Ingrid Gjøstøl Ytterland

The Locked Room Narrative as a Social Research Tool

What the Locked Room Narrative tells us about Social Class in Britain

Graduate thesis in Language Studies with Teacher Education
Supervisor: Rhonna Robbins-Sponaas
May 2023

Graduate thesis

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Abstract

This thesis explores the use of locked room narratives as a tool for examining social structures in British society. Through an analysis of two novels, *The Hunting Party* (2018) by Lucy Foley and *And Then There Were None* (1939) by Agatha Christie, the thesis argues that locked room narratives offer a unique perspective on the human condition that is unavailable through other types of narratives.

Each novel utilises multiple perspectives to critique social class and its impact on human behaviour. The use of various perspectives is common in mystery novels, but even more so in the locked room narratives. This technique allows readers to gain insight into characters' innermost thoughts and perceptions, and through this, how they are influenced by their social class.

By examining these novels, this thesis demonstrates how locked room narratives can be used by social researchers to provide a more humane perspective in their research. The thesis concludes that the locked room narrative is a useful tool for accessing and articulating parts of the human condition that are often inaccessible through other types of narratives.

Abstrakt

Denne oppgaven utforsker bruken av "locked room"-narrativer som et verktøy for å undersøke sosiale strukturer i det britiske samfunnet. Gjennom en analyse av to romaner, *The Hunting Party* (2018) av Lucy Foley og *And Then There Were None* (1939) av Agatha Christie, argumenterer avhandlingen for at "locked room"-narrativer gir et unikt perspektiv på den menneskelige tilstanden som ikke er tilgjengelig gjennom andre typer narrativer.

Begge romanene kritiserer sosial klasse og dens innvirkning på menneskelig atferd. De bruker flere fortellere som verktøy for å oppnå dette. Bruken av flere perspektiver er vanlig i mysterieromaner, men enda mer vanlig i "locked room"-narrativer. Denne teknikken gir leserne innsikt i karakterenes innerste tanker og oppfatninger, og gjennom dette hvordan de blir påvirket av sin sosiale klasse.

Ved å undersøke disse romanene, demonstrerer denne oppgaven hvordan "locked room"-narrativer kan brukes av samfunnsforskere for å gi et mer menneskelig perspektiv i sin forskning. Oppgaven konkluderer med at "locked room"-narrativet er et nyttig verktøy for å få tilgang til og artikulere deler av den menneskelige tilstanden som ofte er utilgjengelig gjennom andre typer narrativer.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

"One of the things which makes the study of social history interesting is the places in which it can be found" (Arnold 275). This statement highlights the idea that social history can be uncovered and understood through a wide range of sources and mediums. By looking beyond traditional historical texts and documents, we can gain a more complete and nuanced understanding of the past and the societies that shaped it. Analysing social structures is important in all societies. However, Britain has a unique history that makes it particularly important. Class concerns are often viewed as being confined to the past, even though it is still an ingrained part of British society. Analysing contemporary literature can provide insight into this. Further, by examining social structures in Britain, it can help us understand the root causes of these issues and develop more effective policies and interventions to address them. The locked room mystery genre, in particular, provides a unique opportunity to examine and analyse social structures. The genre demonstrates the existing class issues in Britain today, despite the common belief that they no longer pose a significant problem.

The locked room mystery is a subgenre of detective fiction that centres around a seemingly impossible or inexplicable crime. The crime is committed in a locked room, remote place, or other confined space with no apparent means for the perpetrator to escape. The solution to the crime, which might at first seem irrational, extra-terrestrial, or unexplainable, is always required to have a rational explanation (Scaggs, 21). This genre has a long history, with some of the earliest examples dating back to the 19th century, with Edgar Allan Poe's "The murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841) often considered the first one (Porter 24). The locked room genre has especially found great success in Great Britain, with Agatha Christie being one of the biggest contributors to the genre. These types of mysteries have been popular for centuries and continue to captivate audiences today, and the detective novel is together with romance the most popular of the modern genres (Porter 2).

In addition to its popularity in literature, the locked room mystery has also been the subject of academic study. Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen argues that readers of the genre impart useful social knowledge when trying to solve the crime (186). The appeal of the locked room mystery lies in its ability to challenge and engage the reader's imagination. Stougaard-Nielsen suggests that the genre allows readers to engage in the same process of reasoning as the

detective in the narrative, and the reader often needs to exercise social abilities rather than traditional forensic abilities (185). Locked room mysteries force the reader to focus on the behaviour and motivations of the suspects to try to resolve the case. Characters are often portrayed differently in the locked room genre compared to others as the reader is presented with thorough information about the characters, and both positive and negative sides, so that everyone appears to be a suspect of the crime. Its enduring appeal can be attributed to the challenging and engaging nature of the genre, which allows readers to use their own problem-solving skills to unravel the mystery. This engages readers and encourages them to consider each character as a potential suspect. Additionally, the narrative often employs multiple perspectives, allowing for an in-depth portrayal of the ways in which individuals and groups interact with one another. This attention to detail, which puts the genre apart from other genres, can be especially valuable for social researchers or historians seeking to gain insight into past social structures. Locked room mysteries often feature a small, isolated group of individuals who are depicted in greater depth than what is typical in other genres, offering a unique window into the dynamics of human behaviour. The confined setting of a locked room mystery allows the author to explore the psychological and emotional states of the characters in a way that would be difficult in a more open setting. This provides valuable insights into the inner workings of social groups and the motivations of individual characters. Therefore, while other types of novels can also provide valuable insights into social structures, locked room mysteries are particularly useful for historians due to the confined setting and the opportunity they provide to delve into the minds, relationships, and motivations of a small group of characters.

The locked room mystery often involves puzzles and riddles that reflect the interests, fears, and obsessions of the society in which it was written. The genre can in this way function as a historical record. In the Victorian era, for example, there was a fear of technological advancement and the potential for crime and violence that it brought (Kiehlbauch, 87). This fear is reflected in the genre, with stories often involving the use of modern devices or techniques to commit crimes. In addition, the genre can provide insight into the values and beliefs of the time period through the portrayal of the detective and the criminal. In many locked room mysteries, the detective is portrayed as a highly intelligent and rational figure, representing the values of logic and reason that were highly prized in the Victorian era. On the other hand, the criminal is often portrayed as irrational and degenerate, reflecting societal fears about deviance and social decline. As previously mentioned, the locked room mystery has played a significant role in the history of detective fiction and continues to be a popular subject for writers and readers alike.

Onwards, this thesis will explore two British locked room mysteries from different time periods: *And Then There Were None* by Agatha Christie (1939) and *The Hunting Party* by Lucy Foley (2018). The analysis focuses on these two novels as they are both set in the present time of when they were written, following the classic pattern of the locked room mystery. *And Then There Were None* follows ten people who are invited to an isolated island off the coast of Devon, England. The guests appear to be unrelated to each other, but they have all been lured there under false pretences. They quickly discover that they are trapped on the island due to bad weather, and as time passes, they begin to die one by one in mysterious ways. Similarly, *The Hunting Party* follows a group of friends from London, who travel to Scotland to celebrate New Year's Eve together at an isolated hunting lodge. When a blizzard isolates them from the outside world and one of them is found murdered, they begin to suspect each other. The stories are both told through multiple perspectives, and the reader gradually gains insight into what really happened before the murder(s) and what motivated the killer.

There are clear similarities between *The Hunting Party* and *And Then There Were None*. Both novels centre around a group of people who are isolated in a place, and where one or more of them are killed. Both novels also explore the idea that no one can be trusted, and that everyone has their own secrets and motivations. Lucy Foley has stated in interviews that she is inspired by Agatha Christie and that she wanted to create a modern version of a locked room mystery (*Lucy Foley on Agatha Christie and Locked-Room Mysteries*). So, while *The Hunting Party* is not a direct adaptation of *And Then There Were None*, it is clear that Christie's work impacted it.

And Then There Were None has been utilised in various social research studies to explore crucial and sensitive topics such as justice, racism, and religious discrimination (Sistiadinita; Allmendinger; Arnold). Progress has been made in addressing these issues since the 1930s, which we can see by comparing modern day England to when the novel was written. However, there is one issue that continues to dominate British society that does not get enough attention: class. Many individuals shy away from discussing this topic, despite its pervasive and influential nature. Class differences are evident in various aspects of British life, from education and employment opportunities to social interactions and cultural practices, and it is vital that they are acknowledged and discussed to ensure social equality and a more just and inclusive society. Recognising the impact of class on people's lives and understanding its influence on different aspects of society is the first step towards creating a society that is fair and equitable for all. Therefore, research on the impact of class on society is critical to ensure that everyone, regardless of background or social standing, has equal rights and possibilities in

life. These two works of literature provide insights into how class divisions have evolved over time and their enduring effects on British society.

