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TRANSPORTING THE ENGLISH VILLAGE TO THE CARIBBEAN IN AGATHA CHRISTIE'S *A CARIBBEAN MYSTERY*

ABSTRACT

This article examines Agatha Christie's *A Caribbean Mystery* as a novel that initially sets itself apart from but ultimately reinforces the spatial and thematic conventions of Miss Marple novels. While the Caribbean setting suggests a radical shift from English villages typically associated with Miss Marple, the novel refrains from representing the island through its history and culture, turning it into an empty signifier to suit the needs of Miss Marple novels. In a similar manner, the temporary and anonymous space of the hotel is transformed into a small village. These interventions on two levels of spatiality serve to domesticate the foreign setting to enable Miss Marple's success in mystery-solving. Focusing on critical discussions of space and Miss Marple's investigative methodology, this paper demonstrates how the island of St. Honoré is made to disappear from the narrative whereas the hotel is imposed upon the characteristics of village as a social space. Hence, the paper contends that the change of scenery from England to the Caribbean does not actually refer to any change in the thematic and/or spatial dynamics of Miss Marple novels, rather indicates the deliberate imposition of familiar tropes at the cost of effacing the original characteristics of the new locales.

Keywords: Agatha Christie, Miss Marple, space, village mystery, hotel

AGATHA CHRİSTİE'NİN *ÖLÜM ADASI* ROMANINDA İNGİLİZ KÖYÜNÜ KARAYİPLERE TAŞIMAK

ÖZET

Bu makale, Agatha Christie'nin *Ölüm Adası* romanını başlangıçta kendini diğer Bayan Marple romanlarından ayrı bir yere koyan ama sonuç olarak bu romanların mekânsal ve tematik geleneklerini yeniden üreten bir eser olarak incelemektedir. Romanın Karayiplerde geçmesi her ne kadar Bayan Marple ile özdeşleşen İngiliz köylerinden radikal bir ayrım izlenimi verse de eserin olayların geçtiği adayı tarihî ve kültürel açıdan sunmaktan kaçınması, adayı Bayan Marple romanlarının gereklerine uygun boş bir imleyen haline getirmektedir. Benzer bir şekilde, otelin tanımı gereği geçici ve anonim olan mekânı da küçük bir köye dönüştürülür. İki ayrı mekânsallık düzeyinde gerçekleşen bu müdahaleler, Bayan Marple'ın gizem çözmedeki başarısını sağlamak için yabancı mekânı yerlileştirme işlevi görür. Suç anlatılarında mekânın kullanımına dair eleştirel tartışmalara ve Bayan Marple'ın araştırma yöntemlerine odaklanan bu çalışma, St. Honoré adasının nasıl anlatı dışına itildiğini ve otele de bir köye ait sosyal mekân özelliklerinin nasıl yüklendiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Böylelikle, sonuç olarak, İngiltere'den Karayiplere gerçekleşen bu yolculuğun aslında Bayan Marple romanlarının kendine has tematik ve mekânsal dinamiklerinde herhangi bir değişiklik anlamına gelmediği, aksine yeni mekanların orijinal özelliklerinin yok edilmesi pahasına bilindik temsillerin zorla dayatıldığı savunulmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Agatha Christie, Bayan Marple, mekân, köy merkezli gizem, otel

