

***A STUDY OF POWER DYNAMICS IN SELECT NOVELS BY
AGATHA CHRISTIE***

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Submitted

***In partial fulfilment of the requirement of the Degree of
Master of Philosophy in English of Mizoram University, Aizawl.***

DECLARATION

Mizoram University

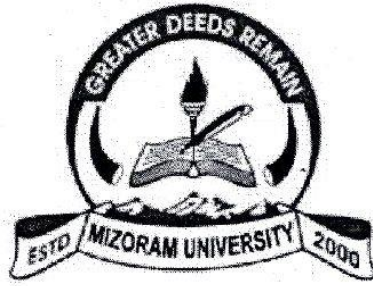
December, 2014.

I, Z.D. Lalmangaihi, hereby declare that the subject matter of this dissertation is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this dissertation did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the dissertation has not been submitted by me for any other University or Institute.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that “A study of Power Dynamics in Select Novels by Agatha Christie” written by Z.D. Lalmangaihi has been written under my supervision.

She has fulfilled all the required norms laid down within the M.Phil. regulations of Mizoram University. The dissertation is the result of her own investigation. Neither the dissertation as a whole nor any part of it was ever submitted by any other University for any research degree.

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This dissertation proposes to examine and analyze Agatha Christie's novels namely *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926), *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934) and *Death on the Nile* (1937). This chapter will focus on the brief bio data of the author by denoting her personal life, the struggle she has faced as a writer and her contribution to detective novel as a genre. Besides, the chapter will give a coherent view of the background of the age by highlighting the importance of the age in which the three selected works were written. It will denote a comprehensive analysis of the three selected works by highlighting the themes and concepts that the author has explored in her novels.

Agatha Christie is known as "The Queen of crime," "The Mistress of Fair Deceit," "The First Lady of Crime," "The Mistress of Misdirection," "The Detective Story Writer's Detective Story," Her body of works consisting of sixty seven novels and one hundred and seventeen short stories of detection and mystery makes her the most popular writer of twentieth century (Bargainnier, *The Gentle Art of Murder* 1). Agatha Christie wrote under the name of Martin West, Mostyn Grey, Mary Westmacott (Kelleghan *100 Masters of Mystery and Detective Fiction* 154). She was born just outside Torquay, England, on September 15 1890, to Frederick Alvah and Clarissa Margaret Boehmer Miller and died in 1976 in Wallingford, England (154). She hailed from a wealthy upper class family in Ashfield, Torquay, Devon in South West England. She was the third child of a family living the life of the wealthy upper classes, whose income was however rapidly diminishing (Rowland, *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell* 1). Agatha Christie spent much of her time alone and was however in the company of her two grandmothers. Although she did not received formal education except in music, she read voraciously and showed an early interest in writing, publishing a poem in the local newspaper at the age of eleven. After recovering from influenza at eighteen, she took her mother's suggestion to write stories and her first attempt *The House of Beauty* was published in revised form as *The House of Dreams* in the Sovereign

magazine in January 1926 and two other stories from this period later grew into novels. She then turned to write longer fiction and sent a manuscript titled *Snow upon the Desert* to Eden Phillpotts, a popular novelist as well as family friend of Christie and he referred her to his agent, Hughes Massie who later become hers as well (Kelleghan 156). She married Archibald Christie, a pilot during the First World War after a passionate courtship (Rowland 1). After her marriage to Archibald, Christie on Christmas Eve, 1914 went to work first as a nurse and then as a pharmacist and the latter post gave her knowledge of poisons as well as free time to apply that information (Kelleghan 156). Archibald survived the war and the couple experienced several impoverished postwar years in London while he sought establishment in the city. During this period Christie's only child Rosalind was born, at the same time, financial pressures stimulated the production of her novel, *The Mysterious Affairs at Style* which introduced Hercule Poirot (Rowland 1). Rejected by several publishers, the manuscript went to John Lane at the Bodley Head in 1917, where it lay buried for two years. In 1919, the same year Rosalind was born, Lane called Christie into his office and told her that he would publish the novel with some changes and he signed Christie to a five-book contract. *The Mysterious Affairs at Styles* sold two thousand copies in its first year. However Christie had not yet begun to consider herself as a professional writer even after *The Man in the Brown Suit* (1924) earned for her enough money to buy a car. In 1926, although she had succeeded in publishing *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, her life changed. Archiebald announced that he wanted a divorce which was coupled with the recent death of her mother. The news overwhelmed Christie and later she suffered from hysterical amnesia and vanished for ten days in December. On an excursion to Iraq in 1929, she met Max Mallowman, an archaeologist fifteen years younger than she was and were married in Edinburgh on September 11, 1930. For the next decade she would travel between the Middle East and England while producing seventeen novels and six short story collections. The war years

were equally productive, yielding seventeen works of fiction and an autobiography. In 1947, in celebration of the birthday of the Queen Mother, Christie created half-hour radio play, *Three Blind Mice* which in 1952 opened in London's West End as *Mousetrap*, a play that was to break all theatrical records. *A Murder is Announced* published in 1950 was a novel which was sold more than fifty thousand copies in one year. She was honoured with Grand Master Award from Mystery Writers to America (1954), The New York Drama Critics Circle Award for best foreign play, Commander of the British Empire (1956), an honorary doctorate from the University of Exeter (1961), and Dame of the British Empire (1971). In 1970, at the age of eighty, she published her eightieth book. Unfortunately, a fall the next year broke her hip, and she never fully recovered. On January 12, 1976, she died at her home in Wallingford, England and she was buried at St. Mary's churchyard in nearby Cholsey (Kelleghan 156, 157).