There is a long history of connection between fiction and social research. Over sixty years ago, American sociologist C. Wright Mills proposed using fiction as a means to inspire research and enlarge the sociological imagination. He suggested that, for example, reading novels by Balzac could give researchers knowledge about different classes in French history. He meant that fiction could replace inadequate or absent research. According to Mills, fiction could provide readers insights into private troubles, and he argued that "In the absence of adequate social science, critics and novelists, dramatists and poets have been the major, and often the only, formulators of private troubles and even of public issues. Art does express such feelings and often focuses them – at its best with dramatic sharpness's" (18). According to Banks & Banks (26) fiction is only somewhat fictional. All works of fiction are shaped by the real world. Readers must be able to comprehend, relate to, and recognise the fictionalised version of the world presented in the fiction. Therefore, it has to at least partly mirror the author's reality. Patricia Leavy is a feminist sociologist who has used fiction as a form of qualitative research in her research. She emphasises the relevance of social researchers with critical perspectives, employing fiction to achieve research goals such as unsettling stereotypes, building critical consciousness, and creating empathy across differences. She states that qualitative researchers have demonstrated, over the last two decades, that fiction is a crucial and valid method of inquiry in the social sciences. Fiction allows academics to access and articulate parts of the human condition that would otherwise be unavailable to them, making social science more accessible to the general public. Short stories, novellas, novels, plays, poetry, and other works of fiction have become a significant part of social scientific research (Leavy 252).

Throughout the 300-year history of the novel, there has been a continual movement back and forth between fact and fiction, with each influencing the other (Franklin in Leavy 253). Leavy states that there are three key features of fiction that makes it particularly attractive to researchers in the social sciences. The first feature is the freedom that fiction allows for creative expression. Many qualitative researchers are interested in using creative license to make their work more engaging for readers. Drawing inspiration from fiction provides an excellent opportunity to do just that. The second feature is fiction's use of recurring literary elements such as master plots and character types. These elements are used to create a sense of familiarity and comfort for readers. By tapping into these narrative components, researchers can "get deeper into the minds of readers, promoting reflexive engagement and the emergence

of critical consciousness" (Leavy 254). Analysing the narrative components of fictional stories can help social researchers identify common themes and ideas that resonate with readers, which may shed light on cultural or societal values and beliefs. Finally, and arguably the most significant distinction between fiction and academic nonfiction, is the access that fiction provides to people's innermost thoughts and emotions. Readers are given a unique opportunity to delve into the inner lives of characters and gain a deeper understanding of their feelings, motivations, and beliefs, through techniques such as interior monologue. This access is not usually possible in academic nonfiction, which makes fiction a valuable tool for social researchers who are interested in exploring the complexities of the human experience. The importance of getting into the heads of characters— their emotions, beliefs, and motivations— cannot be stressed enough. With this, readers can gain insight into the cultural and societal norms of the time period in which the story takes place. For example, if a character expresses a belief or value that is common for their time period, readers can infer that this belief or value was likely widely held by others in society at that time. According to de Freitas, a major strength of fiction as method is uncovering characters' inner lives and fostering empathetic connection among readers. Gibbons & Kupferman define 'fiction as method' as "a method that does not require the scientization of the social sciences or humanities research" (168), however social researchers such as Leavy and de Freitas see fiction as a supplementary tool to their social sciences research, rather than a tool itself.

Historian Inga Clendinnen stated that fiction has taught her the majority of what she knows about life by providing her access to the inner thoughts of characters (in Franklin 15). Clendinnen states that in "[her] view the largest single difference between History and Fiction [...] is that each establishes quite different relationships between writer and subject, and writer and reader" (in Franklin 15). The creation of fictional characters involves a combination of the writer's imagination and real-life experiences. Franklin argues that "it's impossible to dream up an animal totally unrelated to any other, just as it's impossible to imagine a color one has never seen. Even the most far-fetched imaginary creatures will have heads, or wings, or scales; they will be composed out of familiar parts. In the same way, fictional characters too are never "either wholly true or wholly invented"" (16). Every writer leaves their mark on the characters they create, and these characters are influenced by the writer's own experiences and interactions with people. Both history and fiction are made up of the same material, and while they serve different purposes, they are interconnected. With this, Clendinnen argues that if fiction was ever completely made up then it would be unable to teach us about life (in Franklin 16).

Researchers in literary departments and the social sciences both share a common interest in human development, human behaviour, and social relationships. There are various ways in which social scientists might use fiction in their work as academics. During the past two decades, fiction has increasingly been employed by social researchers as a tool of creating critical consciousness, changing stereotypes, accessing hard-to-get-at facets of human experience, and widening public scholarship (Leavy 254). According to Ben Yagoda, novels originated as fake memoirs, using Daniel Defoe's (1719) *Robinson Crusoe* as an example, whose title page makes the novel appear to be a genuine story (75). The existence of genres such as nonfiction novels and historical novels demonstrates the ongoing blurring of fictional and nonfictional forms of representation. Banks points out that authors, like social researchers, seek to understand social behaviour. Roiphe remarks that: "the basic talent of the novelist is to observe social behaviour—the way a person furnishes his house or makes love or reacts to death or folds an envelope or constructs his sentences or plans his career" (in Leavy 254). Seen in light of this, it is understandable that fiction should be added to the social scientist's methodological toolbox (Leavy 254). When it comes to analysing social class and the daily existence of the working class, cultural studies have traditionally been the most common areas of academic enquiry. However, when class is only theorised in the abstract, it fails to fully encompass the complexities of lived experience. This is where fiction steps in. British literature places a great emphasis on the emotions and experiences tied to social class, in part because class distinctions are so ingrained in British culture. Readers can obtain a more complex grasp of what it means to be a member of a given social class by digging into literary texts (Lee 5). Fiction, in this way, bridges the gap between abstract ideas of class theory and the actual reality of everyday life.

The stigmatisation of the working class has become so deeply ingrained in British society that it often goes unnoticed. Although this topic has not received the recognition it deserves, Owen Jones's published research on the subject garnered considerable attention upon its release. By analysing literary texts, evidence of this demonisation can be observed, and this analysis will use Owen Jones's *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class* as a backdrop. In his published research, Owen Jones contends that the media and politicians utilise the demonisation of the working class to divide society and divert attention away from the country's true problems, such as inequality and poverty. Jones explores the history of the British working class, and he states it is difficult to pinpoint a specific starting point for the demonisation of the working class in Britain, as it is a complex process that has evolved over time. However, Jones discusses how they have faced marginalisation and discrimination all

throughout history. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the working class played a central role in the Industrial Revolution and the rise of trade unions. However, they also faced poor working conditions, low pay, and limited rights. Today the media plays a significant role in perpetuating negative stereotypes, often portraying the working-class as lazy, criminal, and irresponsible. He claims that the media and politicians have neglected and stigmatised the working class, which has contributed to the fall of the labour movement and the disintegration of working-class neighbourhoods. Political rhetoric has also contributed to this demonisation, with politicians frequently using language and policies that are dismissive or hostile towards the working class. Finally, cultural stereotypes about the working class, such as the use of the term "chav" to refer to young, working-class people in a derogatory way, have contributed to the negative perception of the working class in society. Jones argues that this demonisation is a means of controlling and oppressing the working class. He also addresses how globalisation and economic policies have impacted the working class, and how these have contributed to the demise of manufacturing and the development of insecure work.

These stereotypes are frequently found in literature to create characters that are easier to analyse for the reader as this reduces the amount of processing they must do as they are categorising the characters under a preconceived marker of similar attributes (Andersen 5). In one way, this makes it easier for the reader to register all the characters in the narrative, but it also prejudices the reader against the characters, which in the locked room genre often can lead to the reader suspecting the working-class characters of the crime. So, despite the demonisation of the working class being an old phenomenon that many may believe no longer exists, Jones contends that the demonisation of the working class has persisted and has been aggravated by various factors, including globalisation, economic policies, and media representation.

Although class differences continue to exist today, they are not taken as seriously as they were a century ago. Nonetheless, these distinctions continue to shape British society, and scholars, such as Jones, have sought to understand their ongoing impact. Gaining a different and more humane perspective through the locked room narrative can function as support in this research. Owens's research provides important background and depth to the use of a locked room mystery as a means of representing class differences, shedding light on the ways in which these disparities continue to influence people's lives and relationships. By exploring the nuances of this genre and its thematic concerns, we can gain new insights into the complex interplay between class and power in the modern world.

Chapter 2: Social class in Agatha Christie

Agatha Christie holds a significant place in the literary world. She is the best-selling fiction writer of all time, and her novel *And Then There Were None* (1939) is recognised as one of the best-selling books in history (Ramazan 18). Christie's writing has had a significant impact on the mystery genre, particularly during the "Golden Age" of detective fiction in the early to mid-20th century (Ramazan 17). Her contributions to the genre include popularising the classic whodunit format, and to this day her legacy continues to inspire new generations of mystery writers. Lidia Kyzlinkova notes that mystery writers have a remarkable ability to gather precise, or at the very least highly plausible, information about everyday life. They tend to accumulate a lot of information about everyday life as they strive to create believable characters and settings for their stories (116). Further, she highlights how Agatha Christie's novels are an especially great source for social historians seeking to uncover the social conventions and changes of the time, because Christie's career spans several decades, during which British society underwent considerable transformations (116).

According to Appigani, "Christie is perhaps the world's most notable exponent of academic inquiry, but that her works are overlooked as models of social science methods" (6). Some of the most notable cultural studies researchers have recognised the value of using Agatha Christie in scientific study, recommending her novels for future research (MacDonald, McLuhan). Unfortunately, this research thread was neglected (Appigani, 6).

