

Miss Marple's Legacy: The Protagonist's Feminist Portrayal in Marple:12 New Stories

Miss Marple'in Mirası: Başkarakterin Marple:12 Yeni Öykü'deki Feminist Betimleniři

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Abstract

This study presents the enduring feminist elements depicted in the main character of Marple: 12 New Stories, portraying a unique and sympathetic woman within the detective fiction genre. Emerging in 1927, well before the active feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s, Miss Marple defied traditional gender norms, embodying independence and strength. Despite the societal constraints of women of her time, her popularity persisted, leading to numerous adaptations, including films and television series. Moreover, in 2022, a significant development occurred as twelve distinguished British and American contemporary female writers contributed to Marple: 12 New Stories, the first authorized sequel in detective fiction featuring Miss Marple after Agatha Christie's decease. This collection not only pays tribute to Christie's iconic creation but also reimagines Miss Marple through diverse perspectives, emphasizing her feminist legacy in the 21st century. In this regard, this paper takes a look at how Miss Marple's portrayal as a strong woman, both in the original works and the recent sequel, serves as an everlasting inspiration for future writers of detective fiction and feminists alike.

Keywords: Agatha Christie, Detective Fiction, Feminism, Marple:12 New Stories, Miss Marple

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Öz

Bu çalıřma, dedektif kurgu türü içinde benzersiz ve sempatik bir kadının canlandırıldıđı Marple:12 Yeni Öykü'deki ana karakterin kalıcı feminist unsurlarını sunmaktadır. 1960'lar ve 1970'lerdeki aktif feminist hareketlerden çok önce, 1927'de ortaya çıkan kurgusal Miss Marple karakteri, geleneksel cinsiyet normlarına meydan okuyarak bağımsız ve güçlü bir kadın portresi çizmektedir. O dönemde kadınların toplumsal statüsü ikinci planda olsa da, Miss Marple'in popülerliđi günümüze kadar sürmüř ve birçok film ve televizyon dizisine ilham kaynađı olmuřtur. Son olarak, 2022'de, on iki seçkin Britanyalı ve Amerikalı çağdař kadın yazarın katkıda bulunduđu Marple:12 Yeni Öykü adlı eser, Agatha Christie'nin ölümünden sonra Miss Marple'in başkarakter olduđu ilk yetkili devam kitabı olarak ortaya çıkmıřtır. Söz konusu koleksiyon, sadece Christie'nin ikonik dedektifini anmakla kalmamıř, aynı zamanda onun bakıř açısını 21. yüzyıldaki feminist perspektifle birleřtirerek önemli bir geliřmeye imza atmıřtır. Bu nedenle, Miss Marple karakterinin hem orijinal eserlerinde hem de son devam kitabında güçlü bir kadın figürü olarak betimlenmesinin gelecekteki polisiye yazarlara ve feministlere ilham kaynađı olmaya devam edeceđi öngörülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Agatha Christie, Dedektif Kurgu, Feminizm, Marple:12 Yeni Öykü, Miss Marple

Extended Summary

Agatha Christie, a significant figure in 20th-century literature, left an indelible mark on the detective genre, influencing subsequent writers. Before Christie, the British detective fiction landscape had already been shaped by iconic characters like Sherlock Holmes, introduced by Arthur Conan Doyle in 1892. Christie's Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple, influenced by Doyle's deductive reasoning, further advanced the genre. The Queen of Crime, as Christie is often hailed, showcased her prowess in constructing mysteries, creating memorable characters, and introducing unexpected plot twists. Also, in the early 20th century, G.K. Chesterton contributed significantly to the genre with Father Brown, a distinctive and unconventional Catholic priest solving crimes. Christie's own detectives, Poirot and Marple, followed in this tradition, employing keen observation and logical thinking. Christie's works also reflect her admiration for the French novelist Maurice Leblanc's Arsène Lupin, evident in her intertextual references. Christie's great influence on the detective genre is seen in the continued proliferation of authors in crime fiction, attesting to her lasting legacy. Her genuine narrative style demands active reader engagement, making her a well-spring of inspiration for future generations of crime writers.

