Hercule Poirot and Criminal Psychology: Crime and Detection in Selected Novels of Agatha Christie

Research Article

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Abstract

In this article, we explore the concept of criminal psychology and will explicate some of its major tenets in characterization of Hercule Poirot. Using an interdisciplinary approach, by close reading and drawing from crime and psychological theories (especially Behaviorism), we investigate the criminal profiling techniques in Agatha Christie's detective novels. Particularly, we adduce Ian Marsh's theory in introducing a set of explanations for criminal behavior and Westera et al.'s propositions in identifying features that make a detective's endeavors effective. We focus on the psychological procedures that exist in the process of mystery (making and solution), as well as on the detective's task to decodify riddles in light

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of the internal and external forces acting on him and how these affect his final decision. Then, we expand the notion of profiling as conducted by a detective and will illustrate some of the recurring biases that influence the final verdict about a case. Finally, we depict how the abovementioned proceedings are implemented in *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934), *The A.B.C Murders* (1936), and *Hickory Dickory Dock* (1955), three of Christie's best-selling novels with Hercule Poirot as their leading character. The character of Poirot, with his immaculate criminal profiling, bears witness to how Christie drew from and, at the same time, contributed to the concept and practice of criminal psychology in fiction.

Keywords: Criminal Psychology, Agatha Christie, Hercule Poirot, Behaviorism, *The A.B.C. Murders*

Introduction

Since its emergence, literature has focused, among other things, on human lives, souls and minds. Psychology took the latter responsibility with more gravity and seriousness since its inception. In recent centuries, particularly after Sigmund Freud, Literature and Psychology in many ways interlaced to become valuable fields of study with shared common concerns regarding human emotions, mindsets and fantasies. Frank Laurence Lucas' *Literature and Psychology* (1951), Ralph J. Hallman's *Psychology of Literature* (1961), Morton Kaplan's *Literature and Psychology* (1975), and Patrick White's *Literature through Psychology* (2019) are only a couple of scholarly books that address the mutual relationship between these two fields. What they all agree upon is that literature is an efficient realm for the manifestation of what psychology has to offer; more than any other field it brings about the mazes and puzzles of human thoughts and motives. One alluring and complicated branch of psychology that recurs in literary fiction is criminal psychology, which focuses on identifying criminals, the causes of criminality, the motives behind a crime, and a criminal's mind. The high rate of criminal behaviors and recidivism all over the world highlights the importance of studying criminal behavior and criminal psychology particularly on a wider ground like literature. In following sections, we methodically examine the responsive attitudes carried out by Hercule Poirot in his encounter with criminal behaviors and mysterious enigmas in Agatha Christie's novels.

Previous studies of/on Christie's novels have often dealt with social classes and contexts in which these stories are located. For example, Carron Stewart Fillingim (2007) in *Revelations from 'Cheesecake Manor': Agatha Christie, Detective Fiction, and Interwar England*, speaks of the significance of the highly English settings of Christie's stories that seem to recount "a tale of a highly defensive middle class determined to defend its privileges against the dual threats of the organized working class and socialism" (p. 43). Rene Cutforth (1976), in her book *Later than We Thought: A Portrait of the Thirties*, asserts "it is impossible to set the English scene at any period without becoming involved in the subject of class" (p. 25). Although both of these studies point out the "good and heroic"

aspect of Hercule Poirot, neither highlights the motives of the criminals and their recognition through the mind of Poirot as an expert in the mist.

Samantha Walton in *Guilty but Insane: Psychology, Law and Selfhood in Golden Age of Crime Fiction* (2013) explains psychological detection in law cases in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, which are famously known as the golden age of crime fiction. However, the lack of relevancy between criminal psychology as a distinct theory and distinguished literature in the works above calls for the emergence of a new approach; one that tends to both criminal psychology and its application. This article fills this gap by analyzing Christie's selected novel within these theoretical frames.

The contribution of the present article to the body of research available in the field of criminal psychology and crime fiction is its manifestation of the behavioral patterns of the criminals and the explanation of the personal traits common among effective detectives, which, building upon interdisciplinarity, uses close reading and discourse analysis of the crime and psychological theories to fulfill its task. It demonstrates that Christie's criminal fictions are more than mere tales of enigmatic journeys and exciting revelations. Her stories include psychological facts and take aid from them in the process of resolving the conflicts which, in many cases, are puzzling murder mysteries. In proving this claim, we will heavily use psychological evidences and link them to literature, a method that has not been applied as such to Christie's novels before.

Crime and Psychological Theories

Criminal psychology is interested in answering the question "why do crimes occur?" Criminals are often labeled as "psychos" (Westera et al., 2014, p. 70), which is much a generalized term used on common ground. In Hercule Poirot's fictional cases, criminals are often simply sick or crazy rather than being motivated by complicated psychological mental disorders. Ian Marsh (2006) draws a kind of Self/Other dichotomy and argues identifying a person as a criminal requires a distinguishing between "the innocent" and "the rest" (p. 57). Those who fit in "the rest" category often put "the innocent" in danger and, therefore, are to be avoided at all costs. Finding out more information about the traits that distinguish the two groups can provide us with a valuable foundation for the other steps in criminal psychology. Some of the most common traits found among the criminals and associated theories are as follows:

