

KAPITEL 12 / CHAPTER 12¹²

CONCEPTS OF RICH AND POOR IN A. CHRISTIE'S NOVEL "WHY DID NOT THEY ASK EVANS?": MULTI-PARADIGMAL ANALYSIS

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Introduction

It has been already the second century, since detective novels and stories by A. Christie were recognized as the best ones all over the world. They have been read all the time ever since. All best sellers, they became close to everyone's life, as they reflect the challenges of modern society, on the one hand, and respond our contemporers' burning personal problems, on the other hand. That's why we decided to choose one of them – the detective novel "Why did not they ask Evans?" – for a thorough complex, multi-paradigmal analysis, which is **aimed** to find out and analyse complexly the ways of expressing concepts *RICH* and *POOR* in the given literary work by A. Christie, that has not been done yet. That's what explains the **topicality** of the present research and its **novelty**, as well.

12.1. The Related Facts of A. Christie's biography

Christie (named as Agatha Mary Clarissa Miller) was born in September, 15th, 1880, in Torquay, Devon in the South-West of England. From her early years of childhood, Agatha was grown up at home by her mother, and absorbed the best manners of English society with her mother's milk [<https://www.biography.com/authors-writers/agatha-christie>]. Since that time Agatha could see heterogeneity of social strata and ways how representatives of different social groups behave in challenging situations and earn for life or just try to survive. Those invaluable observations she embodied later in traces of the literary characters of her incomparable

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Number of characters: 23615

Author's sheets: 0,59



detective novels and stories, taking into account their belonging to rich or poor classes. It is essential to notice in this connection, that it was her mother who opened and formed Agatha's love to fantasy plays and creating characters. It was her mother who engaged her to writing stories [<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Agatha-Christie>].

Agatha's feeling of beauty and refined worldview was developed while learning piano and studying vocal in Paris [<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Agatha-Christie>]. This helped her afterwards to create sophisticated representatives of rich and poor in her literary works.

The first marriage with colonel Archibald Christie, continued in 1912-1926, obviously, enriched A. Christie's experience of building personal and social relations. Further, having got married with archeology professor Max Mallowan, A. Christie travelled a lot on several expeditions, met new people, developed her circles of communication and studied peoples' character features and habits for creating her future heroes and literary characters.

First of all, A. Christie is fairly appreciated by critics as an author of upper-class English mysteries [<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Agatha-Christie>]. But at the same time, the following facts of her biography indicate a truthful portrayal of simple poor people, as well: when World War I started, A. Christie joined the Voluntary Aid Detachment of the British Red Cross and worked in the Town Hall Red Cross Hospital in Torquay as a nurse and then as a dispenser [*ibid.*]. During World War II A. Christie moved to London and started her work in pharmacy [<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt14829590/>]. There she gained more special knowledge for her future detective novels and stories describing the cases of poisoning.

"Why didn't they ask Evans?" is one of the most appreciated best sellers by A. Christie. It "is a work of detective fiction by Agatha Christie, first published in the United Kingdom by the Collins Crime Club in September 1934 and in the United States by Dodd, Mead and Company in 1935 under the title of *The Boomerang Clue*. ...The title of the book actually came from a conversation Ms. Christie overheard coming out of a movie theater, and she built a whole story around it but there is no evidence that



Christie reused the phrasing from *Lord Edgware Dies* in *Why Didn't They Ask Evans*” [ibid.].

To see how the above-mentioned facts were reflected in the detective novel under analysis, the complex, multi-paradigmatic literary text analysis was provided in our research.

12.2. Multi-Paradigmatic Approach in Literary Studies of Nowadays

Till recently, literary functional and stylistic analysis has been typically used for fictional texts. In two last decades the first attempts to use multi-paradigmatic approach to analyse literary fictional texts were successfully taken (see [Terekhova, Rudnytska 2018; Terekhova, Rudnytsky 2018a; Terekhova, Rudnytsky 2018b; Terekhova 2022; Terekhova, Pitsyk 2023]). The above-mentioned research touch upon different social challenges and their reflection in particular fictional texts. For example, ways of conceptual and fictional representing of the universal problem of *GOOD* and *EVIL* was investigated in frames of multi-paradigmatic analysis based on the detective novel under analysis in [Terekhova, Rudnitsky 2018a]. The same methodology was soon afterwards used for complex studying of a lingual personality in post-October revolution Russia based on the M. Bulgakov’s “Dog’s Heart” [Terekhova, Rudnitsky 2018b]. Almost at the same time the next attempt to involve multi-paradigmatic methodology to analyse problem of *WAR* and *PEACE* in the American literature (i.e., in a fictional text) was taken based on M. Mitchel’s “Gone with the Wind”, in particular, in a way of describing old and new South in the novel [Terekhova, Rudnitska 2018]. These works permitted to polish the technique of implementing of multi-paradigmatic analysis and adjust it to fictional texts analysis. Later it was used for studying M. Fuller’s works [Terekhova, Pitsyk 2023]. The last (but not least) multi-paradigmatic study of fictional texts was conducted based on parabells [Terekhova 2023].