Christie had established a pattern of extraordinary resilience with the publication of *The Mysterious Affairs at Style* (1920) which reflects a murder during a gathering at a country house. *The Mysterious Affairs at Styles* tricks the readers not by making the most likely and the least likely suspects both guilty of the crime by introducing many false leads. The novel is set in England during World War 1 at Styles court. Christie has dedicated the novel to her mother Clarissa Boehmer Miller who has always been a strong influence and a source of inspiration in her life. The story is narrated in the form of first person narrative by Hasting. There are dozens of suspects in the novel who have concealed facts about their own self. John Scaggs in his book titled *Crime Fiction* denotes:

In Britain, the Golden Age has a convenient point of origin in the publication of Agatha Christie's first novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, in 1920, and the reign of 'Queen of Crime' continued until long after the Golden Age is normally considered to have ended, in the wake of the Second World War (26).

Agatha Christie has contributed immensely for the development of the detective novel which includes the development of country house murder. In Christie's work the settings of the novels take unusual surroundings in specific locales which are often isolated one. The main implication of the isolated settings is to limit the number of suspects, making detection easier and simpler for the detective. Besides, the closed circle also emphasizes the abnormality of the crime by isolating it from the everyday matters of the world around it, which automatically creates tension and suspense. (Bargainnier, 22)

Agatha Christie received twenty five pounds for *The Mysterious Affairs at Styles*. At the same time the popularity of her one hundred and eighty four works of mystery and detective fiction, as well as thirteen mystery and detective fiction including thirteen films based upon her works made her rich and famous. By the time of her death in 1976, she was according to the UNESCO report the most widely British read author of all time translated into one hundred three languages which is fourteen more than Shakespeare. Her total readership was estimated to be 2,000,000,000 and her total earnings at \$20,000,000. Her agent Edmund Cork stated in 1975:

“Her sales go up every year. A million and a half paperbacks a year in Britain alone. She is unquestionably the best author of all time. Every estimate of her sales I have seen is a gross under-estimate” (Bargainnier,199).

Christie enthusiast ranged from millions including T.S. Eliot, John Updike, Ayn Rand, Charles deGaulle, Helmut Schmidt, Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth II, as well as most of her fellow mystery writers. She received the first Grand Masters Award of the Mystery Writers of America in 1954 and was elected the president of The Detection Club in England succeeding Dorothy Sayers, in 1957. She was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 1950 and later received an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from Exeter

University in 1961. Having been named commander of the Order of the British Empire by the Queen in 1956, she was raised to Dame Commander in 1971 (200). Bargainnier extols Christie when he says:

Christie is superb storyteller. To some, such a statement may seem facile, but it must be made. Though by their nature her stories are quiet complex in structure, she may confound but she very rarely confuses. Her skill in plot construction rests in balancing of mystification and detection, in covering any anomalies and loose ends, and in not allowing other elements to detract excessively from the central process of discovery. She fulfills reader's expectations of what her fiction will be, by staying within the boundaries of her genre, while surprising them with new twist and turns of plots and characterization. This duality of predictability and variation has always been a characteristic of great and popular tellers of tales and Christie has it. She is the Dickens of detective fiction (201).

Hercule Poirot, a highly resilient and respectable figure entered the fictional world of Christie in *The Mysterious Affairs at Style*. Hercule Poirot proves to be a highly resilient and respectable figure who is able to call on police support despite some occasional short lived mockery. In the novel, Poirot is no longer a young man and he has retired from the Belgian police and has come to England as a war refugee. The essential source of Christie's ideas about the figure of the great detective is undoubtedly Arthur Canon Doyle and his creation of Sherlock Holmes. Christie has unraveled the assumption when she says:

"I considered detectives not like Sherlock Holmes, of course. I must invent one of my own, and he would also have a friend as a kind of butt or stooge" (Onderkova, 20).

Hercule Poirot is a Belgian detective who features in the three selected novels of Agatha Christie viz *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, *Murder on the Orient Express* and *Death on the Nile*. In addition to Christie's contribution, the "Golden Age" in Britain is defined by another author namely Dorothy Leigh. Sayers who created Lord Peter Wimsey who has become one of the most imitated of the Golden Age detectives (Scaggs 26). Dorothy L Sayers who is scholarly and meticulous with her sparkling imagination has exercised a remarkable influence upon detective fiction. Her first detective novel is titled *Whose body* published in 1923 introduced the hero called whose name can be associated with Lord Peter Wimsey. She has contributed immensely for the development of detective fiction through the publication of her well written detective stories namely *Clouds of Witness* (1926), *Unnatural Death* (1927), *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* (1928), and *Lord Peter Views The Body* (1928) (Murch 221).

Techniques and methods have been considered an important element in Christie's novels; the intricacy of her plots is developed primarily with the blending of clues and misdirection to make detection possible at the same time to procrastinate the investigation. Agatha Christie says:

"Writing a detective story is a good deal like making a sauce. You know you've put in all the right ingredients but so many things can go wrong, you can't tell until it reaches the table if it will be a sauce or a complete disaster"(Bargainnier 167).