And Then There Were None by Agatha Christie is a classic locked room mystery that features a group of characters who are invited to an island and become involved in a series of murders. Through its in-depth description of characters and its plot, the novel provides a window into the social, cultural, and historical context of early 20th century Britain. The characters in the novel come from a wide range of backgrounds and social classes, reflecting the complex and stratified social hierarchy of the time. The guests invited to the island are depicted as representatives of the various classes and attitudes that characterised the British society of the period, including the aristocracy, the middle classes, and the working classes. Through the interactions and relationships between these characters, the novel explores the societal norms, prejudices, and expectations that defined the era, illuminating issues such as class snobbery, deference to authority, and the strict adherence to social etiquette.

Christie is well-known for her constant critique of her characters' preoccupations with class and money, not to mention their biases about national origin. Being a woman of the upper-class herself, she loved to set her stories in the hushed elegance of upper-class residences. This

recurring theme can be observed throughout her extensive literary career and has become a notable hallmark of her writing style. As noted by Kyzlinková, Christie's works consistently feature characters who are fixated on their social status and wealth, leading to societal hierarchies and class-based prejudices that serve as underlying themes within the narratives (113). Through her exploration of these themes, Christie challenged and criticised the societal norms that perpetuated such biases and prejudices, and in doing so, opened up discussions on issues of social class, wealth, and cultural identity. This realistic representation of society serves as a mirror, reflecting the society at the time it was written, giving the reader an idea of how it was.

Farman Ramazan argues that crime and criminals in a detective narrative may serve as a barometer of social values and morality, which gives us an insight into some ideologies or cultural peculiarities at a specific time in a given culture (19). For example, if a detective story portrays a criminal who is motivated by a desire for material wealth, it may suggest that the society in which the story is set places a high value on material possessions. Alternatively, if a detective story features a criminal who is motivated by a desire for revenge, it may indicate that the society in question values personal honour and justice. In general, detective stories are abundant with motives and methods of committing a crime. As a result, there is a heightened focus on the characteristics, psychological motivations, and personal details of the characters involved, providing the social analyst with more details than other narratives. Further, the characterisation of a particular action as deviant is often influenced by the cultural and social values of a given society, because in different cultures and time periods what is labelled as deviant varies. Understanding why certain behaviours are deemed deviant provides insight into the underlying ideologies and cultural peculiarities. By examining the reasons for the distinction, we gain a deeper understanding of the cultural and historical factors that contribute to the development of societal values. Therefore, the study of deviance in a narrative provides a window into the complexities of cultural norms and values, revealing the nuances of social life and the ways in which these values are shaped and propagated. The detective novel allows us to explore how different societies define and regulate the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and how these boundaries evolve over time. Understanding the cultural and historical context of deviance enables us to grasp the complexity of human experience and sheds light on the intricate interplay between society and the individual. *And Then There Were None* reflects the societal idea of deviance at the time it was written. It is centred around the belief that individuals who violated the established moral standards deserved punishment. The characters in the novel, who are all accused of committing various crimes that caused the death of

someone else, are portrayed as being morally corrupt and deserving of punishment for their actions. Their past actions are used to justify their murders, and the characters are presented as being morally responsible for their own deaths. The characters on the island are punished for their past crimes — an eye for an eye — and the killer is portrayed as an agent of justice, seeking to punish those who have committed wrongdoings.

The novel has a point of view that constantly shifts among the ten characters, allowing the readers to see the story from different angles and gain a more profound understanding of the characters. As opposed to other mystery novels, the locked room mystery presents a closed environment in which a limited number of characters are confined together, which allows the reader to see all the characters better. This creates a situation where the relationships between the characters, their motivations, and their behaviours are under intense scrutiny, and the social dynamics at play become more apparent. Furthermore, the enclosed setting of a locked room mystery provides for increased tension and pressure among the characters, which can result in revealing behaviours. This, in turn, gives the researcher a more nuanced exploration of the underlying social structures at play. The novel primarily employs a third-person narrator who closely observes the events happening on Soldier Island. However, this narrator occasionally enters the minds of certain characters, infiltrating their thoughts one by one, but we do not get to see what every character is thinking during every scene. The limited number of characters in the narrative provides an ideal opportunity to conduct a detailed analysis of each character's characteristics and traits. The shifting point of view allows readers to understand the characters better by providing insight into their thoughts and emotions. In addition, the shifting point of view employed by the novel provides a valuable tool for exploring the social dynamics of the characters. By examining how the characters interact with one another and how their perceptions of each other (does not) change over time, researchers gain insights into the complex social dynamics that underpin group behaviour. Through their inner monologues, we can see their fears, insecurities, and secrets, which helps us understand their actions and decisions throughout the story.

In the novel, Christie uses the interactions and relationships between the characters to explore the theme of social structures. The characters can be divided into two main social groups: the wealthy and influential, and the lower class. The characters' social positions are significant in determining their actions and behaviours, as the wealthy characters hold more power and influence due to their social status. On the other hand, the lower-class characters are treated with less respect and are more likely to be suspected due to their lack of status. However, as the plot progresses, it becomes evident that the social hierarchy on the island does not

necessarily reflect the characters' guilt or innocence. Each character has a dark past and has played a role in the deaths of others, regardless of their social position. This ultimately challenges the idea that social status and wealth determine one's character or guilt and suggests that the truth can be found by looking beyond these superficial markers of social hierarchy.

The determination of the social class of the characters in this narrative can be achieved through an analysis of several key factors, including their modes of transportation to the island, profession, and gender. These factors serve as markers of wealth and power, and collectively provide a nuanced understanding of the social divide among the characters. Already in the first chapter of the novel the reader gains insight into the social class of the characters through the mode of transportation used to reach the island. For example, Mr. Justice Wargrave travels in first class on the train, whereas Vera Claythorne travels in third class. This distinction, even in the early stages of the narrative, highlights the divide in wealth between the two characters. Furthermore, the professions of the characters play a crucial role in determining their social class and in shaping their personalities. The characters range from a retired judge to a secretary, from a former soldier to a butler. Each profession comes with its own set of expectations and responsibilities, which significantly impact the character's behaviour, motivations, and social status. For example, Judge Lawrence Wargrave, who is a highly intelligent retired judge, possesses a commanding personality and a strong sense of justice, which makes him a natural leader among the group of guests on the island. What the other guests do not know is that he is the one committing the crimes.

Wargrave's character reflects the high status and respect associated with the judiciary in the 1930s. Due to his strong yearning for justice, he strays from the conventional path and carries out his own twisted and gruesome punishments on those he deems guilty. He portrays himself as a champion against injustice and takes it upon himself to bring justice to those who have avoided legal consequences. Yet, the core ideals of justice are unaffected. As a judge, Wargrave upholds justice by sentencing the guilty to imprisonment or execution within the confines of the courtroom. Similarly, Philip Lombard, a former soldier, is confident, resourceful, and bold, which helps him to survive almost until the end of the novel. However, his chivalrous attitude towards women proves to be his weakness, and his underestimation of Vera Claythorne's resourcefulness leads to his downfall. Despite her intelligence and capability, Vera is depicted as suffering from hysteria, reflecting the societal view of women's mental health and the stigma surrounding it. In contrast, Dr. Edward George Armstrong is a successful yet gullible doctor. Since doctors were highly respected back then, also took a leading position in the group simply because of his high-standing profession, despite the fact

that his trusting nature was not the best in a crisis. William Henry Blore, a former police inspector, acts boldly and frequently takes initiative, but his frequent blunders and constant suspicion of the wrong person suggest a lack of true competence. His character mirrors the view British society held of police at the time. In England, the police had a generally positive image until the 1926 general strike, during which "many workers, especially the miners, believed that the police, whose job was to keep the law, were actually fighting against them [...] These memories influenced their opinion of employers, government and the police for half a century" (McDowall 164). Initially, the police were perceived by the working class as comical, untrustworthy, and tainted by corruption. However, over time, this perception softened during the Golden Age of Detective Fiction, into the police being depicted as dedicated and honest servants, albeit lacking in intelligence (Danielová 77). Instead of having police officers take the lead in investigation, Christie often has an amateur detective do the work (e.g., Miss Marple), showing how they are more capable than the police. While there is no lead detective in *And Then There Were None*, as everyone is doing the investigation, it is noteworthy that the police officer is not assuming a sole leadership role. At the time, the police were not viewed positively by the working class and they "were seen as a military force that was sent by the government to control the working class" (Danielová 18). William Henry Blore's offence was that he imprisoned an innocent man in order to advance in his career. It is reasonable to assume that the man he arrested was a man of the working class, as he saw it as just a man whose life he could take away for his own gain. With this in mind, historical researchers can examine how Christie's characterisation of Blore as an unethical police officer resonated with readers at the time and contributed to the negative perception of the police. Additionally, researchers can study how this negative perception of the police affected police practices and policies during the early to mid-twentieth century in England. It is apparent that the diversity of professions among the characters highlights the way in which societal expectations in relation to profession and class shape individual personalities.

