several sub-genres of crime fiction and one of them is called classic whodunit. Classic whodunit is a sub-genre that involves a crime—usually a mysterious death—that has to be solved by the detective in the story and the readers using provided clues (“Crime Fiction – Sub-Genres”). One of the acknowledged crime fiction authors who often writes classic whodunit is Agatha Christie.

Agatha Christie is a 20th century famous crime fiction writer with many extraordinary works and achievements. She has written more than 70 detective novels, 14 short stories, and various plays under her pen name. She also has written romance novels under her pseudonym, Mary Westmacott. In fact, she is so famous as a crime fiction author that she is known as “Queen of Crime” and “Queen of Mystery”. Christie’s works always become best-selling books. They have sold more than 2 billion copies worldwide which makes Christie one of the top-selling authors in history. Some of her famous works are *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926), *The Mystery of Blue Train* (1928), *Murder of the Vicarage* (1930), *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934), and many

more. Her works have also been adapted into films such as *Murder on the Orient Express* (2017) and *Death on the Nile* (2020) (Biography.com Editors).

Judging from the fact that Christie's works have always become best-selling books and they have been praised as excellent many times, it can be assumed that her books have a great writing quality. For that reason, I have chosen one of her books to be analyzed for my thesis. The book that I am going to analyze is *The Body in the Library* (1942). *The Body in the Library* is a crime fiction novel that tells about the murder of an unknown young woman at Gossington Hall, the residence of the honorable Bantroy's family. With the aid of the police and Miss Marple, one of Christie's famous detective characters, they help the Bantroy's family to solve the case. According to a proclaimed Agatha Christie expert, *The Body in the Library* is one of the top five Miss Marple novels (Chan). Aside from the interesting story, Maurice Willson Disher, a critic, says that in this book "professional detectives are no match for elderly spinsters... it is hard not to be impressed" (249). Disher's claim indicates that Miss Marple and the other elderly female characters in the novel give a unique addition to the story and create quite an impression on the readers reading the story. Therefore, *The Body in the Library* has an interesting plot and the characters are worth to be analyzed.

In my thesis, I am going to analyze the suspense and surprise along with the artistic unity of *The Body in the Library*. Suspense is "the quality of a story that makes the readers ask 'what is going to happen next?' or 'how will this turn out?'" and impels him to read on to find the answers to these questions" (Perrine 45). While surprise is "proportional to the unexpectedness of what happens; it becomes pronounced when the story departs radically from our expectations" (47). The suspense and surprise will influence the artistic unity of the novel. Artistic unity is "condition of a successful literary

work whereby all its elements work together for the achievement of its central purpose” (“Artistic Unity”).

The literary approach that I will use to analyze the novel is formalism. Formalism is defined as “an interpretive approach that emphasizes literary form and the study of literary devices within the text” (Brewton). Formalism is used because the data in the novel is enough to be analyzed without external sources.

Statement of the Problem

The problems that are going to be discussed are:

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

Purpose of the Study

Based on the problems above, the purposes of analyzing the work 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 use library research as the method of research. First, I read Agatha Christie’s *The Body in the Library* as the primary text. Then I search and take some references from the internet sites to support my analysis of the element of plot in the novel. After that, I

analyze the surprise, suspense, and artistic unity in the novel. Last, I draw some conclusions from the discussion.

Organization of Thesis

This thesis consists of three chapters. Chapter One is the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is the Analysis of Elements of Plot in this novel. Chapter Three is the Conclusion from the analysis. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and Appendices that consists of Synopsis of *The Body in the Library* and Biography of Agatha Christie.