Christie has employed an important ancient literary device which is called "retardation". The term connotes delay or hold back where the detective appears on the scene as late as possible which leads the readers to a false track (Revzen and Graffy 368). Good mystery writers know all about the "red herring". It is a clue that is designed to mislead readers and make them suspect the wrong characters. So, the term literally means something

that is intended to mislead or distract the readers. In Christie's fiction, the presence of other crimes that is unrelated to the central crime is an obvious source of "red herring" which mislead the readers. The crimes that are unrelated to the central crime are usually represented in the form embezzlement, forgery, fraud, blackmailing and other variations of theft. At the same time an obvious form of "red herring" is represented by certain objects for instance in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, Ralph Paton's boots, the Tunisian dagger from the silver table, the blue envelope containing Mrs Ferrars' letter which disappeared, the dictaphone and the footmarks are notables. In *Murder on the Orient Express* the "red herring" is designed in the form of the red kimono, the conductor's uniform button, the pipe cleaner, the handkerchief, the burned letter, the wounds on the body of Ratchett and the booking of the tickets under a fictitious name called Mr. Harris. Whereas in *Death on the Nile*, "red herring" is represented in the form of the initials 'J' written in blood on the wall above Linnet's head, Miss Van Schuyler's stole, the handkerchief with red ink, the sound of "pop" which is heard by the passengers, the pearl, the surgical knife and the hideous kimono.

A majority of Agatha Christie's books span a period from 1920 to 1976 and three years are essentially clubbed as the "Golden Age" which was the period between the two World Wars. Christie provides in her own way a social history of England from World War 1 to the 1970s. From an upper middle class viewpoint, she records the changes of those years and their meanings not only from the economical and political perspectives but the day to day existence of her characters (Bargainnier 202). The World Wars have a huge impact on the individual ranging from individual to the social level. The 1920s is a competitive world where war, assassination, death and killing are inevitable. As it is an age that is pervaded by a sense of fear and uncertainty in the lives of the people, nations are biased about each other and are strongly inhabited by their own culture. Earl F. Bargainnier in his Book *The Gentle Art of Murder* says:

“Snobbery and narrow chauvinism, even xenophobia, have been called characteristics of the interwar English upper classes, and the detective fiction of the period has been accused of fostering those attitudes” (33).

Agatha Christie belongs to the English upper middle class, and the world of this class forms the social scene of her fiction. In her novels she has avoided what she had not experienced and once claims:

“I could never manage miners talking in pubs because I don’t know what miners talk about in pubs” (30).

Therefore Christie does not write about miners in pubs but about the class and social world in which she has experienced. At certain point of time her novels can be examined as a study of class structure. In Christie’s fiction crime is committed by characters who belong to the middle class. Criminals in her novel are not the conventional criminals who are harassed men, gangs, smugglers, vagabond. Where the criminals of the seventeenth century were harassed men, ill-faced, quick to act, quick to anger, seasonal criminals in the eighteenth century were sly cunning, sly, calculating criminals who were on the fringe of society (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 75). Foucault also stresses:

“The misery of the people and the corruption of morals have increased the number of crimes and convicted criminals” (77).

The statement also stresses upon the decline of morality, which subsequently highlight that society is in transition with the passage of time. As social values changes during her life time, moral values do change rapidly. She has never discarded those concepts of right and wrong, which she had been taught as a child. As a consequence, fear of and for the modern world along with nostalgia for the earlier, simpler and construction of “more

moral” society and distrust of modern youth is a conspicuously thread that runs along her novels. The violence of the war and the increase in actual violence along with the change of moral standard fills Christie with dread (Bargainnier 194).

Christie has been conscious in handling her character. The affirmation of life and the protection of the innocent remains a prevalent theme in her novels. Christie denotes that one of the most rewarding forms of detective fiction is its accommodation of “passion”. According to her, detective fiction has a kind of “passion” behind it and the “passion” implies the protection of the innocence. For her, innocence matters and not the guilt. The detective task in her novels is to answer the question of who among them is the guilty party and it is the onus of the detective to save the innocent from the shadow of guilt (193).

John Scaggs in his book *Crime Fiction* (2005) contends that the development of police forces around the world from the beginning of the nineteenth century, which was in fact a clear reaction to the increasing number of crimes, is the result of post enlightenment thought. He further stresses the belief that the application of the power of reason would lead to truth and the search for truth was considered to be integral to the improvement of human life (18). The concept of truth according to Foucault has been imposed by power and holds a firm perception that the world is not the accomplice of human knowledge. Michel Foucault in his book *Discipline and Punish* describes the nature of justice as well as penal operation which has taken extra judicial elements. Foucault says:

Today, criminal justice functions and justifies itself only by this perpetual reference to something other than itself, by this unceasing reinscription in non-judicial systems. Its fate is to be redefined by knowledge (22).

Foucault’s approach between law, criminal justice and power challenges the the manner in which power was perceived. The statement further can be associated with the

aspect of justice which Christie has repeatedly denoted in her novels. In Christie's novels there is a conspicuous absence of legal punishment which at times is at odd. The absence of legal punishment makes it easy to assume that law and the system of legal punishment are invariably given, that is constructed and can be altered. The concept of justice serves to hold a pivotal position in Christie's novel where the entire idea of criminal justice is debunked by the detective and his authoritative voice serves as a final conclusion for justice. In her novels death is often portrayed to be a preferable option, which is more appealing and sympathetic, and which eventually provides meaning to an individual.

Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, which was published in 1926 by Harper Collins Publishers, is set in a small village called King Abbot in which Christie has employed rural settings which provided opportunity for the detective to investigate the crime consistently. The novel is a departure from conventional detective novel in terms of settings and characters. In conventional detective novel the criminals are usually harassed men, gangs, smugglers, vagabond and people who belong to the lower strata of society. In this novel however, characters who are involved in crime belong to the middle class society. An enormous controversy rests on the subject of money and the power of money is acutely felt by almost all the characters. The involvement of money reaches its peak and is heightened because money is associated with power and authority. The story and tragic life of the Parlour maid Ursula narrated in chapter 22 under the title "Ursula's Story" demonstrates the importance of money. Money becomes so powerful that it sets a hierarchy between Ursula and Ralph Paton. Both of them have to conceal their marriage as they belong to different classes and are aware that their marriage will not be approved by Roger Ackroyd. The narrator of the novel says "Roger was always a queer chap about money" (287). Ursula Bourne is from an impoverished Irish family who has to earn her living. Being an untrained girl the only job that is available to her is to become either a nursery governess or

job of a Palour maid. Their love affair ends up in a secret marriage because the power of money has constructed a sense of hierarchy which in turn creates distance. So, in the novel the power vested in money has extended its territory in various aspects and further becomes a sociological tool to create power.