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Introduction

Agatha Christie's novel *A Caribbean Mystery* (first published in 1964) starts with a dedication in which she expresses "happy memories of [her] visit to the West Indies" (Christie, 2016, no page number). This dedication points to the inspiration behind the creation of the setting for the novel, the fictional island of St. Honoré and the Golden Palm Hotel specifically. Christie's oeuvre employs a variety of settings generally in line with the protagonist of the novel. When one considers the two well-known detective figures of Christie, Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple, with respect to the locations of their adventures, it is possible to notice a certain pattern: while Poirot novels take place in a multitude of places, from small villages in England to a luxurious boat on the Nile or the famous Orient Express, Miss Marple novels tend to be located in the rural atmosphere of England, be it Miss Marple's own village, St. Mary Mead, or other similar villages she visits for a variety of reasons. London emerges as the only urban setting for Miss Marple in a few novels, though in these novels the narrative almost always remains limited to a certain neighborhood or building in the city, thus creating a closed circuit of places and characters similar to those in the countryside. In other words, Miss Marple novels are bound with the domestic character of the crime through their depiction of the countryside, the web of relations and secrets underlying the seemingly peaceful village life with its limited set of characters. In this framework, *A Caribbean Mystery* emerges as an exception, in which Miss Marple enjoys a vacation, thanks to her nephew Raymond, in a holiday resort in the Caribbean, an utterly unfamiliar setting for readers of Miss Marple's adventures. Despite the choice of an international location for the novel, the narrative ultimately mimics the already familiar tropes of Miss Marple novels and recreates the social dynamics of the village in an entirely foreign setting. I argue that, by metaphorically transporting the English village to a hotel in the Caribbean, the novel not only domesticates the island and disregards its own identity but also alters the social structure of the hotel to accommodate the creation of a community similar to that of a small village. Thus, the success of Miss Marple as a detective figure in a foreign setting is only actualized at the cost of undermining the originality of setting and its unique characteristics.

Sandeep Banerjee and Atreyee Majumder draw attention to one of the fundamental elements of the relationship between literary representations and space: "All representations, by definition, are located, and implicated, in space – they depict space, and in so doing offer readers ways of knowing space" (2025, p. 153). The use of "implicated" in this sentence brings forth the social, cultural, historical and political dynamics that are at work in the construction and representation of space in literary texts. Henri Lefebvre's ideas about space and specifically social space become highly useful in comprehending and analyzing the representation of space in the fictional world of Miss Marple. Lefebvre, in *The Production of Space* (1991), takes his starting point from the notion that space is not a neutral setting or a container appearing as the background to human activity. Rather, it should be understood as an active element in affecting humans and being affected by them. This interactive relationship is encapsulated in his understanding of social space: "Space is never empty: it always embodies a meaning," thus, as a "social product", social space is inevitably connected to historical, social, cultural and political relations (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 154). This interconnectedness also presents the connection between and among different spaces and the need to contextualize the relations underlying any connection or possibility of it. Andrew Thacker, elaborating on Lefebvre's ideas, states that "any particular space is thus not an abstract entity, cut off from other spaces, but caught up in multiple relationships with other spaces" (2025, p. 21). Indeed, the complexity of social space in Lefebvre's theory stems from the fact that it "embrace[s]

as it does individual entities and peculiarities, relatively fixed points, movements, and flows and waves – some interpenetrating, others in conflict, and so on" (1991, p. 88). Such an all-encompassing and dynamic understanding of social space presents the possibility of layered interpretations of the same physical space in terms of the social spaces it conjures up through various relations. Illustrating the interconnected nature of social space, Thacker remarks, "In Lefebvre's terms, there is no absolute separation between the representation of a rented flat in industrial Salford and the geography of an ex-British colony overseas, only an 'ambiguous continuity' between these two social spaces that interpretation can reveal" (2025, p. 22). In the world of Miss Marple, village life constitutes the main social space acting as a referent for approaching any setting. While this referentiality can work across the various places she visits in England in different novels, it poses problems in the case of the novel under examination here. Rather than an organic continuity, it presents the imposition of a specific social space upon another accompanied by omissions and alterations necessary to enable the transformation of the island and the hotel to the familiar social space of a village.

In the following sections, I will, first, discuss the role and function of the setting of small village in Christie's Miss Marple novels in general. By illustrating the patterns employed in these novels, I will examine the representation of the island as well as the spatial and social characteristics of the hotel in *A Caribbean Mystery* to disclose the transformation of the social space to accommodate the already familiar social space of the village in a foreign setting. In doing so, the paper will address spatial dynamics on two levels, those of the island and the hotel, elaborating on how the first is stripped of its own identity and the latter is given a new identity in terms of social spaces they signify.

