

## MERCURY AND LITERATURE – a look at Mercury in the horoscope of ‘The Queen of Crime’, Agatha Christie

by Christine Bennett

Agatha Mary Clarissa Miller was born on September 15th 1890 at 4.00 a.m. in Torquay, England. She was always of a literary and imaginative turn of mind. Even as a child she loved reading, she conjured up make-believe friends, and she wrote poetry. By her late teens, her love of words and her rich imagination naturally led her to writing short stories.

On Christmas Eve 1914, after a whirlwind romance, Agatha married Colonel Archibald Christie, an aviator in the Royal Flying Corps. After the most fleeting of honeymoons, they each resumed their war efforts: Archie returned to France and Agatha continued her work with the Voluntary Aid Detachment in a Red Cross Hospital in Torquay. When the Hospital opened a dispensary, she accepted a post there. At the time she was unaware of how useful her burgeoning expertise in potions and poisons would become in her future writing career.

Due to their respective commitments Agatha and Archie were unable to meet very often during the war years, but it was during their enforced separation that she started to write detective stories. Her writing career started tentatively. Her first novel *THE MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR AT STYLES* took quite some time to finish and also quite a while to find a publisher. In fact, it was not until 1920 that the public was introduced to the now celebrated and world-renowned Belgian detective Hercule Poirot.

Agatha continued to write apace when the war was over. She wrote thrillers and murder mysteries, creating many well-loved characters such as Tommy and Tuppence and the shrewd and inquisitive Miss Jane Marple of St. Mary Mead.

After the breakdown of their marriage, Agatha and Archie divorced in 1928. She married her second husband, archaeologist Max Mallowan, on September 11th 1930 on the Isle of Skye. An extremely fertile writing period followed; on average she wrote two or three books each year.

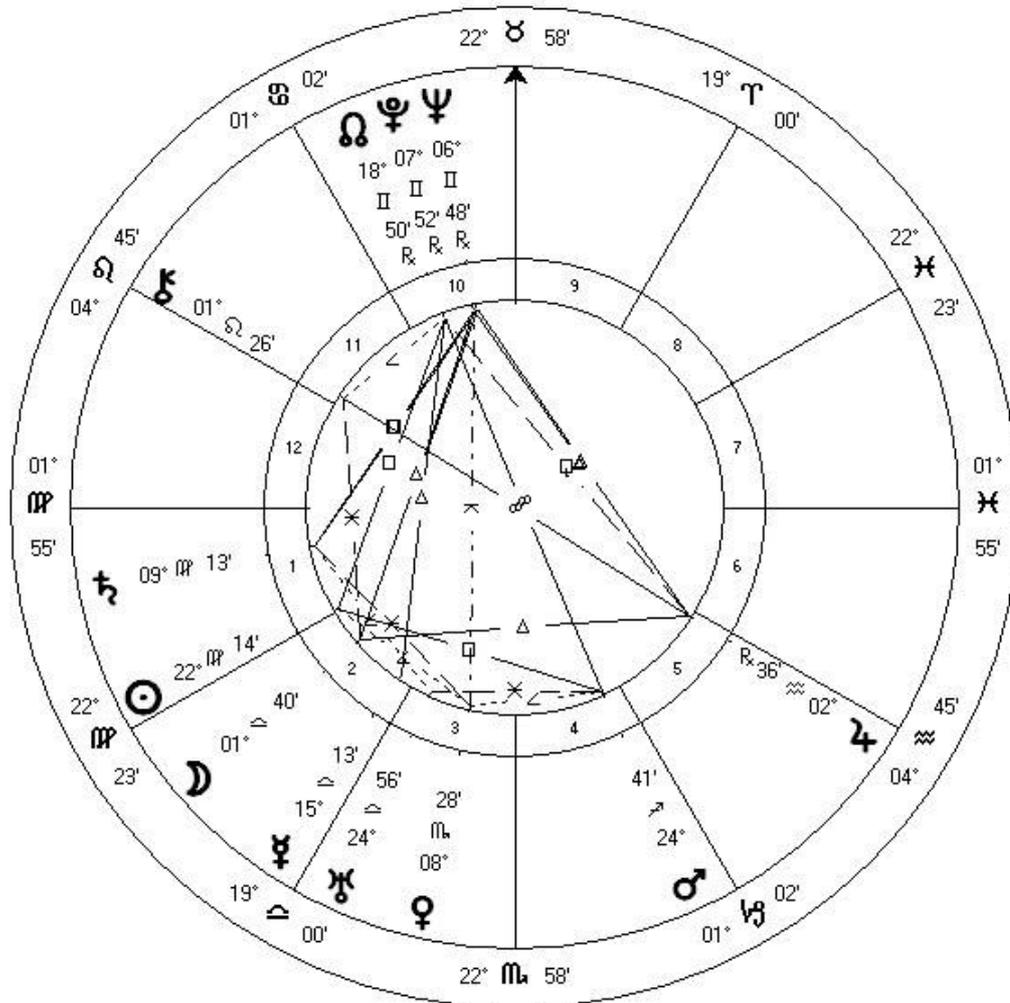
During World War II, Max had a wartime job in Cairo while Agatha remained in England, writing and volunteering at the dispensary at University College Hospital in London. She continued to be focused and prolific during this period, producing such classics as *AND THEN THERE WERE NONE*, *THE BODY IN THE LIBRARY*, and *THE MOVING FINGER*.

