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CRITICAL EXPLORATION OF THE ISSUE OF LOVE AND HATRED THROUGH AGATHA CRISTIE'S *THE UNEXPECTED GUEST*

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to show and discuss the importance of love and hatred through *The Unexpected Guest* by Agatha Christie. To reach the objectives of this paper, we have made a thorough and critical reading and we have used sociocriticism and intertextuality as literary theory. Love and hatred being factual concepts of great preoccupation in modern societies throughout the world, we have put a stress on how they influence people interactions. At the end of the work, the conclusion that the way people behave with others, the emotions and feelings they share with family members, neighbours, lovers and friends is what they receive in return. Life is conditioned by an alternative action of give and take. The more you share love, the more you receive.

Keywords: Love, Hatred, Life, Society, the unexpected guest.

Résumé

Le but de cette recherche est de montrer et de discuter de l'importance de l'amour et de la haine à travers *L'invité inattendu* d'Agatha Christie. Pour atteindre les objectifs de cet article, nous avons fait une lecture approfondie et critique du roman et nous avons utilisé la sociocritique et l'intertextualité pour les analyses. L'amour et la haine étant des concepts d'actualités et de grande préoccupation dans les sociétés modernes à travers le monde, nous avons mis l'accent sur la façon dont ils influencent les interactions entre les gens. À la fin de notre travail, nous sommes arrivés à la conclusion que la façon dont l'individu se comporte avec les autres, les émotions et les sentiments qu'il partage, avec sa famille, ses voisins, ses amants et amis, est ce qu'il reçoit en retour. La vie est conditionnée par une action alternative de donner et recevoir. Plus on partage d'amour, plus on en reçoit.

Mots clés : Amour ; haine ; vie ; société ; L'invité inattendu.

Introduction

Human being is a complex creation. It is hard and even impossible to say that we know someone. Man is capable of good and evil. Provided with a great intelligence, he is a love when he desires and can become hateful at any moment. Human nature is still under investigations.

As humans, we tend to think about our actions and whether or not they qualify as being "good" or "bad." There are many different attributes of a good person. For example, a good person is known to have the traits of treating others as their own, being honest, kind, and generous while making choices that would lead to a path of becoming a good moral person. However, not having these qualities does not necessarily mean that a person is bad. Humans are born to be good if they are taught right from wrong at a young age, but are later manipulated by society to act in evil or unethical ways (Ebudurdi, 2021).

From this quotation, it appears that human being is a double face creation, he has his good side and bad one. He can love and can hate as well. Ancient Greek philosopher, Socrates (470-399 B.C.), believed that virtue is achieved through human relationships such as family and friends, love, and happiness. The ambivalent nature of human beings makes them specific creatures whose state of feelings cannot be known. Sometimes we wake up feeling happy or sad, brave or scared, in love or full of hatred, tolerant or full of revenge.

The same issue about human nature is what Agatha Christie has dealt with in her famous detective and crime novel *The Unexpected Guest*. Very genius in all her works, she presented the different characters of the novel with different faces. The intension is to show how changeable human being is. From a closer analysis of each character behavior the reader comes to the conclusion that an individual can never be well known until his mask falls and that his real face appears. Published in 1958, *The Unexpected Guest* is a very interesting novel in which Christie depicts a mysterious scene of murder with its ups and downs proper to movies action. Through the novel, Christie described how human beings are ambivalent in their nature, submerged and guided by their emotions which lead them to act in good or bad way. To love people or hate them. To make friends or have enemies.¹

The main aim of this paper is to examine the issue of love and hatred through *The Unexpected Guest* by Agatha Christie. The work is the fruit of a critical analysis of the issue under consideration. To reach the goal of the present paper, data have been collected from former articles and essays and social experiences having the novel as the primary source. Sociocriticism and intertextuality has been used as literary theories in order to better understand the subject. The qualitative approach enlightened the procedure of the research.

1- Study method and Theoretical framework

The results of this paper are based on documentation drawn from many sources; the novel under study which has been considered a primary source on which some critical books, theses, dissertations, articles, as well as novels dealing with the issue under study have been added. The work is not dealing with numerical data that is why qualitative approach for data collection has been used. Love and Hatred being issues of deeper feeling and personality, the most suitable literary theory selected is the psychoanalytic.