Due to the described above experience the following **procedure of multi-**



paradigm analysis of a literary fictional text was developed: (1) conceptual and semantic analyses, based on authorbiographical facts, historical, cultural, social, philosophical, nationally determined, etc. facts and approaches” to the text under analysis; (2) literary and linguistic text analyses (functional and stylistic, functional and semantic, conceptual and semantic, psycholinguistic analyses); (3) complex literary studies analyses of the form of the text, its pragmatic, communicative and cognitive role and specifics (compare to [Terekhova, Pitsyk 2023, p. 94-95]). This procedure involves literature and linguistic methods of studying (structural method, comparative method, contrastive method), methods of translation (semantic, communicative, and the method of transformations) as well as general scientific methods (such as, induction, deduction, analysis, synthesis, comparison, hypothesis, etc.). Beside it, literary analysis by Yu. Lotman [Лотман 2018] and R. Jakobson [Якобсон 1975, p. 193-230] involving linguistic and semiotic aspects of a literary text explication was also taken into consideration in this research.

12.3. Conceptualization of *RICH* and *POOR* in the Detective Novel “Why didn’t they Ask Evans?” by A. Christie: Multi-Paradigm Approach

In the present research the main terms correlate as follows: concept is considered as “an abstract idea that serves as a foundation for more concrete principles, thoughts, and beliefs” [<https://en.wikipedia.org>]. A concept includes notions represented in a human’s mentality and explicated in language units in particular lexical meanings or their parts – lexico-semantic variants. They are used by speakers while communicating verbally.

“Cambridge Dictionary of the English Language”, reflecting the general lingual facts about the world around in the English language, defines concept *RICH* as “having a lot of money or valuable possessions” [<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/rich>]. This is its primary, nominative notion as the word *rich* is of polysemantic nature in English. Beside it, *RICH* is also used in the following



particular representations: (a) “having a lot of money”, (b) “containing a large amount of a valuable natural substance such as coal, oil, or wood”, and in its secondary nominations, as follows: (c) “containing something good or useful”, (d) “containing a lot of existing events or experiences and therefore very interesting”. One can see the usage of these shades of meaning of the word *rich* in the analyzed A. Christie’s text. But if to have a look at the main events of the detective novel “Why didn’t they ask Evans?”, the dominant notions of the concept *RICH* which are to be investigated are (a), (c) and (d). In its primary representation *RICH* is associated with the personality of Lady Frances Derwent, or Frankie – a young lady from the castle. Frankie was born in a rich family but she was not grown up as a snobe. She is open to communicate with ordinary people. When she and Bobby were yet children, Frankie’s parents organized holidays celebrations for children inviting them to play to the castle. This family nobles Frankie inherited in her adulcy. For example, when she unexpectedly met Bobby in her 1st class carriage in the train, it appeared to be that he had the ticket of “the wrong colour”. “That doesn’t matter,” said Frankie kindly. ‘I’ll pay the difference’ [Christie 1980, p. 3]. It is not the sign of her wastefulness, rather, it is a gesture of nobility and generosity. She is true lady from the top class of the British society.