In terms of analysing and understanding social structures, the most notable of the characters is Mr. Rogers. Against the backdrop of a rigid class system, the butler's unwavering commitment to serve the guests, even in the midst of a crisis, underscores the deeply ingrained expectations of subservience and deference within the servant-master relationship. The butler was considered an essential part of any wealthy household and was responsible for serving the family's needs. As such, Mr. Rogers is portrayed as a competent and reliable servant, who is remarkably skilled at his job. Furthermore, Rogers' adherence to his role as a servant highlights the limits of social mobility in that time. Although he is an intelligent and capable individual,

he is confined to his position as a butler and has no hope of advancing beyond that role. This is evident in his interactions with the other characters, where he is always deferential and subservient. His status as a butler defines his identity and limits his aspirations, which underscores the rigid hierarchy of British society. As the story progresses, and the murders happen, the guests' social statuses become irrelevant. However, the servant-master dynamic remains constant, and the servants are still expected to serve their employers, even though they are in the midst of a crisis. This is evident in Mr. Roger's behaviour towards the other guests. The most notable incident is when his wife is the second person to fall dead on the island, and as the other guests are discussing the death without him present, he appears and asks if there's "anything more I can get you?" (82). Even in times of crisis, he remains committed to his role, and while everyone agrees to stick together and be cautious, this does not include the staff, they are expected to keep to themselves. This portrayal speaks to the social hierarchy that dominated this period, where individuals of higher social standing were entitled to expect and demand service from those occupying the lower rungs. It also shows how ingrained the ideas are, not even ceasing in a time of crisis. Moreover, the butler's relentless service suggests that the servants themselves may have similarly subscribed to the rigid class norms, thereby perpetuating, and legitimising existing power structures. Thus, the characterisation of the butler serves as a representation of the broader societal forces that shaped class relations and expectations during this era. People were expected to remain true to their social class.

Furthermore, some guests believe that people of the proper class are incapable of murder. This belief further emphasises the classist attitudes of the time. There was a general perception that those from higher social classes were more cultured, refined, and better behaved than those from lower classes. This idea was largely based on the assumption that individuals from higher classes had access to better education and upbringing, which made them morally superior to those from lower classes. This highlights the damaging effects of classism on society and challenges the notion that social class determines an individual's moral character. According to this belief, individuals of the higher classes are expected to adhere to a strict code of conduct that includes refraining from engaging in behaviours that are considered immoral or uncivilised. The idea that individuals of the proper class are incapable of murder can be seen as a form of classism, or the belief that certain social classes are superior to others. This belief reinforces the idea that the upper class is inherently more moral and civilised than the lower classes, and that their behaviour is subject to a higher standard of scrutiny and judgement. However, as the plot of *And Then There Were None* unfolds, it becomes clear that this belief is not based in reality. The characters in the novel, many of whom come from the upper class, are

revealed to be just as capable of committing murder as anyone else. In this way, the novel challenges the idea that social class determines a person's character or behaviour and suggests that individuals from all walks of life are capable of both good and evil actions.

This idea can be further emphasised by looking into the classic "the butler did it" trope, a common mystery fiction trope where the person responsible for a crime turns out to be the butler, maid, or other servant of a wealthy family. The use of this trope is an example of classism, as it reinforces the stereotype that people from lower social classes are more likely to be involved in criminal activity or have less moral character than those from higher social classes. It also implies that the wealthy are immune to committing crimes themselves, and that they are more likely to be the victims of crime rather than the perpetrators. In 1928, detective author and art critic S. S. Van Dine published his own set of requirements for detective fiction in an issue of *The American Magazine* (190). In the list, he argues that misdirection in the narrative is crucial for detective stories. It is important that the culprit is not immediately obvious due to their social status or class. This approach requires a shared communal perception of social status and agreement on who is or is not a suitable suspect. It assumes a consensual morality and a perfect order in society, where only wicked people disrupt the harmony, and they are ultimately caught (190). Van Dine suggests that readers may instinctively suspect working-class characters of criminality more than those of higher social classes, leading to a belief that such characters are less worthwhile subjects. This suggests that Van Dine assumes a certain level of conformity between the reader's moral values and those presented in the story. He implies that the writer should reflect reality in their work, assuming that the reader shares the same ideas of morality as the characters in the narrative. The notion that readers are more prone to suspect lower-class characters of criminality than those from higher social classes reflects the societal conventions and beliefs prominent in Van Dine's time, which favoured the upper classes and frequently denigrated the working classes.

Ethel Rogers, Thomas Rogers's wife, is described as a frail, "white bloodless ghost of a woman" (25), who is dominated by her husband. She depicts the vulnerable and submissive class of women in the 1930s. Women were seen as the weaker sex, and their lives were often dominated by their husbands. They were expected to be obedient and subservient to their husbands and were often denied the same opportunities and freedoms as men. This stereotype is embodied by Ethel's character, as she is portrayed as a timid and helpless woman who is completely under the authority of her husband. One instance of this is when Thomas convinces Ethel to withhold medicine from a former employer, resulting in the employer's death and allowing the Rogers to inherit money from her will. This incident highlights Ethel's

vulnerability and subservience to her husband, as she is coerced into participating in a crime against her better judgement. She remains haunted by the crime for the rest of her life, implying that she is not a willing participant in the scheme, but rather a victim of her husband's manipulation and control. Her character represents the challenges faced by many women during this period, who were trapped in unhappy marriages and had limited opportunities to improve their lives, and she reflects the societal expectations of gender roles in the 1930s.

During the time when *And Then There Were None* was written, society held a terribly negative view towards unmarried mothers. These women were often viewed as immoral and were ostracised from society. The novel portrays this attitude through the character of Miss Emily Brent, who is depicted as an extremely religious, deeply judgmental, and unsympathetic person. When her maid becomes pregnant out of wedlock, Miss Brent is so outraged that she dismisses her on the spot, which ultimately leads to the maid taking her own life. Miss Brent remains unmoved by the event. Instead of showing any sympathy or Christian forgiveness towards her former employee, Miss Brent only thinks about the negative impact that the incident will have on her reputation. This unsympathetic attitude towards an unmarried mother's suffering reflects the harsh social climate of the time period. Through the portrayal of Miss Brent's reaction to her maid's pregnancy and suicide, Christie is highlighting the double standards that existed towards women in society. While men who engaged in promiscuous behaviour were often viewed as charming and adventurous, women who did the same were judged harshly and punished severely. Miss Brent's reaction towards her maid's pregnancy and subsequent suicide suggests that she viewed working-class women as being beneath her and unworthy of sympathy or support, simply something replaceable when needed. If the girl who got pregnant was of a higher social class, the situation may have been viewed differently by society. People of higher social standing often received preferential treatment compared to those of lower classes, but it is important to note that attitudes towards unmarried mothers were generally negative across all social classes during this time period, and the consequences of pregnancy outside of marriage could be severe, regardless of one's social status. However, if a girl from a wealthy family became pregnant out of wedlock, her family may have had the resources to help her conceal the pregnancy and provide her with the necessary support.

There are several more examples of objectification of the help found in the novel. We can draw an example from chapter two that reflects this view. It is apparent that Mr. Wargrave does not have a high opinion of women in general, but especially remarkable is it that he does not even consider the help, Mrs. Rogers, as one of the women:

"Mr. Justice Wargrave reflected on the subject of Constance
Culmington. Undependable like all women. His mind went on to the two
women in the house, the tight-lipped old maid and the girl. He didn't care
for the girl, cold-blooded young hussy. No, three women, if you counted
the Rogers woman." (31)

He refers to women in general as "undependable". Mr. Wargrave's attitude towards Mrs. Rogers is particularly telling. Despite the fact that she is a woman, he does not even consider her as such. This indicates that he does not view her as an equal or someone worthy of much consideration, but as nothing more than the help. Instead, he refers to her as "the Rogers woman," emphasising her position as a servant. This type of thinking reflects a patriarchal mindset, where men are considered superior to women, and women's worth is measured by their ability to serve men. By reducing Mrs. Rogers to a mere object, Mr. Justice Wargrave is reinforcing this mindset and perpetuating gender and class inequality.

Anthony Marston, the wealthy young man, represents the class of wealthy individuals who were seen as carefree and lacking in conscience. Wealthy individuals were often expected to have a sense of entitlement and to act impulsively. Marston's reckless driving and lack of remorse for his actions reflect the societal expectations of the wealthy class. As mentioned, men, as opposed to women, who engaged in promiscuous behaviour were often viewed as charming and adventurous. It is clear that Marston values the attention from women:

"Several young women looked at him admiringly—his six feet of
well-proportioned body, his crisp hair, tanned face, and intensely blue
eyes. He let in the clutch with a roar and leapt up the narrow street." (12)

He drives recklessly and this leads to the deaths of two innocent children; however, after the incident he is able to return to society as normal. This can be attributed to his social status and wealth. Marston is portrayed as a young, attractive, and wealthy individual, and these qualities often allowed individuals to get away with reckless and immoral behaviour. Additionally, Marston's charm and charisma may have also played a role in his ability to avoid punishment and continue his way of life. His wealth and social standing may also have allowed him to hire skilled lawyers and influence the legal system to his advantage. Furthermore, Marston's lack of remorse for his actions can be related to his privileged position in society. Wealth and social status often provided individuals with a sense of entitlement and immunity from consequences, which may have contributed to Marston's indifferent attitude towards the deaths of the two children.

