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Contradiction of Law and Justice Portrayed In *And Then There Were None*

*And Then There Were None* by Agatha Christie is a story about the contradictions of law versus justice. This book raises deep questions about the relationship between justice and law, as well as vigilantism and morality. Laws were created and are constantly being modified to maintain justice and order in society, but they are as imperfect as their creators, humans, at delivering true justice. Former nursery governess Vera Claythorne knowingly caused a child in her care to swim out too far and drown in order to gain the attention of the man she loved. The boy she was caring for was Cyril. Vera loved Hugo, Cyril's legal guardian. However, Hugo said he couldn't marry Vera because he had a child to take care of. So, Vera intentionally makes him swim in a dangerous situation, leading to his death. It is written in the text that Cyril says, "Miss Claythorne, why can't I swim out to the rock? I can. I know I can." (Christie 229). Claythorne replied, "Of course, you can, Cyril, really. I know that." (Christie 229). Furthermore, former General MacArthur ordered an underling general to undertake an extremely dangerous mission, which he knew would result in his death, because his underling was having an affair with his wife. When he first noticed the fact that his wife Leslie and underling Arthur Richmond had an affair, he felt a sense of great betrayal. He got frustrated and said, "God damn the fellow! Damn his smiling face, his brisk "Yes sir." Liar and hypocrite! Stealer of another man's wife!" (Christie 83). After that, he sends Arthur Richmond to a battlefield difficult to survive. He recalls, "He'd sent Richmond deliberately to death. Only a miracle could have brought him through unhurt.

That miracle didn't happen. Yes, he'd sent Richmond to death and he wasn't sorry." (Christie 83). These are two examples of laws failing to deliver justice. As displayed in these examples, there are many cases where laws contradict the justice actually innate in the morals of humanity. The ten people killed during the course of the novel each had committed actions, directly and indirectly, leading to the death of others, but were deemed innocent in the eyes of the law. Mr. Justice Wargrave took it upon himself to personally correct these injustices. In his view, the ends justified the means.

Many others in society, though, believe that it is still important to obey the law even if the law is imperfect to maintain justice in all cases. In this novel, the judge, once sworn to uphold the law, embarked on a vigilante campaign. Though one may be sympathetic to his cause, it shows that he was also a man with a personal lust to kill; he was driven by powerful desires for both justice and blood. Legally, his murders were completely unjustifiable. Furthermore, even though he was a sociopath, as a judge, he was legally constrained to judge people only based on the evidence and the verdicts of juries. In the letter that the judge confesses his crimes, he mentions, "I have a reputation as a hanging judge, but that is unfair. I have always been strictly just and scrupulous in my summing up of a case." (Christie 287). Through this quote, it is clear that although the judge was a sociopath who liked punishing and murdering people, he had to strictly follow the laws and the procedures of the court when judging people as a judge. Maybe it was not what he wanted, but the law made him judge in a just way regardless of his intention. Therefore, law plays a significant role in maintaining justice in modern society, though it may not be a perfect standard.

The book raises profound questions of law and justice. It forces one to consider law and justice from various perspectives. Law is an imperfect standard for delivering true justice. It has

drawbacks, such as guilty persons going free or receiving very light punishment. There are no clear answers to these problems, but one thing is clear: laws and systems should be constantly scrutinized, modified, and improved to render better justice in our society.

Works Cited

Christie, Agatha. *And Then There Were None*. HarperCollinsPublishers, 1939.