In the secondary meaning (c) relating to the rich internal world of a personality, concept *RICH*, probably, equally associated with Frankie and Bobby (or Bob Jones) as they both have enough knowledge, personal and social development, social intelligence and communicating skills to be interesting to each other as well as to other people around. However, one can see some other, specific representations of the concept *RICH*, in the analyzed text, i.e., “rich in intellectuality” (first of all, Frankie and her father. She easily copes with any enigmas of her investigation, find right solution to any challenging situation in life. For example, in the train she quickly agreed with the ticket collector for Bobby to travel together with her in the first-class carriage despite his “wrong colour” ticket: “Frankie smiled to the ticket collector, who touched his hat respectfully as he took her ticket. ‘Mr Jones has just come in to talk to me for a short time,’ she said. ‘That won’t matter, will it?’ ‘That’s all right, your ladyship.’ ‘What can be done with a smile,’ said Bobby as the ticket collector went out.’ Lady Frances



Derwent shook her head thoughtfully. ‘I think it’s father’s habit of tipping everybody really well whenever he travels that does it.’” [Christie 1980, p. 4] Another example is concerning her father, Lord Marchington. Remember, how deeply he knows the origin of old British families: “‘Father,’ Frankie said that evening, ‘do you know any Bassington-ffrenches?’ ‘What about them?’ said Lord Marchington. Frankie didn’t know anything about them. She made a statement, knowing that her father enjoyed disagreement. ‘They’re a Yorkshire family, aren’t they?’ ‘Nonsense – they’re from Hampshire. There’s the Shropshire ones, of course, and the Irish lot. Which are your friends?’ ‘I’m not sure,’ said Frankie. ‘People move around so much nowadays. Are they well off?’ ‘I couldn’t say. The Shropshire lot have lost a lot of their money, I believe. One of the Hampshire ones married an heiress. An American woman.’” [Christie 1980, p. 19-20]. In the negative sense of being rich in intellectuality, we can characterize Mr. Bessington-ffrench, who kidnapped Bobby and Frankie, intended to kill Moira Nicholson, committed other crimes [Christie 1980, p. 50-51; 61], Dr. Nicholson in some of his deeds).

Notions “rich in belief” and “rich in love” of the concept *RICH* are explicated in two senses: (1) in the sense of belief in God and following this way, and (2) in the sense of human relations – friendship and love. In the first sense that’s what can be said about Bobby and his dad, vicar Jones. In the second sense that’s what is represented in the text in the relations and mutual attitude of Bobby and Frankie to each other, in their friendship and love (through all the novel). In a bit different way, it is explicated by the relations between Bobby, Bager and Frankie, in their close friendship, trustfulness to each other, self-sacrifice, readiness to help to each other and bear one’s neighbour’s cross, as the Holly Bible says (see, for example, [Christie 1980, p. 51-63]).

Notion “rich in inventions, fantasy” is best represented by Frankie’s play accident and her personal investigation (through all the novel). We must pay tribute to her ingenuity and ability to achieve fearlessly her goal for the sake of truth. When she took on this investigation, she even could not foresee how dangerous it turned to be. But she did not step aside, she bravely went on until the end.

Metaphoric notion “rich in lie, deceit and deceive” is embodied by A. Christie in



personalities of Dr. Nicholson and Mr. Bessington-ffrench. How dodgy, criminally selfish and cunning they are in A. Christie's interpretation! How sophisticated they are in committing crimes! (see, for example, last chapters of the detective novel).

One more explication of the concept *RICH* is "rich in simplicity, in the truth, simplehearted". That's what is represented by the characters of Bobby and his dad. Belonging to a poor class family, both Bobby and his dad are always simple to communicate with other people. Despite his upper church rank, the vicar never boasts as well as his son, Bobby. At the same time, even communicating with upper class people, they do not forget about their simple social state, keep reserved and demonstrate their good manners.

Opposite concept *POOR* is represented in the mentality of English people, first of all, as "having little money and / or few possessions" [<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/English/poor>]. Based on this primary meaning, the following secondary nominations were developed in English: (a) to have very little of a particular substance or quality" (this meaning is not represented in the text by A. Christie under analysis), (b) "not good; being of a very low quality, quantity, or standard" (used in the text concerning material state of Bobby, his family and Badger to stress their social and class affiliation), (c) "deserving sympathy" [ibid]. Notion (c) is mainly used in the text. From the first pages of the novel, it refers to the dad man Alex Pritchard, Mrs Leo Cayman's brother, who was found dead by Bobby and Dr Thomas in the depth under the edge of the cliff. "He is dying, poor fellow. There is nothing I can do for him – his back is broken...", Dr Thomas said [A. Christie, 1980, p. 2]. Further (c) appears regarding Moira Nicholson, Bobby when poisoned, the vicar, when Bobby missed the church service where he promised to play organ.

There are also several specific meanings reflected in speech: "with a lack of something good or useful", "poor in intellectuality", "poor in belief", "poor in love", "poor in inventions, fantasy". They are not stressed in the detective novel.