The issue of death in the novel acts as a generating force in order to understand the law, nature of crime and punishment. In the novel death is portrayed to be a preferable option which is more appealing and sympathetic. The existentialist concept of death is applicable in the novel because death provides meaning to an individual. Mrs. Ferrars has committed suicide because of her fear of publicity. She chooses death so that the whole secret would be revealed and prefers to die as it is “the only road open to her” (62). Her life is tormented by her blackmailer and has hindered her from creating an identity. Her inability to face reality by choosing death and her fear of publicity that she poisons her husband makes her a tragic figure. The last chapter of the novel remains a debatable issue as far as death is concerned. Dr Sheppard says:

“My greatest fear all through has been Caroline..... Well, she will never know the truth. There is, as Poirot said, one way out... My death will be a grief to her, but grief passes...” (368).

The teasing phrase “one way out” has a hidden meaning because it denotes death which becomes more preferable rather than to suffer in public. The “one way out” as the narrator says will be managed between Poirot and Inspector Ralgan. Dr. Sheppard like the other characters prefers to die quietly. Therefore, at the climax of the novel the murderer prefers to die by taking Veronal like Mrs. Ferrars and hopes to get justice through death.

Earnest Mandel stresses that crime story is intertwined with the development of modern industrial society. According to him “bourgeoisie society is an of itself breeds crime,

originates in crime and leads to crime, perhaps because bourgeoisie is when all is said and done a criminal society” (Saar 152). The statement becomes debatable and crucial because majority of the characters belong to the middle class who are snobbish in their behavior and have a high aspiration for wealth. So, in the novel crime takes place within the bourgeoisie family which makes the novel a microcosm of the bourgeoisie world order. Drugs and alcohol are consumed by a majority of the characters which leads to their destiny and makes them commit heinous crimes. They are portrayed to be victims of alcohol and drug excess. Ashley Ferrars has been a drunkard for many years before he died, Mrs. Ferrars has been a confirmed drug taker for years and dies of an overdose of veronal, Parker’s former master Mr. Ellerby is addicted to drugs and is known to have been involved in crime and smuggling of cocaine. The relevance of smuggling is also denoted in “Daily Budget” one week before Mrs. Ferrars’s death. *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* can be interpreted as a novel, which depicts the world of the bourgeoisie and their association with crime.

Being a writer with a conscience Agatha Christie does not confine her novel by subscribing only to a particular theme. She has also embedded the question of the position of women in society. In the novel, women are stereotyped as having similar qualities who do not possess any kind of wit. According to Dr. Sheppard Flora’s fascination with George Eliot’s *The Mill on the Floss* becomes absurd and “out of date stuff” (49). He further confesses that what women read and profess to enjoy frightens him. As the plot of the novel progress within the process of investigation, Poirot blatantly utters and stereotyped women when he says:

“Women observe subconsciously a thousand little details, without knowing that they are doing so. Their subconscious mind adds these little things together - and they call the result intuition. Me, I am very skilled in psychology. I know these things” (195).

Poirot's opinion and attitude towards women is reflected when he boldly asserts his archetypal view on women from his personal observation based on psychology. Christie does not feel hesitant in portraying the flaws of society because she is a realistic writer who does not adhere to abstract ideas. Michel Foucault in his work *The History of Sexuality* deliberated immensely on the issues of power and the nature and workings of power. According to him, everything is vested in the concept of power that has a particular aspect and dynamic. At the same time according to Foucault, power can be repressive as well as liberating. Poirot exercises his power on women and stereotyped them as being inferior beings who form absurd ideas and conclusions that are not appropriate.

Aristotle's *Poetics* emphasizes deliberately on the nature and concept of tragedy which is applicable in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. Aristotle defines the nature of tragedy:

A tragedy then is the imitation of an action that is serious and also having magnitude complete in itself; with language with pleasurable accessories... with incidents arousing pity and fear where with to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions. (Abrams and Harpham, 315).

The term catharsis implies a sudden purge of emotion which is an important element in tragedy. In the novel the mind and emotion of the readers is cultivated in administering and finding the criminal. The murderer is the least likely suspect as readers have already pre conceived criminals at the back of their mind. It is the revelation of the criminal that causes a sudden purge of emotion. Besides, the cathartic effect in the novel is heightened when the unexpected and hidden secrets are revealed. Mrs. Russel's revelation that Charles Kent is her son, evokes pity to the readers and produces a cathartic effect.

Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* was published in 1934 by Harper Collins Publishers. The setting of the novel takes place inside a moving train that runs across Europe.

In the novel characters differ and are from various nationalities, age and social background. There are Belgian, American, German, Italian, English, Russian, Hungarian as well as Swedish protagonists. The setting of the novel is an unconventional murder scene which usually occurs in some obscure corner of a house or other isolated places. The setting of the novel taking place inside the train also signifies that the murder was already preplanned beforehand. It also makes it conspicuous that it is not a sudden or random act because the criminals who are involved in the crime are all connected to the victim's family and are striving to seek for justice. The novel is divided into three parts, the first part of the novel contains eight chapters, the second part contains fifteen chapters and the last part contains nine chapters. Ratchett is an American citizen who has kidnapped a three years old heiress Daisy Armstrong and he eventually kills the child despite collecting the ransom from the wealthy Armstrong family. Although he is arrested for six months he escapes, facilitated with the wealth he possesses:

“But by means of the enormous wealth he had piled up and by the secret hold he had over various person, he was acquitted on some technical inaccuracy” (97).