Intelligence

'Intelligence' is often conflated with intelligence quotient (IQ). Some research (e.g. Marsh, 2006) suggests that people with lower IQ are more likely to become criminals. Of course this does not mean that all criminals possess a low level of IQ; conversely, some criminals hold a very high IQ that consequently makes the discovery of their misdeeds super-difficult, because clever criminals often diminish all possible evidence that might blow their covers. Hercule Poirot's cas-

es are often fairly intelligent criminals, so that he has to strive beyond the ordinary to deal with them. The level of intelligence is directly related to the amount of time it takes for a criminal to commit a crime. The criminals with lower levels of intelligence are more likely to rush when it comes to committing the final deed. Their actions, therefore, are not very well thought out. An example of such criminals is Franklin Clarke in Christie's *The A.B.C Murders* (1936). Clarke commits all of his crimes in alphabetical order, but when the circumstances go against his will, he is quick enough to commit an irrelevant murder to his usual pattern that finally gives him away. A low level of intelligence might be due to a lack of education or even to genetic disorders. Alexander Bonaparte Cust in *The A.B.C Murders* is a victim of both. He is a mentally ill person who gets excited over the slightest mention of money and, therefore, can be easily manipulated. A similar pattern is also visible in *Hickory Dickory Dock*. Nigel Champan is a skilled criminal who has committed multiple cases of robbery and murder. His prowess regarding manipulating people into believing that he does not mean all the bad things that he says and that this is a part of his fun nature allows him to manipulate Celia Austin into portraying behaviors that are not like her. Celia, manipulated by this highly intelligent criminal, does as he says and ends up emotionally hurt and eventually gets murdered due to Nigel's criminal scheme. Miss Valèrie Hobhouse, Nigel's accomplice, is just as smart and leads even Poirot himself to confusion and fascination regarding the lengths that she is able to go to in order to have their plans carried out accordingly. The case with *Murder on the Orient Express,* however, is different. In this story, a sense of collective intelligence is at stake. The crime committed is the outcome of multiple people coming together and producing a bigger picture, which is the murder of Ratchett. It is safe to say, however, that this collective intelligence ends up working to the favor of Armstrong family as they succeed in murdering Ratchett and making Hercule Poirot believe that he could consider them as an exception and not turn them in to the police. Sure, as Marsh highlights, "It's almost impossible to separate the link between intelligence and propensity for criminal behavior from environmental and even possible heredity factors" (p. 58). Intelligence is, however, an influential factor for criminal behavior and does not cause crimes deliberately on its own.

Impulsivity

Another common personality trait among criminals is impulsivity. This factor refers to the criminal acting almost fully based on the instincts with absolutely no consideration for its consequences. Criminals with high levels of impulsive intentions are more prone to be diagnosed with psychological disorders. An example of an impulsive criminal is Nigel Chapman in Christie's *Hickory Dickory Dock.* In this novel, Nigel kills his own mother at such an early age with absolutely no sense of regret or hesitation. Later on, he commits a series of crimes that the impulsive nature of each is too obvious to go unnoticed. Such criminals possess little self-control and, therefore, are quick to both commit a crime and later confess it. Lack of self-control leads the criminal to seek for immediate

satisfaction of his/her needs. It is important to note that different types of impulsivity function differently. As March classifies, "Functional impulsivity" often leads to the occurrence of a good and useful deed, whereas "dysfunctional impulsivity" leads to destruction (p. 61). Dysfunctional impulsivity is also visible in *The A.B.C Murders*. The killer of the case, Franklin Clarke, mistakenly and out of sheer impulsivity, commits a murder, the record of which does not correspond with the alphabetical order that he has initially aimed to create. This causes the destruction of his master plan in the end as Poirot succeeds in seeing right through him.

Locus of Control

Locus of control, as an internal mechanism, works in a way that the criminal imagines conditions are immensely under his/her control (Marsh, 2006). Internal locus of control often convinces the criminal that there are different interpretations and explanations for the events that take place. Yet, people with an external locus of control often believe that the occurrence of all or at least some of the events are directly dependent on some forces beyond their own will or power. This group strongly believes in and accepts the idea that good or bad luck will determine the outcomes of their deeds. Locus of control can also be seen as a catalyst for people who are prone to becoming criminals or display criminal behavior in one way or another. The best example of how locus of control might manifest itself in criminal novels is shown through Alexander Bonaparte Cust in *The ABC Murders.* Cust becomes wrongly accused of a sequence of crimes that occurred under his name but the he himself did not commit. This person is not a criminal but is prone to becoming associated with one since he accepted to play the fake criminal in the first place. His external locus of control leads him to deny all accusations against him as he keeps repeating "I was unlucky" and "everything is against me" (Christie, 1955, p. 133). He refuses to believe that what he is facing is the result of becoming a slave to his temptations and instead dumps all the weight on the forces beyond his will and power.

It is worth mentioning that none of these common traits can be responsible for a crime single-handedly. It is the interplay of these different conditions that finally results in criminality. In *Hickory Dickory Dock*, Mrs Christina Nicoletic, the secretive owner of the dormitory, is aware of the criminal deeds going on around her property. However, she refrains from intervening and helping the police, so Poirot must unravel the mysteries surrounding the criminal activities around her. In a way, she chooses to play the role of the accomplice as an attempt to save her property's reputation from getting besmirched. Upon getting called out for her misdeeds, her belief in an external locus of control causes her to deny her involvement in everything that she has been a part of.