Psychoanalytic theory is the theory of personality organization and the dynamics of personality development that guides psychoanalysis, a clinical method for treating psychopathology. First laid out by Sigmund Freud in the late 19th century, psychoanalytic theory has undergone many refinements since his work. The psychoanalytic theory came to full prominence in the last third of the twentieth century as part of the flow of critical discourse regarding psychological treatments after the 1960s, long after Freud's death in 1939. (Teresa 2008, p.105-109).

On the same vain (Tyson 2002), said that:

Freud had ceased his analysis of the brain and his physiological studies and shifted his focus to the study of the mind and the related psychological attributes making up the mind, and on treatment using free association and the phenomena of transference. His study emphasized the recognition of childhood events that could influence the mental functioning of adults. His examination of the genetic and then the developmental aspects gave the psychoanalytic theory its characteristics starting with his publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1899, his theories began to gain prominence.

Talking about human behaviour, his feelings and his perceptions of life and love, (Friedman et al 2011 p 49) said:

Through the scope of a psychoanalytic lens, humans are described as having sexual and aggressive drives. Psychoanalytic theorists believe that human behavior is deterministic. It is governed by irrational forces, and the unconscious, as well as instinctual and biological drives. Due to this deterministic nature, psychoanalytic theorists do not believe in free will.

Love and hatred as existing forces have been thoroughly explored within the literature of psychoanalysis, building on awareness of their co-existence in western culture reaching back to the "odi et amo" of Catullus, and Plato's *Symposium*.

¹ [www.bartleby.com/essay/the-unexpected-guest-gives-plot-summary-and P3H36E9KR2YSH](http://www.bartleby.com/essay/the-unexpected-guest-gives-plot-summary-and-P3H36E9KR2YSH)

2- Literature review

Love and hatred are two contradictory feelings human beings express according to the situations or the estate in which they are. Such a contradiction led Sigmund Freud to use the term ambivalence to express the simultaneous presence of love and hatred in human life. Agatha Christie is not the first to have raised the issue of love and hatred in her works.

Thomas Mann (1924) considers that love is a strong feeling which runs to positive things in the world. For him the love we share with our family, friends and neighbours is more important than anything else. It is like reason and death. *It is love, not reason that is stronger than death* he said. Thackeray (1848) thinks that not being able to love is senseless. Love is one of the characteristic of a wise man. In his work entitled *Vanity Fair* he wrote: *It is better to love wisely, no doubt: but to love foolishly is better than not to be able to love at all.*

According to the Russian author Leo Tolstoy (1869), the real meaning of life is in love. Anybody who has never experienced love is a lost person with no guide somewhere in the nature. He claimed in *War and Peace* published in 1869 that: *All, everything that I understand, I understand only because I love.* Through the above statement, Tolstoy is saying that love is the key which unlocks the closed doors of our minds. Whoever you are when you don't educate a child with some kinds of love, you cannot expect to get the better from him. In his book entitled *Man Search for meaning* Viktor E. Frankl (1959), one can read:

Love is the only way to grasp another human being in the innermost core of his personality. No one can become fully aware of the very essence of another human being unless he loves him. By his love he is enabled to see the essential traits and features in the beloved person; and even more, he sees that which is potential in him, which is actualized but yet ought to be actualized. Furthermore, but his love, the loving person enables the beloved person to actualize these potentialities. By making him aware of what he can and of what he should become, he makes these potentialities come true.

From this statement, I understand that love is compulsory for human being. Loving each other is a must for peace and better life in communities. Self-development and welfare also come from the way you love each other. As to back what Viktor has said, Coleman Barks (1995) in his novel *The Essential Rumi* wrote: *Gamble everything for love, if you are a true human being.* Meaning that everything you do, you should do it for the sake of love to justify your being human. Normally there should not be any place for hatred in life. Still, the nature of man leads us to talk about it.

Miriam Webster 2023, defines hatred as an extreme dislike or disgust. Resentment that is usually mutual: prejudiced hostility or animosity.² So it is huge hate for your neighbor. This could lead people to do unimaginable things to their friends, relatives. It is because its dangers that Martin Luther King Jr advises people not to be influenced the feeling of hatred. For him, when we are forced or obliged to hate, we should not take that part. "Let no man pull you so low as to hate him"³ Furthermore, it is obvious that a human being in possession of all his capacities and mentally good cannot keep on hating his neighbor. It is sometimes just like they are created with a deficit of compassion and pity sensibility. From this perspective one could understand Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) p273 when she said:

There is, I believe, in every disposition a tendency to some particular evil, a natural defect, which not even the best education can overcome. And your defect is a propensity to hate everybody.