In conclusion, Agatha Christie's novel *And Then There Were None* provides a significant contribution to the exploration of social class in early 20th century Britain. Through the genre of the locked room mystery, the novel engages with the broader societal issues of the era, including class dynamics, cultural values, and gender inequality. The novel provides a nuanced view into the complicated structure of social relationships and the ways in which socioeconomic class influences an individual's status and treatment within a group by depicting a diverse group of characters and their interactions. The character of Mr. Thomas Rogers, the butler, is particularly notable in this regard, serving as a representation of the rigid class structure of British society, its societal inequalities, and the limits of social mobility. The novel creates and maintains a rigid system to show how difficult it is to break down class barriers, and how individuals can be trapped within their social class, despite their actions. Furthermore, the novel challenges the classist attitudes prevalent in the era, such as the belief that members of the upper class are incapable of murder. Through this exploration, the novel ultimately reveals for social researchers the complexity and diversity of human behaviour and character that were notable at the time.

Chapter 3: Social class in Foley

"We're all middle class" the former British prime minister, Tony Blair, once announced (Jones 139). Jones lists multiple news outlets that seem to agree: "We're all middle class now, darling" (*Daily Telegraph*), "We're all middle class now as social barriers fall away" (*The Times*) (139). Jones argues that the reasoning behind these claims is that the traditional working-class in Britain has long been associated with occupations such as miners and factory workers. However, with the closure of mines and factories in recent years, the pillars of this stereotype have crumbled, and therefore many politicians now argue that the working-class has been transformed into a middle-class society (140). Despite this, a significant portion of the British population continues to struggle with poverty and economic insecurity, and the term "working-class" remains relevant in describing their experiences.

A major survey on social class was conducted by the BBC's Lab UK and the Current Affairs Department in 2011, with the aim of mapping the class divide in the UK (Savage 230). The survey "was designed to include questions to develop detailed measures of economic, cultural and social capital" (Savage 223). So not only did it cover people's economy, but for example with its questions on cultural capital asked about people's leisure interests, musical tastes, use of the media, and food preferences. The data from the survey categorised people into one of seven main classes: Elite, established middle class, technical middle class, new affluent workers, traditional working class, emergent service workers, and precariat. The elite class constituted only 6% of the population and was defined as having exceptionally high economic capital, high social capital, and highbrow cultural capital. Professions such as functional managers, directors, barristers, and judges fall under this category (Savage 230-231). The upper middle, middle, and lower middle classes were represented by the established middle class, technical middle class, and new affluent workers, respectively. They span from "High economic capital, high status of mean contacts, high highbrow and emerging cultural capital" (Savage 230) to "Moderately good economic capital, moderately poor mean score of social contacts, though high range, moderate highbrow but good emerging cultural capital" (Savage 230). Various professions fall under these categories, including environmental professionals, police officers, and postal workers (Savage 232). Lastly, the lower classes are divided into the traditional working class, emergent service workers, and precariat. They are people with moderately poor to poor economic capital, few social contacts, and low to moderate cultural capital, where the precariat scores the lowest on every criterion. Various professions fall under these categories, including care workers, cleaners, leisure and travel service occupations, and

customer service occupations (Savage 230-232). 48% of those surveyed fell into one of the latter three categories, proving that nearly half of the British population can be determined as working-class.

While conducting research, future historians may be prone to trust mainstream sources, such as *The Times* or the *Daily Telegraph,* that claim there no longer exists a working class in Britain. While some other sources, such as the BBC's Lab UK and the Current Affairs Department survey, state otherwise, they do not provide the same level of in-depth experience as the locked room mystery. The genre allows us to discover underlying issues that are not talked about in the media and other sources, because these narratives usually contain characters from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, it provides a unique window into class relations. In addition to this it gives us a more humane perspective than statistics from research, allowing academics to access aspects of the human experience that might otherwise be inaccessible.

In *The Hunting Party* by Lucy Foley, the social class of the characters plays a significant role in shaping their personalities. Set in a remote hunting lodge in Scotland, the novel follows a group of friends who are brought together for a weekend of partying to celebrate the new year. The main character, Miranda, is a glamorous and popular woman who comes from a wealthy, upper-class background. She is described as being used to getting "what she wants" (227) and is depicted as being confident and assertive. Miranda is joined by her friends and their partners, including Katie, her best friend and the only single of the group, and Emma, the newest member of the group. In addition to them we have an Icelandic couple staying at the lodge, the groundskeeper, Doug, and the lodge keeper, Heather.

The narrative is told in first person from the perspectives of multiple characters, which allows the reader to gain a better understanding of what is going on inside the minds of the characters. The use of multiple perspectives is common in mystery novels, but even more so in the locked room narratives. The author can use this technique to provide different viewpoints of the same event, allowing the reader to piece together the clues and solve the mystery. The reader can compare the various characters' perspectives and reactions to get a complete picture of what happened. This is particularly effective in a locked room mystery, where the number of suspects is limited, and each character's perspective is essential to solving the puzzle. This approach enhances the reader's experience by allowing them to get inside the minds of the characters, creating a deeper level of engagement with the story. By telling the story from the perspectives of different characters, Foley mirrors how socioeconomic class affects people's perceptions of themselves and their attitudes towards others. For example, Miranda is from an upper-class background and views herself as superior to the other characters and is surprised

when Doug does not show signs of desiring her. As the narrative reveals the characters' innermost thoughts, a social researcher can better comprehend their ideas and actions as a result of their social standing. The characters' interactions demonstrate how social class creates tensions, enhances stereotypes, and prejudices, affecting not only individual behaviour but also social structures and power dynamics.

While Christie's novel is set in a period that historians and social scholars have spent much time delving into, contemporary mystery fiction may be overlooked as a valuable tool for understanding society today and current underlying issues. Contemporary novels frequently focus on topics such as racism and homophobia as their main themes, but the issue of class tends to be overlooked. While some contemporary novels may address social issues head-on, locked room fiction provides a subtler but equally valuable perspective on society today. The plot of a locked room mystery is the crime; however, by exploring the underlying themes and messages of the narrative, researchers can gain insight into how society views certain issues through how the author represents them. As fiction is shaped by the real world, it can be used as a window into society (Banks in Leavy 253). So, although not necessarily the primary intention of the author, fictional works often mirror real-world circumstances and serve as a gateway to understanding societal norms. Thus, locked room mysteries are a valuable tool for understanding society and its underlying issues, even if the author is not explicitly addressing them.

The first example we can see of Foley representing people from different classes differently is through how they socialise with others. The narrative depicts the working-class characters, Doug and Heather, as being loners, while the upper-class guests are shown as social and fun-loving. This portrayal highlights the class divide between the characters, as the higher-class guests have had more opportunities to socialise and network with each other due to their lifestyle, and education. On the other hand, the lower-class characters may not have had the same opportunities or access to similar social circles, which could contribute to their more reserved nature. This could be related to educational and lifestyle differences. The reason could also be that people simply do not want to socialise with them as they view them as below them. Foley may have chosen to portray the characters in a particular way to convey certain themes or ideas in her story, such as the class divide, without necessarily subscribing to those portrayals herself. It is also probable that the representation of the characters in the novel reflect Foley's own perspectives. An author's social background, experiences, and beliefs influences the way they portray characters in their writing. Her representation of the different characters can subconsciously be a reflection of how she and the society around her view people of different

classes. With this a researcher can question the portrayals of characters in literature and understand how they reflect larger societal issues and power dynamics.

The story revolves around Miranda, a popular and confident character who lives off her wealthy husband and does not have a career. She becomes the victim of the story when she is murdered by Emma, the newest member of her friend group who turns out to be her stalker from college. Emma had always admired Miranda's glamorous lifestyle and had longed to be like her, which is the reason behind her stalking. By imitating Miranda's look, Emma manages to attract the attention of Miranda's friend, Marc, who has long had an eye for Miranda. This is how Emma makes her way into the group. However, Emma's obsession with Miranda ultimately leads to her downfall, suggesting that this type of admiration and envy can lead to destructive behaviour. In addition, Marc's infatuation with Miranda represents the desire for someone from the upper middle class, further highlighting the allure of wealth and status.

The class differences between Emma and Miranda play a crucial role in the story. Emma's desire to move up the social ladder and gain access to the privileges and opportunities that come with wealth and status is reflected in her attempts to fit in with Miranda's group of friends. The reader obtains insight into the societal pressures and power dynamics that drive the characters' actions and reactions through the locked room narrative, and how it gives us insight into the different characters' minds. Emma's stalking suggests that she is highly motivated to achieve an upper-class lifestyle and is willing to go to great lengths to obtain it. The way she imitates Miranda is a clear indication of her desire to attain the perceived benefits of a privileged life, such as social status and power. Emma's obsession with Miranda and her lifestyle may stem from a deep-seated sense of insecurity and inferiority, leading her to believe that her own life is lacking in some way. By imitating Miranda, Emma may hope to fill this sense of emptiness or inadequacy. This behaviour reflects a larger societal aspiration to achieve an upper-class lifestyle, which is often fuelled by a cultural narrative that glorifies wealth and power, positioning the upper class as the ultimate symbol of success and accomplishment. Many people are drawn to the idea of living a life of luxury and comfort, with access to exclusive social circles and expensive goods. However, as Emma's actions demonstrate, the pursuit of an upper-class lifestyle is highly competitive and cutthroat. The pressure to succeed leads some individuals to resort to extreme measures, such as cheating, lying, or even criminal activity, in order to get ahead.