Psychodynamic Theory

This theory is probably Sigmund Freud's most important contribution to psychology. Early Freudian studies of crime "highlight the irrational, infantile, and unconscious dynamics of crime" (Fitzpatrick, 1976, p.70). Therefore, the central

element of this theory is the idea of unconscious. According to Freud, much of the action that we undertake is under the influence of the unconscious to which we have no direct access. Agatha Christie made use of Freud's ideas in her works through the psychological profiling. Alexander Bonaparte Cust in *The ABC Murders* is suffering from the Oedipal Complex that failed to resolve back in his childhood. He also suffers from several mental disorders as the result of the humiliation and degradation that were imposed on him back in his childhood. The strong presence of unconscious and childhood in Cust's case strongly calls upon the psychodynamic theory. Nigel Chapman and Valerie Hobhouse in *Hickory Dickory Dock* have not had a healthy bringing up and their relationships with their mothers are incredibly disturbing. Nigel ends up murdering his mother and Valerie lives with the burden that her mom is an alcoholic who does not care for her the way a mother normally does. The undeniable traces of these disturbances in their unconscious creates two skilled criminals out of them. The unconscious need to avenge the murder of a three-year-old child becomes the motivation for the team of criminals in *Murder on the Orient Express*. They unconsciously (and at times consciously) feel the need to seek answers for the brutal murder and the pain that came along with it. This is why they plan out Ratchett's murder and succeed in doing it.

Behaviorism

Behaviorism grew out of experiments that suggest that Freud's beliefs about the unconscious are scientifically unprovable. Instead, Behaviorism pays close attention to "observable behaviors" (Marsh, 2006, p. 65). Behaviorism states that behaviors could be the result of education or interactions that take place consciously. As Marsh asserts, "depending on what and how we learn, we either may or may not learn to behave in either criminal or non-criminal ways" (p. 65). Behaviors could be learnt through interactions with the world. An example of learnt criminal behavior can be seen in *Hickory Dickory Dock,* where Valerie Hobhouse shows symptoms of criminal behavior through participating in homicide and stealing objects as a result of close interaction with the experienced criminal that is Nigel Chapman. The murder of Ratchett in *Murder on the Orient Express* could also be another case of learnt criminal behavior. The team of criminals had previously witnessed Ratchett committing a horrendous murder and getting away with it, so they try to use their chance at recreating a similar experience with a different plot and victim. In a way, Ratchett paves the way for his own demise.

Cognitive Theory

"Cognitive theory" as Ian Marsh (2006) puts it, "is concerned with internal mental processes. It describes how criminals' thinking patterns are mostly characterized by a lack of empathy, poor perspective of time, perception of themselves as victims and general correctness in their beliefs" (p. 75). Based on these notions, criminals often perceive their acts flawlessly carried out and fail

to take into account the consequences of their actions. This theory manifests itself in several criminals that Agatha Christie introduced in her novels. Lack of empathy portrays itself in the crimes committed by Ratchette in *Murder on the Orient Express.* He holds the little girl of the Armstrong household hostage for days and demands money. He gets all the money that he demanded for but still proceeds to murder the little girl. In another example, having a poor perspective of time is the major flaw of Franklin Clarke in *The ABC Murders.* His weak sense of timing eventually makes him delivered to Hercule Poirot.

A very famous trick that often allows criminals to get away with what they have done is insisting on perceiving themselves as the victims. Nigel Chapman in *Hickory Dickory Dock* often takes the blame without anyone directing it to him. His swiftness in accepting the responsibility for the things that might have nothing to do with him catches Poirot's sharp eyes and later, by relying to the cognitive theory, Poirot announces that Chapman is the real criminal. Common beliefs among criminals often originate from their childhood and their relationship with their parents. Nigel has an uneasy relationship with his parents. This leads him to first murder his own mother and then abandon his father and lie about him in all social spheres. Such criminals grow up and enter the society without developing a sufficient post-conventional morality. The prerequisite of post-conventional morality is pre-conventional morality that should be developed during the childhood. Criminal behavior, therefore, is considered as a more or less rational choice made by the criminals.

One significant branch of cognitive theory is "routine activity theory." (Marsh, 2006, p.78). This theory states that for a crime to reach its final goal, the interaction of several items is necessary. There should be a motivated criminal, a pre-examined and detected target, and the absence of a potential savior for the target. Through the interaction of these three items, a crime successfully occurs. Routine activity theory can be observed in the criminal procedures that exist in Christie's novels. In *The ABC Murders*, Franklin Clarke disguises himself as a poor man who sells socks. His true intention, however, is to gain information about his soon-to-become victims. He makes sure to surprise the target with his/her last goodbye in the most secluded places when he/she least expects it, and there is no savior nearby.

The Detective and His Role

The aim of this section is to draw attention to the importance of detectives' job and the significance of what they do and how they do it. Acquiring a good understanding of what detectives do requires having a list of standards about what makes an effective detective. This section provides a list of characteristics and skills required to train an effective detective in details. In fiction, a detective's investigative abilities are often closely connected with their ability to psychoanalyze criminals, so we can say that a detective can be a kind of psychoanalyst at the same time. A comparison between the fictional detective and the interrogative policeman can make this clear. "Detectives are entrusted with a

highly serious job" (Westera et al., 2014, p. 4). The most basic expectation of a detective is for them to be able to distinguish "the innocent" from "the rest" correctly (p. 4). No innocent should be wrongly accused and no criminal should escape justice. A detective's ability to do this correctly directly influences people's perception of the justice system and the level of satisfaction they have with it. The higher the profile and more serious the crime is, the heavier the responsibility of the detectives to do this properly. In such cases, the final outcome of the investigation process defines and partly changes the public belief and perception of the justice system. "Identifying these matters has profound implications for how the detective's role is conceptualized" (p. 6). The job of the detective can be perceived in three different ways: It can be seen as an art, a craft, or as a branch of science.

