

01

ENTREVISTA COM SOPHIE HANNAH

Isabela Duarte Britto Lopes (UFF)

Isabela Duarte Britto Lopes é Doutoranda em Literatura Comparada pela Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF) e, atualmente, pesquisa as representações dos detetives herói e *noir* na literatura brasileira em comparação com a de língua inglesa. Durante o curso de Mestrado em Estudos da Literatura (UFF), analisou as *continuation novels* de Sophie Hannah que retomam o icônico personagem criado por Agatha Christie, Hercule Poirot. Graduada em Letras Português/ Inglês (UFF-2017), atua na pesquisa de temas relacionados a romances policiais, literatura detetivesca brasileira e internacional, principalmente de língua inglesa.



Sophie Hannah é poeta e autora renomada de romances policiais e detetivescos, e teve suas obras publicadas em 49 idiomas. Além de suas poesias, a autora inglesa, reconhecida pela *Sunday Times* e pelo *New York Times*, escreveu a saga de Waterhouse e Zailer sobre as investigações e a vida dos policiais protagonistas dos romances. Em 2014, a autora publicou seu primeiro romance com o detetive Hercule Poirot, criado por Agatha Christie, após ter sido convidada pela família da autora para dar continuidade às aventuras do detetive belga. Além disso, Hannah ajudou a construir o curso de Mestrado em Escrita de Crime e Thriller na Universidade de Cambridge, onde atua como professora e diretora do curso.

A conferência Captivating Criminality 4, organizada pela International Crime Fiction Association, na Bath Spa University, em 2017, teve Sophie Hannah como uma das palestrantes principais. A escritora convidada pôde, assim, compartilhar um pouco da sua experiência ao escrever as *continuation novels*. Por intermédio da organização do evento, entrei em contato com o assessor da autora, Jamie Bernthal, explicando a natureza desta pesquisa. Bernthal sugeriu então que eu escrevesse algumas perguntas para que Hannah respondesse.

Curiosamente, neste meio tempo, consegui entrar em contato direto com Hannah através do aplicativo de leitura *Goodreads*, por onde ela me encaminhou o seu e-mail e aceitou responder as perguntas aqui apresentadas.

Q.: I was in the audience when you were a keynote speaker at the Captivating Criminality 4 conference at Bath Spa University (Coursham Court) in 2017. On that occasion, you said that the Christie family asked you to write continuation novels with

Hercule Poirot. How did you feel with such invitation and what challenges did you face?

A.: I felt incredibly privileged and excited, it's been a thrilling creative challenge and it was a daunting prospect to resurrect such a familiar and well-loved character. I was also concerned about getting the period detail right as I've not written historical fiction before. Mainly though, it's a tremendous honour to have been given use of the finest ingredient in mystery fiction – Hercule Poirot.

Q.: In which aspects do you consider your new version of Poirot different from the one created by Agatha Christie?

A.: The Poirot in my books is very much Agatha Christie's Poirot, not only did I feel it would be disrespectful to change him but also that there would be no point in writing new books about such a beloved series character only to alter him. Obviously, though, I'm a new person writing about Poirot so he is seen through new eyes, which is why I created a new narrator – Catchpool, the Scotland Yard Detective - who, like me, is a new person working with Poirot.

Q.: How could you make people identify with your novels even though they are set in a different time with different ideologies from the ones we have nowadays?

A.: I think this is part of the reason why Agatha Christie's books are still so popular today – human nature doesn't change. People are flawed now just as they were in the past, ideologies might be different but people of all eras share the same feelings: love, hate, fear, guilt, etc., and have the same needs. Our ideas

are mainly just things we invent and mistake for the absolute truth, but our emotions are constant and universal, which is why we can relate to people from the past.

Q.: At some points in the narratives, you seem to introduce topics that represent contemporary society, for example women as head of a family or even abortion. What is your purpose in do so? Is it a way to criticize current problems or a way to bring the reader closer to that environment?

A.: I don't see these topics or situations as being exclusively contemporary, abortion happened in the 1920s/30s just as it does today and many families had a woman in charge too – psychologically if not financially. I never look at things through a 'gender issues' lens because that always ends up providing a reductive picture. I believe that - man or woman -we're all just humans and group identities are meaningless, it's the fascinating individual I'm interested in.

Q.: In what aspects do you think your continuation novels differ from your other works?

A.: The main difference is the approach to the storytelling in that contemporary crime fiction goes to great lengths to give the impression that the reader is simply witnessing the action rather than being told a story, whereas golden age novels have the very opposite approach and revel in the storytelling aspect, there is an overt 'let me tell you a story' feel to these novels which give my Poirot novels a very different tone to my previous books.

Q.: How would you describe continuation novels? In what sense are they different from a pastiche?

A.: To me the main aim of pastiche is parody or mimicry, whereas a continuation novel is undertaken with serious intent. Continuation novels featuring a character created by another (usually dead) author are written with great respect and affection for the character and the work of the original author, there's no parody involved.

Q.: In many of Christie's novels one can see many different narrators, however in your three works you decided to maintain Catchpool as the narrator. Why?

A.: So far Catchpool has been the narrator of my Poirot novels but there's no guarantee that if I write more this will always be the case. However, I do like the Poirot and Catchpool combination and the development of their rapport really interests me, they have a mentor/mentee relationship, Catchpool benefits from Poirot's wisdom and guidance and improves as a detective with every case he helps Poirot solve.

Q.: Edward Catchpool is a Scotland Yard inspector and as a narrator he has a lot of voice in the narrative even though the police is usually very criticized in not only Christie's novels, but also Doyle's and Poe's short stories. Why did you choose this specific character to narrate the new Poirot's adventures?

A.: For my first Poirot novel I wanted Poirot to have younger sidekick who has a case that he's totally baffled by, but absolutely needs to solve, a policeman was a perfect fit for this – it's imperative that he solves the case as it's his job so he really needs Poirot's help. The character of Catchpool appeared fully formed in my head and I had no desire to criticise

the police as a group – each member of it is just an individual – as with my feelings about men and women. Individuals in the police force might be awful or brilliant or anything in between. Catchpool certainly is a very good policeman.