So, if to compare the given representations of both compared concepts, it is easy to see a particular conceptual and semantic asymmetry, that can be clearly observed from the table 1 in the form of correlated semantic oppositions, particularly:



**Table 1. Conceptual and Semantic Asymmetry of Oppositions of Concepts
RICH and *POOR***

Nr	<i>RICH</i>	<i>POOR</i>
1.	having a lot of money or valuable possessions	having little money and / or few possessions
2.	having a lot of money	<i>no separate option in the dictionary</i>
3.	containing a large amount of a valuable natural substance such as coal, oil, or wood	to have very little of a particular substance or quality
4.	containing something good or useful	with a lack of something good or useful
5.	rich in intellectuality	poor in intellectuality
6.	rich in belief	poor in belief
7.	rich in love	poor in love
8.	rich in inventions, fantasy	poor in inventions, fantasy
9.	rich in lie, deceit and deceive	<i>no separate option</i>
10.	rich in simplicity, the truth, simplehearted	<i>no separate option</i>
11.	<i>no separate option</i>	not good; being of a very low quality, quantity, or standard
12.	<i>no separate option</i>	deserving sympathy

There are no opposite representations of *POOR* 2, 9, fixed in dictionaries, as well as the ones of *RICH* 11, 12, although they have been functioning in speech (see examples in [<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/>], etc.).

At the same time, one can see enantiosemy of some notions of the concepts *RICH* and *POOR* expressed by A. Christie in some of her characters in the text.. For example, Mrs. Moira Nicholson, Dr Nicholson's wife. She is depicted in the text as an obedient, meek, silent and weak woman, usually totally following Dr. Nicholson's instructions and orders. She is really rich in patience and meekness, but poor in force, resistance



and personal independence. That's why even living in a family she feels lonely and depressed (that's what is additionally enforced by Doctor's prescriptions). Bobby and his dad are surely rich in belief, sense of duty to others, but they are poor in money, in some respect and mutual understanding to each other (the last appears on the pages of the novel only once, when Bobby and his dad call each other derogatory names). The following words confirm this idea, as well: "He won't know whether to start the service or not," thought Bobby, 'he'll get so upset, he'll get stomach pain. Nobody over fifty has any sense – they worry about things that do not make sense. Poor old Dad, he has got less sense than a chicken! He sat there thinking about his father with a mixture of affection and irritation. His life at home seemed to him to be one long sacrifice to his father's old-fashioned ideas. To Mr. Jones, who was aware of how often Bobby was irritated by him, it seemed to be one long sacrifice on his part." [A. Christie, 1980, p. 2]).

Conclusions

The conducted complex, multi-paradigmatic analysis of the concepts *RICH* and *POOR* in the detective novel "Why didn't they ask Evans?" by A. Christie permitted to represent the essence of the above-mentioned concepts in English and, in particular, in the A. Christie's detective novel text. There were defined both universal and specific features of the conceptual and semantic representations of the concepts *RICH* and *POOR*. Dominant semantics of *RICH* is widely used in the analyzed text in different shades of meaning while the primary semantics of *POOR* is not. Metaphoric representations of *POOR* are preferred by A. Christie instead. There were defined several additional, associated metaphoric meanings of the both concepts. Semantic asymmetry in ways of representing the above-mentioned concepts in speech, was found among opposed mental and lingual representations. Despite most of common features, some lacunas in the two opposing concepts and their relative explicants were found and characterized here. Psycholinguistic analysis enabled to find associative



connections to the particular characters in the A. Christie's text.

To sum it up, opposition *RICH* and *POOR* represents one of the fundamental themes of the detective novel – the relations in the British society of the 20th century. In the interpretation of A. Christey, as a consummate detective novels master, it naturally correlates with global eternal literary themes of good and evil, parents and children, love and friendship, development of young personality, faith and unbelief, justice of God's providence, crime and punishment. Functionally and grammatically equal, explicants of the concepts *RICH* and *POOR* acquire specific characteristics in different contexts, representing lexical, semantic and functional diversity of the author's language as well as reflecting the uniquely diverse palette of British society, contemporary to the author.

The further research of A. Christie's works is foreseen in the fields of Literary Studies and Criticism, Conceptual Semantics, Psycholinguistics, Language and Culture Studies, Translatology, that can be successfully combined in frames of complex, multi-paradigmatic research. It seems rather prospective to apply the given here methodology and example of multi-paradigmatic analysis to other A. Christie's text research.