Considering what the detective does as an art means strongly believing in the detective's intuition and instinct. This signifies that training a person to become a detective or providing necessary and related education has very little effect on the process of making a good detective. Seeing the work of the detective as a craft provides a more traditional view that states the more experienced the detective gets, the more s/he develops a "sense of craftsmanship" (Westera et al., 2014, p. 5-6). The ideal form of craftsmanship includes being able to put all matters in context and perfectly communicating with a variety of people. Stephen Tong and Benjamin Bowling (2006) rightfully assert that "The scientific approach to detective work points to a potentially evolving 'professional' detective significantly different from the detectives in the past" (p. 326). This approach has led to the creation of criminal psychology as a scientific branch that analyzes the criminal minds. This approach is also responsible for the creation of forensic psychology which "is the application of clinical specialties to the legal arena" (American Psychological Association, 2013). Perhaps the most important contribution of scientific approach is the creation and introduction of criminal profiling that provides the detectives with the best framework to analyze criminal behavior. The scientific approach allows utilizing evidence-based information in a trusted and creditable way. The common belief about detectives is that they are innately educated and always ready to catch some criminals. The truth is that detectives devote the majority of their time and energy to psychological profiling, filling in the blank spaces of the puzzle of evidences and communicating with suspects and people who are overall involved in the case. After all these steps take place, criminal catching occurs. The detective needs a set of tools to acquire enough information to decide about a particular case. These tools or skills are empirically gathered information, great communication skills, interviewing skills, crime-scene management skills, the skill of being able to distinguish between useful and irrelevant information and the skill of investigating and deciding as unbiased as possible. To close a case successfully, all of these skills should work harmoniously, which can be divided into four parts: task, information, people, and communication skills.

Managing Tasks Skills

The detective should be able to put the available evidence and information into effect and control the situation. Having this skill goes hand in hand with how calm and collected the detective in charge is. In fiction, Hercule Poirot is one of the best examples. He is never in a rush, is always calm, and never fails to find stability. In *The ABC Murders*, Hastings, Poirot's close friend internally admires how calm he is and how neat and organized his files are. When Hastings upon receiving the fourth letter from the criminal barges into Poirot's closet and dumps all he sees in a suitcase, he is met with a pretty savage reaction from Poirot who thinks they cannot fight against the normalcy in life and have to wait until the train arrives instead of hurrying uselessly. His collectedness is also visible in how he manages to gather the necessary information of the murder case in *Murder on the Orient Express*. His distressed friend, Mr. Bouc, hurries fruitlessly while Poirot takes his precious time going through every passenger's ticket and passport in order to gain more insight into what might have caused the murder of Ratchett. As expected, he spots the nuances of the murder plan in the way the personal information in passports have been altered and manages to grasp the thorough scheme by the end of the story. Poirot's calmness is also presented through its stark opposition to Ms. Lemon's state of despair in *Hickory Dickory Dock*. Poirot constantly tries to assure her that progressing as he has planned would ultimately reward them with victory and that there is no reason for worrying too much. In the end, Poirot succeeds and once again proves that calmness and enough thinking are the key to the revelation of criminals' motives.

Managing Information Skills

Detectives should constantly look for clues and get all the help they can to solve the mysteries of the cases. It is important to note that not all of the clues are of the same importance. Some of the clues are merely out there just to mislead the detective and affect the final outcome of the investigation process. Prioritizing the information elicited from the clues is the job of the detective. In *Hickory Dickory Dock*, Poirot himself instigates a journey in order to gain more insight into the seemingly random sequence of lost objects including "evening shoe (one of a new pair), bracelet (costume jewelry), diamond ring (found in plate of soup), powder compact, lipstick, stethoscope, earrings, cigarette lighter, old flannel trousers, electric light bulbs, box of chocolates, silk scarf (found cut to pieces), rucksack (ditto), boracie powder, bath salts, and cookery book" (Christie, 1955, p. 4). He purchases one rucksack identical to the one found as evidence and by rampaging through its compartments finds out that this rucksack is made for smuggling purposes. In this way, he discovers that there are more layers to the case.

In *Murder on the Orient Express*, Poirot discovers a plethora of clues; however, he comes to realize that not all of them contribute to the resolving of the enigma. The embroidered handkerchief is one of these "clues" that might have

distracted Poirot's attention to a wrong idea, but Poirot doubts the easiness with which he has found this clue and as a result does not build his theories on the basis of it. His appropriate prioritization of the available clues and evidences rewards him and Mr. Bouc with the discovery of the actual murderers.

Alexander Bonaparte Cust in *The A.B.C Murders* serves as the red herring while Franklin Clarke is the mastermind behind the alphabetical murders. Poirot's skepticism towards the lack of barriers that exists between the authorities and the criminal leads him to explore the theory that Alexander Bonaparte Cust is just a scapegoat for Clarke to get away with the murders. He does not take the evidence at the face value and analyzes and reanalyzes it until it makes absolute sense. Ultimately, he succeeds in recognizing the true criminal and leaves Clarke wondering about how he might have blown his cover having planned out everything accordingly.