Miss Jane Marple, first introduced in Christie's 1927 short stories, holds a distinguished place in world literature. Christie's own recollection of elderly acquaintances inspired the character, with St Mary Mead's English village setting adding details to her persona. In fact, Miss Marple's departure from the typical detective archetype is notable as she competes with gender and professional norms. Furthermore, the quaint backdrop of St Mary Mead serves as a crucial element, anchoring her character in a rich environment. Apart from her detective pursuits, Miss Marple's hobbies and her adept use of gossip as an investigative tool contribute to her character as well. Within this framework, Christie's portrayal of Miss Marple's resourcefulness and her understanding of intricate community dynamics make her an enduring and cherished figure in detective fiction.

Even though the term "feminism" is not explicitly used in Christie's works, Miss Marple emerges as a feminist figure through her strength, independence, and defiance of societal expectations. The feminist principles she embodies display gender stereotypes, illustrating that women possess intellect, resilience, and equal capabilities to men. Thus, Miss Marple's detective prowess aligns with that of male investigators, demonstrating her equality in solving complex cases. While not overtly labelled as a feminist, she performs as a silent revolutionary, defying conventional gender roles and inspiring women to assert themselves. Christie's subtle conveyance of feminist ideals through Miss Marple extends beyond investigative skills to represent societal norms. Despite being portrayed as a traditionalist, Miss Marple defies gender roles, proving her feminine qualities to ingeniously solve cases. Her spinster status transforms from a perceived liability into her greatest strength, manifesting independence and financial self-sufficiency that oppose gender stereotypes. Moreover, her influence transcends literature, with adaptations of her works into films, stage productions, and television series in the 21st century. In 2022, the release of *Marple: 12 New Stories* marked a significant event, representing the first time authors other than Christie herself officially contributed to Miss Marple's stories. The collection features contributions from twelve accomplished British and American female writers, including Naomi Alderman, Leigh Bardugo, Alyssa Cole, Lucy Foley, Elly Griffiths, Natalie Haynes, Jean Kwok, Val McDermid, Karen M. McManus, Dreda Say Mitchell, Kate Mosse, and Ruth Ware. This collaborative effort not only expands the Miss Marple universe but also brings fresh positions to the character, allowing for exploration and development of her feminist qualities.

Indeed, Miss Marple's last appearance in an original Christie work was in 1976, making the revival through *Marple:12 New Stories* an important contribution. The anthology adheres to definite guidelines, requiring narratives to specify within the temporal framework accepted by Christie's original Miss Marple fiction. The twelve authors have engaged in the exciting task of reimagining Miss Marple while remaining faithful to traditional mystery elements. Through this creative venture, the contemporary authors have bridged the past and present by introducing Miss Marple to a new generation of readers in the 21st century. Miss Marple, characterized by physical vitality, astuteness, kindness, and social connections, remains a compelling and timeless figure in these stories. The authors also display familiar activities of Miss Marple, such as knitting, gossiping, and gardening, while positioning her as a symbol of feminism, refusing public expectations and depicting her strength and independence. Thus, the anthology provides a powerful commentary on gender norms, illustrating that women, through Miss Marple, can excel in traditionally male-dominated domains and objecting stereotypes about women's abilities. Finally, Miss Marple's feminist legacy not only endures but also thrives, maintaining its vitality and relevance in the ever-evolving landscape of future detective fiction.

Introduction

Agatha Christie, a noteworthy novelist of the 20th century, has wielded considerable influence on the detective literature and subsequent writers in the genre. Prior to Christie, Britain had already established a rich history of detective fiction, demonstrating the creation of iconic and influential characters in literature. The detective fiction specifically focuses on the investigation of crimes (Rzepka, 2005:9), typically murder cases, by detectives who can be either professionals or amateurs. The roots of this genre date back to the 19th century, when American author Edgar Allan Poe wrote a series of stories featuring the detective Auguste Dupin¹ in 1841. In this respect, McArthur (2016:126) credits Poe as the father of detective fiction, while Cawelti (2004:293) asserts that his stories are widely acknowledged as the earliest examples of this genre in literature. Within this scope, Poe's stories gained substantial popularity in Britain, shaping the development of the detective fashion throughout the country. One of the most prominent British detective characters is Sherlock Holmes, created by Arthur Conan Doyle, who openly credited Poe as his inspiration (McArthur, 2016:126). Sherlock Holmes debuted in print in 1892 and quickly captured readers' interest from the late 19th century to the early decades of the 20th century. Essentially, the stories featuring Sherlock Holmes, serialized in the *Strand Magazine* (Redmond, 2009:73), played a crucial role in setting and defining the detective style in Britain.