Haters never put themselves at the place of others in order to understand why and how people behave this or that way. They usually stick on what they heard about people or basing

² "Hatred." Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hatred>. Accessed 15 Apr. 2023.

³ Martin Luther King Jr, *A knock at Midnight*, Chicago, 1958

themselves on the appearances which push them hate. They become evils towards people wanting to eliminate them if possible. As for Maya Angelou, the world will be better if we stop hating. He believes that nothing can be revolved with violence, brutality and threat. People must reorganize their minds and find solutions to the problems which undermine countries welfare than being interested in domestic conflicts which lead to self-destruction and ruin. He said: "*Hate, it has caused a lot of problems in the world, but has not solved one yet*"⁴ Martin Luther King in his *A Testament of Hope: The Essential writings and speeches*, he wrote:

Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction.

Luther describes hate like a darkness which blinds people eyes. For him a man full of hatred can never know the real sense of life and the importance of sociability. Mohandas K. Gandhi thinks that love is long lasting whereas hate is an emotion which disappears after having caused a lot of pains, disasters and emptiness. People will appreciate you for the good actions than for the bad ones. Gandhi believes that:

Hatred ever kills, love never dies. Such is the vast difference between the two? What is obtained by love is retained for all time. What is obtained by hatred proves a burden I reality for it increases hatred.

As you can see many writers have already dealt with the issue of love and hatred, despite all they have said, there is a lot to say. The paper aims at putting a stress on the necessity of the lovers to keeping on supporting each other whatever the situation. They should not let any kind of hatred gains their heart at the point of willing to kill their partner

3- Love and hatred through *The Unexpected Guest* by Agatha Christie.

The Unexpected Guest is a literary work by the mother of crime novels Agatha Christie. It has been published on 6 September 1999 by Charles Osborne. The novel itself is a crime novel in genre. I have decided to focus on the issue of love and hatred through the novel. From a closer and critical reading, I came across different types of love and hatred. Love in love affairs; hatred in love, brotherhood hatred, mother's love and hatred, friend's love and hatred etc... The case of Laura Warwick in the novel is of good example. She hates her husband Richard Warwick a lot. Talking about the latter she said:

*For one thing he drank. He drank excessively. For another, he was cruel. Unbearably cruel. I have hated him for years.*⁵

This statement may be hard to understand and to accept. Mr Warwick being her husband she should not hate him at this level. They are supposed to support each other for good and worse. But that is the case for Laura. As it not enough she added:

They say misfortune improves character. It didn't improve his. Instead, it developed all his bad points. Vindictiveness, a streak of sadism, drinking too much. He made his life pretty impossible for everyone in this house.

She showed how much she hates the person her husband became. He has become a drunkard and is no more the person she has got married to. Still she does not divorce. She is still living with him. She loves her husband and do not want to criticize in the community as a woman who left her husband because he has had an accident and became a cripple. She said:

⁴ www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/hatred/maya_angelou

⁵ Agatha Chrisitie, *The Unexpected Guest*, Harper Collins, United Kingdom, 1999, chap.02

Critical exploration of the issue of love and hatred through Agatha Christie's *The Unexpected Guest*
He did have good qualities, you know. Generosity and courage, supreme courage. He was an attractive man to women.

Richard Warwick is one of the main protagonists of the novel. The whole story is around his character. He is a heartless man full of hatred for his own physical appearance and for other people around him. He rarely sleeps at night and keeps shouting at cats and birds. He is very wicked, hateful and heartless because a human life is meaningless for him. He considers human beings' life like the cat and birds he used to shoot with his guns at night. For him there is no compassion for a deceased corpse because his absence is worth nothing. He is always in conflict with his family members because of his lack of sociability. Brotherhood hatred with his half-brother Jan is of good illustration. They really hated each other; that's why when Jan was asked whether he was fond of Richard he strictly replied: *Fond of him! Fond of Richard? Oh, no, nobody could be fond of Richard.* We live in a world where brothers are supposed to love and support each other in all circumstances. Not only because of the same blood have they shared but also the fact that they come from the same family then same parents. The dogs and the cats have forgiven each other why not human. Christie portrayed a mother's love and hatred towards her son. As we know, parents who really educate their children in order to make them integrate society life by giving them the good directives which they must follow to better build and transform their personality. That's what Richard's mother Mrs Warwick expressed when Richard is to be sentenced for his crime. She said:

I loved my son Inspector. But I was not blind to his faults, and they were very largely due to the accident that made him a cripple. He was a proud man, an outdoor man, and to have to live the life of an invalid and a semi cripple was very galling to him. It did not shall we say improve his character.

