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Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

V literatuře se vlaky objevují nejen jako pouhé dopravní prostředky, ale mohou se stát dějištěm příběhu, mohou rovněž symbolizovat mobilitu, setkávání a loučení, modernitu, vrchol průmyslové revoluce, zdroj znečištění krajiny i místo smrti. Závěrečná bakalářská práce se zaměří na role vlaků ve vybraných dílech britské prózy, konkrétně v tvorbě Agathy Christie a V. L. Whitechurchea a bude je konfrontovat s parodickým přístupem Svěrákova a Smoljakova díla Vražda v salonním coupé.

V úvodu práce studentka velice stručně nastíní historii britské železnice, především s ohledem na její sociální a kulturní dopad. Dále uvede zvolené autory a zasadí jejich tvorbu do literárního a kulturního kontextu. Svůj výběr děl zdůvodní. Dále bude krátce definovat žánr detektivky a vysvětlí pojem parodie.

Jádrum práce bude analýza vybraných děl, v níž se studentka soustředí především na funkce vlaku v daných dílech. Zaměří se rovněž na literární prostředky, které zvolení autoři/autorky používají. Své vývody bude vhodně ilustrovat primárními texty a konzultovat se sekundárními zdroji. Závěrem své analýzy přehledně shrne a zhodnotí, nakolik se určité motivy, funkce či symbolika spojené s vlaky v dílech shodují či liší, a porovná přístup "vážený" a parodický. Pokusí se vyslovit obecnější závěry o roli vlaku v literatuře.

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Annotation

The work deals with the roles of the trains and railways in literature, namely in crime fiction and parody narratives by Agatha Christie, Victor L. Whitechurch and Jára Cimrman. The development of British railways in the 19th century is outlined regarding the social and cultural impacts on the society. The time period and literary context of the selected authors are described taking the publication dates of the works into consideration, and literary devices used by the authors to depict trains, mystery plots and parody are described.

Key words

trains, railways, crime, fiction, parody, Christie

Název

Vlaky v literatuře

Anotace

Práce se zabývá rolemi vlaků v literatuře, konkrétně v detektivních příbězích a parodii autorů Agathy Christie, Victora L. Whitechurche a Járy Cimrmana. Nastiňuje vývoj britské železnice v devatenáctém století s ohledem především na sociální a kulturní dopady na společnost. Vybraní autoři jsou zasazeni do dobového a literárního kontextu s ohledem na dobu vzniku jejich děl, také jsou popsány jazykové prostředky, které autoři využili pro popis vlaků, detektivních zápletek a parodie.

Klíčová slova

vlaky, železnice, detektivky, fikce, parodie, Christie

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Introduction

And yet – it lends itself to romance, my friend. 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. They sleep and eat under one roof, they cannot get away from each other. At the end of three days they part, they go their several ways, never, perhaps, to see each other again.¹

These are the words of M. Bouc, a character from the *Murder on the Orient Express* by Agatha Christie, expressing the love for trains and highlighting the aspects of this means of transport which impart the magic and nowadays certain nostalgia to railways, namely the mixture of different people with different backgrounds and lives brought together and all the possible situations and relationships that may arise.

The main aim of this work is to introduce chosen literary works featuring trains in order to compare and analyse them while trying to interpret all the possible roles of the trains apart from being one of the convenient means of transport. The expected outcome is to find supporting evidence for a claim that trains are always something more than simple conveyance and therefore more important for human lives than ordinary objects enabling transportation without any added value in the form of situations, feelings and opportunities experienced by the travellers.

Simultaneously, the paper will compare detective aspects of a narrative by the popular writer Agatha Christie to work by Victor L. Whitechurch and to a parody by Jára Cimrman in which the parodic aspects prevail over the roles of the train. Possibly, this thesis will manage to partially reveal the reasons behind a scarce success of Whitechurch and an immense success of Christie, whose works are so famous that they can be fruitfully parodied. The last chapter of the work is devoted to the literary devices that the authors implemented in their works.

All necessary translations from the Czech sources were done by me. The story *Vražda v salonním coupé* appears in this paper as *Murder in the Parlour Car Compartment* to maintain the integrity of the English text. Furthermore, for this paper is not focused on translations, all extracts from this play were translated into English, excluding only the parts in Hungarian that were used to demonstrate several points, without further Czech language analysis.

¹ Agatha Christie, *Murder on the Orient Express* (Glasgow: Collins, 1974), 21.

1 History and Development of Trains and Railways in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The impact of railways on humanity was undoubtedly eminent. Henry T. Buckle believed that locomotive had contributed to bringing people together more than philosophers, prophets and poets since the creation of the Earth.² However bold this statement might seem, he was not the only one promoting the immense importance of railway for Matthew Engel insists that “The construction of the London & Birmingham line was one of the great adventures of the nineteenth century.”³ Engel also reminds the words of Peter Lecount who called the structure “the greatest public work ever executed.”⁴

Firstly, it needs to be emphasized that the need for transportation of heavy objects had been present in human history from everlasting, for example as far back as in Ancient Egypt as substantiated by Roman historian Plinius who describes Egyptian stone tracks.⁵

Secondly, when speaking of British railways, it should be notified that railway and wagon history in Britain dates back to not less than the sixteenth century when it was used in coal mines.⁶ Nevertheless, Esveld emphasises that they required man or horse power and only several centuries later the invention of the steam engine enabled the inception of the first locomotives constructed by Richard Trevithick in 1804.⁷

Thirdly, as the world was evolving, the pace of life accelerating and human needs broadening, the progress in technologies inevitably brought a point when there emerged a social need for new, fast and efficient transportation. As the steam engine caused a revolution in production, subsequently rose the demands on transportation of the goods. At this point the fact that the need was most noticeable in England should be highlighted, because, for instance, the manufacturers in Manchester needed to convey 1 000 tons of goods per day to the Port of Liverpool, but the maritime transport was obsolete and the horsepower was no longer sufficient.⁸

² Jaroslav Pacovský, *Lidé, vlaky, koleje* (Praha: Panorama, 1982), 3.

³ Matthew Engel, *Eleven Minutes Late: A Train Journey to the Soul of Britain* (London: Macmillan, 2009), “The Great Wall of China? A Doodle!,”

<https://books.google.cz/books?id=Frz3eiwUYZwC&pg=PT204&dq=eleven+minutes+late&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj1xdXjzfb0AhXRy6QKHUmuAdoQ6AEIKDAA#v=onepage&q=eleven%20minutes%20late&f=false>.

⁴ Engel, *Eleven Minutes Late*, “The Great Wall of China? A Doodle!.”

⁵ Pacovský, *Lidé, vlaky, koleje*, 7.

⁶ Christian Wolmar, *Fire and Steam: A New History of the Railways in Britain* (London: Atlantic Books, 2007), “Why Railways?,” https://books.google.cz/books?id=4xkAIW_4ydAC&hl=cs.

⁷ Coenrad Esveld, *Modern Railway Track* (Zaltbommel: MRT-Productions, 2001), “Historic development.”

⁸ Pacovský, *Lidé, vlaky, koleje*, 23.

Subsequently, the first railroad in Great Britain suitable for steam locomotives was opened in 1825. The Stockton Darlington line again served for conveying minerals to ships and used locomotives built by George Stevenson, renowned as Father of Railways. First passengers had to wait 5 years for carriers designed for transportation of people, the Liverpool and Manchester Railway opened in 1830 and it became the first modern railroad. The greatest extent of the system was recorded in 1914.⁹ There was no unequivocal golden age of British railways, nonetheless, the peak of prosperity and foreign investments before the year 1914 was never overcome.¹⁰

However, the introduction of railway to Britain was not in the least easy, several concerns about the railway effects on British way of life arose and as it follows from the discussion in the British Parliament in 1823, they feared the most that the locomotive would disturb the grazing herds of cows, effect the hens laying eggs or that villages near the track would burn down, birds would not be able to live in the air poisoned by the locomotives, pheasant and fox breeding would be thwarted and horses would become worthless or that owners of inns would become poor. Moreover, travelling by trains would be immensely dangerous because locomotives explode, and the travellers would be torn to pieces.¹¹ In 1825, there was even a struggle to establish the railway transportation between Liverpool and Manchester. Initially, it was declined after two days of discussions in the Parliament, and it was authorized only after second discussion and therefore perceptibly delayed.¹²

Next, the swift expansion of railway lines and companies was the most sensational aspect of the time.¹³ Apart from the positive influence it had had on human lives, being it convenience or reliability, there appeared also critics of the rapid growth. Among others, Charles Dickens voiced concerns about financial outcomes of the undirected development with no government supervision.¹⁴ The economic aspect was debated by Wolmar as well who stressed also the requirement of capital for the primal construction and, moreover, the intervention into the possessions of landowners whose estates were crucial for the railway system.¹⁵

⁹ "British Railways," Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed April 17, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/British-Railways>.

¹⁰ Judith M. Brown, and Wm. Roger Louis, *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume IV. The Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 97.

¹¹ Pacovský, *Lidé, vlaky, koleje*, 3.

¹² Pacovský, *Lidé, vlaky, koleje*, 25.

¹³ Derek H. Aldcroft, *British Railways in Transition: The Economic Problems of Britain's Railways Since 1914* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1968), 4.

¹⁴ Wolmar, *Fire and Steam*, "The Agatha Christie Railway."

¹⁵ Wolmar, *Fire and Steam*, "The First Railway."

Despite the negative attitudes and fears that have accompanied the railways in Britain since the outset, the positive contributions and benefits outweighed the shortcomings. For overcoming the natural and understandable fears of the speed, the safety records and statistics were crucial and in spite of the imperfections, people learned to rely on trains which enabled them to move around the country freely in a new and more convenient way.¹⁶ After all, today we perceive trains as an ordinary means of transport which is convenient for its reliability, speed and also capacity.

Not surprisingly, the first British monarch to travel by train was Queen Victoria and since then there have been a tradition of British Royal Train. As the beginnings of passenger-carrying trains were rather dangerous, the Queen's journey from Slough in Berkshire to Paddington in London took place as late as 1842. The quality of the locomotives and carriages had significantly improved by then and the Queen herself described the journey in her diary as follows: "in fact, it was delightful and so quick."¹⁷ Apart from royalty also rich people soon grew fond of railway transportation and used private carriages for journeys into the country.¹⁸

Even though only the future will show which event or invention was the crucial for humanity in long-term perspective, it can be said with certainty that railways and trains will always be among the occurrences of significant importance. This claim can be supported by the facts that railways changed the appearance of the world and influenced the lives of individuals as well as states in general, examples of the impact being the wealth some people gained thanks to railways and, on the contrary, those who became poor as a consequence of the railway system, further, new words or laws that were invented or even the new pace of life and the interconnection of the world which had been so tight.¹⁹

Finally, this outline of the history of British railways and trains can be summarized by presenting the words of Coenraad Esveld who concluded the impact of railways as follows: "The railways formed an enormous stimulus to the political, economical and social development in the nineteenth century."²⁰

¹⁶ Wolmar, *Fire and Steam*, "Getting the Railway Habit."

¹⁷ "Queen celebrates the 175th Anniversary of the first Royal train journey," The Royal Family, last modified June 12, 2017, <https://www.royal.uk/queen-celebrates-175th-anniversary-first-royal-train-journey?fbclid=IwAR18zsiGY66EKPHwWBxD9jYsCrrXZDnrtRYQ79mbukRBQvobg6x95GE8DLk>.

¹⁸ Wolmar, *Fire and Steam*, "Changing Britain."

¹⁹ Pacovský, *Lidé, vlaky, koleje*, 213.

²⁰ Esveld, *Modern Railway Track*, "Historic development."