Another British author who made significant contributions to the detective genre in the early 20th century is G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936), the creator of Father Brown (Ker, 2011:282). Characterized by his distinctive attire and a large umbrella, Father Brown is a small and round Catholic priest celebrated for his exceptional aptitude in solving mysteries and crimes. Despite his unassuming demeanour, Father Brown presents a notable level of intelligence and perception, demonstrating a deep understanding of human nature. His approach involves employing unconventional thinking to solve complicated cases successfully (Chesterton, 2014). Subsequently, in the 20th century, following literary works from several male authors, the detective genre in Britain

¹ Tavlin (2018:54) contends that Detective Dupin served as a prototype for famous detectives like Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot.

continued to evolve with notable women authors like Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, and P.D. James. In fact, they expertly blended traditional detective fiction elements with social commentary and character development. Dorothy L. Sayers, for instance, debuted detective Lord Peter Wimsey in novels like *Whose Body?* (1923), exhibiting his wit and intelligence. Similarly, P.D. James featured detective Adam Dalgliesh in several novels, including *Cover Her Face* published in 1962.

However, Agatha Christie, often referred to as the “Queen of Crime” and “Duchess of Death”, has had the greatest influence on readers compared to other writers in the detective fiction genre. Although she began writing her own detective works a few decades after Doyle and his Sherlock Holmes stories, it is evident that Doyle had a significant effect on Christie. Like Holmes, Christie’s iconic detectives Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple often have a sidekick or narrator who aids them in solving crimes. Christie was also influenced by Doyle in the adept handling of deductive reasoning and logical thinking to display mysteries. Similar to Holmes, Christie’s detectives employ keen observation and analysis to decipher clues and solve crimes. By the way, Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple do not know each other and have never met in Christie’s works. Christie also held some admiration for Arsène Lupin, a detective she mentions in her short story *Strange Jest* published in 1950 (Christie, 1985:238). This intertextual reference proves Christie’s acknowledgment of other notable writers and the role they had on the detective genre. Luebering (2023) describes Arsène Lupin as a fictional character crafted by Maurice Leblanc², portraying a reformed thief evolving into a talented detective. Therefore, the incorporation of Lupin in *Strange Jest* underlines her admiration for the French novelist Leblanc, who commenced writing years prior to Christie and exerted an influence on both her and the detective genre. Essentially, Lupin’s dual nature as both a criminal genius and a detective can be seen as an inspiration for Christie’s own portrayal of complex characters, such as her well-known detectives, Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple.

Additionally, as Powers (2020:5) points out, Christie’s writing drew inspiration from well-known real crimes of the past. Indeed, Christie is one of the most important and successful novelists in the history whose novels were published from the late 1920s to the early 1970s (Bloomfield, 2020:24). She is considered a master of the ‘Golden Age’ of detective fiction, which flourished in the 1920s and 1930s, representing the genre at its zenith of popularity. The author is primarily known for her 66 detective novels, 14 collections of short stories, and *The Mousetrap*, the longest-running play in the world. Moreover, her works have been adapted into numerous films, stage productions, and television series. With translations into over 45 languages (Warren, 2010:51) and over two billion copies sold, Christie ranks as the third best-selling author worldwide, after the Bible and Shakespeare, solidifying her remarkable success (Cawthorne, 2014:v). Christie is also credited with popularizing the “whodunit” form of mystery, where the identity of the perpetrator is revealed only at the end of the story. Within this framework, her literary prowess is notably characterized by her competent construction of mysteries, the creation of memorable characters, and the introduction of unexpected plot twists. Besides, her narrative style demands an active reader engagement, as highlighted by Hardesty (1983:39). In this scope, readers of Christie’s fiction are compelled to think critically and actively participate in solving the complex puzzles she presents.