Small villages, familiar faces

Crime fiction relies on the description of places not only for the representation of the scene of crime, but also for the construction of the mystery, suspense and curiosity in the overall narrative. David Geherin points out two fundamental issues considered by authors in presenting any setting: "The first is how writers actually create setting, i.e. how they artistically transform geographical space to literary space." (2008, p. 5). This creative act involves imbuing a space with a spirit or soul to turn it into a place imaginable and evocative for the readers (Geherin, 2008, p. 5). The second issue, very much associated with the first one, is how literary space acquires metaphorical and symbolic meanings within the context of a given fictional work (Geherin, 2008, p. 6). While these points may easily apply to any literary work, their relevance and significance for crime narratives become more obvious as the reader, generally, tends to identify with the detective figure and strive to solve the mystery simultaneously. In order to be able to do so, the reader has to have the same information and familiarity about the physical environment and the characters with the detective figure, which is usually facilitated through descriptions. Christie, however, does not always provide detailed descriptions to the reader; nevertheless, details and observations presented by the detective figure compensate for the lack of long descriptive passages and pinpoint the reader's attention to what really matters for the solution of the crime.

In order to have a comprehensive understanding of the use of space in not only *A Caribbean Mystery* but any mystery featuring Miss Marple, one needs to be reminded of the personality of Miss Marple herself. Stephen Knight's (1980) description of her points to several key elements: "An elderly spinster, much given to gossip, but kind as well as shrewd, she is in some senses a

bourgeois antiheroine, a little person who succeeds where others fail – notably the police" (p. 129). As an elderly woman living in a small village, Miss Marple has a disarming effect on the people she interacts; they, especially men in power, either dismiss her as a busybody who is simply curious due to her seemingly uneventful life or underestimate her powers of observation and understanding of human psychology. Indeed, it is this impression she creates on people that enables Miss Marple to solve mysteries without attracting any attention to herself. As she blends into the environments she is familiar with, her "humble personality enacts with great success the idea of domestic watchfulness, […] only she sees the significance of a certain potted plant, a stone too large for her rockery, a piece of affectionate interaction between the criminals." (Knight, 1980, p. 130) Miss Marple's keen eye for details distinguishes her from other elderly women and leads her to assume an informal investigator position, generally surpassing the investigative powers of the police due to her astute analysis of any given environment and personal relationships. Merja Makinen (2006) states that "the stereotype of the nosy, elderly woman spying on her neighbors for her own ends […] can be read as conservative" (56); however, Miss Marple's interest in other people's lives and the information she acquires through observing others serve a greater purpose, that of solving a crime or mystery. In that, Christie transforms the idea of gossip or idle talk through Miss Marple's combination of gossip with nuanced observation: "Miss Marple, as main detective, is in control of the complete process, both the initial 'feminine' disquiet and the 'masculine' explanation of the facts. […] [S]he blurs the boundaries between the two, creating a liminal space where gossip and intuition meet scientific classification." (Makinen, 2006, p. 60)

If Miss Marple succeeds in resolving any mystery she sets her eyes on, "it is the combination of spatial location and social observation that affords Marple the knowledge to solve the crime." (Martin & West, 2020, p. 14) The aforementioned personality traits of Miss Marple are closely linked to where she lives, the village of St. Mary Mead, namely the very place she gains a profound insight into human behavior and psychology. Even though not all Miss Marple novels take place in villages, St. Mary Mead embodies the most notable spatial and social characteristics that will be repeatedly employed in Christie's oeuvre. Brittain Bright describes the significance of village as such:

> Miss Marple brings the village to prominence in Christie's oeuvre: she is introduced in a village setting, and she continually uses her local village of St. Mary Mead as a point of reference in her investigations. Although, as noted above, she detects in a variety of other settings, the village makes at least a brief appearance in nearly all the novels that feature Miss Marple, as she departs from home on an investigation, or returns gratefully once it is completed. (Bright, 2015, p. 77)