2 History and Development of Detective Stories

Crime fiction, in other words detective stories, begins with Edgar Allan Poe in the first half of the 19th century. Poe set the formula of an extremely clever and eccentric detective who is often an amateur. The detective is accompanied by an assistant who provides explanations to the common reader. Together they deal with dull or uncooperative police and wrongly accused suspect through the use of logic, detection, science and psychological insight. Poe's stories, *The Murder in the Rue Morgue*, *The Purloined Letter*, *The Mystery of Mary Rogers*, feature an amateur detective C. Auguste Dupin and his friend, the narrator of the story, remains anonymous. *The Murder in the Rue Morgue* is widely accepted as the first work of the detective fiction genre. The cases are constructed as puzzles and solved using the techniques of deduction or induction.²¹ Auguste Dupin is presented as a genius mystery solver and the winner of the play-like plot when he deciphers the clues and hints.²²

Poe decided to set his story in France as first police forces were established there. Ironically, the forces were established by a former criminal Eugène-François Vidocq who is now considered a founder of many disciplines of modern criminology. Hence, France had its police force and detective agencies already at the beginning of the 19th century while British citizens had to wait until 1842 when Scotland Yard was founded. After it was moved from the original premises in Whitehall, its official name has been the New Scotland Yard.²³

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The typical features of the genre were soon adopted by the British writers, in the works, there can always be identified an unsolvable mystery, wrongly accused suspect, inept police force, the ingenious detective and, finally, the surprising unravelling.²⁵ The plots were placed in various settings following among others the Gothic tradition introduced by Poe, for example Victorian mansions, rural villages, mysterious coasts with dangerous cliffs or even the British railway network.²⁶

²¹ Darlene Harbour Unrue, "Edgar Allan Poe: The Romantic as Classicist," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 1, no. 4 (Spring 1995): 117.

²² Shawn Rosenheim, "'The King of 'Secret Readers'': Edgar Poe, Cryptography, and the Origins of the Detective Story," *ELH* 56, no. 2 (Summer 1989): 387.

²³ John Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 17.

²⁴ "Detective story," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed April 17, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/art/detective-story-narrative-genre>.

²⁵ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "Detective story."

²⁶ Douglas R. McManis, "Places for Mysteries," *Geographical Review* 68, no. 3 (July 1978): 319.

Traditional, literature had been dominated by men and the detective stories were not and exception,²⁷ however, there can be found women writing detective fiction long before the 20th century, for instance Caroline Clive or Cathrine Crowe.²⁸

Gradually, the crime fiction joined genres such as romance, fantasy or science fiction in the classification of popular literature as the main aim of the stories was to entertain readers across all the social classes. Only a few authors elevated popular genres to higher literary level: H.G. Wells, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Raymond Chandler or Jules Verne. Among them also Agatha Christie, who has remained a bestselling author up to the present.

²⁹

Edgar Allan Poe was the founder of the genre but the author who popularized the stories was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and his detective Sherlock Holmes.³⁰

While there has never been a period of significant prosperity and rise of the British railways,³¹ the Golden Age when detective fiction flourished is widely known term with authorities usually placing the era between 1920s and 1930s, starting with the story by Christie *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*.³² During these years the genre was represented mainly by two influential women Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers.³³

In 1930, G. K. Chesterton together with several authors founded the Detection Club whose members had to take the Detection Club Oath and swear to follow the rules of detective stories called “10 Commandments of Detective Fiction” by a Catholic priest and writer Ronald Knox.³⁴ The authors committed mainly to carefully structured plots so that the readers could follow the hints and utilizing the help of providence, divine revelation or intuition.^{35, 36}

After the World War II, the crime fiction in Britain lost its naivety and the characters and plots ceased to appear in exclusively aristocratic environment.³⁷

²⁷ Kate Watson, *Women Writing Crime Fiction, 1860-1880: Fourteen American, British and Australian Authors* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co, 2012), 16.

²⁸ Watson, *Women Writing Crime Fiction*, 20–21.

²⁹ “Popular art,” Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed April 18, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/art/popular-art#ref236490>.

³⁰ Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 19-20.

³¹ Wolmar, *Fire and Steam*, “Speeding to Danger.”

³² Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 145.

³³ Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 26.

³⁴ Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* 27.

³⁵ J. C. Bernthal, *Queering Agatha Christie: Revisiting the Golden Age of Detective Fiction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 4.

³⁶ J. Madison Davis, “Playing by the rules,” *World Literature Today* 89, no. 3-4 (May/August 2015): 30.

³⁷ Scaggs, *Crime fiction*, 31.

3 The Cultural and Literary Context of 19th and 20th Century in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The history of Great Britain and the cultural and literary context of the analysed works is presented in the following chapter. As indicated, this work focuses on works by three different authors living in overlapping yet too vast time periods, therefore this chapter of the theoretical part concentrates solely on the Victorian period and first half of the twentieth century with overlays to the second half of the century.

First of all, the reason for focusing primarily on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is the fact that Agatha Christie, whose work is the most analysed work of this paper, lived almost entirely in the twentieth century, however, she was raised and educated under the persisting influence of the nineteenth century.³⁸ Furthermore, Victor L. Whitechurch was born in 1868, also on that account the whole Victorian period implemented, even though his work, the *Thrilling Stories of the Railway*, was not published until 1912,³⁹ which brings them closer to the publishing of the *Murder on the Orient Express* that was introduced in 1934.⁴⁰

The nineteenth century is mainly associated with the reign of Queen Victoria whose name the period from 1820s bears, the Victorian era, even though the Queen died in 1901 and thus symbolically ended the century, the era is usually defined up to 1914, the outbreak of the World War I. The characteristic of the period is growth, in the class-based society grew the numbers of people who could vote, economy was on the rise and the British empire was the most powerful in the world.⁴¹

Britain has always had rich culture and the Victorian period was not an exception. Had not it been for the stability of the government and wealth, it would not be capable of expanding its territories, granting more rights to its citizens or undergoing industrialization of such a degree. Victorian Britain and the ensuing period prove that only a powerful nation which is not afraid of advancements of different kinds can control large empire.⁴²

Further, despite the loosening of certain aspects of lives, the core Victorian values and principles were still strong roles of gender and class hierarchy. The ideal family at that

³⁸ Gwen Robins, *The Mystery of Agatha Christie* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1978), 19.

³⁹ Victor L. Whitechurch, *Thrilling Stories of the Railway* (London: Routledge, 1977), no pagination, <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks13/1300071h.html>.

⁴⁰ Robins, *The Mystery of Agatha Christie*, 229.

⁴¹“Victorian era,” Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed April 18, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Victorian-era>.

⁴² Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Victorian era.”

time involved a woman that would take care of the household and raise children while man was responsible for earning money and he was the one expected to discuss serious topics, such as politics.⁴³

Even though the empire was large and absorbed influences from the colonies, the inhabitants on the British Isles were mainly Christians dominated by the Church of England with the monarch as the nominal head.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, the fact of being highly religious was not an obstacle for the British to welcome and accept scientific advancements, the most significant of the era was beyond doubt the theory of evolution presented by Charles Darwin in 1859.⁴⁵

As already suggested, halfway through the 19th century majority of the adult population in Britain regularly attended church services. However, the situation changed rapidly during the oncoming century and by the end of the 20th century the numbers decreased to less than one-twelfth of the population.⁴⁶ The statistics show that the drops of numbers of devoted Christians were closely related to the individual generations and the loss was greater every decade.⁴⁷

There were various ways of amusement for the British including sports, theatre, music halls featuring dancing and singing performances and more. As the literacy in the society was growing, large numbers of newspapers and magazines were printed, they were sold rather cheaply and therefore most of the people could afford them. Distinctive milestone of the period was also the rise of the novel. The late Victorian era saw the separation of popular fiction and the novel of high literature.⁴⁸

As aforementioned, the roles of women were of a domestic character and it was not expected of them to become publishing authors, however, for instance Anthony Trollope, George Meredith or Mary Ann Evans (known by her pseudonym George Eliot) managed to publish their works, though often anonymously, and gain public appreciation.⁴⁹

⁴³ Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Victorian era."

⁴⁴ Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Victorian era."

⁴⁵ Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Victorian era."

⁴⁶ Alasdair Crockett, and David Voas, "Generations of Decline: Religious Change in 20th-Century Britain," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 45, no. 4 (Nov. 2006): 567.

⁴⁷ Crockett et al., "Generations of Decline," 581.

⁴⁸ Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Victorian era."

⁴⁹ "Late Victorian literature," Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed April 18, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/art/English-literature/Late-Victorian-literature>.

Nonetheless, majority of the genres was dominated by men, being it gothic novels, utopian fiction or science fiction, the authors appearing in the nineteenth century were such renowned names as Robert L. Stevenson, Oscar Wilde, Samuel Butler or H. G. Wells.⁵⁰

The arrival of the new century did not bring any striking changes and the transformation came only after the World War I as it completely altered the political and mental situation in Britain as well as in the rest of the world.⁵¹ The crises of the war was intensified by the economic collapse on the turn of the 1920s and 1930s. New rights given to British citizens during the period included for instance wider voting rights, elementary education accessible to working class or small old age pensions.⁵² Nonetheless, the great power that controlled the British Empire over the nineteenth century faded and, gradually, the Imperial period of Britain fell apart in the 1960s.⁵³

Many writers at the beginning of the 20th century followed the traditions from the preceding period, others that became widely known during the Victorian period continued their work and gained further success, for example Rudyard Kipling who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1907.⁵⁴

The change in literature brought by the World War I was most significant in poetry, even though often published later, the poems were written under the direct impact of the conflict and gave rise to such authors as Rupert Brooke, Edmund Blunden, Wilfred Owen or Siegfried Sassoon. The works written in the interwar period included realism, fiction, drama and Modernism, which flourished mainly in the 1920s.⁵⁵ The prominent authors of the movement were James Joyce⁵⁶ and Virginia Woolf.⁵⁷ James Joyce broke the established rules of narration including punctuation and created a new style of writing called “stream of consciousness”.⁵⁸

The 1930s saw already first works by George Orwell, however, the stories and critical writing that brought him fame were yet to come.⁵⁹

⁵⁰ Encyclopaedia Britannic, “Late Victorian literature.”

⁵¹ G. C. Thornley, and Gwyneth Roberts, *An Outline of English Literature* (Harlow: Longman, 1984), 143.

⁵² Eva Oliveriusová, Josef Grmela, Martin Hilský, and Jiří Marek, *Dějiny anglické literatury* (Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1988), 195.

⁵³ Brown et al., *The Oxford History*, 1.

⁵⁴ Oliveriusová et al., *Dějiny anglické literatury*, 211.

⁵⁵ Encyclopaedia Britannic, “Late Victorian literature.”

⁵⁶ Oliveriusová et al., *Dějiny anglické literatury*, 23.

⁵⁷ Oliveriusová et al., *Dějiny anglické literatury*, 25.

⁵⁸ Thornley at al., *An Outline of English Literature*, 149.

⁵⁹ Thornley at al., *An Outline of English Literature*, 156.

As mentioned above, the detective novels gained popularity on the verge of the 19th and 20th century owing to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and his Sherlock Holmes. The detective stories in the 20th century, however, were dominated by Agatha Christie starting in 1920 when *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* was published, and the author introduced Hercule Poirot to the readers.⁶⁰

Apart from Christie there was another female mystery writer in Britain, Dorothy L. Sayers, who was in a sense competing with Christie in popularity as some critics called her “the greatest living author of the mystery genre”.⁶¹ These two British writers created detectives who were brilliant amateurs solving crimes that the incompetent police could not. Interestingly, none of them tried to follow the American example of hard-boiled school represented by Samuel Dashiell Hammett. The two women followed the tradition of rationality and innocence from the pre-war era instead of creating corrupted environment.⁶²

⁶⁰ Thornley et al., *An Outline of English Literature*, 156.

⁶¹ Howard Haycraft, *Murder for Pleasure: The Life and Times of the Detective Story* (New York: Dover Publications, 2019), “England: 1918-1930,” <https://books.google.cz/books?id=FNmGDwAAQBAJ&dq=howard+haycraft&hl=cs>.

⁶² Robin Anne Reid, “The Centenary Caper: Casing Two Competing Schools of Detective Fiction,” *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 46, no. 1/2 (1992): 55.

4 Parody and Humour

In the previous chapter we focused mainly on the historical and cultural context of Great Britain. Now follows a rather different topic of parody with overlaps to general humour, Czech as well as British. This section describes the origins of the word parody, the Scriblerus Club and some of the literary tools that can be used in a parody.