2 Maurice Leblanc (1864-1941), a renowned French novelist, is celebrated for introducing Arsène Lupin in the early 20th century. Lupin’s stories have enjoyed widespread popularity and inspired various adaptations in films and television series, contributing significantly to the mystery and detective genre, with lasting global appeal. For additional details, refer to Kemp, 2017.

Cunningham (2018:104) has observed a widespread proliferation of authors in the detective genre and crime fiction since Christie's emergence. This notable influence suggests that Christie's effect will persist, serving as a wellspring of inspiration for generations of future writers in the realm of crime literature and detective fiction.

Miss Marple-The Sympathetic Detective

Miss Jane Marple made her debut in Agatha Christie's short stories in 1927. However, as stated by Bunson (2000:99), her detailed first appearance in a novel was in *Murder at the Vicarage* in 1930, introducing readers to the distinctive amateur detective. In fact, Miss Marple stands as a prominent and special figure in world literature, leaving an indelible sign on the detective fiction genre. Her effect is particularly noteworthy due to her original characteristics, making her a memorable presence that resonates with readers globally. According to Christie's own account in her autobiography, the creation of Miss Marple and the writing of *Murder at the Vicarage* had somewhat hazy origins. Christie (2001:387) admits that she cannot recall the specific details of where, when, or how she wrote the novel or even what inspired her to introduce a new character like Miss Marple, an elderly spinster, as the sleuth. Furthermore, she did not anticipate her to become a long-standing character and prove to be a rival to her famous detective, Hercule Poirot. Christie (2001:389) explains that her starting point of Miss Marple was imagining her as the type of old lady she met among her grandmother's acquaintances in various villages she visited during her childhood. While Miss Marple was not a direct representation of her grandmother, she possessed some of the fussy and spinster-like qualities that these ladies exhibited. However, one particular trait Miss Marple shared with Christie's grandmother was her tendency to expect the worst of people and situations, which often turned out to be eerily accurate (Christie, 2001:390). Therefore, in creating Miss Marple, Christie endowed her with some of her grandmother's prophetic abilities. Considering her cautious nature and propensity to anticipate the worst, Miss Marple is polite and would often extend kindness to others, regardless of their flaws. Thus, the character of Miss Marple was developed with the ability to accept people amiably despite her initial suspicion. Interestingly, Christie ensured that Miss Marple, though born at the age of sixty-five to seventy, did not age throughout the novels, allowing her to remain a consistent and timeless figure in her stories.

One of the key aspects contributing to Miss Marple's significance is her departure from the typical detective archetype prevalent in the genre. In a distance from the norm, Miss Marple is not a male investigator affiliated with law enforcement agencies. Instead, she is a civilian who relies on her personal talents, experiences, and astute observations to figure out the mysteries she experiences. This distinctive approach adds a layer of intrigue to her character and provides readers with an alternative outlook on crime-solving, diverging from the conventional detective fiction. Mezei (2007:111) keynotes Miss Marple's character traits, describing her as sharp-tongued and observant. These qualities contribute to the richness of her character, making her more than just a detective figure; they transform her into a compelling and multidimensional personality within the detective fiction landscape. Besides, Miss Marple's distinctive position as a civilian investigator exhibits traditional gender and professional norms within the genre, offering readers a refreshing view on detective stories. Christie's portrayal of Miss Marple on her official website³ presents a delightful glimpse into the charming and enigmatic character.

3 The official website *The Home of Agatha Christie* offers extensive information about Christie. Visit <https://www.agathachristie.com/en> for details.

Described as an attractive, thin, old lady with a twinkle in her blue eyes, Miss Marple's physical appearance belies the astute mind within. Even though being a spinster, she occasionally hints at past suitors, adding a touch of romantic intrigue to her character. What sets Miss Marple apart as a sleuth is her atypical background—devoid of any formal training in criminology or affiliation with the police force. Instead, her proficiency in searching mysteries arises from a deep comprehension of human nature, a distinctive method cultivated through careful observation. Expanding on the setting of Miss Marple's life, we find her situated in the idyllic village of St Mary Mead, a charming English locale that serves as both her home and the stage for her amateur detective endeavours. Nestled within this picturesque village are familiar features, including a local pub, a handful of shops, the vicarage, and the distinguished Gossington Hall estate. This carefully crafted environment becomes an integral part of Miss Marple's investigative landscape, offering the perfect canvas for her astute observations and deductive reasoning. As Frost and Laing (2014:212) note, Christie intentionally chose English villages, particularly in the context of the Miss Marple series, as the settings for many of her mystery novels. In this regard, St Mary Mead, with its quaint charm and distinctive landmarks, emerges as a microcosm of English village life with its own complicated social fabric and hidden intrigues. The deliberate selection of such a setting enriches Miss Marple's texts, infusing them with the dynamics and nuances that define life in a close-knit community. As a result, in the tapestry of St Mary Mead, Miss Marple's home becomes a focal place, offering a vantage point from which she observes and interprets the activities of her neighbours. Thus, the quaint backdrop of St Mary Mead not only shapes Miss Marple's everyday life but also becomes an integral element in the rich storytelling woven by Christie.