Dealing With the People Skills

This set of skills is closely related to the detective's social skills. The detective should be able to adjust his or her moods and social behavior in accordance to the type of people that he or she is dealing with. This set of skills is a prerequisite for communication skills (Westera et al., 2014, p. 10). Throughout all of the novels of Agatha Christie that features Hercule Poirot as the chief detective, we can see how his tone and manners change interacting from one person to the other. Sometimes, he randomly makes up some fake piece of information just to see how his suspect responds. He uses this method to test the honesty of his suspect. Often they comment on this fake information as if they were present when that particular thing occurred. In *The ABC Murders,* Poirot describes an imaginary murderer to Mrs. Auscher's neighbor and asks her to give him all the information she has of this person in exchange for five pounds. The neighbor starts describing this imaginary person with passion and thus gets omitted from the circle of the witnesses that Poirot can trust. Other times, he speaks completely to the point and even explains the already carried out procedures that are supposed to be confidential. He does this in *The ABC Murders* when Megan Barnard does not seem to trust Poirot with accurate information about her deceased sister. Only after Poirot explains the alphabetical nature of the murders to her does she become fully invested in the process. He knows who he is dealing with and adjusts himself to their moods to get the best information.

Effective Communication Skill

This set of skills more than anything else requires the detective to be as approachable as possible. This is the most important and the most critical set of skills. The detectives should be able to connect and communicate with people from all walks of the society. Poirot makes sure to take the age and intelligence level of his audience into consideration. The best example of how Poirot's

communication skills operate can be seen in *Murder on the Orient Express.* This story revolves around a murder that involves over ten different people. Each one of these people has their own unique story considering their lives and points of view regarding the murder. Poirot converses with all of them and tries to build enough trust for them to trust him with whatever information that they have. His way of talking differs from the men to the women, the elderly to the youth, the British to the foreigner, and the extrovert to the introvert.

It is important to note that the job of the detective is multidimensional. A detective might have to appear as an expert in some other fields that are more or less related to his job, fields like psychology. There is no doubt that a fictional detective should be an expert when it comes to psychology. It is only natural for the detective to appear as a psychoanalyst since the investigation process is highly cognitively demanding. The criminal responsible for a crime is never fully unknown. There is always a small clue left behind due to the carelessness of the criminal or his attempt to challenge the authorities through a game of hide and sick. Psychology can never work to its fullest if the criminal is fully unknown. Poirot engages himself in a psychoanalytical process each time he tries to trace a clue back to its origin. Through this indulgence, he is differentiated from the normal people who just sit back and watch aimlessly. Speaking of the roles that a detective can play, the power relation in the police versus detective set is also worthy of mentioning. In Agatha Christie's novels, these two authorities mostly function on the same page. In crime fiction, the police are almost always marginalized and given a minor role compared to the detective. The police are often criticized for lacking depth of imagination and cognitive thinking. They are usually the ones who get fooled by looking at a set of unreliable information. Inspector Crome and Hastings in *The ABC Murders* are great examples of inferiority in relation to Poirot who is given an almost supernatural importance. He is the one who is always available to save the day and through his manners and professionalism, the readers perceive the police involved in the case as naïve and a little dumb.

Clues in Criminal Cases

Clues are the starting points in the journey towards discovering the motives and eventually resolving the conflicts of a case. To speak more about clues, it is essential to first see what clue literally means. According to Oxford Online English Dictionary, a clue is "a ball of thread, employed to guide anyone in 'threading' his way into or out of a labyrinth or maze; hence, in many more or less figurative applications, a fact, circumstance of principle which, being taken hold of and followed up, leads through a maze, perplexity, difficulty, intricate investigation." This definition can be applied to Poirot's investigations as well. Poirot often starts his investigations with an invisible but real murderer who has committed a crime or a set of crimes in a way that neither the readers nor himself have any accurate knowledge of. The process of investigation that takes place throughout the story works in favor of uncovering the motives behind the crimes. In Christie's novels, usually the process of finding clues and consequent-

ly investigation begins with the discovery of a corpse. In order to find the clues, the plot of the story that includes the details of the actions of Poirot and his allies and the investigation process should develop together. In *Hickory Dickory Dock* and *Murder on the Orient Express,* the two processes take place simultaneously, whereas in *The ABC Murders,* both of the processes are subverted. Crimes keep occurring one after the other without leaving much time for the previous one to resolve. Poirot's clues are often in the shape of "finger prints, foot prints" (Westera et al., 2014, p. 9) and an overheard conversation long enough to create suspense and short enough not to provide any valuable and trustworthy information. A problem with absolute reliance on clues is that, when a state of cluelessness is faced, nothing can be done to get out of it. Cluelessness happens when the criminal is experienced and intelligent. In *Curtain: Poirot's Last Case,* cluelessness is the result of the criminal role being fitting enough for almost everyone. Clues require a smart detective such as Poirot to find and interpret them in a way that they serve as "links between past and present" (p. 17).

Finally, we approach some of these theories in *Hickory Dickory Dock*, in which the focus is on a set of robberies that leads to murders in a student hostel located on the Hickory Street. Mrs. Hubbard, who is assigned to administer the students and the hostel by Mrs. Nicoltis, lets Hercule Poirot know about all of the strange things that have been happening for quite a while. Poirot accepts this challenge of the case, and through recurring visit sessions to the hostel and communicating with the students that reside there, comes to a conclusion about the causes of all the chaos that had put Mrs. Hubbard and her sister, Mrs. Lemon, in great distress. Digging deep and beyond the surface of the story, this section aims to analyze certain parts of this novel through the lens of criminal psychology as conducted and carried out by the epitome of fictional detectives, Hercule Poirot.

