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The “Whydunit” in Agatha Christie’s *A Pocket Full of Rye*

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Abstract

Crime fiction is a very popular genre that is worthy of exploration and analysis. It dates as far back as the earliest crime fiction of Thomas Skinner Sturr’s anonymous *Richmond* in 1827, up to the present. In fact, twenty-first century statistics show that the most sold novels are detective fiction. Accordingly, the present study proposes to examine a novel by the queen of crime fiction, Agatha Christie (1890-1976). Her influence on the golden age of the crime mystery is highly considered due to her innovative creativity and improvement of the classic whodunit stories. Christie has developed the whodunit genre through her stunning plots in which she had made it possible for anyone to commit a crime; a sweet son or daughter, a dear husband, and even a gentle-looking grandmother. Christie breached the conventional rules of the genre by introducing puzzle-like plots. Her intricate plots deserve serious recognition. One of her most famous whodunit novels is *A Pocket Full of Rye* (1953). This mystery fiction is saliently known for its nursery rhyme crime in which a murderer follows in his crime a popular and traditional song. Henceforth, the psychological consciousness of the culprit and the hidden motives behind his serial crimes need to be deeply analyzed. On that account, this non-thesis proposes to look at the “Whydunit” rather than the by now exhausted “Whodunit.” Consequently, using the psychological approach to literature, this study investigates the “why” of the murders committed rather than the “who.” The intention of this study is to mark a revival of interest in this now-forgotten writer.

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