Elaborating on Miss Marple's personality, we discover that beyond her amateur detective pursuits, she takes delight in the simple pleasures and domestic pastimes that colour her everyday life. Gardening and knitting stand out as her preferred hobbies, providing a glimpse into her character's more tranquil and nurturing side (Christie, 1985:3,46). Essentially, the act of gardening, tending to the blossoming life around her, adds a layer of domesticity that contrasts with her role as an astute detective. Apart from her garden and creating intricate knitted pieces, Miss Marple is also recognized for another captivating hobby—engaging in gossip. This seemingly commonplace activity takes on a perfect significance in her character's version. Far from being idle chatter, Miss Marple strategically employs gossip as a tool for collecting information and exposing indiscretions relevant to her investigations. In this way, gossip becomes a valuable resource, serving as a means for Miss Marple to brighten the complexities of village life and piece together the puzzles she encounters. According to Snell (2010:37), Miss Marple's adeptness at acquiring information through gossip depicts the importance of this seemingly mundane activity in her detective toolkit. It exposes her shrewd ability to express the social fabric of St Mary Mead, turning what might be dismissed as trivial conversations into essential threads that weave together the pieces of her investigations. Therefore, the use of gossip as an investigative tool demonstrates Miss Marple's resourcefulness and her astute understanding of the complex dynamics at play in the community she calls home.

One further distinctive aspect of Miss Marple's character is her role as a caring employer. Her house-proud nature is evident in the revolving door of housemaids she employs, many of whom she takes in from an orphanage. In this way, Miss Marple not only supports them with a home but also imparts valuable housekeeping skills, presenting her nurturing and compassionate side. As noticed, Christie's portrayal of Miss Marple creates a character rich in depth and charm, blending astute observational ability with a warm and engaging personality against the backdrop of a quaint

English village. In her community, she holds significance and respect, maintaining a broad network of friends, and associates upon whom she depends for support and assistance. Miss Marple, according to Kalikoff (2006:74), is endowed with an extraordinary talent for solving confusing murders that often perplex the official police force. Her proficiency is grounded in an intimate understanding of her detailed attention to domestic minutiae. While official detectives may struggle to fathom the ways and social conventions of well-bred criminals, Miss Marple's deep connection to the community renders her an indispensable ally in their investigations. What truly sets Miss Marple apart and enhances her value to the police, as mentioned by Jacobs (2015:25), is her exceptional capacity to discern and interpret minute observations. Rooted in a keen perception of the subtler links that once united society, these watchings allow her to discern patterns and connections often overlooked by others. In a world where these links have dissolved, Miss Marple's insights transcend time and context, empowering her to unveil motives and expose the perpetrators behind heinous acts. Additionally, Rolls (2015:837) defines Miss Marple's unwavering scepticism, which knows no bounds. She approaches every situation with a healthy degree of doubt, refusing to accept anything at face value. This refusal to take things for granted, coupled with her acute observational prowess, contributes to her ability to uncover hidden truths lurking beneath seemingly innocuous facades.