Foley employs the use of irony to critique the concept of the upper class "golden girl" lifestyle. Miranda appears to have everything one could desire. In society's eyes, Miranda is the perfect example of a "golden girl" - beautiful, Oxford-educated, and married to a

stockbroker. But she's desperately unhappy and says "It used to be enough. Just to be me. To look the way I do, and to be a bloody Oxbridge graduate, and to be able to talk with fluency about current affairs or the state of the economy and the new trend for body con or slip dresses. But I woke up one morning and realised I was supposed to have something more: to be something more. To have, specifically, 'A Career'" (142). In contrast, depicting Emma's extreme desire for this upper-class lifestyle, in light of Miranda's character, underscores the absurdity of this societal construct and warns against the dangers of striving for it. As previously stated, it is a common trait in the locked room genre that they contain characters from different classes. It could be argued that Foley incorporates the same technique to stay true to the genre, drawing inspiration from the past, as opposed to reflecting society today, especially as she stated that she was inspired by Christie in her writing. However, Foley incorporates modern stereotypes that were not present in Christie's novel, but that are common in British society today. In doing so, Foley's novel mirrors contemporary society and its attitudes, rather than drawing solely from the past. Foley plays into modern stereotypes and has created characters that portray the idea society has of these people. In one way this portrayal perpetuates harmful stereotypes and reinforces class divisions and inequalities, in another it highlights the dangers behind this negative portrayal. Through her narrative Foley reflects the society she views, critiquing it through irony.

Historically the upper class in Britain was perceived as an exclusive and nearly impenetrable social stratum, and the only ways to attain this status were by being born into privilege, through marriage, or in certain cases, by receiving a title, and it seems that climbing the ladder is still a challenge. Falling down the ladder, on the other hand, seems to happen quickly. The novel states that Doug "was lucky to get this job, he knows that. Not only because it suits him, his frame of mind, his desire to be as far from the rest of humanity as possible. But also, because it is likely that no one else would have had him. Not with his past." (23). Doug may have come from a higher social class as it is stated that he attended a private school before he dropped out. However, his traumatic experiences in the military caused him to suffer from blackouts, during one of which he strangled a man at a pub. This event landed him in jail, which resulted in a loss of status and opportunities. The fact that his only job option is as a gamekeeper at the lodge, a precariat job, reflects the limited options available to him due to his past, which has relegated him to a lower social class. Emma's behaviour highlights the difficulty of moving up the social class ladder, while Doug shows that moving down the ladder happens more quickly. Researchers can examine how these differences in access to resources and opportunities affect individuals' life chances and opportunities for social mobility.

One of the key elements that social class is rooted in is education, and this is also eminent in the novel. The group that visits the lodge in *The Hunting Party* are from London, and all know each other from their days at Oxford. Nearly half of the students at Oxford were privately educated (Jones, 120) and Jones states that the students there are privileged people that rarely socialise with those lower down on the scale. Many students at the university were accepted due to their privilege. Jones suggests that half of the students at Oxford were admitted due to their private education rather than their talents, while those at the bottom of the societal ladder cannot afford this education and therefore are seen as stupid because they could not get in (Jones, 121). This is expressed in the novel through the inner thoughts of Emma. She was admitted into Oxford due to her brilliant academic record while she states about Miranda that "I wasn't sure that she would have been bright enough" (351) to get in. In this way Foley portrays the reality of higher education and how privileged it is, and the difficulties and challenges faced by those who are not born into privilege when it comes to higher education. It appears that admission to a prestigious institution such as Oxford is much easier if you come from a privileged background, while those who do not must work exceptionally hard to achieve the same results. While Jones's published research is useful for social researchers due to its examination of how the British education system perpetuates class inequality, *The Hunting Party* provides a more nuanced examination of the impact of social class on education and social mobility through its depiction of Emma's experiences. The novel highlights how privilege and access to private education creates an uneven playing field in the pursuit of academic excellence. It also illustrates the tension that can arise between individuals from different social classes and how these tensions affect social interactions and relationships. *The Hunting Part*y provides a more micro-level exploration of how social class affects individuals' experiences and relationships and provides a more personal and relatable perspective on the issue than academic non-fiction and research can. As Mills argues, fiction offers insight into issues on a more personal level than non-fiction is able to (18). In this way, *The Hunting Party* complements published research such as *Chavs* in social research by offering a more humanistic perspective on the impact of social class on people's lives.

Career is another key element that social class is rooted in. Foley herself stated in interviews that she finds it interesting to explore the theme of mistrust in supposedly trustworthy professions such as doctors, lawyers, and bankers in her writing (*Lucy Foley on Agatha Christie and Locked-Room Mysteries*). She says, "those are professions you're meant to trust" (*Lucy Foley on Agatha Christie and Locked-Room Mysteries*), and these professions are often associated with high status and education. As such, people working in these

professions may be perceived as belonging to a particular social class, which could influence the expectations that others have of them. She cites Agatha Christie as a similar author who often includes such characters in her stories. Foley's observation emphasises the idea that people often place a great deal of trust in individuals in certain professions, assuming that they will act with integrity and honesty. However, Emma, who works for a literary agency in London, challenges this assumption by demonstrating that anyone, regardless of their profession or status, is capable of betrayal. Katie is an additional example. She is a successful lawyer but goes behind Miranda's back and sleeps with her husband, who works for the hedge fund.

Katie is frequently seen as an outcast because she is the only single person in the friend group. Despite the fact that she has been a member of the group from its beginning and is Miranda's best friend, her lack of a partner makes her stand out. Emma, who is the newest person to join the group, has previously felt like the outcast, but thinks that "Katie, [...] is the odd one out, not being in a couple. In a way, I suppose you could say that she is more of an interloper than I am these days." (6). This results in Katie having to sit in a carriage by herself on the train to the cabin, while the other eight sit together. Despite being a part of the friend group since the beginning, and titled Miranda's best friend, Katie is still the outcast of the group because she does not have a partner. This can tell social researchers how people today view single people. The situation exemplifies how being single can lead to social exclusion and a sense of being an outcast. It appears that in this group, having a partner is a significant factor that determines social acceptance, which is evidenced by Katie's exclusion from the group during their trip. Emma's perspective also suggests that being single can be perceived as a deviation from the norm, and therefore, single people may be seen as interlopers in social situations. The situation with Katie provides insight for social researchers into the ways in which people perceive and treat those who are single. It suggests that there is a societal expectation for individuals to be in relationships, and those who do not conform to this norm may experience social ostracism. Essentially, social class is not just a label, but a fundamental aspect of how people see themselves and relate to others in the world around them. With this, the way Katie is portrayed, she is a middle-class woman, despite working as a lawyer and being Oxford educated.

As mentioned, Doug suffers from trauma, due to which he suffers from blackouts, during one of which he strangled a man at a pub. This event landed him in jail. Doug's actions are even written about in the media, and Foley references names of real newspapers when doing so. She writes that Heather finds these articles:

"The *Daily Mail* article is the first hit. I click it open. There is a photo of Doug, hollow-eyed, mouth a grim line, hair shorn to the scalp. Another of him in an ill-fitting suit, being shepherded out of a car into the courthouse, his teeth bared at the photographers in a snarl. He looks like a criminal; he looks violent, dangerous. The article that follows is a lurid attack on every aspect of his character. Educated at a private school; university dropout; time in the Marines, the only one to survive an attack by the Taliban in 'murky circumstances'. Strongly insinuating, if not stating outright, that some foul play or cowardice was involved on his part. And then a 'brawl in a bar'. As I read on, it only gets worse. The form of 'bodily harm'? *Attempted strangulation*. I look for anything in the article that might exonerate Doug's behaviour in some way: something I could latch onto." (223)

In the paragraph above, the media depicts Doug, a working-class man, as a violent criminal. The use of photographs and language in the article is deliberately sensationalised to make Doug appear menacing and dangerous. This portrayal reinforces the stereotype that working-class people are prone to violence, crime, and antisocial behaviour. This type of representation is damaging because it leads to a lack of empathy and understanding towards working-class people, and a perception that they are somehow to blame for their circumstances. By promoting negative stereotypes and reinforcing prejudices, the media perpetuates inequality and creates barriers to social mobility. Further Heather says that "I discard the *Daily Mail*, click on the BBC News link, which should give me an account without bias or sensationalism." (224). Heather discards the *Daily Mail* in favour of a more neutral source of news, such as the BBC, which reflects the need for fair and unbiased reporting in the media. *The Daily Mail* is known for its sensationalist and often biased coverage of news stories. Heather's decision to seek out a more balanced source of news suggests that she is aware of these biases and is actively trying to avoid them.