It is generally accepted that the term humour as it is known today comes from the ancient Greece, the term had emerged from physiology and has been included in psychology ever since. Moreover, the first theoreticians of the comic were no other men than Plato and Aristotle.^{63, 64}

Furthermore, the term parody itself was known already in the ancient Greece, Simon Dentith in his *Parody* particularizes its usage by stating that the earliest appearance of the term “parodia” was in Aristotle’s *Poetics* and referring to the writer Hegemon.⁶⁵ Whilst Dentith does not enlarge upon the precise meaning of the Greek word, Linda Hutcheon explains that the prefix means also beside, hence broadening the pragmatic scope of parody by adding the facet of intimacy and not contrast.⁶⁶

William Shakespeare is widely accepted as a genius of the comic in English renaissance for he used it not only in his comedies but in the tragedies as well,⁶⁷ and even Simon Dentith included Shakespeare’s works in his work dealing with Parody and added wider explanation why: “This is true of Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre more generally, which, while it is certainly capable of high tragic effects, is never hidebound by any notions of tragic decorum, and is throughout characterised by a rich combination of linguistic styles and registers. Parody thrives in such situations, and the plays of the period draw heavily upon it; though in some cases the use of parody is incidental.”⁶⁸

However, what is considered to be the golden age for English humour is not the period of renaissance previously mentioned but the 18th century, the time of such authors as Johnathan Swift.⁶⁹ Speaking of which, in the 1730s Johnathan Swift established together with John Arbuthnot, Alexander Pope, Thomas Parnell and others an informal association of authors called the Scriblerus Club. The fictional leader of the group was Martin Scriblerus

⁶³ Vladimír Borecký, *Teorie komiky* (Praha: Hynek, 2000), 49.

⁶⁴ Jan Orlický, *Záhady komična: Teorie komična, vtipu, gagu a smíchu* (Praha: Futura, 2003), 19.

⁶⁵ Simon Dentith, *Parody* (London: Routledge, 2000), 10.

⁶⁶ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 1985), 32.

⁶⁷ Borecký, *Teorie komiky*, 55.

⁶⁸ Dentith, *Parody*, 125.

⁶⁹ Borecký, *Teorie komiky*, 59.

whose fictitious memoirs were published. This club and its idea inspired authors in many countries including the Czech Republic, the Jára Cimrman Theatre gathered around a character known as Jára Cimrman and all the works of the authors are officially claimed to be written by him.⁷⁰ Unlike the model Scriblerus, Cimrman is not portrayed as stupid, on the contrary, he is depicted as a misunderstood genius who was always a few moments late for a great invention. This inspiration is the justification for the Czech primary source chosen for this thesis. It is an interesting opportunity to compare a story by an English author with Czech parody based on a character inspired by a different British author from a more distant time period.

In addition to the historical background of humour, now focus will be more on the parody itself. Generally, upon closer examination, things and objects are not comical by themselves. The things people laugh at are comical only by their relation to a person.^{71,72} On similar note, we would not be able to relish the comic if we were feeling lonely as it is said that laughter needs an echo, a company.⁷³

There is no definition of parody that would be without reservation accepted by the authorities of the field, the dictionary by Merriam-Webster defines parody as “a literary or musical work in which the style of an author or work is closely imitated for comic effect or in ridicule.”⁷⁴ However, for example Orlický proposes an elaborate definition of parody, its methods and techniques that will be used in this paper: The method of parody is to ridicule by alteration. It imitates people, their looks, speeches and acts by changing or substituting some of these features so that it results in obvious similarities but also striking contrasts. A number of the attributes can be changed or replaced simultaneously yet never all of them at the same time. In that case, the result would not be a parody but a completely new arrangement. As a rule, parody needs an accurate concurrence, so that the reader can recognize the persons who are being parodied for the audience must be able to believe these could be the situations of the models, and alongside there needs to be at least one exotic or foreign aspect that contradicts the truthful signs of the scene. Popular means is transferring

⁷⁰ Borecký, *Teorie komiky*, 60.

⁷¹ Orlický, *Záhady komična*, 39.

⁷² Borecký, *Teorie komiky*, 143.

⁷³ Henri Bergson, *Smích* (Praha: Naše vojsko, 1993), 17.

⁷⁴ “Parody,” Merriam-Webster, last modified April 13, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/parody?fbclid=IwAR3fW86wtK80vaaTFMEedTL3O2piH1JvNAg6UkBG5tzdnhOIpq0N-b-urVqU>.

noble scenes into a lower-class environment and, vice versa, bringing low scenes into lofty setting.⁷⁵

This thesis also considers the definition provided by Simon Dentith whose interpretation in some aspects agrees with the former statement that parody first needs to identify a manner, style or aspect and only then this characteristic can be made comically visible.⁷⁶ Furthermore, Dentith presents a crucial claim that parody depends on the reader's ability of recognition of the parodied original and adds that: "The greater the historical distance which divides us from parodic literature, the harder it becomes to reconstruct with any confidence the discursive dispositions, or even the specific targets, from which parody emerges and towards which it is aimed."⁷⁷ In other words, for the audience to easily recognize the original, it should be a recent piece of work which aroused a reaction or an older narrative that is generally popular on a long-term basis and this particular utterance applies to the *Murder in the Parlour Car Compartment* chosen for the analyses in the practical part.

Furthermore, in parody, newness is necessary. Nevertheless, not all aspects of the experience must be new, yet at least one component of newness must be included.⁷⁸

Common parody of an author uses his or her typical elements, for example metaphors, favourite phrases or other distinctive features that enable the reader to identify the parodied author.⁷⁹ It should be also emphasised that parody involves irony for a highlight, not only textual comparison.⁸⁰

Lastly, the mention of troubles which parodic literature brings to translators and interpreters who need to search for a corresponding mode in the target language⁸¹ should be included because Cimrman faced similar difficulties in parodying a work by a foreign author in the Czech language.

In this chapter we learned several facts concerning the evolution of parody, its main authors and works. Further, different aspects of parody and its tools were introduced and most of them will be illustrated on references to the primary sources which are introduced in the next chapter. This is the end of theoretical part of this work and onward

⁷⁵ Orlický, *Záhady komična*, 92.

⁷⁶ Dentith, *Parody*, 32.

⁷⁷ Dentith, *Parody*, 39.

⁷⁸ Orlický, *Záhady komična*, 63.

⁷⁹ Orlický, *Záhady komična*, 93.

⁸⁰ Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, 34.

⁸¹ Dentith, *Parody*, 41.

follows the analytical part that will apply the pieces of knowledge gathered on the previous pages.

5 Introduction of the Primary Sources

This chapter introduces the works that are further analysed in relation to the roles of the trains, murder mysteries and parody. This chapter justifies the choice of the authors and their narratives.

5.1 *Murder on the Orient Express*

In 1978 a writer Gwen Robinson published a book in which it is stated that Agatha finished ninety-four books that were translated into at least one hundred and three languages. This means that she overtook William Shakespeare by fourteen languages and her books are among the most published works together with William Shakespeare's and the Bible.⁸²

Consequently, there is hardly a person to be found who have never in their lifetime heard of Agatha Christie or her most famous detective, Hercule Poirot. This brings us to the work which was chosen for this thesis the *Murder on the Orient Express*.

Christie travelled by the train herself several times during her life.⁸³ In her autobiography she mentions her love of trains and the Orient Express expressively.⁸⁴ In the words of Jaroslav Pacovský:

There was no train more famous than the Orient-Express. A single ticket was four times more expensive than in any other trains. It needed 81 hours 40 minutes to travel the 3100 kilometres long track. During the first years, it was the fastest and the most luxurious train in the world.⁸⁵

Hence, it is not startling that the train was not utilized only by Agatha Christie as the promising murder locale because Jaroslav Pacovský farther mentions: "No wonder that plots of 400 short stories and novels were set there. It's not a coincidence that it was called the express of emperors, politicians and spies."⁸⁶

5.2 *Thrilling Stories of the Railway*

Unlike Agatha Christie, who is a renowned and frequently analysed author, Victor Lorenzo Whitechurch, primarily a priest, is hardly known and there are only several mentions about him in articles or books, as an example: An article on sea resorts states that "in the early

⁸² Gwen Robins, *The Mystery of Agatha Christie* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1978), 3.

⁸³ Robins, *The Mystery*, 93.

⁸⁴ Agatha Christie, *Agatha Christie: An Autobiography* (London: Harper Collins, 2010), "Second Spring," <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Agatha-Christie-Autobiography/dp/0006353282>.

⁸⁵ Pacovský, *Lidé, vlaky, koleje*, 212.

⁸⁶ Pacovský, *Lidé, vlaky, koleje*, 212.

1900s, Max Beerbohm, Victor Whitechurch and H.G. Wells were amongst the authors who used Bognor in their stories, depicting it as a quiet or dull seaside resort.”⁸⁷ Whitechurch is mentioned in *Literary Landmarks*: “Deaths Canon Victor Lorenzo Whitechurch, English churchman and author, at Oxford in May, age 65.”⁸⁸

Nonetheless, in his foreword to the 1977 edition of the *Thrilling Stories of the Railway*, Bryan Morgan explains that Whitechurch was mentioned in six detective fiction histories and was admired surprisingly more in the United States of America than on the British Isles. Among his admirers were Ellery Queen, Dorothy L. Sayers or John Carter, who prized his railway stories, besides other things, for the factual accuracy.⁸⁹ Hence, it cannot be stated that Victor L. Whitechurch was forgotten and completely negligible, nevertheless, when compared to Agatha Christie, he holds the post of the less known and consequently less significant author.

As for the stories themselves, all of the narratives are set on the railway and trains, the author does not use any other setting even though he tries to vary the stories’ environments in order to entertain the reader and avoid boring them by repetitive narratives. Only one character reappears in most of the stories and that is a man called Hazel. He is intelligent mystery solver and a railway enthusiast which enables him to solve murders, find lost items or persons and help with other cases of iniquity. As a person, Hazel could be described as an eccentric for his vegetarianism and superfluity as exercise. The reader cannot miss the resemblance of Hazel and the police inspector Trachta from the last primary source of this thesis.

5.3 Murder in a Parlour Car Compartment

In comparison to the two previously mentioned literary works, *the Murder in a Parlour Car Compartment* is a play, specifically a detective comedy, which was written by Jára Cimrman and which was evidently aimed to parody the *Murder on the Orient Express* by Agatha Christie.

At this point it needs to be clarified that even though the “official” author is so called Jára Cimrman, the true playwrights were Ladislav Smoljak and Zdeněk Svěrák who created

⁸⁷ Sue Farrant, “London by the Sea: Resort Development on the South Coast of England 1880-1939,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 22, no. 1 (January 1987): 144.

⁸⁸ Joseph A. Brandt, “Literary Landmarks of 1933,” *Books Abroad* 8, no. 1 (January 1934): 31.

⁸⁹ Bryan Morgan, “Foreword to *Thrilling Stories of the Railway*,” in *Thrilling Stories of the Railway*, by Victor L. Whitechurch (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1977), <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks13/1300071h.html>.

Cimrman as a fictional national hero and his humour so much needed by the Czechoslovak citizens in the times of communism. Cimrman's name was first mentioned during a radio play in 1966.⁹⁰ Terje B. Englund explains the popularity of Cimrman to foreigners as follows: "Thus, in the dark years of normalization a Jára Cimrman performance became one of very few public media where the common Czech could roar with laughter from a half-hidden joke about the rulers without having to fear any consequences."⁹¹

For the purposes of this paper, despite being a fictional character himself, Jára Cimrman will be referred to as the author of the play since the real authorship is rather complicated to discuss in this thesis.

In brief, the plot is a simplified version of the *Murder on the Orient Express*. There are five characters who appear on the stage: police inspector Trachta, his student Hlaváček, two businessmen and a train steward. An investigation takes place during which the inspector shows rather curious behaviour that will be discussed further in the paper.⁹²

Even though the can be hardly compared to the worldwide success of *Murder in the Orient Express*, over the span of thirty years the performance repeated over 693 times⁹³ and in 2011 the play was successfully introduced in Germany.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Jára Cimrman, Ladislav Smoljak, and Zdeněk Svěrák, *Hry a semináře: úplné vydání* (Praha: Paseka, 2009), 6.