For Miss Marple, village life provides the starting point to understanding human condition in general. It is not only the place she departs or returns to but rather the source of knowledge about people, relationships, and what may lie beneath the seemingly peaceful and calm surface, in other words, a microcosmic representation of the world beyond the confines of her village. Christie, in her works, challenges several stereotypical traits of village life such as simplicity, innocence, genuine human connection with the help of other fundamental characteristics of village such as "physical proximity and the interconnectedness" (Martin & West, 2020, p. 104) and "its structure and closeness" (Sarnelli, 2019, p. 2). Indeed, it is possible to extend these characteristics to various locations in Christie's novels, such as country houses, boarding houses, and a certain neighborhood in a metropolitan city like London. Deborah Sarnelli (2019) succinctly defines the almost too formulaic structure of narratives based on this spatial organization by Christie: "a bounded place where a small assembly of people with no direct contact with the outside world is

involved in a crime." (p. 2) This formulaic structure, in fact, takes its starting point from the specific social space of the village with its own set of dynamics in rural England. If, in Lefebvre's view, social space cannot be separated from the multiple relationships simultaneously existing in physical space, and it is rather born out of them and responding to these relationships through its own design, then Miss Marple's world is based on and shaped by St. Mary Mead as a culmination of "physical geography, the routines of everyday life and symbolic meaning associated with it" (Banerjee & Majumder, 2025, p. 141).

For the purposes of crime narratives, spatial limitations employed in Christie's novels create a world complete in itself. Elena Spataru (2025) asserts that "the enclosed settings of country estates and English villages – defined by moral scrutiny and rigid social hierarchy – operate as ideological microcosms where crime, investigation, and restoration unfold within controlled boundaries." (p. 130) When everyone knows everyone else, sometimes for generations, and the familiar yet at times judgmental gaze can be turned onto anyone, the proverbial buried skeletons can be easily recovered when the status quo is disturbed. With the victim and the murderer belonging to the same community, there is an inherent sense of danger for everyone. Indeed, as Sarnelli reminds, "in Christie's oeuvre the murderer is never an outsider, but becomes 'one of us' " (2019, p. 11). That the murderer is an insider undermines the safety and security of a place and shatters the illusory protection coming from the familiarity and sense of belonging to the closed community. It befalls upon another insider, namely Miss Marple, to restore order, or provide the solution, by unveiling the murderer. Miss Marple, with her methodological approach perfected by her observations and analysis of the social space of St. Mary Mead, is able to conduct her investigations into any mystery, be it in a familiar village in England or a small island in the Caribbean.

Miss Marple abroad

A Caribbean Mystery opens with Miss Marple listening to the stories told by Major Palgrave. As Miss Marple contemplates about the plethora of stories she heard from men of military rank over the years, she summarizes their commonality: "the pattern was essentially the same. An elderly man who needed a listener so that he could, in memory, relive the days in which he had been happy." (Christie, 2016, p. 1) It is curious whether this is a metacommentary by Christie herself about a novel written later in her literary career yet repeating the formulaic pattern already well-established and familiar to her readers: Miss Marple having suspicions of foul play in the unexpected death of a character, followed by the murder of another character with knowledge of the first death, enlisting the help of other characters to verify her intuitions about the pool of suspects and the ultimate revelation about the identity of the murderer with the third and last murder. In other words, a series of murders occurring in a closed setting, thus a limited number of suspects, and the inquiry about possible motivation for the first murder, the key to the following murders, constitute the main focus of the narrative. What distinguishes this novel from others at first glance is Miss Marple solving the mystery under the Caribbean sun instead of the grey English skies. However, as it will be illustrated in this section, this initially distinguishing factor loses its novelty with the setting soon turning into the familiar social space of a small village.