To start, we have to see how Poirot meets the standards of an effective detective in the context of this novel. The novel begins with a description of a situation in which Poirot is seemingly shocked by the fact that his normally mistake-free semi-robot secretary, Mrs. Lemon, has typed a letter remote from its usual flawlessness. Upon observing this inconvenience, he calmly asks for the reasons responsible for her lack of concentration. By her response, he becomes aware of the fact that Mrs. Lemon is upset about her sister, who is also deeply upset. He expresses his surprise by asking a rhetorical question that is "your sister?" (Christie, 1955. p. 4). This shows that he is very curious in nature and realizes the smallest changes, both of which are the characteristics of an effective detective. Later in an internal monologue, he criticizes Mrs. Lemon's "heel of Achilles" (p. 5), which he perceives as her lack of imagination. Poirot himself is rich in this particular department, which distinguishes him from other people around him. After listening to Mrs. Lemon narrate Mrs. Hubbard's story, he accepts the case only because he feels motivated and never wants to see Mrs. Lemon making the same mistakes ever again. This motivation that pushes him to think and take action is another important characteristic of an effective detective. Later, he arranges a meeting session with Mrs. Hubbard, and before her arrival, makes sure that everything is prepared and symmetrical. This external

sensitivity over appearance signifies that his mind is just as organized and clear-cut, which is a positive point for an effective fictional detective. He sets off to visit the hostel and the students, and upon his first encounter with them, he finds out a variety of new information. He is sharp enough to realize that, at the mentioning of the name of Colin McNabb, Miss Celia Austin turns a shade of crimson indicating her emotional attachment to him. He finds it suitable to narrate some of his great experiences in the form of well-developed stories to the students. He does so "in a light and amusing fashion" since "the sound of his voice was always pleasant to him" (p. 33). This confidence is also a vital factor required for an effective detective. The murder of Miss Celia Austin finally takes place and Poirot is bombarded with an avalanche of new information given to him by the police inspector. His first assumption about the case is that Miss Valerie Hobhouse and Mr. Nigel Chapman are in fact very suspicious. Later in the story, this assumption proves to be right, which shows that he is as intelligent as an effective detective should be. He makes sure to double-check all of his observations and finds the first functional clue when he pays attention to how the soup is served in the hostel the night before the murder. This sharpness of the eyes allows him to recognize Valerie Hobhouse as the thief of the diamond ring.

Now we go back to the beginning of the story and trace some of the skills put to use by Poirot. Upon observing the mistakes that Mrs. Lemon had made, Poirot does not get mad at all. This is an example of 'dealing with the people' skills explained earlier. After hearing all that has been going down in the hostel, he responds with "the parsley sinking into the butter on a hot day" (p. 16). This is a reference to Sherlock Holmes, and Poirot proves to be skilled enough in managing the tasks by connecting his current case to his pre-existing knowledge. His statement "We try to prevent murders, not wait until they have been committed" (p. 44) shows his skills in controlling the situation. Later, Colin McNabb straight up attacks Poirot and his "traditional ways" (p. 50) and tries to humiliate him with his modern, psychology-based ones. Despite the hash tone of Colin, Poirot seems calm and collected and even interested in absorbing the information brought about by this new point of view. Poirot shows that he has excelled in communication and dealing with the people. Communication skills are the most important skills, and Poirot states "all murderers I have ever come across enjoyed talking. In my opinion the strong silent man seldom commits a crime" (p. 54). This is a good example of how communication skills can destroy the barriers between what the criminal wants to hide and what he puts out on display in the vitrine. He tries to approach the case with an open mind by connecting it to his pre-existing knowledge. He compares the current situation that he is involved in to the "three honored lady game" (p. 78) and opens up new doors to deeper perception of the situation.

Explaining some of the examples and causes of criminal behavior in the novel leads to a better understanding of the function of the clues. When one of the students observes that her notes are soaked in green ink, Nigel Chapman immediately accepts the blame by saying "bad Nigel spilt the ink" (Christie, 1955, p. 42). Playing the role of the victim when in reality he really is the crimi-

nal is a classic criminal behavior. After the murder occurs, Nigel is interviewed by Poirot and the Police inspector, during which he is reluctant to give any sort of information about how he supplied three different types of poisons. This shows that Nigel as a professional criminal is intelligent enough not to give away information that could be used against him. The factor of the intelligence of the criminal is also portrayed through the actions of Valerie Hobhouse. She is the one who teaches Celia Austin how to commit crimes in a way that strikes Colin as amusing and interesting. At the end of the story, Sir Arthur Stanley's letter reveals that Nigel has always been a chaotic child. This exhibits the role of the much complicated childhood that Nigel went through in his character development as an individual.

It is now time for Poirot to find new clues and analyze the already existing ones. His first attempt to find some clues is by asking Mrs. Hubburd to describe the hostel and the types of students to him. After finding the lost pair of shoes in the lost properties office of Hickory Street, he traces it back to its origin and provides himself with the first trustworthy clue. Later, Mrs. Hubbard prepares a list of the stolen objects in a chronological order that serves as a perfect clue for Poirot. Among the items on the list, the most important and eye-opening ones such as Valerie's and Nigel's illegal passports are the hardest to find let alone traced. Poirot approaches this difficulty with an open mind and reminds inspector Sharpe that a clue as important as an illegal passport cannot possibly be found during the first time searching the hostel and the properties of all of the students. Poirot also relies on empirical experiments to get a clearer view of the vague and blurred clues. The ripped apart rucksack is a very important clue and to see exactly why, Poirot purchases one himself and rips it apart.