Miss Marple-The Feminist Icon

While the term "feminism" may not have been explicitly used in Agatha Christie's works, Miss Marple can be seen as a feminist figure due to her strength, independence, and ability to change societal prospects. She ensures as an inspiring example of a woman who defies the constraints of her time, highlighting that women are capable of intelligence, resilience, and making their mark in the world. Feminism, as per the *Merriam-Webster* (n.d.) dictionary, is the belief in and advocacy for the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes, manifested through organized activities supporting women's rights. Therefore, feminism advocates for equal rights and opportunities for all genders, a movement that gained widespread momentum in the 1960s and 1970s. A feminist, accordingly, is an individual actively working to eliminate gender-based inequalities and discrimination while advocating for gender equality. In the view of *The Guardian* critic Shaffi (2022), Miss Marple emerges as a feminist icon in the literary world, embodying essential feminist principles. Through her characterization, Miss Marple defies prevailing gender stereotypes, illustrating that women possess intellect, reason, and capabilities equal to their male counterparts. Unyielding in her resolve, she stands firm against gender-based biases, portraying strength, resilience, and keen intellectual acumen. As indicated by Köseoğlu (2015:135), Miss Marple's detective prowess aligns with that of male investigators, underscoring her equality in solving messy cases. Despite acknowledging gender distinctions, Miss Marple transforms these differences into strengths, showing her excellent outlook as a woman to find out truths and control the complexities of human behaviour. Furthermore, Devas (2002:258) cites Shaw and Vanacker's argument that Agatha Christie masterfully uses common stereotypes against femininity, old age, and spinsterhood, transforming them into qualities that make Miss Marple an exceptional investigator. By embracing these qualities, typically underestimated or trivialized in society, Christie endows Miss Marple with a special standpoint, allowing her to handle complex mysteries with astuteness and experience. In this regard, Miss Marple's feminist attributes extend beyond her investigative skills to her determination in refusing public norms, proving that women can excel in domains traditionally dominated by men. In this sense, her character serves as a powerful role model, shattering barriers and inspiring readers to acknowledge and appreciate the intelligence, reasoning, and valuable contributions of women in society.

As mentioned earlier, while Christie may not have explicitly identified as a feminist, her works have subtly conveyed feminist ideals, with Miss Marple emerging as a robust embodiment of these principles. For instance, in *A Murder is Announced*, published in 1950, she displays her feminine qualities, including her domestic knowledge and insights into relationships, to ingeniously solve the case and surpass community outlooks (Christie, 2011). Therefore, Miss Marple is encouraging women to assert themselves and break free from limiting norms. Her character stands as a testament to women's capability in problem-solving, objecting stereotypes that often underestimate their intelligence. Notably, she outshines even male counterparts like Hercule Poirot, illustrating that women should never be belittled in their abilities. Indeed, the spinster status, once perceived as a liability, becomes Miss Marple's greatest strength. Her independence and financial self-sufficiency defy the stereotype of women being dependent on men for their well-being. Living on her own terms, she utilizes her talents to contribute positively to her community, displaying herself as a beacon of inspiration for overlooked and underrated women as depicted in *The Moving Finger* first published in 1942 (Christie, 2016). Miss Marple's role as a proficient detective further displays her resourcefulness and intelligence, debunking gender and age limitations. Her compassion and kindness align with the ethos of feminism, suggesting that she would not support systems that oppress or discriminate against others. While the novels may not explicitly address Miss Marple's stance on patriarchy, her portrayal as a kind and compassionate individual hints at a reluctance to support oppressive systems. In essence, Miss Marple's character, although not overtly aligned with traditional feminist figures, radiates strength, independence, and a commitment to making a positive effect on her surroundings, irrespective of gender or social status as portrayed in *The Body in the Library* (Christie, 2019) released in 1942. Consequently, within the novels and stories featuring Miss Marple, she is portrayed as a feminist figure who defies societal norms and competes with traditional gender roles.