Ratchett, formerly Cassetti changes his name and goes to travel with his money. The insufficiency of law and judicial system is put to question by the author where the demand for justice becomes the primary goal of the murderers. Princess Dragomiroff who is Sonia Armstrong's god mother expresses her intense desire for justice to Poirot:

“In this case I consider that justice, strict justice has been done” (300).

The novel constantly questions the role of the jury and system of self appointed jury. There is a question why Princess Dragomiroff says “strict justice” has to be generated. Poirot's conversation with Antonio Foscarelli who is a car sales man based in Chicago and is Armstrong's family chauffeur is significant in matters related to justice. He willingly admits

that his reasons for lying are firstly business reason; secondly, he does not have a firm faith in Yugoslav police as they hate Italians. At the same time he assumes that the Yugoslav police would not give him justice. The concept of justice as deemed by the author becomes an important phenomenon and remains the central subject of the novel.

Imagery as an important literary tool plays a significant role in the novel but the imagery which Christie has deliberated upon is grotesque in nature. The use of grotesque imagery lends the readers to come across certain kinds of clues and assumptions. At the outset of the novel the description and impression of Mr. Ratchett is grotesque when Poirot stated his impression to Mr. M. Bouc:

“I had a curious impression. It was as though a wild animals- an animal savage, but savage! you understand- had passed me by...I could not rid myself of the impression that the evil had passed me by very close” (29).

The use of the terms “savage” and “wild animals” by Poirot to express his unpleasant impression is strange, bizarre and is out of ordinary. Through the use of grotesque imagery the author foreshadows what is going to happen later in the book. The physical description of Princess Dragomiroff is described by M. Bouc as being “ugly as sin” (40) and the tall woman Greta Ohlsson in a plaid blouse and tweet skirt is described to have “an amiable face rather like a sheep”(40). The grotesque use of the human body becomes a significant theme in the novel and has in fact, become an instrumental touchstone for judging a person’s personality and psyche. Poirot himself is extremely conscious of the appearance of Ratchett who according to him resembles wild animals. He thereby blatantly rejects Ratchett’s profuse proposal to take up his case and instead confesses that he does not like the face of Ratchett.

Death on the Nile published in 1937 revolves around the theme of colonialism, consumer capitalism, and Englishness in which a party of upper class English and American

tourist on a Nile river boat assemble together (Rowland 73). In the novel no spontaneous crime is committed on the spur of the moment. On the contrary it is carefully planned and accurately timed with all the details meticulously worked out beforehand. The plot of the novel is confined inside a moving steamer and the murder itself takes place inside the moving boat. In Christie's *Death on the Nile* the plot of the novel encapsulates a wide variety of themes ranging from identity, capitalism, human relationships, money, love, and greed. Christie in her foreword to the novel says:

Death on the Nile was written after coming back from a winter in Egypt. When I read it now I feel myself back again on the steamer from Assuan to Wadi Halfa. There were quite a number of passengers on board, but the ones in this book travelled in my mind and became increasingly real to me- in the setting of the Nile steamer. The book has a lot of characters and a very elaborately worked out plot. I think the central situation is intriguing and has dramatic possibilities, and the three characters, Simon, Linnet and Jacqueline, seem to me to be real and alive... I think myself that the book is one of the best of my 'foreign travel' ones, and if detective stories are 'escape literature' (and shouldn't they be!) the reader can escape to sunny skies and blue water as well as to crime in the confines of an armchair (5).

In *Death on the Nile* similarly like the other two novels mentioned earlier, there are characters who feature from various nationalities ranging from French, Italian, American including central Europe. In keeping with the usual motives for murder in Christie's novel, money, fear and revenge dominate. Additionally, in this novel the murderers are often motivated by love and passion and money is by and large the most common motive for murder. In the novel the main cause of crime occurs because of obsession with money as Poirot claims:

“Most frequent- money. That is to say, gain in its various ramifications. Then there is revenge- and love, and fear, and pure hate and beneficence” (112).

There are a number of paradoxes in the novel namely good and evil, life and death, love and hatred, freewill and dictates of cause and effect. The novel explores the disintegration and transmutation of not only the passionate relationship but also the whole world and its values. The concept of evil is represented and committed under the veneer of both the paradoxical concept of love and hatred which is evident in the case of Jacqueline de Bellefort and Simon Doyle. As in most of her novels, many of the characters in *Death on the Nile* are upper-class and well-off, and the murderers are driven by both passion and ambition. As the complex plot develops, the reader is provided with clues to the crimes through the description of the characters' actions and points of view. The novel explores how lives are driven by jealousy, love, ambition, arrogance, faithfulness and unfaithfulness, frustration or boredom. Each character has a personal history that affects his or her behaviour and decisions and the story is full of possible motives for murder, which makes the plot rich, intriguing and extremely complex.

The process of investigation in the novel takes place in the form of interviews that are accompanied by psychological observation. Poirot says:

“I must interview all the passengers. Until we have got their stories it would be unwise to form theories” (214)

So for Poirot, the immediate and safest way of formulating theory is to interview all his passengers so that he could abstain himself from implementing false theories and conclusion. Besides, the job of interviewing the passengers crystallized his perception and lends him to invigorate critical power in order to established reality that is rooted behind.