⁹¹ Terje B. Englund, *The Czechs in a nutshell: a user's manual for foreigners* (Praha: Baset, 2004), 61.

⁹² Jára Cimrman, Ladislav Smoljak, and Zdeněk Svěrák, *Vražda v salonním coupé: (Detektivní hra)* (Praha: Paseka, 1992), 35.

⁹³ "VRAŽDA V SALÓNŇÍM COUPÉ," Divadelní hry, accessed April 18, 2020, <https://eldar.cz/cimrman/vrazda.htm>.

⁹⁴ "50 let DIVADLA JÁRY CIMRMANA," Cimrmanův zpravodaj, accessed April 18, 2020, <https://www.cimrman.at/list.php?l=4>.

6 Roles of Trains in *Murder on the Orient Express* in Comparison with *Thrilling Stories of the Railway*

The Orient Express is a train well-known among several nations, this fact itself makes this particular train special among all other trains which, despite having names, are not known a few kilometres off their track. Therefore, already at the beginning of Agatha Christie's story the train is not an ordinary train, a mere means of transport as every other of the kind. In fact, precisely the opposite case applies, because the train is associated with exotic places, adventures and luxury for the fare is very expensive, countless famous people travelled on board of the Orient Express and even real crimes took place there, although never a murder.⁹⁵

On the other hand, in all of the *Thrilling Stories* trains are introduced solely as means of transport. When the passengers board the trains in the stories, they do not expect any crimes or exciting events to occur during their journey, the train therefore represents only a setting and if they were to delineate their ensuing free time occupation, they would most probably describe the train as a means of transport and use it merely as a setting for their different everyday activities, such as reading or sleeping. This assertion can be demonstrated on the dialog between Thorpe Hazell and Mr. Wingrave: "... Was there anything to be noticed before the train started?" "Nothing at the time. ..."⁹⁶ The answer suggests that the passengers expected to be taken from one place to another without deeper meaning or plans.

Unlike most ordinary train, the Orient Express travels long distances and if the passengers spend nights and days on board, the train becomes a hotel of sorts to them: they have a bed, a bathroom, services and restaurant available. Apart from the fact that the train is constantly moving forward and its space is rather confined, there is no real difference between a small guesthouse and the train. This is suggested for example in the description of Poirot's morning: "He had risen early, breakfasted alone, and had spent the morning going over the notes of the case that was recalling him to London." Afterwards he joins his friend for a lunch.⁹⁷ All of these actions described could have happened in any hotel or a boarding house. Moreover, Douglas R. McManis in his *Places for Mysteries* stressed the fact that Christie did not highlight the countries and sceneries the train was passing, only occasionally naming a stop or country.⁹⁸ This supports the resemblance with the hotel for the changing

⁹⁵ Pacovský, *Lidé, vlaky, koleje*, 212.

⁹⁶ Victor L. Whitechurch, "The Affair of the Corridor Express," in *Thrilling Stories of the Railway* (London: Routledge, 1977), no pagination, <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks13/1300071h.html>.

⁹⁷ Christie, *Orient Express*, 21.

⁹⁸ Douglas, "Places for Mysteries," 327.

view is one of the key differences. Another similarity can be found in the role of the conductor who represents a room service available in hotels. Instead of calling the reception, the passengers ring a bell which summons the conductor. Poirot himself used his service: “He pressed his own finger on the bell. The conductor arrived promptly.”⁹⁹

Contrarily, the *Thrilling Stories* always describe short journeys lasting only minutes, never longer than a few hours. Therefore, this setting could be compared at best to a waiting room at municipality or post office since there are seats, people can read a magazine, have a cup of coffee or simply sit and wait for their turn in parallel to their stop on the train. The conductors in *Thrilling Stories* are scarcely mentioned as their roles usually consist of locking doors or checking tickets, “The guard took the proffered half-crown, drew a key from his pocket, and turned the lock.”¹⁰⁰

The Orient Express changes its roles rather soon in the novel. Aside from the primary transporting role, it takes on the aforementioned role of a hotel. Furthermore, the principal role of the train is thwarted when the weather changes and as a result of a snowstorm, a snowdrift, blocks the track so that the train cannot move and, naturally, cannot reach its destination. This fictional inconvenience was based on real stops due to abundant snowfall, though not on Christie’s personal experience.¹⁰¹ The conductor summarizes the situation for Poirot: “Monsieur has not noticed? The train has stopped. We have run into a snowdrift. Heaven knows how long we shall be here. I remember once being snowed up for seven days.”¹⁰² Subsequently, the train becomes a prison, because there is nowhere else to go, the murder had been perpetrated before the weather change and the murderers must endure an investigation. What had been a symbol of perfect crime and a way to a better world after the vendetta, becomes a prison and a symbol of their doom. One of the murderers refers to the situation as “Destiny”.¹⁰³

However, the train is also a little cosmos with its own laws, more accurately of its people, and therefore it becomes a host of a specific social bubble and the train sees a drift from the doom back to the better future. This aspect is further discussed below.

⁹⁹ Christie, *Orient Express*, 31.

¹⁰⁰ Victor L. Whitechurch, “The Mystery of the Boat Express,” in *Thrilling Stories of the Railway* (London: Routledge, 1977), no pagination, <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks13/1300071h.html>.

¹⁰¹ Pacovský, *Lidé, vlaky, koleje*, 212.

¹⁰² Christie, *Orient Express*, 31.

¹⁰³ Christie, *Orient Express*, 86.

There would be no point in generalizing the setting and train roles of the *Thrilling Stories of the Railway* because the following paragraphs focus on individual stories in the collection and compare them to the *Murder on the Orient Express*.

Out of the 15 stories contained in *Thrilling Stories of the Railway*, five were chosen for analysis and comparison of the use of certain situations, characters, and principles in the story of a well-known writer and of an almost forgotten one. Besides the main focus on trains and their roles, the paper also poses a question, whether Christie's and Whitechurch's approaches to trains as settings and the mysteries presented suggest partially reveal why their success was not comparable.

The first point of comparison that suggests itself is the fact that Agatha Christie's novel is at least ten times longer than any of the stories by Whitechurch. It therefore follows that she had enough space for various plot twists and roles of the train. Both of the writers use trains as a means of transport, nevertheless, at other layers of meaning, Christie's work is undoubtedly more complex than any of the short stories. While Christie applies throughout the whole plot of the *Murder on the Orient Express* several approaches to what the train may represent, though scarcely expressing it directly, Whitechurch focuses primarily on one or two so that the stories are puzzling but not too complicated to understand, usually the train only turns from a means of transport to a crime scene, skipping the possible meeting place or prison cell.

The motives and hints in Whitechurch's stories are discernible during the first reading. On the contrary, Christie's story can be read several times and during each repetition the reader figures out a new clue and understands more and more hints finally realizing that the story was foreshadowed already in the first chapter: "'Rather an odd little comedy that I watch here,' said Poirot to himself thoughtfully. He was to remember that thought of his later."¹⁰⁴ The references to a theatrical play are ubiquitous in Poirot's utterances and in the end proved to be correct when the murderers are revealed. This point will be discussed further in the work.

The ensuing part demonstrates these claims on specific examples in the selected stories by Whitechurch and Christie.

¹⁰⁴ Christie, *Orient Express*, 12.

6.1 “How the Bishop kept his Appointment”

The paper will gradually move from the stories the least similar to the plot and setting to the most resembling the Orient Express case. The resemblance this story shares with Christie’s idea is the simple unpredictability of certain circumstances in otherwise strictly punctual railway travelling. While the Christie’s set of characters was stopped and forced to improvise by natural occurrences, the characters in the short story face a malfunction and breakage of the train itself, precisely a crank axle of a tank engine had broken therefore thwarting the schedule and passenger’s plans.¹⁰⁵ The consequences of these events fundamentally differ, while the bishop is faced only with a delay or at most a cancellation of his speech and meeting, the murderers on Orient Express are doomed to failure of their plan which depended on the movement of the train and its regular stops at stations that would enable the fictitious murderer escape the train and vanish forever.

The role of the train is very restricted in this particular story, apart from being a means of transport, the train only represents a setting for an encounter that would have never taken place for Hazell is not a practising Christian and his destination was completely different from the bishop’s, yet they met on the train and due to the malfunction, they talk and even influence each other, for example, the bishop tries vegetarianism for a fortnight owing to Hazell’s reasoning.¹⁰⁶ The train could have embodied an excuse for the bishop to evade the meeting however he did not want to avoid his speech, conversely, he was eager to arrive on time in order not to disappoint his audience. Apart from the influential meeting there was no special meaning of the train in this story. Unlike in Christie’s story, the acquaintance of Hazell and bishop was not of greater importance in the lives of the involved. Contrarily, Christie’s characters influence each other’s lives irretrievably.

Moreover, this story does not represent a detective genre as there is no case of theft, murder or sabotage, the state of affairs is caused by a real accident. The story might have been written by Whitechurch simply to mock his profession of a clergyman, as the bishop, for example, is the only character who falls into mud¹⁰⁷ which causes general hilarity and undermines his dignity and authority. Alternative explanation behind the story might be that Whitechurch wished to demonstrate that trains and railways had been feared and considered perilous when they were introduced to British society as mentioned above and yet, a few

¹⁰⁵ Victor L. Whitechurch, “How the Bishop Kept his Appointment,” in *Thrilling Stories of the Railway* (London: Routledge, 1977), no pagination, <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks13/1300071h.html>.

¹⁰⁶ Whitechurch, “How the Bishop Kept his Appointment,” no pagination.

¹⁰⁷ Whitechurch, “How the Bishop Kept his Appointment,” no pagination.

decades later, not only do not people find trains frightening anymore but even a clergyman, a representative of a very conservative social class, considers it ordinary and normal, not evil.

6.2 “The Affair of the Corridor Express”

Now, moving on to a story which depicts a true crime and not only story of a railway accident as the previous paragraphs, the story by Whitechurch called “The Affair of the Corridor Express” centres around a case of kidnapping. *Murder on the Orient Express* does not include direct investigation of abduction, however, the victim was a leader of a gang specialised in kidnapping and murdering children¹⁰⁸ and that justified his execution.

If the Orient Express had not been trapped by snow, the investigation would have worked with the theory of a murderer who had come from the outside and left the train on its regular stops, perhaps incorporating a possibility of accomplice on board. The Corridor Express train shows the option of a crime committed with the help of an outsider. A boy travelling on a train with his carer vanished and even though the train is thoroughly searched with the help of the guard, the boy is gone, as Hazell later proves, the boy was suspended from a window, technically outside of the train, and handed to the accomplice when the train slowed down due to a construction work on the railway line.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, it could be said that the train became a stage property for almost a magic trick of hiding something in the plain sight.

Next, this Whitechurch’s story is unique on account of the child’s point of view. For adults the train represents only a transportation tool, conversely, the boy perceives it as a place for study or play and even the train itself attracts his attention. He examines it and wants to understand it. The self-proclaimed jury in the Orient Express case also had to examine the train, however, the adults did so in order to prepare a crime scene misleading the police and navigating to false leads while the boy simply wanted to understand it. Alternatively stated, from the child’s perspective the train is a means of not transport but adventure. Moreover, it is a playground to him, he explores, observes and entertains himself in ways adults cannot imitate. In contrast with the child’s imagination, the kidnappers see it as a convenient device of opportunity for their plan, thus their actions turn the train into a

¹⁰⁸ Christie, *Orient Express*, 54.

¹⁰⁹ Victor L. Whitechurch, “The Affair of the Corridor Express,” in *Thrilling Stories of the Railway* (London: Routledge, 1977), no pagination, <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks13/1300071h.html>.

crime scene and as a consequence, the child's keeper and the train guard perceive it as an investigation base.

6.3 “A Case of Signalling”

While Christie was interested mostly in the middle or upper-class passengers of the train, only mentioning the conductors because of a murderer among them, Whitechurch was well-acquainted with the train crew and was able to utilize it, for instance the short story “A Case of Signalling” portrays a fireman and a driver of the train.