Miss Marple's Feminism in the Comeback

In 2022, *Marple: 12 New Stories* was released, featuring contributions from bestselling British and American female authors Naomi Alderman, Leigh Bardugo, Alyssa Cole, Lucy Foley, Elly Griffiths, Natalie Haynes, Jean Kwok, Val McDermid, Karen M. McManus, Dreda Say Mitchell, Kate Mosse, and Ruth Ware. According to Shaffi's (2022) commentary, the collection marks a significant event in the Miss Marple series. It is the first time that anyone other than Agatha Christie herself has written Miss Marple stories, officially recognized by the Christie estate. In this sense, this collection has brought new stories by women writers who have taken on the task of continuing Miss Marple's legacy. Essentially, in *Marple: Twelve New Stories*, twelve female writers have individually supplied original texts featuring the formidable detective of St. Mary Mead (Merritt, 2022). Their involvement in shaping the narrative of Miss Marple's adventures demonstrates the collaborative effort to expand and rejuvenate the character in a feminist context. The fact that Miss Marple's last appearance in an original Christie work was in 1976 further emphasizes the significance of this collection. Decades later, the revival of Miss Marple through the collection of short stories not only reintroduces her to contemporary readers but also reinforces her relevance as a feminist figure. By featuring Miss Marple as the central character in these stories, the collection presents feminist qualities. In the new stories, like in the original ones by Christie, Miss Marple is portrayed as a strong, independent, and intelligent figure who defies cultural behaviours and becoming distant restrictive gender norms.

The publication of *Marple: 12 New Stories* not only expands the Miss Marple universe but also brings fresh appearance to the character. It allows readers to analyse new mysteries and experience Miss Marple's detective abilities through a feminist lens, depicting her eternal appeal as a beloved and empowering literary figure. In line with Shaffi's (2022) insights, the compilation of twelve stories featuring Miss Marple has adhered to specific guidelines, necessitating that they have proceeded within the temporal framework established by Agatha Christie's original Miss Marple fiction. These stories have had the creative latitude to draw inspiration from characters and situations embedded in any of the existing Marple novels and short stories. However, a crucial stipulation has prohibited the incorporation of characters or events from Christie's non-Marple literary works, and authors have been restricted from inventing any backstory that Christie herself had not previously touched upon. As stated by Flood (2021), all the writers engaged in this project have been tasked with the exciting endeavour of reimagining Miss Marple. While infusing the fictions with their distinct aspects, they have been expected to remain faithful to the core elements that define a traditional mystery. The intention behind the Marple book has extended beyond mere literary revival; it has sought to introduce this beloved character to a new generation of readers in the 21st century. In doing so, contemporary authors have aimed not only to pay homage to Agatha Christie's permanent legacy but also to underline the extreme influence she has wielded over the past century. Through this creative venture, these writers have served as conduits, bridging the past and present, and depicting the timeless relevance of Agatha Christie's literary contributions.

In the new twelve stories, Miss Marple emerges as a character marked by both physical vitality and astuteness. Described as active and energetic, she moves with agility, featuring a remarkable vigour. Beyond her physical attributes, Miss Marple is characterized by her kind and gentle nature, exuding warmth and friendliness in her interactions. Her standing in the community is notable, as she is well-respected and liked by the people around her. While her physical appearance may reflect her age and retired spinster status, it also mirrors her intelligence, resourcefulness, and unwavering determination, integral components of her character. Besides, Miss Marple demonstrates her great understanding of language and human behaviour to discern the motivations and emotions of those in her vicinity, a power crucial to solving cases and delivering justice to the victims. Within this framework, Miss Marple's influence extends to her social connections, as she is deeply ingrained in the fabric of her community. Maintaining a broad circle of friends and associates, she relies on their support and assistance in navigating the intricacies of her cases. In the stories, her adeptness in solving complex cases lies in a multifaceted mastery set, encompassing the identification and analysis of motivations and behaviours involved. Through diligent gathering and interpretation of clues, she adeptly connects seemingly disparate pieces of information, unveiling the truth at the heart of complicated cases.

As by Christie, the *Marple* collection by the twelve authors adeptly portray Miss Marple engaging in familiar activities such as knitting, gossiping, and gardening, while simultaneously positioning her as a symbol of feminism. Therefore, this 2022-year collection of stories demonstrates the very essence of Miss Marple's character, bringing to the forefront her strength, independence, and her knack for disputing public expectations. In this new book, Lucy Foley's *Evil in Small Places* and Jean Kwok's *The Jade Empress* collectively cast Miss Marple as a feminist icon, embodying resilience and independence (Marple, 2022). Both stories emphasize her role as a woman who fearlessly defies conventional norms, illustrating her strength and unwavering determination to overcome problems. Naomi Alderman's *The Open Mind* further explores Miss Marple's femi-

nist qualities, shining a spotlight on her intellect and reasoning abilities (Marple, 2022). The story portrays her as a person endowed with capabilities equal to, if not surpassing, those of her male counterparts, questioning entrenched notions about the limits of women's abilities. In the story, Miss Marple asserts herself as an intelligent and perceptive detective, proving that her gender does not limit her investigative abilities.