Psychology according to Poirot is an effective form of analyzing human mind and remains an important trajectory in solving crime. As he says to Linnet:

“And that is why the feeling that you have deliberately caused injury to someone upsets you so much, and why you are so reluctant to admit the fact. Pardon me if I have been impertinent, but the psychology, it is the most important fact in the case” (82).

Poirot's method of investigation which is based solely on psychological observation and interview necessitates the criminal to confess before him. At the climax of the novel when confronted, Simon and Jacqueline confess. Jacqueline denotes that she and Simon have always been in love, and that Simon never cared for Linnet. The entire marriage had been an act in order that Simon would inherit her money. They declare that after a suitable mourning period, they would appear to reconcile and eventually marry. Jacqueline tells Poirot it is Simon's idea to murder Linnet but that she has planned it, because she knows that Simon is not astute enough to administer it by himself.

The novel stands as a depiction of the marginality of the police force, their conspicuous absence and their insufficient process of investigating crime and criminal is highlighted. Linnet has been brought up to believe that every annoyance can be automatically referred to the police, but according to Hercule Poirot it is something which is impossible. Later, as the plot of the novel progresses Poirot contends:

I have reflected, and my reason tells me that is so. Those pearls, Monsieur Allerton, are concealed in a rosary that hangs in your cabin. The beads of it are elaborately carved. I think you had it made specially. Those beads unscrew, though you would never think so to look at them. Inside each is a pearl, stuck

with Seccotine. Most police searchers respect religious symbols unless there is something obviously queer about them (368).

An enormous subject rests on the subject of the police process of investigating crime and the private detective's astute process of handling crime. In stating this, it is discernible that the police do not perform any preventive function against crime. Moreover, the statement seems to demonstrate that policing is related more to the archaic sense of the world that is the regulation and control of community, rather than being solely concerned with crime.

Deborah Cohen in her essay "Who Was Who? Race and Jews in the Turn of the Century Britain" describes the meaning of race as "category commonly been understood as a response of difference". In Christie's novels the issue of race has been explored by her enormously and it is discernible in the three works selected for the dissertation. The term "foreign" for instance, frequently occurs in *Murder on the Orient Express* in the course of the investigation. The passengers pretend to be extremely prejudiced against people from other countries. At certain points of time passengers stereotype themselves according to the country they belong. Antonio Foscarelli, an Italian expresses his strong dislike for the English and labels John Bull who shares his compartment as a miserable person although they do not communicate much. He has interpreted the English as a "miserable race" (193) who are not sympathetic. M. Bouc stereotyped Italians as a race who are "great liars" (193) and confesses that he does not like Italians. Though *Murder on the Orient Express* is set in a train running across Europe, America plays a central role in the novel. The Armstrong household who lived in America is recreated in *Murder on the Orient Express*. Mrs. Hubbard whose real name is Linda Arden feels that there is nothing like education. She inhabits a firm perception that there is a need to apply Western ideas and teach the East to recognize them. It is her maiden journey to the East as the narrator states and "thought of the Turks and their Slipshod ways and the conditions of their road" (50). The Europeans have contaminated opinions

about the Americans and the Americans have contaminated opinion about the Europeans. From the race stereotype which has been practiced Poirot is able to collect clues from Colonel Arbuthnot and Miss Debenham who pretend to have no intimacy. Poirot is aware that Englishmen of Colonel's type would not rush things and would advance slowly even when it comes to love. Colonel Arbuthnot who is known to be an unapproachable man directly addressing Miss Debenham as Mary which is her first name and this has aroused suspicion on the detective because the Colonel is supposed to have met her the previous day only. During the process of investigation Poirot's proclamation of "Anglo Saxon brain" becomes an important phrase. According to him, the crime that occurs in the train is a different kind of crime which is carefully planned and staged and calls it far sighted "long headed crime" (193). Since it is a crime that shows traces of cool, resourceful, deliberate brain he perceives it to be the outcome of an "Anglo Saxon brain"(193).

Chris Barker in his book *Cultural Studies* denotes:

Stereotyping commonly involves the attribution of negative traits to a person who are different from us. This points to the operation of power in the process of stereotyping and its role in the exclusion of others from the social, symbolic and moral order (264).

Therefore stereotyping becomes an oppressive form of situating power and it is an important discourse in fixing meaning. It is a powerful strategy that vacillates between what is already in place, already known and something that must be repeated. Stereotyping is a form of power in Christie's novels and it has helped to establish xenophobia, cultural clash and exclusion. Subsequently, in Christie's novels stereotypes essentialises and fixes difference it also establishes characters who are addressed as "foreign" depicted to be the perpetrators of crime.

Susan Rowland in her book *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell* denotes that Golden age writers lived and wrote in racist society. Characters in Agatha Christie make unchallenged racist comments. Xenophobia that is arguably a part of everyday life all around the world is the disintegration of individuals or groups based on perceived differences. So it basically means the implacable result of individual's categorization of the world to which they belong (Hjerm 335). The presence of xenophobic attitude is reflected in Christie's novels from the manner in which characters make comments and remarks about their own specific regions and the pride they possess in the same.

Christie's works has succeeded in highlighting issues and concepts which are debatable, crucial and contemporary. In her novels she has succeeded in portraying the dynamics of power by highlighting the significance through the detective, and its coercive nature which is represented in the form of crime. Most importantly the nature in which it has established the fixity of meaning, has been the dynamics in which the dissertation will be situated.