Jones examines how working-class people are often depicted as drunken layabouts that are reckless and rude in the media (115). The characters of Doug and Heather in the novel serve as examples of this demonisation, as they are the two working-class characters in the narrative, who incidentally are the two people portrayed as struggling with alcohol abuse. Foley portrays Doug and Heather as resorting to alcohol to cope with their past traumas. This reinforces the common stereotype that lower-class citizens are more prone to alcohol use and abuse. Jones, however, notes that statistics show that lower-class households actually consume less alcohol than the middle class. Despite this, the middle class is often seen as consuming alcohol in a

more civilised and respectable way, while the working class is depicted as spending "their time rolling around in a drunken stupor" (Jones, 115). Foley's novel encourages these stereotypes by depicting the working-class characters as consuming alcohol alone and in a negative way, while the upper- and middle-class characters consume alcohol in a social setting and appear to be enjoying themselves. This perpetuates the notion that the working class is seen as problematic and uncivilised, while the middle and upper classes are seen as respectable and sophisticated. The negative portrayal of working-class people in popular culture, as exemplified in Foley's novel, provides insight into how middle-class people perceive the working class. Working-class characters being portrayed as reckless and prone to alcoholism reinforces stereotypes that have long been pushed by the media and popular culture. The media portrayal of working-class people can influence how they are viewed by the middle and upper classes, and this can have real-world consequences.

Doug is a complex character who avoids socialising and prefers to be isolated, due to his struggles, which makes him a natural suspect when the murder occurs. Despite being an obvious suspect due to his history of violence, it is revealed that there is more to Doug than meets the eye. He is a caring person who carries a heavy burden of guilt and remorse for his past actions. Foley plays with the readers' perceptions of the characters, to increase the shock value of the plot. Foley knows that readers might be inclined to suspect the gamekeeper, given his role as an outsider and his working-class status, and when the culprit turns out to be someone unexpected it creates a shock effect. This is a modern take on the butler did it-trope as a red herring, which is explored in Chapter 2, where Van Dine suggests that readers may instinctively suspect working-class characters of criminality more than those of higher social classes. The fact that this class-based trope is still effective today, can show us how little has changed in British class dynamics since the 1930s, when *And Then There Were None* was published.

All characters but Doug narrate in the first person, while Doug's point of view is in third person. Although the reason for this choice is not clear, it is a noteworthy decision, made by the author, that adds complexity to the story. This narrative decision could be interpreted as reflecting Doug's psychological, traumatic state and could allude to his sense of disconnection from his own identity. Foley may be emphasising his detachment from his own feelings by narrating his perspective in the third person. Meanwhile, the use of first-person narration for the other characters allows the reader to enter their minds more intimately and gain a deeper understanding of their motivations and feelings. The contrast between Doug's third-person narration and the other characters' first-person narration serves to create suspicion around

Doug's character. By placing more distance between him and the reader, Foley heightens the sense of suspicion around Doug as a suspect. This technique of switching narrators and narrative voice creates a sense of psychological depth that would be difficult to achieve in other narratives than the locked room.

Through the comments and depictions of several characters, Foley conveys xenophobic views of the British middle class. Miranda says about Katie "You might think she was French: the way she's made the best of those difficult features. What's that expression the French have for it? *Jolie laide*: ugly beautiful." (79). The remark about Katie being "ugly beautiful" and possibly mistaken for French reinforces the stereotype that French people are fashionable but often not conventionally attractive. This statement implies that the British middle class considers themselves superior in both appearance and style to other nationalities and could hint to the tension between the two countries. Furthermore, when describing the only other guests at the lodge, an Icelandic couple, Foley uses language that reflects a negative and discriminatory attitude towards them. The description of the man's "very pale blue eyes, like a wolf's" (69) and the woman's "double-ended stud passing through the septum of her nose" (69) and "tangled dark ponytail" (69) suggests that they look strange to the other guests. It suggests that they are not refined or sophisticated like the British guests. Miranda later states "Are we going to have to share the sauna with them? Judging by the state of the clothes they're wearing I'd have to disinfect myself afterwards." (78). This suggests that the middle-class guests regard themselves as superior and feel uncomfortable around people who do not fit their standards. This reinforces the idea that middle-class people are prejudiced against people who come from different backgrounds or who do not conform to their expectations. So, through the characters' comments and descriptions, Foley portrays a narrow-minded and xenophobic attitude that is present in the British middle-class towards people from other cultures, particularly those who do not fit the traditional mould of what is considered refined or sophisticated.

In conclusion, the claim that everyone in Britain is now middle class, as suggested by Tony Blair and echoed in the media, fails to acknowledge the ongoing issues of poverty and economic insecurity faced by a significant portion of the population. While locked room mysteries such as *The Hunting Party* by Lucy Foley may not explicitly address class issues, they can provide valuable insights into how society views and portrays people of different classes, by mirroring reality in a way that other sources cannot. By using multiple perspectives that go into the characters' minds and depicting characters from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, authors such as Foley can highlight how social class impacts people's behaviour, and perceptions of themselves and others, creating tensions and power dynamics that have a

profound impact on society. While the ultimate purpose of the locked room narrative is to solve the mystery, the behaviours of the characters stuck inside the confined area can reveal a lot about their personality, mindset, and the societal pressures they face. In *The Hunting Party* the guilty turns out to be Emma, a less privileged girl, who has stalked and tried to imitate the upper-class Miranda, and ends up murdering her, because she is envious of her upper middle-class lifestyle. By thinking outside the box and exploring these sources, analysts can get insight into underlying issues that are not commonly discussed in the media, as well as gain a deeper understanding of people's perspectives on the topic. The stereotypes portrayed in *The Hunting Party* can serve as a useful resource for social researchers to analyse social structures of our time period. The novel highlights the prevalence of negative stereotypes about working-class people and the ways in which these stereotypes are perpetuated in the media and popular culture. For example, researchers can analyse how these stereotypes influence the way that people perceive and interact with individuals from different social classes. They can also investigate how these stereotypes impact social mobility and the opportunities available to working-class individuals. Moreover, researchers can also use the stereotypes in the novel to explore the impact of media representations on social attitudes and beliefs. They can examine how media representations of working-class individuals shape public opinion, and the extent to which these representations contribute to social inequalities and discrimination. In this sense, the stereotypes presented in *The Hunting Party* provide a valuable starting point for social researchers to explore the complex dynamics of social structures and class divisions.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Social history can be uncovered and understood through a wide range of sources, including literature. Fiction can be used as a tool for social research, specifically in understanding the class divide in modern-day Britain. The locked room mystery genre can provide valuable insights into the persistence of class stigmatisation in contemporary British society and can be used as a method for research, both as a method itself or as a qualitative tool in social research. Fiction provides a unique opportunity for social researchers to gain insights into the inner lives of characters and understand the cultural and societal norms of the time period in which the story takes place, in a more humane and personal way than through published research. Analysing social structures in British literature can help us understand the root causes of class issues that persist in Britain today, and how the stigmatisation of the working class remains an issue in contemporary British society, despite the common belief that it is no longer a significant problem.

By studying the complexities of lived experience through fiction, we can bridge the gap between abstract ideas of class theory and the actual reality of everyday life. Therefore, fiction serves as a valuable tool for social researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the human experience and develop more effective policies and interventions to address social issues. Findings in this thesis demonstrate the importance of using fiction as a tool for social research, particularly when researching social structures and understanding the complexities of the human experience. Furthermore, through analysing the locked room genre, it becomes evident that there is a persistent issue of class stigmatisation in contemporary British society, and why it is important to develop policies and interventions to address them.

The genre of the locked room mystery provides a unique opportunity to examine these social structures, and how they impact the lives of individuals within British society. Through the lens of this genre, readers can gain a deeper understanding of the root causes of these issues, especially due to the frequent use of multiple perspectives. The technique is used to provide multiple perspectives on the same event, allowing the reader to piece together the clues and solve the mystery, and sets the genre apart from other narratives. This technique allows the reader to gain insight into the characters' innermost thoughts and perceptions, and through this how they are influenced by their social class, providing a mirror that other types of narratives cannot provide as effectively.

Fiction can serve as a unique source of information for social researchers to better understand social and cultural norms of different time periods. Locked room mysteries mirror the power dynamics that are shaped by socioeconomic class, through their characters, making them a useful tool for social researchers. Class stigmatisation remains a significant issue in contemporary British society, despite people arguing otherwise, and that fiction can be a useful tool for understanding the causes of this problem.

Agatha Christie's novel *And Then There Were None* offers a glimpse into the social, cultural, and historical context of early twentieth-century Britain. Through the interactions and relationships between the characters, the novel mirrors the societal norms, prejudices, and expectations that defined the era, reflecting issues such as class snobbery, and the strict adherence to social etiquette. The novel's shifting point of view allows readers to understand the characters better by providing insight into their thoughts and emotions. Examining the inner monologues of the characters, helps the reader understand the characters' actions and decisions throughout the story. Furthermore, the confined area of a locked room mystery increases tension and pressure among the characters, allowing researchers to gain a more detailed understanding of underlying social structures.