The change of scenery is a rather radical one, not only for the reader but also for Miss Marple herself, which necessitates an explanation in the narrative: as she suffered from a bout of pneumonia in the previous winter, she was prescribed exposure to sunshine by her doctor; her

nephew Raymond then arranged every aspect of her journey, from the person who will housesit Miss Marple's house to reserving the hotel in St. Honoré run by an English couple (Christie, 2016, p. 4-5). This introduction elicits certain expectations about the utilization of the Caribbean and a hotel abroad, and their function in the overall narrative. First, given that other Miss Marple novels take place in England and in generally recognizable and identifiable settings, this time, one can easily expect more detailed passages about the setting to give a sense of familiarity as well as the knowledge necessary to comprehend the social dynamics affected by spatial organization. Nevertheless, in *A Caribbean Mystery*, information about the setting is mostly limited to Miss Marple's passing and cursory remarks, without providing elaborate or even informative portrayal of the island. The first instance indicating the location is Miss Marple's reference to enjoying "the deep blue of a Caribbean Sea" (2016, p. 2) followed by an introduction about the Golden Palm Hotel in St. Honoré in which she has "a nice bungalow of her own" with "an easy path from her bungalow to the sea front and the bathing beach where she could sit in a comfortable basket chair and watch the bathing" (2016, p. 5). Neither at the beginning nor in the rest of the novel the island is described in detail; indeed, Miss Marple hardly sets foot outside the hotel grounds. There are brief mentions by other characters to excursions to different parts of the island, yet these are not deemed important, only serve as small talk between characters and justification for them being away from the hotel.

The relative absence of St. Honoré in the narrative is noteworthy to illustrate Miss Marple's, as well as the novel's, perspective toward the island. For her, this holiday is prompted by medical concerns, and she refers to her frail health at different points in the novel, hence indicating an inclination to stay within the confines of the hotel. Anthony Carrigan notes that the Caribbean has welcomed the health tourists since late nineteenth century as the islands started to cater to wealthy tourists from colonial centers seeking rest and recovery (2011, p. 4). Although Christie's novel came out in 1964, it is possible to see the traces of the previous century's colonialist approach to the region in terms of the description of the island or lack thereof. The overall lack of descriptive language in the novel prevents the full visualization of the island for the reader. The brief descriptions are, at best, superficial, with reference to sea, beaches, palm trees and hot weather, thus undermining the possibility of any characteristics that will make St. Honoré stand out and memorable for the reader. Indeed, this is in line with what Carrigan calls "the fetishization [of the Caribbean] as tropical paradises" (2011, p. xiii), in which various islands in the region are represented as having the same exotic characteristic features appealing to the foreigners. This stereotyping of the region as a whole leads to the exclusion of "the islands' rich and varied histories" (Carrigan, 2011, p. 16). Miss Marple's first impression of the environment discloses a similar tendency, though from a different point of view: "Lovely and warm, yes – and so good for her rheumatism – and beautiful scenery, though perhaps – a trifle monotonous? So *many* palm trees, everything the same every day – never anything *happening*. Not like St. Mary Mead where something was always happening." (Christie, 2016, p. 5-6, emphases in original). The current physical environment, instead of energizing and exciting her, has started to dispirit her as evinced by the comparison to her village. Douglas R. McManis (1978), in his elaboration on the use of setting in crime fiction, designates two types of relationship between the plot and setting, namely the passive and the active. When the relationship is passive, the setting operates "as a background only – a stage – for the plot and rarely mentioned once the story [is] under way." (p. 321) The island of St. Honoré fits into the categorization of the passive as it almost entirely disappears once it is introduced at the beginning. This disappearance, however, should also be contextualized

within the legacy of colonialism in the region. Miss Marple's seemingly innocuous comparison between St. Honoré and St. Mary Mead implicates the hierarchical power dynamics between the center and the peripheries prevalent in neocolonial era. Considered as "secondary spaces" (Banerjee & Majumder, 2025, p. 142), the peripheries such as the Caribbean region are shaped and reshaped by the center. In this context, omission of any specific details about the history, culture and society of the island almost turns it into an empty signifier, only to be molded by the narrative to suit its own purposes.