One of the most prominent aspects of criminal cases is the almost invisible rivalry that more or less exhibits itself in the behavior of the police versus the detective. The manifestation of police power in this story is portrayed through the character of inspector Sharpe. The first implication of this rivalry is shown when Mrs. Hubbard and Mrs. Nicoltis agree on getting help from Poirot, but refuse letting the police take the responsibility. This primacy that is given to the role of Poirot is later justified to some extent. When the police officer finally gets a wide view of the whole situation, his first reaction to the murder is that of "a silly kid who's been pinching a few things here and there" (p. 52). To Poirot, however, it is much more complex. The police insist on limiting the case to a suspicious suicide note written out of hopeless romanticism and a good example of kleptomania, but even Mrs. Hubbard is hesitant to fall for this lameness. Inspector Sharpe wants to close the case as soon as possible to "maintain prestige" of the police, whereas Poirot only accepted the case because he was motivated by and interested in it. The difference between inspector Sharpe and Poirot also manifests itself in the way they interview the suspects. Inspector Sharpe acts harshly towards the suspects as soon as he feels the shift of power and his authority being undermined, whereas Poirot welcomes different ideas and tries to get the most information out of them. It also seems like the people involved in the case trust Poirot as the detective figure more than inspector

Sharpe. Celia confesses to his wrong deeds in the presence of Poirot and feels threatened by the police.

Fictional detectives often possess very sharp eyes and senses and, therefore, are distinguished from normal people. At one point, Poirot asks Mrs. Hubbard about the love interests that exist among the students, and Mrs. Hubbard answers that she has never detected any. Poirot later proves Mrs. Hubbard wrong by analyzing the unseen links and detecting all sorts of romantic feelings among the students.

The last part to be analyzed is about psychological profiling of the criminals and the biases that affect the outcomes of profiling and consequently the final decision. The process of profiling begins with Poirot asking Mrs. Hubbard a set of questions about "why such a haphazard of collection of things" (Christie, 1955, p. 11) has been stolen. Later on, process of profiling goes beyond paying attention to a set of stolen objects and psychological profiling of the people involved in the case begins. During the first encounter with Colin McNabb, Poirot recognizes him to be the type blinded by love and emotions that only looks out for the complexes that exist in others. In the case of Celia Austin, everyone considers her to be a poor girl who did not know what she was doing, but Poirot believes that Celia was clever enough to know the way to Colin's heart. After all, Poirot comes to believe that all of the people involved in the case could be the potential murderer. In his opinion, Valerie Hobhouse is smart, Nigel Chapman is childish in behavior, Genevieve is greedy for money and would risk anything for it, Patricia Lane is the maternal type and "the maternal types are always ruthless" (p. 64), Sally Finch knows exactly how to act, Jean Tomlinson is too good to fool anybody and Elizabeth Johnston is the most intelligent person among all of them since she considers her brain to be more important than her emotions and that is dangerous. Poirot "recalled his experiences that lent themselves to an agreeable exaggeration" (p. 39). He successfully overcomes these biases based on his previous experiences and introduces Nigel Chapman as the criminal of the case.

Similarly, *Murder on the Orient Express* focuses on a mysterious murder that takes place on the *Orient Express* that is on its way to London. Hercule Poirot happens to be travelling on this very train accompanied by thirteen other people of different nationalities and cultures in the same wagon. Due to heavy snow, the train is forced to come to a full stop for about two days in Yugoslavia, during which time a murder occurs. During these two days, Poirot begins his investigations for the sake of his friend, Mr. Bouc, who is in charge of the wagon. Poirot eventually comes to a conclusion right before the train continues its journey, leaving Yugoslavia. The process through which Hercule Poirot comes to recognize the criminals responsible for the murder of Mr. Ratchette is to be broken down into its constituent parts and analyzed in this section.

First, it is essential to prove that Poirot is the suitable person for solving this mystery. Poirot begins his journey on the *Orient Express* not as a detective on mission but as a simple passenger just like everybody else on his way to London to run some errands. He first encounters a young British lady that, accord-