In a career that extended over fifty years, Agatha wrote seventy-nine novels and short story collections. She also wrote over a dozen plays including *THE MOUSETRAP*, which opened in London on November 25th 1952 and is the longest continuously running play in theatrical history. Both Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple have been immortalised on the big and small screens alike. Poirot has played the lead in screen adaptations of thirty-three novels and numerous short stories, whilst Miss Marple has been the star of twelve novels spanning from

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THE MURDER AT THE VICARAGE (1930) to Agatha's last published novel SLEEPING MURDER (1976).

Agatha's writing skills were not limited to murder mysteries. She also wrote six novels under the pseudonym Mary Westmacott as well as four non-fiction books including an autobiography and an account of various archaeological expeditions she shared with Max. After a long and productive life, Agatha Christie died peacefully on January 12, 1976.



As can be expected in the horoscope of such a prolific writer, the planet Mercury is very much accentuated in the chart of Agatha Christie. Mercury is the strongest planet. It is the chart ruler as well as the dispositor of the Sun, Saturn, Neptune, Pluto and the north node. Mercury's two signs, Virgo and Gemini, are also extremely prominent with Virgo on the cusps of the first and second houses and Gemini intercepted in the tenth. It is particularly interesting to note that Neptune (imagination) is conjunct Pluto (crime) in this house of career.

Mercury itself holds a very interesting position in Agatha's horoscope. It is placed in Libra, near the end of the second house, and is virtually unaspected. When looking more closely at this, many significant insights regarding her bountiful literary abilities and successes come to mind. Libra is an air sign and with Mercury here, it confers a clarity of thought that opens the mind to the big picture. It is also a cardinal sign, and so the initiative is to actively assert all the inner ideas and information into the outer world. When used to its highest, a Libran

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Mercury can accord a capacity for steady, cultivated and logical thought along with a natural facility for abstract thinking, all favourable attributes for wise comparison and judgement and for focused attention to detail. This in-built proficiency both in written and spoken language gave Agatha an excellent aptitude to merge ideas and concepts and it fostered her ability to weigh up an issue from all sides.

The murder mystery genre is one in which thoroughness and exactitude in plot development is essential. Agatha affirmed that she first worked out her plot and then 'found' her characters – almost as an afterthought. The intricacies of her stories and the intertwining of clues and red herrings in her books demanded a sharp mind and a well-judged use of language. She excelled at leading the reader through all possible scenarios, skilfully steering the storyline first one way then the next, before divulging her carefully planned and often ingenious ending.

Mercury in Libra tends towards shrewd, astute and perceptive thought. Emotional and practical needs may be set aside so that the Mercurial energy can focus on augmenting and applying the intellectual skills. The more these skills are drawn upon the more the innate talents and proficiencies can blossom. This is certainly evidenced in Agatha's case – the more she worked with and developed her characters the easier and more prolific her writing became.

In her stories, Agatha took her inspiration from the people and situations around her. She continuously refined and honed her skills by drawing on her own experiences and by observing and developing any interesting encounters she witnessed. During the First World War, there were many Belgian refugees in England and this sparked in her the idea that a Belgian refugee, a former policeman, would make an excellent detective for her first novel. Likewise, Archie's boss became the inspiration for Sir Eustace Pedlar in *THE MAN IN THE BROWN SUIT*.

Mercury in the second house is an excellent placement for turning ideas into practical life experience. Here, the natural gifts and talents can find expression in different ways and through different media. This is also a very helpful placement for cultivating many positive and beneficial connections – and particularly so as regards communicating and sharing personal talents. The fertile sign of Virgo is on the second cusp with Mercury its ruler in this house again highlighting the potential for heightened imagination and the creative use of words. As the second house is also concerned with finance and income, it shows that the distribution of information was a major factor in how she received money and generated her income.

A second-house Mercury also suggests a certain resourcefulness. During her separation from Archie, Agatha needed an income to support herself and her daughter. She felt unable to write new material at this time and so she adapted some Poirot short stories composed for *The Sketch* magazine and as a result she created *THE BIG FOUR*.

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As time went on, Agatha became more and more astute in the handling of her fiscal affairs. She had begun to feel the terms offered by her original publisher were unfair and so she decided to employ an agent, Edmund Cork. It was through him that she became an established writer for William Collins and Sons, the very successful publishing house that is now HarperCollins.

Having such a strong emphasis and position in her horoscope, you might expect Mercury to make many aspects and connections in Agatha's chart. However, apart from a helpful trine with the north node (emphasising her impulse to communicate and share her ideas with others) and a wide quintile to Chiron (emphasising insightful and perceptive thought), there are no aspects from Mercury to any other planet in her chart. When looking a little more deeply though, it does seem that having a traditionally unaspected Mercury was for her a powerful impetus for intellectual excellence and abundant productivity.

An unaspected planet can express its essence in an intense and singular manner and hence it can use its power without limitation or dilution. It can bestow an extraordinary facility in a particular area of life as it is focused and less inclined to scatter its energies. In fact when used to its highest, it can often give rise to exceptional gifts connected with the planet in question and in the life experiences of its house placement. When studying the charts of people who have achieved extraordinary things, it frequently transpires that they have been supported by an unaspected planet which has helped them on their path.

Mercury is fleet of mind, bountiful, fluid and versatile. Unrestrained, these are qualities that can lead to innovation and the transmission of ideas on a grand and unbounded scale. It is true to say that Agatha was blessed with an almost limitless imagination. Her writing came easily to her and it was always a joyous focal point of her very being. It afforded her a hugely successful career and in many ways a happy life.

Agatha Christie remains the world's best-known mystery writer. Her books have sold over a billion copies in the English language and another billion in over forty-five foreign languages. Only the Bible and Shakespeare have sold more. This being so, it really does seem that she wholeheartedly deserves her given title of 'The Queen of Crime'.