While the island fades into the background in the novel, the Golden Palm Hotel acquires a more prominent role as it becomes the main ground for crime, investigation and final resolution. In McManis' categorization of the active relationship between the plot and setting, "the characteristics of place could be crucial to the commission of the crime and consequently to its solution." (1978, p. 321) In order to examine the function of the Golden Palm Hotel in the narrative, one, first, needs to consider the concept of hotel, and that of holiday, briefly. Hotel is a transitional and liminal space, marked by temporariness and anonymity. At this point Marc Augé's (1995) conceptualization of non-place becomes highly useful to elaborate on the status of hotel in general and its subsequent transformation in the novel. He describes the non-place as "a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical or concerned with identity" (Augé, 1995, p. 77). The non-places consist of "transit points and temporary abodes," offering "a world thus surrendered to solitary individuality, to the fleeting, the temporary and ephemeral" (Augé, 1995, p. 78). This conceptual definition finds its real-life counterpart in hotels, supermarkets, casinos, airports, transportation vehicles etc. The emphasis here is on the anonymity, for an individual does not exist through their identity in the non-place but rather through the temporary status assigned to them, such as being a hotel guest or a passenger, marking them "alone, but one of many" (Augé, 1995, p. 101). When it comes to the idea of holiday, it is usually regarded as an escape from the routine and the mundane, presenting the opportunity to enjoy a temporary break from the usual course of work and life. Travelling to new places, exploration of different cultures, relaxation, leisure and pleasure constitute some of the common markers of holiday. With the disruption in daily routine through a change of setting, people may not necessarily behave within the framework of their habitual social and moral values. However, this possibility of indulging in unexpected behaviors is already contained within the duration of holiday, which will bring the normalcy back once holiday ends. In other words, holiday enables the individual to enjoy the temporary status of relative anonymity and non-belonging provided by the non-places associated with travelling.

For crime narratives, the trope of holiday at a hotel encapsulates several thematic possibilities such as encounters between strangers, people misrepresenting or reinventing themselves, accidental or intentional death in unfamiliar surroundings etc. Bright (2015) suggests that "the holiday presents a different performative space, in which the performance of the criminal is concealed by that of the tourist." (p. 54) As people can take liberties in presenting themselves to fellow holiday takers and act accordingly, the performative space created by holiday can easily be employed to mislead or manipulate others. With no possibility of verifying the real identity of a given person – other than what they tell about themselves –, solution to the mystery may require other means to reveal the identity of the murderer. Christie's *A Caribbean Mystery* employs some of these tropes as well as disclosing the possibility of transforming the holiday hotel into a more familiar, thus more easily comprehensible, place through Miss Marple's comparisons and inferences based on her previous experiences. In fact, this is where it is possible to see a change in

the non-place status of the hotel. Although early remarks about her current environment indicate its difference from St. Mary Mead due to uneventfulness and monotony, as she provides more observations about the social and spatial dynamics the Golden Palm Hotel starts to become more like St. Mary Mead or any small village where Miss Marple can aptly take over the role of detective. In imposing a certain identity and relations on the hotel, the novel alters the perception of the hotel as a non-place and turns into a social space akin to that of small village.

This transformation of the hotel occurs mostly through Miss Marple's strategy of finding parallels between the people she already knows and the people she meets at the hotel. The novel introduces other characters through either Miss Marple's interactions with them or the information presented to her by other guests, such as Canon Prescott and his sister who have been staying at the hotel longer than Miss Marple. Common areas of the hotel such as the dining room and the beach not only bring people together but also present the opportunity to witness their communication with one another. Indeed, it is after the night spent conversing with the Prescotts in the dining room that Miss Marple starts to change her opinion about her surroundings:

> Tonight, for the first time, she began to feel slightly at home in her new environment… Up to now, she had missed what she found so easy, points of resemblance in the people she met, to various people known to her personally. She had, possible, been dazzled by the gay clothes and exotic coloring; but soon, she felt, she would be able to make some interesting comparisons. (Christie, 2016, p. 20)