Additionally, the story also proposes an interesting approach to the detective story from a railway background. While focusing on the situation on the train at the beginning as well as in Christies case, the crime takes place in a house and is completely unrelated to the railway. Burglars break into a house where the fireman's girlfriend is employed and because of their habit of communicating via Morse code when he is working on the track near the house, she manages to call for help. The uniqueness of the plot lays within the idea of using the railway timetable and the fixed routes that the train follows as not only a means of order and punctuality but as a possibility for communication instead of telephones or letters. In the end the train is the device enabling a call for help.¹¹⁰

These two stories share one aspect which should not be overlooked, namely the fact that while the majority of the population perceive trains only as a means of transport, the authors managed to demonstrate that for significant percentage of people it is an employment. The fireman or the conductors are not aboard to admire the landscapes but to keep the fire going and to punch the tickets. As already mentioned, Christie's work uses a guard and only thanks to his position in the murderous scheme. These stories could have been written owing to these usually minor characters since the fireman was going back and forth on the same route which enabled him to spot the signalling and the guard of the Orient Express was able to plan the murder with others because he knew precisely the times, route, stops and the carriage itself. In the final chapter of *Murder on Orient Express* one of the characters explains, using the words: “With Pierre Michel actually working on that train, the chance was too good to be missed.”¹¹¹ If these two characters were only occasional passengers, these two plots could have never worked.

¹¹⁰ Victor L. Whitechurch, “A Case of Signalling,” in *Thrilling Stories of the Railway* (London: Routledge, 1977), no pagination, <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks13/1300071h.html>.

¹¹¹ Christie, *Orient Express*, 190.

Similarly, in the Whitechurch's story the driver's part was of significant importance as well, though minor, for he, unlike the passengers, must not sleep during the journey and therefore pays attention to the track and the surroundings as well. It was him who noticed some queerness in the house and drew the fireman's attention to it. Nonetheless, the problem of this Whitechurch's story might be the fact that the extraordinary detective is not part of the story. If Christie was author of "A Case of Signalling", Poirot would have been at least a distant consultant somehow, because Poirot attracts her readers and without him, the story would not have lived up to their expectations.

6.4 "The Tragedy on the London and Mid-Northern"

"The Tragedy on the London and Mid-Northern" is more suitable for comparison with the *Murder on the Orient Express* than the previously analysed story because the plot and the settings are in many points similar. First of all, one of Poirot's theories in the Orient Express murder is that the murderer came from the outside, taking advantage of the fact that train stops along the way at train stations and he or she could get on at one place, execute the murder and get off a few minutes later never to be seen again.¹¹² Likewise, this particular Whitechurch's story incorporates a murderer who again uses the predictability of train transport, however, he never boards the train and yet manages to kill a person aboard. Both authors work with the fundamental feature of compartments: they can be locked resulting in the victims trapped in their solitude.

Secondly, what Christie never used in the Orient Express story were railway bridges, whereas Whitechurch shows their dangers and even describes some of the history and precautions taken on the railway because of passengers who stuck out their heads during the journey.¹¹³ This might be the aspect that distinctively differentiates the two authors, of course not real bridges but what they represent. While Christie's Poirot describes facts that helped him in his deductions usually rather vaguely and only presents the reader with the facts relevant to the mystery solving, Whitechurch as a railway enthusiast shares as much additional knowledge as he can without completely outshining the plot, which can be regarded as disturbing or unnecessary by a common reader. However, when he does share an important technical detail, he tends to emphasize it too much by expressing how minor such information is, for instance: "Close to the end of one of the sleepers, outside the left

¹¹² Christie, *Orient Express*, 180–181.

¹¹³ Victor L. Whitechurch, "The Tragedy on the London and Mid-Northern," in *Thrilling Stories of the Railway* (London: Routledge, 1977), no pagination, <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks13/1300071h.html>.

handrail, he had noticed a hole. That was all. Nothing very curious, perhaps, but he knew very well that holes are never bored in such places.”¹¹⁴

Thirdly, there is a significant analogy between the *Murder on the Orient Express* and “The Tragedy on the London and Mid-Northern”, the latter contains an execution of the crime that corresponds with Christie’s final solution of the Orient Express murder. When Poirot solves the mystery and confronts the murderers, he gives his final speech and the guilty of the murder inquire about his intentions of divulging their secret to the police. Startlingly, instead of denouncing them, he chooses to deceive the police and tell them a story of a killer who came from the outside and got off the train before it stopped. Similarly, Hazell investigates this homicide case and finds a murderer who was not on board of the train and, furthermore, who was not introduced to the reader at the beginning of the story as it is required by the Knox’s commandments of detective fiction, thus, this case is an example of violation of one of them which verbatim states: “The criminal must be someone mentioned in the early part of the story, ...”.¹¹⁵ In addition, Agatha Christie herself was well-known for breaking the commandments and as it is emphasized by J. Madison Davis in *Playing by the rules*¹¹⁶ or in *Theory and Practice of Classic Detective Fiction* by Jerome H. Delamater and Ruth Prigozy.¹¹⁷

The roles of the train in this thrilling story are rather scarce as they are limited to the means of transport and partial crime scene. There might seem to be a possibility of identifying also a prison aspect in the locked compartment, however, the victim asked to be locked and it was added to emphasize the impression of an accident with no access from within the train. Likewise, it cannot be perceived as a safe place for the victim as he was not seeking shelter from anticipated danger, he simply did not wish to be disturbed.

6.5 “The Mystery of the Boat Express”

Progressively, this paper reached the short story which is the most corresponding to the *Murder on the Orient Express*, in other words, it does not share all of the points, plot twists and occurrences of the novel, that would not be possible with the limited space, but it at least touches most of them. Proceeding with the fact mentioned in previous section, “The Mystery of the Boat Express” again breaks the same Knox’s commandment. Furthermore, the theme

¹¹⁴ Whitechurch, “The Tragedy on the London and Mid-Northern,” no pagination.

¹¹⁵ “Ronald Knox: 10 Commandments of Detective Fiction,” Gotham Writers, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://www.writingclasses.com/toolbox/tips-masters/ronald-knox-10-commandments-of-detective-fiction>.

¹¹⁶ Davis, “Playing by the rules,” 31.

¹¹⁷ Jerome H. Delamater, and Ruth Prigozy, *Theory and Practice of Classic Detective Fiction* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 1997), 98.

of the locked compartment is reused, supplemented with the aspect of espionage. Even though Christie uses a train full of foreigners and her victim is Italian, she never implemented spies, secret agents or even mafia in the narrative.

As a rule, the attention of the reader is attracted by the “impossible crime” mystery, for Whitechurch decided to reveal only a foreign accent of the victim at the beginning of the story and that is the reason why the reader has a little or no chance in discovering the real motives of the murder as in the Orient Express mystery. The reader is left with slight and vague hints from the authors and must wait for the final elucidation.

Christie’s work follows the remaining commandments and does not include a non-passenger playing a major role, on the other hand, Whitechurch clarifies the story by a sister who regularly waves her handkerchief when the train passes by and her brother, the spy, leans out of the window to wave in return. This situation is used by the murderer who leans out of his window in another carriage and shoots the undercover agent dead.¹¹⁸ One of the problems of Whitechurch’s writing stem from the recurrence of the scenes and motives. He frequently uses the locked-room mystery in a locked train compartment and his murderers scarcely use a different weapon than a handgun. Christie’s murderers in the Orient Express decided to use a knife which is logical since guns make a clear sound which would attract attention of the passenger unless a silencer was used and even that is not reliable.

The hidden meaning in train transportation which can be found in both of the works of Christie and Whitechurch is the ability to express emotions. The brother, spy, always waved his handkerchief to show his sister that he is safe on the train, thinks about her and wants to see her. In comparison to the brotherly and sisterly love, in *Murder on the Orient Express* there is the mixture of negative emotions of several relatives not aimed at each other but the common enemy. The beauty of the ritual expressions of mutual love is sharply contrasted to a hatred so strong that all the relatives made the decision to murder a person who caused their miseries. On one hand, there is the terror when a man is murdered and, on the other hand, there is tremendous relief when the villain dies.

Furthermore, the train represents the way to safety to the brother was the embodiment of the rescue. However, it soon proved to be a prison for him as he asked to be locked in the compartment for safety yet the whole train became a cell for him when his murderer managed to board the train.

¹¹⁸ Whitechurch, “The Mystery of the Boat Express,” no pagination.

The preceding lines proved that despite the fact that Whitechurch was able to come up with puzzling plots and knew how to utilise his vast knowledge of the railway, the symbolic aspect in connection with trains remained below its full potential.

Considering the detective aspect of the works by Christie and Whitechurch, one of the major differences between the Orient Express story and the *Thrilling Stories* is that Hazell, the investigator, is not a policeman neither is he a professional detective, nor ever was. The character himself struggles to describe his occupation and authority: "I can hardly explain. I'm scarcely a detective, being only a private individual."¹¹⁹ He does not even appear in all of the stories meaning his presence is not crucial for solving a mystery, sometimes he retells a story of a different detective ("The Mystery of the Boat Express") and in some cases he is left out completely ("A Case of Signalling"). This fact contradicts the assumptions of brilliant detectives who solve crimes instead of incompetent police forces embodied by both Poirot and his parodical twin Trachta. Following from that, it becomes clear that the stories are not built up around a character but rather the setting. The detective is sometimes missing, contrarily, the trains are always somehow included and play simple yet crucial roles in the stories.

Moreover, Hazell, like Poirot, is extremely clever though more limited. His investigations always include trains, while Poirot solves all possible and impossible crimes without restrictions all over the globe and in all conceivable settings. The characteristic they share is the aspect of weirdness in their personalities, despite the fact that Poirot's flaws can be found in his speech and appearance mostly (the usage of French phrases and bodily features mentioned below) whereas Hazell's are based primarily on his behaviour and beliefs, especially striking being his habit of exercising regularly. Hazell performs sets of routines everywhere when the right time comes, however, no matter what he has been doing. Adding the humorous side to the stories, which is missing the Christie's work, by the unpredictability and explanation of the physical activity: "Try living on lentils for a fortnight; and a very excellent exercise is this—I do it before most meals—take three deep breaths through the nostrils, filling the lungs and letting the air escape through the mouth slowly. At the same time rise on the toes, reach the hands above the head, and bring them slowly down to the sides. Repeat fifteen times. It's a capital thing for digestion."¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Whitechurch, "The Tragedy on the London and Mid-Northern," no pagination.

¹²⁰ Whitechurch, "How the Bishop Kept his Appointment," no pagination.

7 The Parody *Murder in the Parlour Car Compartment* in Comparison with *Murder on the Orient Express* and Roles of Trains in Both Works

This chapter analyses the parodic story by Cimrman and the original mystery novel by Christie as well as the roles of the trains in both, however, the parody focuses primarily on the characters, their behaviour and language than the setting, consequently the role of the train is side-lined and overshadowed by the parodic aspects.

According to the preface in *Hry a semináře*, Cimrman mystifies the audience and therethrough inspires them to search the meaning beyond borders in the context which resembles parody.¹²¹ No wonder *Murder on the Orient Express* inspired Cimrman to parody the story and the detective in his play as mystification is one of the key components of mystery. As understood by Ruth Prigozy, “there are reasons to believe that parody is at work within the genre of detective fiction. The first indication is that detective fiction creates the context necessary for audience recognition of parody.”¹²² Moreover, Englund explains that “the Cimrman figure is making fun of ‘great heroes’,”¹²³ and Poirot undoubtedly can be described as a hero of the novels.

While Christie’s Poirot was already well known to her readers when she published *Murder on the Orient Express*, inspector Trachta makes his first appearance in this Cimrman’s work.¹²⁴ Despite this fact, he is presented as well-experienced and able to solve mysteries. Interestingly, the original formula as set by Poe is not strictly abode by in *Murder on the Orient Express* and therefore neither in the *Murder in a Parlour Car Compartment*. There is supposed to be a dull police force, however, in the former story the police are not present at all. On the other hand, in the latter, there is an active police inspector, nevertheless, in the end, there is no victim of murder.