The aspect of power is central and significant to the narrative and the fact that her works have been narrated through the projection of power is noteworthy. Christie's works selected for study impressively imposed upon it a memorable and unique dynamics of power from the social, cultural, racial and political perspectives. The plot of her novels proceeds through a series of mysterious events, including scenes of violence, rage and fear that are often the physical consequences of emotional brutalization. She has embedded an anguished world out of which the crime arises. She has succeeded in locating the intellectual games with highly absorbing puzzle and supplies the details from her own experience and imagination. It is the playful application of scholarly knowledge and verbal virtuosity that ultimately makes Christie's huge body of detective fiction unique.

This chapter will overlay a brief history of the detective novel by highlighting when it was first articulated. It will analyze the significance of the detective novel in literature. The chapter will convey a detailed analysis of the relationship between crime and media by expanding on the mechanism of the media in the orientation of crime. The contribution of crime literature in representing the nature of crime will be stressed upon. An important subject and widely discussed topic of gender stereotyping will be demonstrated in order to give the patterns of shaping women's crime. The uniqueness and the role of detective will be denoted by drawing comparison from the legal system adhering to Foucauldian theoretical paradigm. The detective's different modes of investigating crime will be analyzed from three perspectives namely technical, historical and ideological mode. The incompetence of the police and the powerfulness of the detective will be stressed by juxtaposing the detective's procedure of investigating crime and the police procedure of handling crime.

The detective novel is a genre of literature that deals with crime, which is subsequently followed by investigation, and the revelation of the criminal. It has contributed immensely for the growth and development of literature. It has served as a text that has depicted the consequence of crime and therefore discouraged others from criminal activities by suggesting that crime is not only rampant but is containable in society. In detective novel, the main protagonist of the novel is the private detective who serves as a private eye. Characters in a detective novel pin their hope upon the detective while hoping to get justice and began to focus solely on the detective in order to locate the perpetrator of crime. The genre serves as a trajectory in mirroring society. Most of the incidents and motifs that are portrayed in Christie's novels are the kind of events that are undergone and experienced in every society. Apart from the crime committed, the presence of mystery and suspense has gripped the reader's imagination but inversely served as a distinguishing feature of the genre. The genre serves not only in terms of entertaining the readers but it has equipped the readers

to police the present scenario of the society and it has become a profound social document.

Stephen Knight in his book *The Art of Murder* claims:

The vast majority of detective, and indeed crime, stories written in the nineteenth century did not appear in book form, but in the pages of the elusive magazine and regularly appearing newspaper. This is the sea in which the detectives are born and first swim. (Worthington 1).

Heather Worthington in her book *The Rise of the Detective in Early Nineteenth-Century Popular Fiction* gives an account of detective fiction. In it, she stresses that criminal narratives have existed throughout history and has reached new heights of popularity at the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century. She goes on affirming that it is in the popular literature of the first half of the nineteenth century a multiple number of patterns and themes of the later full-fledged genre of crime fiction were first articulated (1). She argues:

Crime fiction has its origin, as the broadcast and periodical stories vary and develop the patterns found in the *Accounts* of the Ordinary of Newgate and in the *Newgate Calendars*. In the eighteenth century, and well into the nineteenth century, narratives of the crime offering details of the criminal, the crime, the confession, and the consequent punishment most commonly appeared in the broadsides: cheap, single sheets of paper printed on one side only and available to a wide and socially disparate audience. The Ordinary of Newgate's *Account* told stories similar to those found in the broadsides, but were written at a slightly higher intellectual level, were more lengthy and complex in their account, and were more expensive, a factor which reduced their audience concomitantly. Over time, the *Accounts* coalesced into what

became known as the *Newgate Calendars*---- book-length collections of this criminographic material (2).

Agatha Christie's detective novels encapsulate the significance of the detective novel by criticizing materialism, the injustice of the social and political system, the corruption and incompetence of the police and the social structure in which women's crime is defined. Christie's novels have highlighted the patterns of shaping women's crime, which has a stark difference from the crime that is committed by men. In her novels, she has given an astute representation of the manner in which women are stereotyped. The stereotypes do not represent or misrepresent gendered identities but work to construct and structure the meaning of gender. Women's crimes in her novels are associated with robbery, forgery and deception. Turning to the female characters in the novel, a sharp contrast is drawn which is apparent in the sphere of action and their positions within the narrative. The binaries of activity are also depicted by the authors in the selected novels.

In *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926) there are a number of women characters who are involved in crime. Besides their involvement in crime, they are stereotyped as having common qualities. Women criminals are depicted to bear common trait when Mrs. Gannet, in the above mentioned novel says:

“I've just been reading a book from the library about the under world of Paris and it says that some of the worst criminals are young girls with the faces of angels” (237).

Mrs. Gannet's conclusion on the nature of women criminals based on her readings sounds absurd and baseless. She thinks that since Flora Ackroyd is a charming girl and is the last one to see her deceased uncle alive. She unhesitatingly compares her with the kind of criminals in Paris from her readings. She fails to realize that the story she has read is a thing that has happened in France which cannot be compared with the incident which took place in

King Abbot. Her statement is directly the outcome of a social construct, which is theorized. The statement is another matter that makes the readers wonder upon how gender specific character are fashioned.

Whereas in *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934) the patterns of shaping crime takes a different turn. The established view of men's crime and women's crime is stressed:

Well, to give you an example- we find a woman's handkerchief. Did a woman drop it? Or did a man, committing the crime, say to himself "I will make this look like a woman's crime. I will stab my enemy an unnecessary number of times, making some of the blows feeble and ineffective, and I will drop this handkerchief where no one can miss it". That is one possibility. Then there is another. Did a woman kill him and did she deliberately drop a pipe cleaner to make it look like a man's work? (89)

From the examples cited by Hercule Poirot in attempting to gather clues, he highlights the difference between women's crime and men's crime. Surprisingly, the varieties of the two sexes are determined through the handkerchief and pipe cleaner. Moreover, the passage mentioned above demonstrates how gender relations shape the patterns of men and women's crime. It is conspicuous from the quotation that the "feeble and ineffective blows" on the deceased body will be the apparent clue to make it look like a crime committed by a woman. Although it appears trivial, the example reflects a different male and female social behavior and conduct and is indeed stereotypic assumptions of female behavior. In juxtaposing male and female crime, the novel has succeeded in bringing gender difference in crime by raising questions about how gender organizes the discipline of criminology and the behavior of men and women.