ing to his sharp eyes, seems to be very well-travelled based on how she orders her coffee. As the time passes, he visits more and more people and analyzes their behaviors and characteristics without anyone noticing anything. Based on these observations, he comes to a few conclusions about some of the passengers. Poirot realizes through Colonel Arbuthnot and Mary Debenhams' conversations that Colonel is a very sensitive guy. Mr. Ratchette, who makes Poirot nervous in the pit of his stomach, asks for his help on a case related to him and his enemies, but Poirot refuses, and the next night, Mr. Ratchette gets murdered. Upon the occurrence of this murder, Mr. Bouc, who is very anxious and stressed about the fact that a murder has just taken place on the train that he is responsible for, begs his friend, Poirot, to accept this case. Poirot accepts this challenge and his first reaction to the chaos created by the passengers is sitting back in his chair and thinking deeply. He arranges a set of interviews with all of the remaining twelve passengers and decides that all of them can be potential criminals unless the opposite is proved. He takes all psychological factors in consideration before saying something like "McQueen is too clever and contained to have stabbed Ratchette" (Christie, 1934, p. 51). Poirot pays attention to the slightest changes and details. He notes the change in the tone of Dr. Constantine when he is explaining how the murderer stabbed Ratchette and uses it later when he has got more clues to deal with, just as an effective detective does. Somewhere along the primary stages of investigation, he realizes that Ratchette's murderer must have been left-handed, judging the position and depth of the wounds observed on the corpse. This new information is not enough to convince him, and he awaits more creditable information to arrive sooner or later. This hesitancy in accepting the newly acquired information shows that Poirot is an effective detective. Poirot has "very sharp eyes and nothing hides from his great and penetrating gaze" (p. 73). Poirot's sharp gaze along with his intelligence allow him to recognize the cognitive biases that reside in the minds of the people who are involved in the case. One of these biases is observed when Mr. Bouc expresses how unhappy he is with the fact that this murder had to take place in the *Orient Express* that lies within his domain of responsibility. Such biases exist in the mind of Poirot as well, but he tries to overcome them and analyze the matters without such cognitive biases blurring his point of view. When the napkin with the "H" embroidered on it is found in the crime scene, Poirot negates this assumption that it for sure belongs to Mrs. Hubberd and, therefore, she is the criminal. He is very quick in recognizing the odd from the normal, and that is why he immediately realizes that something is off when he observes the weird oil stain on Countess' passport which later turns out to be one of the greatest clues in this case. The mystery of the embroidered napkin is solved when the princess finally confesses that it is in fact hers. Poirot successfully escapes a lapse in judgment by not judging the clues hurriedly. He strongly believes that "the impossible is possible even if it is not the case on the surface" (p. 103), and it adds to the list of the items that prove he is an effective detective. He notices the smallest slips of tongue and actions and makes sure to use them when it is the time. On the first night of spending time in the train, Poirot accidentally overhears the bits and pieces of the conversation between Colonel Arbuthnot and Mary Debenham and later uses this

evidence to prove that these two are not strangers although they really want to appear as so.

The intertextuality and referencing other works of detective fiction is a common feature of Christie's novels. Mr. Bouc suggests a possible plot according to which the murder could have taken place, but Poirot assures him that such clichés only exist in fiction and tries to deal with the matter realistically. Poirot makes it clear a number of times that he believes in building and maintaining a body of knowledge that can be added to or lessened from. This is a great manifestation of Poirot's 'managing tasks' skills. The importance of psychology and psychological profiling is emphasized by Poirot stating that his methods differ from specialized ones since he believes in the "power of psychology" (p. 171). Poirot's excellence in communication skills is shown through the way he behaves toward each individual. He acts soft and calm toward some and toward the others, he does not hesitate to disclose all the lies they have been feeding him to their faces. He uses an omission process to determine the final criminal and this signifies his excellence in 'controlling the situation' skills. His communication skills never fail him and he succeeds to get all twelve criminals to confess to what they have done. This story, unlike the other one, provides all the necessary clues for Poirot gathered in one place. It only takes a genius like Poirot to find these clues, trace them back to their origins, and make sense of them. Poirot uses clues like the map of the wagon, the tickets of the passengers, and their passports. He also manipulates some of the clues such as the semi-burnt piece of paper with the last name "Armstrong" written all over it. Through this manipulation, he acquires new information.

The biases portrayed in the story can be analyzed on two different levels: a) biases of the suspects and b) biases of the detective. Almost all of the biases of both kinds are related to nationalities and stereotypes attributed to them. The Italian passenger does not want the police to indulge since he believes that "Yugoslavians hate Italians" (Christie, 1955, p. 152) and, therefore, do not treat him with enough justice. Mrs. Hubbard constantly nags about how disorganized the "people of this side of the world" are (p. 18). Poirot himself possesses a few biases directed specifically toward the British and the "Anglo-Saxon minds" (p. 173). He believes that the British do not give any information away unless there is some benefit in it for them. His biased mindset about the commonness of multiculturalism in America in this very rare occasion aids him to solve the mystery of the crime.

Poirot succeeds in carrying out the process of investigation as perfectly as possible. The fact that twelve people participated in a shared act of crime falls prey to the emotional biases of all of the people involved in the case who are not criminals. Poirot who had earlier come up with two possible assumptions about the murder decides that it will be okay to deceive the police by narrating them the first one which happens to be only an assumption and nothing more. This is flattering to witness when pondered upon subjectively, but not professionally. Poirot makes a mistake by creating an atmosphere where the criminals are on the loose.

Conclusion

Criminal psychology is a branch of psychology that is interested in understanding the motivations and thought processes of criminals, including their biases. The author of crime detective fiction constantly navigates the boundaries of the injustices caused by the motivations of these characters and by representing the strict professionalism of detectives, who are also biased. An effective fictional detective is, therefore, someone who can balance the two sides of this spectrum and arrive at a conclusion reasonably void of unjust biases. In this research, we analyzed criminal psychology as performed by Hercule Poirot in a selection of Agatha Christie's novels including *Hickory Dickory Dock*, *The A.B.C Murders*, and *Murder on the Orient Express*. We demonstrated that fictional criminals often possess multiple layers in their motivations and personality. Thus, the resolution of a novel requires the presence of a detective to solve the riddles engendered by these complex motivations. Christie, through applying criminal profiling via her character Poirot, represents a fictional world in which criminals, no matter how intelligent or cunning, cannot get away with their crimes when an analytical mind that uses psychological means is present.

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