As already mentioned, Christie’s story is a novel whilst Cimrman’s is a theatrical play. This fact makes the comparison on several levels more complicated, for example when it comes to the characters and their personal characteristics and reasons for action. The play’s primary function is to entertain., whereas the novel entertains the reader as well, however, according to the rules of the detection club¹²⁵ there should be hints throughout the story so

¹²¹ Jára Cimrman et al., *Hry a semináře*, 7.

¹²² Delamater et al., *Theory and Practice*, 63.

¹²³ Englund, *The Czechs in a nutshell*, 60.

¹²⁴ “Policejní inspektor Trachta,” Jára Cimrman DB, encyklopedie cimrmanovských hesel, accessed February 12, 2020, <http://jcdp.crudo.cz/index.php?p=r&id=1053>.

¹²⁵ Robins, *The Mystery*, 102.

that the reader can go back and see these clues and realize he/ she hadn't noticed them at first sight, but they were there the whole time. Example of such a hint is a character, Mary Debenham, who changes her behaviour almost as easily as she changes trains. Poirot and Miss Debenham travelled on the same train from Syria to Istanbul, there was a malfunction which caused minor delay. The lady was extremely nervous and said she needed to be in Paris on time. Nevertheless, when the Orient Express stopped due to the snowdrift, she was perfectly calm and didn't hurry to Paris at all though the delay would be more significant. By contrast, such clues and halfway concealed facts are completely missing from the Trachta's investigation and all the revelations come out of the blue and with no or little possibility of tracing it back to the initial hints.

The parody is eminent already from the title of the play as in Czech, the "parlour car" is "coupé" instead of "kupé" clearly referring to Poirot's habit of using French words. Then, there are a few changes in the plot, as aforementioned "newness is necessary".¹²⁶ In *Murder in the Parlour Car Compartment* the "murder" takes place in a tunnel, not at night as in Christie's story. It is quick action when the opportunity arises. Also, passengers on Christie's Orient express are not enthused by Poirot's presence and investigation while Cimrman's suspect Meyer cooperates with Trachta rather excitedly and enjoys being interviewed.¹²⁷

Furthermore, Christie works with several languages in her story owing to the primal fact that Poirot himself is Belgian and therefore he uses French phrases and sentences even when he is speaking English and in this particular case also M. Bouc, the "assistant" during the investigation uses French phrases as he is employed by a French company, for instance: "Ma foi,"¹²⁸ or "Toute de meme,"¹²⁹ – these phrases complete the identity of the characters and do not hinder the reader from understanding of the sentence as a whole, however, Poirot also utters short sentences in French that are incomprehensible to readers who are not acquainted with French, such as: "Voilà ce qui est embêtant," which means that the situation is unpleasant. Likewise, Cimrman's conductor speaks to himself in Hungarian infused with made-up words that only sound as Hungarian, which is the parody of the French abundance as the Hungarian sentences, which contain real Hungarian vocabulary as well as nonsensical words designed to evoke certain meaning to the Czech audience, cannot be understood by the targeted the audience nor Hungarians, for instance: "Eréč piklôš neméči, huňár scépeň

¹²⁶ Orlický, *Záhady komična*, 63.

¹²⁷ Cimrman at al., *Vražda v salonním coupé*, 53.

¹²⁸ Christie, *Orient Express*, 174.

¹²⁹ Christie, *Orient Express*, 55.

kámoš.”¹³⁰ The words “scépeň kámoš” do not exist in the Hungarian language because they are based on words from the Czech language and are only transcribed to give the impression of Hungarian. The Czech audience is therefore able to decipher it as a slang phrase meaning “die friend”. This key sentence in the parody reflects the French sentence in the original story, where the hidden meaning behind its utterance reveals important clues about the murderer.

As already stated, the Sherlock Holmes type of detective always needs his Watson who is not as brilliantly clever as himself for there needs to be a mediator between the readers and the genius whose trains of thoughts are absolutely incomprehensible to the audience.¹³¹ On the grounds of that the “normal” companion of the detective usually narrates the story, asks questions on behalf of the reader, explains or persuades the detective to explain his moves and thoughts. Interestingly enough, in *Murder on the Orient Express*, Poirot is not travelling with his usual partner, captain Hastings, in this particular story, Poirot is on his own and needs other characters to fill in the gap of the partner who always requires explanations. In this case, the role of an assistant is adopted by the director of the company, M. Bouc. He is also the one who accidentally ruined the conspiracy plan when he arranged Poirot’s presence on the train. Contrarily, though inspector Trachta boards the train alone, he is soon accompanied by a police trainee called Hlaváček in Istanbul. Hlaváček is writing a dissertation on train criminality and therefore asks questions to make sure he gathers correct data for his paper and he always accompanies the inspector during investigations. The parodical aspect here is that whilst Poirot explains the facts usually after he does something because he wants to be sure of the accuracy of the outcome and only when he is sure, Trachta explains to Hlaváček beforehand not only what and why he will ask but also what the answers and outcomes will be.¹³²

The prior paragraph is closely connected to the character’s nature. Poirot always appears to be modest throughout the book and when asked for help, he hesitates.¹³³ Someone might argue that it is only a posh pose and that he only seeks attention and wants to be assured that he is the best and that is the approach grasped by Cimrman in the parody. During his speech, inspector Trachta mentions that he somehow attracts murder and that there is always at least one when he travels by train. Moreover, he is not modest, nor humble as at

¹³⁰ Cimrman at al., *Vražda v salonním coupé*, 39.

¹³¹ Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Detective story.”

¹³² Cimrman at al., *Vražda v salonním coupé*, 45.

¹³³ Christie, *Orient Express*, 38.

one point he even indirectly boasts that who else could solve the mystery if not him.¹³⁴ Although it is true that one of the characters mentions that Poirot “tried to be modest but failed,”¹³⁵ so he probably is well-aware of his abilities and only knows his manners.

In order for the public to like the intelligent and witty detective, he needs to balance his mental superiority with minor oddness or strangeness. For instance, Poirot is always described as a funny figure with egg-shaped head.¹³⁶ Apart from that, when one of the passengers on the Orient Express sees Poirot for the first time, she describes him as a man that cannot be taken seriously by anyone.¹³⁷ His pride is his moustache which adds to the distinctive appearance of his. Except for his looks, Poirot has also various rituals and habits that lessen him from the godly unattainable spheres. Firstly, he speaks fluent English but always uses French expressions, for instance “mon amie” or “vraiment”, which might seem strange for someone who obviously speaks English very well and despises being mistaken for a Frenchman. Secondly, he tends to describe the thinking process as using his “little grey cells”. Thirdly, he can be described as a stickler and everything needs to be neat and organised. On the other hand, Trachta is literally queer when he practices strange rituals, forms of exercises, that help him think. At one point, he even hangs himself upside down, which is similar to Hazell in the *Thrilling Stories of the Railway*. Surprisingly, inspector Trachta’s appearance is not emphasized, which would be expected for the play is not supposed to be only read but performed and seen, Cimrman however chose not to parody Poirot’s appearance and focused on the aforementioned characteristics.

When speaking about absurdity, Bergson mentions a philosophical thought that we see the things we are thinking about instead of thinking about the things we see.¹³⁸ Again, this assertion is applicable to the Cimrman’s parody: Trachta sees a person in a deep sleep but due to professional distortion he considers the person to be dead owing to a strong belief which is mentioned among the first words he utters in the play, a literal claim that every time he travels on a train there happens to be a dead body.¹³⁹ Subsequently, he initiates a murder investigation, completely different reaction to gardener’s or a chef’s if they were the passengers of the train instead of a police inspector.

¹³⁴ Cimrman at al., *Vražda v salonním coupé*, 37.

¹³⁵ Christie, *Orient Express*, 16.

¹³⁶ Christie, *Orient Express*, 9.

¹³⁷ Christie, *Orient Express*, 9.

¹³⁸ Bergson, *Smích*, 82.

¹³⁹ Cimrman at al., *Vražda v salonním coupé*, 35.

Furthermore, Bergson invites the readers to imagine certain characters in any situation and explains that a comical scene occurs when the situation turns upside down and the roles of the characters switch.¹⁴⁰ For instance, in the *Murder in the Parlour Car Compartment* a murder suspect interviews the police inspector Trachta even though the only logical procedure would be the police inspector asking questions and the suspect answering.

Additionally, the power of coincidence is present in both stories. First of all, Poirot was not supposed to be on the train, he needed to board it suddenly owing to changed circumstances concerning completely different case and managed to do so in spite of all the coaches being reserved. Further, the train was not supposed to stop, they could not predict there would be too much snow that would stop the train for days. Similarly, in Cimrman's story, there is attempted murder, but coincidentally the poison does not work or the passengers on the train prove to be connected by common history. These are the examples of the newness which must be included in parodies as suggested by Orlický.¹⁴¹ That is also the reason why Cimrman's parody has a different ending to the one fabricated by Agatha Christie in her detective story.

Out of the three books, the role of the train changes the most in the *Murder on the Orient Express*. Initially, for Poirot it is simply a means of transport. Then, journeys by trains were more comfortable than flying and the Orient Express itself was popular among travellers. Nonetheless, he only needs to move from one location to another at the beginning and therefore decides to board the train. Next, for the director of the company, the train is a source of his incomes, during the first few days, the train appears to be simply a place where the passengers can meet new people.

Now, for the murderers it has been a means of revenge from the beginning, whereas for the victim it turns out to be a place of his last meal, last words and last breath even though, initially, it was only a means of transport. Subsequently, the coach becomes Poirot's workspace, while for the murderers it becomes a prison cell instead of their alibi.

In contrast with the rich train symbolism in Christie's work, Cimrman, as well as Whitechurch, did not utilise the power of the symbolical levels of the train to the fullest and might have not taken some into account at all. In the parody, the train begins as a means of transport, then appears to be a crime scene. There is the common role of a restaurant when the characters eat during the journey, for a moment it is a dentist's office, maybe it could even be perceived a gymnasium because of inspector Trachta's exercise. The aspect of the

¹⁴⁰ Bergson, *Smích*, 48.

¹⁴¹ Orlický, *Záhady komična*, 63.

prison, on the other hand, is completely omitted and the only thing closest to this level is the fact, that the “murderer” must have been one of the passengers.

8 Literary Devices

The preceding part of the work analysed the usage of trains, the detective aspects of the primary sources and the parodic approach of Cimrman, the following paragraphs focus on the literary tools chosen by the authors to describe the scenes and to express the desired meaning and mood.

“Literary Devices refers to the typical structures used by writers in their works to convey his or her messages in a simple manner to the readers. When employed properly, the different literary devices help readers to appreciate, interpret and analyse a literary work.”¹⁴² Some of the significant literary tools that the authors used throughout their works have already been mentioned above, however, this paper does not focus primarily on their comparison as the authors used different literary genres, two of them used epic while the third one chose drama, and therefore thorough comparison would be highly problematic as different genres require different approaches and techniques of conveying desired message to the reader. Nevertheless, a number of the devices will be pointed out to accent for example the same situation handled differently according to the genre or tools used in the parody.

Firstly, none of the authors chose to use euphemisms, “indirect expressions that replace words and phrases considered harsh,”¹⁴³ for the murders or crimes that are being investigated which would be expected for example in Christie’s work as some of the suspects belong even to the aristocracy, namely Princess Dragomiroff for instance. Contrarily, even the upper class passenger in *Murder on the Orient Express* use rather expressive even vulgar language when talking about the victim, one of the characters reacts to the victim’s identity as follows: “The damned skunk!”¹⁴⁴ and similarly, in the *Murder in the Parlour Car Compartment*, the police inspector uses a vulgar word with meaning close to “bullshit” in English during an interview with one of the suspects, though the usage here is meant to primarily surprise and amuse the audience and to express deep feelings of hatred as in the formerly mentioned narrative.¹⁴⁵ Rut explains that the humorous effect is result of the prevailing perception of theatres as noble shrine where art and high culture flourish and therefore the vulgarism shocks the audience and causes laughter.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² “Literary Devices and Terms,” Literary Devices, accessed April 19, 2020, <https://literarydevices.net>.