This passage is immediately followed by comparisons between several people from her present location and others from St. Mary Mead, in which she draws parallels in terms of their personalities and behaviors rather than their physical resemblance. Bright (2015) states that "Miss Marple's identity as a detective is intimately connected with the village, even when she acts in another place, because of her methodology." (p. 84) Here, it is possible to see how Miss Marple takes the first step to establish certain reference points for transforming the unfamiliar to the familiar. In doing so, she symbolically transports the social space of her village to the hotel, regardless of its own dynamics. Furthermore, her daily routine of knitting at the bathing beach while watching the bathers and children (Christie, 2016, p. 25) effects a counterpart to her life at the village where she would be sitting by her window or in her garden. The most important parallelism, however, occurs with the death of Major Palgrave, which presents a mystery to be solved, just like back in England. Despite the general opinion that Major Palgrave must have died from complications due to high blood pressure, Miss Marple finds his death rather sudden and unexpected based on his general well-being the previous day. Moreover, the Major was about to show her a photo of a murderer in the course of one of his stories and got distracted upon seeing someone and changed the subject abruptly. This background information provides the basis for Miss Marple's doubts and prompts her to investigate the matter more carefully.

If Miss Marple's investigative method has its roots in her life in a small village, she then not only adapts her skills to suit the small community at the hotel but also metaphorically modifies this community to allies that will help her in the investigation. For instance, she calls upon Dr. Graham under false pretenses so that she can obtain more information surrounding the death of Major Palgrave. Given the absence of any friends and former acquaintances, she resourcefully cultivates new relationships to proceed with her investigation. Indeed, Christie shows Miss Marple's determination and primary tool of inquiry as such: "Miss Marple lay thinking soberly and constructively of murder, and what, if her suspicions were correct, she could do about it. […] She has one weapon and one weapon only, and that was conversation." (2016, p. 42) Miss Marple,

as a character, is aware of the general impression about old ladies, namely they love to talk. By using this stereotype to her benefit, she strikes conversations with different guests, especially with those who have prior knowledge about other people and are more willing to talk, such as Miss Prescott. Kathy Mezei (2007), in her elaboration of the common strategies employed by women detective figures, states that their indirect tactics may "involve the manipulation of language and the cunning redirection of the readers' and the characters' gaze, sleight-of-hand, and narrative ambiguity." (p. 107) As Miss Marple consciously puts on a performance highlighting her frail appearance and genteel manners, people feel more comfortable sharing information as well as gossiping around her, to the extent that they tend to forget Miss Marple is there (Christie, 2016, p. 49). That some of the guests are regulars and long-term holiday takers with prior knowledge of each other, such as the Prescotts, the Hillingdons, the Dysons and Mr. Rafiel, accompanied by his secretary Esther and attendant Jackson, enables Miss Marple to transform the hotel into her own village abroad with certain modifications. Here, it is important to note that the anonymity associated with the non-place status of the hotel has already undergone a transformation with some of the guests staying there for a longer period of time as regulars, which points to already established relations even on a minimal level. In other words, it has already created its own social space before Miss Marple's intervention. While this can be regarded as an organic outcome of being in the same closed space time with the same people over a period of time, the death of Major Palgrave and Miss Marple's involvement in the inquiry increase social interactions, from which emerges the social space primarily shaped by Miss Marple.