While some people claim that the working class and class issues no longer exist in Britain, Lucy Foley's *The Hunting Party* demonstrates how class relations continue to shape people's lives. Similarly to in *And Then There Were None*, the characters in *The Hunting Party* come from different social classes. The main characters are wealthy and privileged individuals who are disconnected from the realities of everyday life. The novels both explore how people's privileged status affects their relationships with others, and particularly their attitudes towards the working class. Both novels explore the power dynamics between the characters and how these dynamics are affected by their class backgrounds. Despite the fact that *The Hunting Party* is set in present day Britain, the characters' views and behaviour represent a traditional upper-class worldview, which is similar to the novel written in the 1930s. The story demonstrates how socioeconomic class can create tensions and power dynamics that influence people's behaviour. In both novels wealthy characters are portrayed as looking down on the working-class characters they encounter. In *And Then There Were None*, the wealthy characters are dismissive of the servants, not even treating them like human beings. Even as the situation becomes more dire class restrictions do not budge. These portrayals of wealthy characters looking down on working-class characters reflect the class divide that existed and still exists in Britain and suggest that social mobility and equal treatment are not easily achieved. By highlighting these attitudes and behaviours, both novels offer a commentary on the

complexities of class relations in British society. Even if the author does not directly address the underlying issues in society, locked room mysteries can be a great tool for understanding them.

The significance of this research lies in demonstrating the potential for fiction as a tool for social research and understanding the complexities of social issues. The use of locked room mysteries as a method for gaining insight into the power dynamics shaped by socioeconomic class can be particularly useful. This study's findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing a new perspective on the persistence of class stigmatisation in contemporary British society on a more humane level than academic non-fiction and other traditional sources.

The practical implications of this research include the possibility that policymakers may use literature to acquire a better understanding of social issues and build more effective policies and actions to address them. We can recognise progress made in addressing class divisions and ongoing problems in building a more equal and just society by evaluating the portrayal of class in literature from various periods. Policymakers can use this knowledge to implement social change activities targeted at improving social equality and inclusivity, as well as take action to remove the negative working-class stereotype that persists in Britain. We can work towards a more inclusive and equitable society by confronting these stereotypes.

Future studies could look into a greater number of novels through a larger time span, to delve deeper into the subject matter and achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. This would allow them to capture a more diverse range of perspectives and experiences and uncover more patterns or trends that may have emerged over time. Additionally, extending the time frame of the study could provide a better understanding of how the topic has evolved over the years more in depth than comparing one from when the genre first evolved and one from present time.

Finally, this study demonstrates the value of fiction as a tool for social research, particularly in comprehending the complexities of social issues and the persistence of class stigma. Fiction can provide significant insights into cultural and societal values and beliefs by bridging the gap between abstract ideas and everyday experiences. The use of locked room mysteries as a method for social research offers a unique potential to analyse power relations shaped by socioeconomic class and how it affects individuals.

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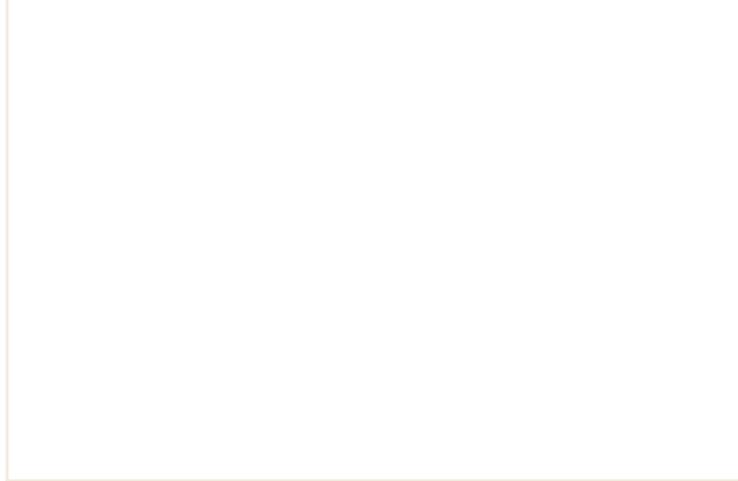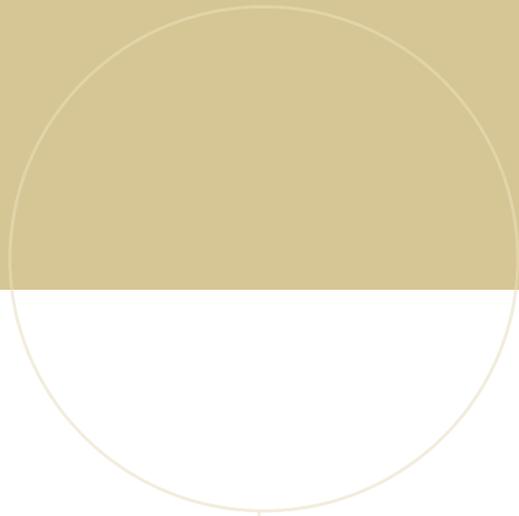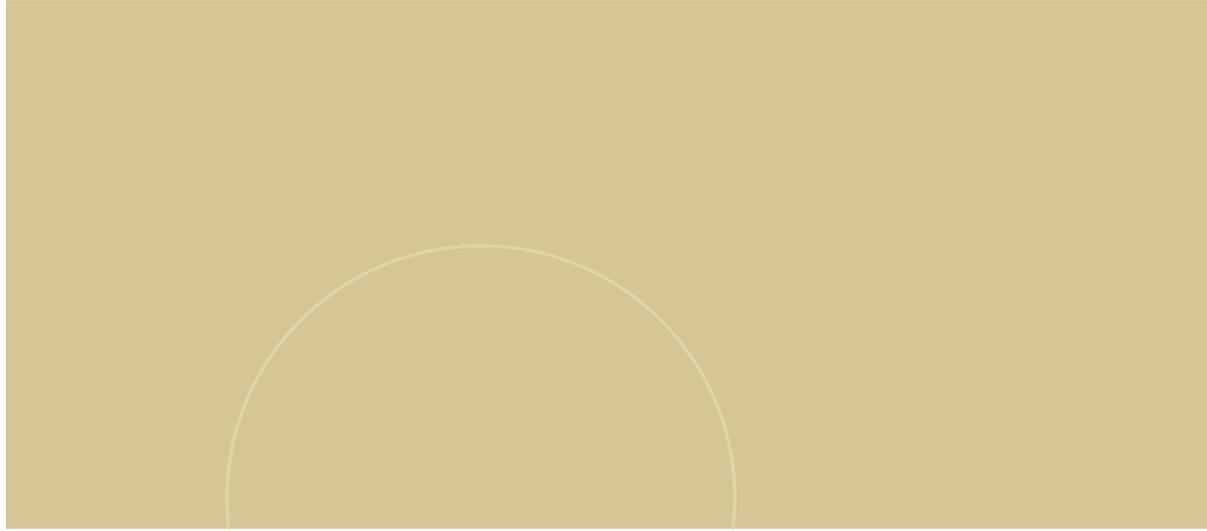## Professional Relevance for this Thesis

The Norwegian curriculum emphasises the importance of having students explore and reflect on diversity and social conditions in the English-speaking world based on historical contexts (Kunnskapsdepartementet). The curriculum emphasises the need for students to reflect upon, interpret, and critically evaluate various types of English-language texts, with the aim of developing language skills as well as knowledge about culture and society (Kunnskapsdepartementet). As an English teacher, I can help students achieve goals by selecting and using a variety of English-language texts that represent diverse language and cultures. To ensure that pupils have a comprehensive understanding of British society, it is important to cover a wide range of topics, including its history, culture, and social structures. Developing cultural awareness is essential, as this can be useful in a variety of contexts, including academic and professional settings. Social class should be discussed in the classroom as it is an essential part of our society that affects our experiences and opportunities. To achieve this, it is necessary to examine both the historical background and current issues related to social class, such as the cultural factors that have contributed to class distinctions, including education and upbringing. Discussing current topics surrounding social inequality, such as the wealth gap, access to education and healthcare, and social mobility, can encourage critical thinking and promote meaningful discussions in the classroom.

Discussing social class in the classroom can help students understand the inequalities and disparities that exist in our society and how they affect different groups of people. It can also help students develop empathy and understanding for those who come from different socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as promote social justice and equity in the classroom and society as a whole. It can help students recognize their own privilege or disadvantage and encourage them to take action to promote a more just and equitable society. Failing to address these issues in the classroom can result in students being unprepared to navigate the real world. Addressing these concerns in a meaningful way can help students develop critical thinking skills and empathy for others while also deepening their understanding of society and the world around them.

Both *The Hunting Party* by Lucy Foley and *And Then There Were None* by Agatha Christie are locked room narratives that explore the themes of social class and inequality. The locked room narrative in both novels adds an element of suspense and intrigue, which can further engage students and make them more invested in analysing the social class themes in the novels. These novels can be used in the classroom to help students develop a better

understanding of British society and its social structures. Through the characters' actions and motivations, students can gain insights into the ways in which social class affects people's lives and the relationships between people from different classes, especially through the access to several character's minds.

In the classroom, teachers can use these novels to facilitate discussions and activities that help students analyse the role of social class in the novels and how these themes relate to broader social issues. For example, students could be asked to identify instances of social class in the novels and discuss how they affect the characters and their interactions. They could also be asked to compare and contrast the depictions of social class in the two novels and discuss how social class has changed throughout the years. By examining the evolution of social class in British society, students can gain a better understanding of contemporary social issues related to class and inequality.