¹⁴³ “Euphemism,” Literary Devices, accessed April 19, 2020, <https://literarydevices.net/euphemism>.

¹⁴⁴ Christie, *Orient Express*, 63.

¹⁴⁵ Cimrman at al., *Vražda v salonním coupé*, 48.

¹⁴⁶ Přemysl Rut, “Předmluva,” in *Hry a semináře: úplné vydání*, by Jára Cimrman, Ladislav Smoljak and Zdeněk Svěrák (Praha: Paseka, 2009), 10–11.

Secondly, a tool which is plentifully to be found in the work by Agatha Christie is foreshadowing, a tool which “a writer gives an advance hint of what is to come later in the story.”¹⁴⁷ Nonetheless, at the same time, she presents the reader also with apparent clues that only seem to be foreshadowing at first glance but contradict the real clues, this makes the story very complex and the common reader therefore struggles to guess the murderer from the hints as it is rather difficult to distinguish between the real and fake statements, for example “... But nevertheless let us just for one moment suppose it. Then, perhaps, all these here are linked together – by death.”¹⁴⁸ This sentence is an example of simple foreshadowing for we already read the book expecting a murder, the same can be said of “... It may be foolish, but I feel anything might happen. Anything at all. ...”¹⁴⁹ However, sentence: “I cannot see that there has been any negligence on your part.”¹⁵⁰, is clearly misleading for the subject of the statement proves to be one of the murderers in the end. Then there are also sentences that do not seem to foreshadow anything, like “We will listen to her story now.” Notwithstanding, the hint is hidden in the word story which does not mean only the suspect’s testimony or evidence but truly a story – a tale that had been carefully put together long before the train journey.

In parallel, Cimrman uses foreshadowing as well, naturally, since he parodies a story which is full of it, however, he overdoes it on purpose and does not use the false hints, thus the sentences are straightforward and striking: “Sometimes it seems to me that I attract murders. For example, I have never been on a train without a murder onboard.”¹⁵¹ This is the opening scene of the play which clearly sets the mood and removes any doubts if there had been any despite the title itself.

On the contrary, different approach was again chosen by Whitechurch as he does not foreshadow almost in any of his stories, his style is more pragmatic and systematic using different literary devices and techniques usually laying the clues one by one, focusing on each of them and explaining them which cannot be considered foreshadowing in any case.

Thirdly, there can be found examples of hyperbole (“exaggeration of ideas for the sake of emphasis”)¹⁵² which are clear and easy to identify in the works, such as “There are hundreds of reasons why silly persons put their heads out of a train window.”¹⁵³ in the

¹⁴⁷ “Foreshadowing,” Literary Devices, accessed April 19, 2020, <https://literarydevices.net/foreshadowing>.

¹⁴⁸ Christie, *Orient Express*, 21.

¹⁴⁹ Christie, *Orient Express*, 27.

¹⁵⁰ Christie, *Orient Express*, 63.

¹⁵¹ Cimrman at al., *Vražda v salonním coupé*, 35.

¹⁵² “Hyperbole,” Literary Devices, accessed April 19, 2020, <https://literarydevices.net/hyperbole>.

¹⁵³ Whitechurch, “The Tragedy on the London and Mid-Northern,” no pagination.

Thrilling Stories. Truly, there are certainly many reasons why a person would put their head out of train window, nevertheless, if he was to name specific cases, he would be able to list only a handful of them. Next, there are also hyperbolic sentences that overlap with foreshadowing in Christie's work: "But does everybody on this train tell lies?"¹⁵⁴ This sentence is an exaggeration exclaimed by M. Bouc when Poirot uncovers more and more lies, however, it proves to be almost truthful since all the passengers in the carriage, apart from the detective, prove to be involved in the crime.

Furthermore, another example of literary devices which Christie uses adroitly are idioms, expressions which "are not interpreted literally".¹⁵⁵ She knew how to enrich her texts and there can be found immense number of idiomatic expressions throughout the novel, for example: "... that by itself is a calamity of the first water,"¹⁵⁶ "... I don't as a rule cotton to Britishers – they are stiff-necked lot...",¹⁵⁷ "When Momma's got a hunch, ..." ¹⁵⁸ In contrast, Whitechurch uses idioms rather scarcely and in the analysed stories there were only a few of them, including "I ought to have kept a sharper eye on him"¹⁵⁹ and "It began to dawn upon him that ..." ¹⁶⁰. As the reader can see, these idioms are more common and therefore fit into Whitechurch's style, which is predominated by straightforward language and broad vocabulary, however, narrowed and particularly focused on the railway. This makes his stories easy to follow excluding the parts where he tends to use too much terminology, on the other hand, it deprives the stories of certain artistic aspect.

As for the parody, Cimrman did not use idioms in his work for the genre of parody is different from the previously described stories and relies on other devices and techniques, for instance the situational irony which means that "incongruity appears between expectations of something to happen, and what actually happens instead."¹⁶¹ This type of irony that can be found in parody as well as in the *Thrilling Stories*. Particularly the methods the detectives use are perfect examples of this irony. As an illustration was chosen the situation when the police inspector Trachta announces that one case requires vertical hanging position and instead of expected deep thinking in a chair, which would be typical for Poirot or armchair mysteries in general, or torturing the suspect by the exercise which may be and

¹⁵⁴ Christie, *Orient Express*, 174.

¹⁵⁵ "Idiom," Literary Devices, accessed April 19, 2020, <https://literarydevices.net/idiom>.

¹⁵⁶ Christie, *Orient Express*, 35.

¹⁵⁷ Christie, *Orient Express*, 64.

¹⁵⁸ Christie, *Orient Express*, 75.

¹⁵⁹ Whitechurch, "The Affair of the Corridor Express," no pagination.

¹⁶⁰ Whitechurch, "How the Bishop Kept his Appointment," no pagination.

¹⁶¹ "Situational Irony," Literary Devices, accessed April 19, 2020, <https://literarydevices.net/situational-irony>.

option, he himself pulls a little horizontal bar out of his suitcase and thinks during the physical activity of hanging on it upside down.¹⁶² Similar surprise awaits the reader in the *Thrilling Stories* when Hazell stops everything he is doing and instead of expected thinking or for example finishing a conversation, he suddenly stops and performs his special workout without warning his companions first and only explains what is happening mid-exercise: “‘Good! they ought soon to be here,’ replied Hazell, as he munched some biscuits and washed them down with a draught of milk, after which he astonished them all by solemnly going through one of his ‘digestive exercises’.”¹⁶³

Concerning the most common type of irony, verbal, when the utterance is “contradictory to what was intended to say”,¹⁶⁴ the examples in all of the works are plentiful and there will be highlighted only some of them. One of the ironical exchanges in the *Murder in the Parlour Car Compartment* is following (talking about the steward): “He is a very nice man. I will bequeath my horse to him. Do you think he will be pleased?” and Trachta ironically answers: “Indeed, especially if he owns a stable.” This is also example of certain criticism of higher classes – the factory owner does not realize that owning a horse would be nearly impossible for a working-class man, let alone a conductor who spends sometimes days aboard and highly likely would not be able to take care of such animal. Another example, from the Orient Express murder, can be found in the dialogue between Hercule Poirot and the victim to-be: “Mr. Poirot, I am a rich man - a very rich man. Men in that position have enemies. I have an enemy.” to which Poirot reacts, saying: “Only one enemy?”¹⁶⁵ This is also the excerpt that foreshadows the high number of murderers.

In addition, similes are very popular literary tool among authors generally, these three being no exception. Similes are defined as “a comparison, showing similarities between two different things.”¹⁶⁶ Poirot likes to make himself understood by comparing and using similes, for instance: “The train, it is as dangerous as a sea voyage!”¹⁶⁷ Similar examples can be found also in the *Murder in the Parlour Car Compartment*: “I slept like a log.”¹⁶⁸ and in the *Thrilling Stories*: “The whole thing's as plain as daylight, except just one point.”¹⁶⁹

¹⁶² Christie, *Orient Express*, 38.

¹⁶³ Whitechurch, “The Affair of the Corridor Express,” no pagination.

¹⁶⁴ “Verbal Irony,” Literary Devices, accessed April 19, 2020, <https://literarydevices.net/verbal-irony>.

¹⁶⁵ Christie, *Orient Express*, 25.

¹⁶⁶ “Simile,” Literary Devices, accessed April 19, 2020, <https://literarydevices.net/simile>.

¹⁶⁷ Christie, *Orient Express*, 12.

¹⁶⁸ Cimrman at al., *Vražda v salonním coupé*, 63.

¹⁶⁹ Whitechurch, “The Tragedy on the London and Mid-Northern,” no pagination.

Lastly, the symbolism of trains was discussed in the preceding chapters, however, there can be found more examples as symbolism “meanings that are different from their literal sense,”¹⁷⁰ does not apply solely to objects. The major theme and reason for the murder is the insufficiency of legal system in the United States as the former kidnapper and murderer is set free owing to bribery and that results in his position of a victim. The murderers decide that since there are twelve members of jury who embody the law, there should be twelve of them as well. Poirot himself becomes a symbol related to the flaws of the legal system when he solves the mystery and instead of extraditing them, he condones their action.¹⁷¹

Similarly, the story “The Tragedy on the London and Mid-Northern” by Victor Whitechurch works with the symbolism of insufficient legal system and the detective, who solves the mystery and discovers the murderer, decides to keep the information of the true nature of the incident to himself.¹⁷² This story is enriched by the fact that the murderer is at the end of his tether for he is already dying when Hazell finds him, thus the murderer is punished by a greater force than the human law. Nonetheless, the truth is that Whitechurch’s stories are mostly too simple and short to offer a plot of such quality as Christie’s, albeit it cannot be said of all of his works and, as already proved, he was able to use advanced literary tools and complicated plots.

Symbolism is present in the parody, that is indisputable, however, Cimrman uses different kinds of symbols and for different purposes. Through the parody he criticises the police forces that can be bribed or fooled, their methods and techniques are subtly lambasted. Moreover, as stated previously, the approach of upper classes to lower classes is brought to attention and even the dissimulating of the middle and lower classes considered necessary in customer service. The conductor in the *Murder in the Parlour Car Compartment* is very professional and shows only the best manners to the passengers, brings them anything they ask for and helps them in any possible way, for example the “victim” has a toothache, the conductor wastes no time and performs dental surgery right there in the compartment. This situation is primarily humorous, however, the deeper meaning reflects the absurdity of behaviours of upper classes towards their servants and lower classes, moreover, there can be detected also the silent revolt of the oppressed as the conductor inserts poison into the tooth to kill the businessman.¹⁷³ Furthermore, his speech is always very polite in the language the

¹⁷⁰ “Symbolism,” Literary Devices, accessed April 19, 2020, <https://literarydevices.net/symbolism>.

¹⁷¹ Christie, *Orient Express*, 191.

¹⁷² Whitechurch, “The Tragedy on the London and Mid-Northern,” no pagination.

¹⁷³ Cimrman at al., *Vražda v salonním coupé*, 39.

gentleman understand even though he does not master it, for instance: “Good afternoon, gentlemen. Everything alright in the tunnel? All is erömu? Thank you.”¹⁷⁴ Nevertheless, when he speaks to himself, he uses Hungarian and expresses all the negative emotions such as in the sentence mentioned previously, where he utters the words of dying friend: “Eréč piklóš neméči, huňár scépeň kámoš.”¹⁷⁵

To summarize, the literary devices used by the authors are too varied, on the grounds of the genres they used and their authorial styles, to be thoroughly compared and confronted with the other works. There cannot be determined the author who used the literary tools the most correctly or in the only right amount, the parody requires different tools than the original detective story and in different amounts, similarly, Whitechurch’s stories cannot be considered to be of inferior literary value to Christie’s work as both of the authors managed to attract readers who enjoyed their distinctive style of writing. In spite of this statement, it may be possible to argue that Whitechurch never reached Christie’s popularity also due to the lack of language variety in his works. However, this cannot be substantiated by any reputable research at the moment.