Additionally, Dreda Say Mitchell's *A Deadly Wedding Day* and Natalie Haynes's *The Unravelling* paint Miss Marple as a character who actively defies prevailing gender stereotypes (Marple, 2022). These stories vividly illustrate that women, personified through the character of Miss Marple, can be intelligent, reasoned, and adept at solving confused mysteries on par with their male counterparts. By relying on her understanding of gender dynamics and social norms, she resolves truths that might have otherwise remained hidden. Further, in *The Murdering Sort* by Karen M. McManus and *Miss Marple Takes Manhattan* by Alyssa Cole, Miss Marple is portrayed as a woman proving her superb perspective to unveil truths and navigate the complicated web of human behaviour (Marple, 2022). These narratives point up her ability to utilize her feminine intuition as a valuable tool in solving mysteries, providing the concepts that intuition is a less valid form of deductive reasoning. Also, Kate Mosse's *The Mystery of the Acid Soil* and Elly Griffiths's *Murder at the Villa Rosa* present Miss Marple as a trailblazer, breaking barriers and demonstrating that women can excel in domains traditionally dominated by men (Marple, 2022). In this respect, these stories maintain a powerful commentary on gender norms, presenting Miss Marple as a capable and resourceful detective. She proves that women are just as clever of solving complex cases, demonstrating the belief that certain professions or talents are exclusively reserved for men. Moreover, Val McDermid's *The Second Murder at the Vicarage* and Ruth Ware's *Miss Marple's Christmas* emphasize Miss Marple's economic independence and financial self-reliance (Marple, 2022). These versions prioritize her ability to proceed life on her own terms, free from dependence on a man, providing further affirmation of her feminist qualities.

Thus, the compilation of twelve stories in *Marple* published in 2022 offers a captivating exploration of Miss Marple's varied feminist qualities within each independent narrative. These stories provide readers with a nuanced understanding of Miss Marple as a multifaceted feminist character, depicting her strength, intelligence, and determination to debate societal norms in the pursuit of justice. As noticed, each story presents unique scenarios that allow Miss Marple's feminist values to shine, highlighting her unwavering belief in gender equality and her ability to cope with a male-dominated world. Through these stories, readers are treated to a diverse and empowering representation of Miss Marple, reinforcing her enduring relevance as a feminist icon in the detective fiction genre.

Conclusion

Miss Marple stands as a testament to the lasting and quietly revolutionary nature of her character, embodying feminist qualities well before the active feminist movement gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s. Her initial appearance in Agatha Christie's short stories dating back to 1927 demonstrates that, even in an era steeped in traditional gender norms, Miss Marple emerged as a character discussing public manners. Despite her first appearance predating the height of the feminist movement, Miss Marple's continued presence in novels until 1976 and following numerous film and series adaptations in the 20th and 21st centuries, attests to the timeless appeal of her character still. Consequently, Christie's creation transcends the confines of her era, depicting Miss

Marple's resilience, independence, and intellect, which resonates with audiences across generations. The significance of Miss Marple as a feminist figure is further emphasized by the release of *Marple: 12 New Stories* in 2022, marking the first authorized sequel in detective fiction featuring Miss Marple. Written by twelve different female authors, this collection not only pays homage to the persistent legacy of Agatha Christie's iconic character but also reimagines Miss Marple through diverse interpretations. This literary milestone emphasizes that Miss Marple, with her unwavering independence and keen intellect, continues to inspire and connect with a new generation of readers in the 21st century. In doing so, Miss Marple's feminist legacy remains not only intact but vibrant and relevant in the ever-evolving landscape of detective fiction. Hence, the collection of twelve stories in *Marple*, intricately portrays various facets of Miss Marple's feminist qualities within each distinct narrative. Every independent story within the collection highlights specific aspects of Miss Marple's character that align with feminist principles. Through diverse plotlines and character developments, the book presents a nuanced and multifaceted exploration of Miss Marple's enduring feminist attributes, contributing to her rich effect within the detective fiction genre.

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