A mother's love is for life. It deeper and sincere. Throughout the novel, I noticed that no one knows better Richard than his mother and her opinion about her son is very crucial to this analysis. Despite his bad behaviour and his unacceptable mood with people around him, his mother's love remains unbroken. She believed her son is a good person that he has changed because of sad situation he went through. She said: *I loved my son very dearly. As a child and in his manhood, he had many fine qualities. He was successful, resourceful, brave, sunny-tempered, a delightful companion.*

She believes that if not the accident which made him invalid obliging him stay in a wheel chair, her son would not be a burden for anyone. He was transformed to an evil that just showed off his wicked side at the unexpected moment. In her confession, Mrs Warwick claimed (p.88-89):

There were, I must admit, always the defects of those qualities in him. He was impatient of controls, of restraints. He has a cruel streak in him; he had a kind of fatal arrogance. So long as he was successful all was well.

She calls on the audience not to exaggerate by designating his son as a monster. A heartless man. He is just angry of the fact that he could not be able to do everything by himself. He is no more able to go out as he wanted and make some parties with friends as usual. Mrs Warwick said: *It would sound exaggerated. And yet, in some ways he was a monster, a monster of egoism, of pride, of cruelty. Because, he had been hurt himself, he had an enormous desire to hurt others.*

Finally, Mrs Warwick concluded the matters of love and hatred could not be understood. As a human being is unfathomable, no one can really know what happens in people's mind and heart which pushes them love and hate at the same time.

Throughout *The Unexpected Guest* gives the opportunity to the reader to make his mind on the issue of love and hatred. To achieve her objectives she decided to put in action different characters that perform distinctive roles. Meticulously she used the Warwick to better

demonstrate how love and hatred could affect human beings lives. In one side, she depicted Richard as a man full of hatred who doesn't care about anybody not even about himself. As a result he has become a persona non grata of his community beginning from his own brother. He thought he could gain something good by becoming wicked and unbearable. He doesn't care anymore about his wife Laura who was a very humble and patient woman.

On the opposite, Christie portrayed a very joyful and beautiful woman who loves everybody in the Warwick's household. She really fills her duties of wife taking care of her husband, protecting her in-laws. She shares more love and happiness with her family members and the servants, so that everybody in the household testifies that she is a good and kind partner. Even Richard's mother testifies her being a good wife.

Now I am very fond of my daughter-in-law. She has spirit; she is warm-hearted and had a very brave power of endurance.....She did everything a wife could do to make Richard illness and inaction bearable.

By portraying the above characters, Christie tried to show us that only love should prevail at any circumstance. Love plays a great role in many aspects of the relationship that people entertain such as: marriage, friendship, brotherhood, work and self-development. Love solidifies the connection between a man and his wife. When they care of their love, it improves the quality of the household and helps them educate their kids in the right way. For the author of the crime novel under study as for the sacred writing, she should stop hating each other and become leaders of peace and love builders for the citizens to learn to live together in a global environment where man is no more an enemy for his suchlike.

Conclusion

The issue of love has been and would still be a topic of more and more interest. We can't live without love. It is the real essence of life. This has been the vision of the late South-African artist Lucky Dube when he wrote:

I give love to those who give me love
Love those who give me war
I love those who hate me
I bless even those who curse me.

This portion of Lucky Dube's song has been taken from his last album *Respect*. It summarizes well the idea of Agatha Christie in the novel under study. Most of her works are directed to better the society and to change the way we manage interpersonal interactions between each other. The issue of love and hatred has already raised by different writers. Several studies are carried out on it still enough remains to say about it. The researches have proved that love and hatred are narrowly linked in one or another way. It is said that love is like light which illuminates our life and makes us see the real nature of things whereas hatred is just darkness which blinds our eyes and drives us to our own destruction. Sociocriticism and intertextuality have used to better understand the impact of the various interactions between the characters and the intersexuality brings light to better understanding not only about the text under study but also the its relationship with other texts from other authors.

Christie made the issue under study more interesting through her use of themes, dialogue, questionnaires; where each character comment and argument on his point of view. She has composed the play in a manner proper to crime-fiction novel full of mysteries and questions. Each character comes with his approach trying to declare oneself in favour or against Richard. No matter how the situation may be, let's always put love at the center.

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