In addition, as stated above, this paper addressed only a fraction of the literary tools that could be found in the texts and these were chosen to demonstrate the prominent values of the stories and those of minor importance appearing only in one of the works were omitted completely.

¹⁷⁴ Cimrman at al., *Vražda v salonním coupé*, 36.

¹⁷⁵ Cimrman at al., *Vražda v salonním coupé*, 39.

9 Conclusion

The outline of the development of British railways in the 19th century proves that even though trains and railways faced negative emotions and fears of public, they soon proved to be convenient means of transport and general liking grew among all classes of the British society. Trains influenced the British culture and inhabitants by connecting the country and bringing people together, the speed of the transport brought faster pace of life and the railway impacted all spheres of politics and economy.

Almost simultaneously with the railways the detective stories were evolving and therefore it was not surprising when authors combined the genre with the means of transport. While trains and railways were only beginning to appear, literature had already been considered standard form of communication, expression of thoughts and entertainment for centuries, thus was only natural that literature absorbed the phenomenon and used it either as a main theme of a book or as a kind of a complement, fashionable accessory that should not be missing from any literary piece written during certain period in the history.

The welfare of Britain in the Victorian Era gave rise to the railway network, crime fiction and consequently enabled the rise of Agatha Christie who, as a train admirer, set several of her stories on board of trains, for example her favourite Orient Express. Nowadays, electrified trains are inseparable part of our lives and the stories by Christie and Whitechurch offer an escape to the times before World Wars when trains were steam-powered connected with nostalgia.

There are three distinctive literary works that can be compared and analysed despite their authors being of different nationalities and living in slightly different time periods due to the fact that all of them share similar if not identical themes of murder solved by deduction of ingenious detectives. The three detectives perfectly coexist because Poirot is serious professional, Trachta is the parodic version of Poirot and holds a mirror up to his peculiar methods by exaggerating them, these two are accompanied by Thorpe Hazell, who could be considered a somewhat parody of Poirot as well, were it not for the fact that Christie published her first novel, the *Mysterious Affair at Styles*, years after Whitechurch had already published the *Thrilling Stories*.

The roles of the trains vary, the only function that all of the stories share is the basic transportation role. Most of the stories work with the symbol of crime as a set for execution and ensuing investigation. Christie imparts sundry roles to Orient Express, presenting it as an exotic location promising adventure, a place for meeting people and creating lifelong

bonds or contrarily parting with friends forever. The Orient Express became figuratively a hotel, prison or a tool of revenge, whilst trains in Whitechurch's stories were primarily depicted as crime scenes and only scarcely represented for example a playground, device for communication, safety, meeting location or stage for crimes resembling magic tricks. Whitechurch himself embodied what he showed in "How the Bishop kept his Appointment" as he was clergyman himself instead of perceiving trains as evil he became enthusiast and nearly specialist in the field. All three of the authors presented trains as capable of raising and expressing strong emotions, being it love of brother and sister, love of two lovers, fear of enemies or hatred.

Cimrman prioritised parody of Poirot and his methods to the roles of trains and yet he managed to express the absurdity of demands of passengers and turned the train not only into a crime scene, the meeting space or place for acquiring business connections, but for example also into a dentist's office.

The authors used wide range of literary tools, from foreshadowing to irony, to attract the readers and to enrich the experience of following the meticulously constructed plots of the mysteries, depicting trains and constructing a parody.

Trying to answer the question why Whitechurch never gained as much popularity as Christie, remains problematic and would require further research as there is no clear answer. The setting of his stories were exclusively trains for he merely loved them and as an enthusiast practiced his writing skills on detective stories. The fact that he used solely the railway environment as the setting for his stories might have been too repetitive for the readers. Moreover, he never managed to overcome the tendency to use terminology and to describe technical details too elaborately, including even charts and drawings. Of course, Christie had to use railway-related terminology as well, however, in her story it never stands out and the reader follows the lines without realizing it, while reading Whitechurch occasionally requires sharp focus in order to understand. On the other hand, the precision and accuracy were admired by American authors such as Dorothy L. Sayers proving that the narratives are of high literary value and do attract readers, the problem is, that the audience interested is not as wide for a certain intellectual level is necessary.

In conclusion, as it had been demonstrated throughout the paper on the primary sources, trains are popular setting used by many authors from the least known to the most popular regardless of time period (however, dating from the 19th century) and genre. The trains represent a means of transport whose symbolic perception does not need to be restricted to everyday device for commuting or background setting for everyday activities

such as sleeping or reading, trains can become scene for a story or murder investigation, symbolize mobility, modernity and peak of industrial revolution, the source of pollution and death.

10 Resumé

Bakalářská práce se zabývá vlaky a jejich rolí v literatuře. K analýze byla vybrána díla tří autorů, jmenovitě *Vražda v Orient expresu* Agathy Christie, *Thrilling Stories of the Railway* („*Vzrušující příběhy ze železnice*“) Victora L. Whitechurche a *Vražda v salonním coupé* Járy Cimrmana.

Práce je rozdělena na dvě části, první kapitoly se postupně zabývají historií a vývojem vlaků a železnice ve Spojeném království Velké Británie a Severního Irska v průběhu devatenáctého století se zaměřením na sociální a kulturní dopad na britskou společnost, vývojem detektivního žánru od Edgara Allan Poea po zlatý věk detektivní prózy, kulturním a literárním kontextem doby v druhé polovině devatenáctého a první polovině dvacátého století a na závěr teoretické části je definován termín parodie spolu s kontextem v oboru smíchu a parodie.

Druhá část práce se zabývá již samotnými vybranými díly, jejich analýzou a vzájemným srovnáváním s přispěním konzultací vybraných sekundárních zdrojů. Na úvod jsou jednotlivé knihy a autoři představeni a je vysvětleno, proč byla zvolena právě tato tři díla. Následuje kapitola pojednávající o různých rolích, které na sebe berou vlaky v dílech Agathy Christie a Victora L. Whitechurche. Kniha *Thrilling Stories of the Railway* je souborem patnácti povídek s tematikou železnice, k analýze a vzájemnému srovnání s *Vraždou v Orient expresu* bylo vybráno pět z nich.

Jedinou rolí vlaků, kterou všechny příběhy sdílí, je základní přepravní funkce. Většina zvolených příběhů pracuje se symbolem vlaku jakožto dějištěm zločinu, místem, pro vykonání popravky a následného vyšetřování. Role, které přisuzuje *Orient expresu* Agatha Christie, jsou rozmanité a představuje čtenáři vlak jako exotickou destinaci s příslibem dobrodružství, místo pro setkávání lidí a vytváření doživotních přátelství, nebo naopak loučení přátel bez jistoty opětovného shledání. *Orient expres* se pro pasažéry představuje jako hotel, ve kterém mají zajištěný nejen nocleh a několikrát denně stravu, ale také například „pokojevou službu“, kterou zastává průvodčí. Pro vrahy, kteří se rozhodnout spáchat během cesty vraždu, představuje vlak nástroj pomsty, i když samotné zabití je provedeno nožem, poté následuje okamžik, kdy se pro ně vlak místo útočištěm stane vězeňskou celou, ve které jsou uvězněni a není úniku před Poirotovou dedukcí a následným odhalením pravdy.

V porovnání s *Orient expresem* mohou čtenáři připadat vlaky ve Whitechurchových příbězích ochuzeny, protože častokrát je jedinou další rolí samotného vlaku právě již

zmiňované místo činu, v některých příbězích doplněné například rolí hřiště, kdy pro malého chlapce vlak nepředstavuje pouze přepravu z místa na místo, ale bere ho jako příležitost k dobrodružství a hře, v jiném příběhu je vlak využit jako komunikační prostředek nebo jeviště pro zločin svou důmyslností připomínající kouzelnický trik. Samozřejmě nechybí občasné role vlaku jakožto bezpečného útočiště, případně prostředku, který danou osobu do bezpečí přepraví. Podobně jako Orient expres i Whitechurchův vlak se stane místem setkání osob, které si navzájem ovlivní život, nicméně nejde o tak trvalou ani radikální událost jako v expresu, jmenovitě se jedná o příběh „How the Bishop kept his Appointment“, volně přeloženo jako „Jak biskup stihl své jednání“. V této povídce nedojde ke zločinu a Whitechurch jej pravděpodobně napsal, aby dokázal, že i přesto, že se lidé zpočátku vlaků a železnice obávali, o několik desítek let později cestují vlakem i duchovní, představitelé jedné z nejkonzervativnějších lidských společenství. Všichni tři autoři představují vlaky jako nástroje pro vzbuzení, popřípadě vyjádření emocí, ať už se jedná o lásku mileneckou či sourozeneckou, strach z nepřátel nebo přímo nenávist.

Doplňkovou otázkou, která vzešla z porovnání děl Agathy Christie a Victora Whitechurcha je, proč se jeden autor zabývající se vlaky a detektivem využívajícího dedukci stala světoznámá postava a autor bestsellerů, zatímco druhý byl postupně pozapomenut a jeho díla se nedrží na předních místech prodejních žebříčků. Tato problematika by vyžadovala důkladnější zkoumání a bádání, pro které v této práci nezbyl prostor, přesto se ale nabízí několik možných odpovědí: Whitechurch sám byl vlakovým nadšencem, díky tomu znal veškerou terminologii, jízdní řády i tratě a z toho důvodu jsou v jeho povídkách hojně zastoupené informace, které nejsou nutné pro rozuzlení případu a čtenáři, který nadšení z vlakové dopravy nesdílí, mohou připadat nudné a nadbytečné. Podobně mohlo průměrné čtenáře unavit opakující se prostředí, a to i přesto, že se Whitechurch snažil zápletky obměňovat a zasazovat své příběhy do různých částí Británie. Christie využila vlaky ve svých příbězích několikrát, ale nikdy neuvedla zbytečné technické nákresy a detaily, které by čtenáře mátlly více, než bylo nutné pro zachování napětí při četbě, přílišná zaujatost se tak mohla stát Whitechurchovi „osudnou“.

Třetím vybraným dílem je *Vražda v salonním coupé*, parodie *Vraždy v Orient Expresu*. Cimrman svou parodii pojal jako divadelní hru, což je jeho osobitý styl, a značně tak omezil počet postav, rozsah a propracovanost zápletky a bohužel také různých rolí, které mohl Orient expres v jeho podání ztvárnit. Prvním, kdo ve hře promluví, je policejní inspektor Trachta a jasně tak určí, že hlavním parodovaným v této hře je Hercule Poirot a jeho metody. Nicméně i přesto, že jsou vlaky v tomto díle upozaděny, podařilo se autorovi

vyjádřit několik různých rolí. V rámci parodie cestujících a jejich občasných absurdních požadavků se vlak stává nejenom místem předpokládaného zločinu nebo prostředí vhodného k navázání obchodních vztahů, ale také například ordinací zubního „lékaře“, jehož roli zaujal vlakový průvodčí.

Všichni tři autoři ve svých dílech využili širokou škálu jazykových prostředků, od různých typů ironie využitých především v parodii, přes symbolismus až po například idiomy. Tímto způsobem obohacují čtenářský zážitek při sledování pečlivě vystavěných kriminálních zápletek i popisu vlaků a jejich rolí.

Závěrem, v celé této bakalářské práci bylo na ukázkách z primárních zdrojů demonstrováno, že vlaky jsou oblíbeným místem pro zasazení děje v detektivní próze a je možné do vlaku zasadit i děj divadelní hry, výběrem autorů z devatenáctého i dvacátého století, z Velké Británie i z tehdejšího Československa. Vlaky v literatuře představují nejen předpokládaný dopravní prostředek, který lidé využívají při dojíždění do práce či školy, přičemž si krátí čas obyčejnými každodenními činnostmi, jako například četbou nebo spánkem, ale v symbolické rovině se mohou stát také dějištěm kriminálního příběhu, vyšetřování vraždy nebo únosu, místem pro osudová setkání nebo rozchody. Vlaky jsou symbolem mobility a moderního věku, jelikož představují vrchol průmyslové revoluce devatenáctého století, a nepřímo tak způsobily zrychlení životního tempa a ovlivnily životy lidí po celém světě.

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