With the second death, that of Victoria the maid who noticed the bottle of anti-hypertension pills in the Major's room and died for sharing her realization that it was not there before, the Golden Palm Hotel comes under closer scrutiny by Miss Marple. Since Victoria is killed in the bushes on the hotel property, the police conduct an inquiry and question the hotel owners, Molly and Tim Kendall, as well as anyone else who can provide relevant information. This part of the novel serves to familiarize the reader with the general layout of the publicly accessible parts of the hotel. The dining room opening to the terrace, the stairs from the terrace to the beach path and the beach exemplify some of the places where people see others and are seen by others. In this regard, Miss Marple holds a crucial position with her self-effacing attitude, her interactions with other characters carry the traces of "the dialectic between seeing and being seen, omniscience and invisibility" (Mezei, 2007, p. 104). As she sits in front of her bungalow or at the beach, she is able to surveille people without drawing attention to herself. However, she misses the companionship of her friends in England who would normally listen to or assist her: "She realized, bitterly, that here on this paradise of an island, she had none of her usual allies." (Christie, 2016, p. 126) The ally arrives in the shape of Mr. Rafiel, the grumpy elderly wealthy gentleman. This alliance, reminiscent of the ones back at home, helps Miss Marple to converse about her theories and test them with a person of intellectual rigour and authority. Their collaborative theorizing, however, does not result in a solution until another death, Lucky Dyson's murder by drowning, occurs. It is only after this murder that Miss Marple is able to figure out the identity of the murderer and stop him with the help of Mr. Rafiel's attendant Jackson before he commits another murder.

In *A Caribbean Mystery*, as in many of Christie's novels, "a matter of major personal betrayal" (Knight, 2004, p. 91) lies at the center of the murders. Tim Kendall, who is stopped before causing the death of his wife Molly, turns out to be the murderer of not only the three people from the Golden Palm Hotel but also his former wife – the very murderer who was captured in the

photo that cost Major Palgrave his life. Miss Marple's determination and cunningness untangle the mystery surrounding the deaths at the hotel. In order to do so, she, quite masterfully, interprets the dynamics among the people at the hotel based on her experiences in living in a closed community of St. Mary Mead. Miss Marple's scrutinizing gaze contently observes people as they busy themselves outside in public areas to enjoy their holiday and forget about the deaths. In such a setting, it is no coincidence that Miss Marple can imagine the hotel as another village where human beings are no different than in her village. The novel ends with the only scene where Miss Marple is not on the hotel grounds: she is "at the airport waiting for her plane." (Christie, 2016, p. 228). Having accomplished her mission, Miss Marple is ready to be back at home. However, at the end of the novel, it is also possible to pose the question whether Miss Marple, on a metaphorical level, has ever left her home given her deliberate actions to domesticate the island of St. Honoré by disregarding its own history and culture, and to transform the Golden Palm Hotel to another version of St. Mary Mead.

Conclusion

Christie's Miss Marple has become almost synonymous with the English countryside throughout the series of novels in which she appears. While *A Caribbean Mystery* starts with the promise of novelty through its introduction of the island of St. Honoré as the setting, the novel ultimately reveals that a profound change in geography does not necessarily entail a corresponding change in the thematic and spatial structures of Miss Marple narratives. In order to efface the foreignness of the setting, the narrative employs different strategies to domesticate and familiarize the island and the hotel. The foreignness of the island is erased by including stereotypical elements about the nature and by excluding any description or information specifically about St. Honoré, so that it resembles one of the many paradise-like islands in the region. Soon enough, the island entirely disappears from the narrative. In the case of the Golden Palm Hotel, the foreignness stems from the very qualities that define any hotel, namely temporariness and relative anonymity. This time, the hotel's inherent characteristics are challenged or redefined to create a social space that can accommodate the needs of Miss Marple's investigative efforts to bring the current environment closer to her own world in St. Mary Mead. Miss Marple's observations, comparisons and method of inquiry render the unfamiliar to the familiar, with relatively recognizable patterns manifesting themselves in the overall narrative. Thus, instead of undermining or challenging Miss Marple's investigative process, the setting is absorbed into it. Miss Marple's success in solving the murders at the Golden Palm Hotel underlines the idea that crime is primarily rooted in human behavior rather than in place. In other words, the same patterns of betrayal, deception and violence persist, be it under grey English skies or Caribbean sunshine. The novel's effacement of the island of St. Honoré and transformation of the Golden Palm Hotel, however, indicate that Christie's formulaic structure of village mystery and Miss Marple's uniquely domestic mystery-solving skills can only function in the familiar social space emerging from an English village and thus require intervention on anything and everything that is foreign.

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