In *Death on the Nile* (1937) Christie has wielded an uncompromising approach formulated towards women's crime. The novel follows a long process of investigation under

the supervision of Hercule Poirot. In between, the conversation the subject of crime is discussed which yield obnoxious remarks on Jacqueline:

“*The crime passionel!...* The primitive instinct to kill! So closely allied to the sex instinct. That girl Jacqueline, half Latin, hot blooded, obeying the deepest instincts of her being, stealing forth, revolver in hand” (245).

The unacceptable distinctive approach that has been conveyed in the novel needs to be questioned and re- examined because an instinctive desire to kill has not been derived from biological sex difference. At the very outset of the novel, the narrative of the novel specifically mentions the account of Jacqueline de Bellefort. She is an old friend of Linnet Ridgeway and they were together at a convent in Paris. She faces the most terrible bad luck. She and her mother had been deserted by her father, and in the meantime her mother had lost all her money. She lives a life of impoverishment and is in a destitute state. It is rather her acute desire for money and her wretched condition which has prompted her to initiate an outrageous crime. The association of criminal behavior with sexual instinct put women’s issues in a narrow sense that shows the absence of empirical inquiry. By and large Jacqueline’s crime is predominantly the crime of the powerless which is not formed by her sexual instinct.

In her book *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell* (2001), Susan Rowland argues that crime fiction is the other, of the powers of legal institutions to represent crime to the culture. She stresses that crime fiction crucially subverts the culturally authoritative texts of the law and claims that there is more to crime than the institutionalized stories which are told in courts and police stations (17). The characteristics of crime fiction are discernible in this statement. Unlike the legal system which sees criminality, crime fiction documents not only the criminals. It harbors effortlessly in examining the criminal motives, action and lives that

is not documented and represented in the legal system. In *Murder on the Orient Express* the author has attempted to bring forth the fabricated identity of the criminal and the crime. Most importantly she has succeeded in portraying the concept of organized crime and the implication of cultivating organized crime. In the novel, the crime that is committed is coordinated and skillfully planned. Without any further procrastination, the plot of the novel ponders straightforwardly on the motives of the murder instead of adhering to the legal system. The intention of murdering Ratchett by the Armstrong family's kin proves reasonable and is indeed necessary. The criminals in the novel are fuelled with anger and resentment as they are devoid of justice. When asked Helena says:

“Surely, M. Poirot, you can guess my reason. This man who was killed is the man who murdered my baby niece, who killed my sister, who broke my brother-in-law's heart. Three of the people I loved best and who made up my home- My world” (291).

The tragic situation represented in the novel has a double significance. The murder of Ratchett is bizarre, at the same time it reflects the injustice that pervades the family. Helena and her husband the count, who both have connections with the Armstrong family prompt Poirot to consider their case passionately. In expressing the main motive for murder the Count expresses their fear and their strong dislike for the police. The count is aware that since his wife is connected with the Armstrong family, she could have been immediately suspected and would have been questioned and arrested. Their refusal to approach the police and their insinuation to take part in the murder in order to seek justice depicts the different world order of the police and the stories that are depicted in crime fiction. Although crime fiction is considered to be a fiction that represents the fictitious ideas of the author that is inappropriate to compare with the reality of the world, it has succeeded in portraying realistic issues that are not portrayed anywhere else. The fictional narratives of the characters and the fictional investigations of the detective are equally treated as a kind of professional investigation.

In Christie's crime fiction there is an absence of execution and punishment, but investigation has become an important phenomenon with the exclusion of intervention of the crowd. In the newly developed literature, the account of execution becomes the account of investigation and it has parted from confession to the intellectual struggle between criminal and investigator. The new genre terminates heroes and execution, and the criminal is wicked and at the same time intelligent too and although he is punished he does not have to suffer. (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 69). In Christie's detective novel the intellectual struggle between the detective and the criminal draws the attention of her readers. Dr. Sheppard in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926) is trusted by everyone in the village as he is a doctor. He never once thought that Poirot would discover his crime. At the climax of the novel, he claims:

“I mean it to be published some days as the history of one of Poirot's failures! Odd, how things pan out” (365).

Although Poirot and Sheppard investigate the crime together, Dr. Sheppard is incapable of comprehending Poirot's little grey cells. His intention to surpass Poirot, assisted, by his medical knowledge turns in vain which brings a drastic shock for him.

In *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934) to confuse the investigation, a “red herring” is drawn across the trail. All the passengers in the train intend to stay away from suspicion by fabricating their identity and employ their own hints and insinuations. Poirot intellectually claims that the dagger could be used by everyone, whether strong or weak. He boldly asserts that it is impossible and unlikely for so many people who are connected with the Armstrong family travelling by the same train. According to him it is not a coincidence, the passengers design everything previously. He recalls Colonel Arbuthnot's remarks about trial by justice

which comprise twelve people, and there are twelve passengers and Ratchett is stabbed twelve times. To conclude the intellectual struggle he stated:

“Now there was one further point to consider. Allowing that my theory of the crime was the correct one, and I believe it must be the correct one” (342).

The passengers in the train astutely schemed their crime to triumph, but could not challenge the logical investigation made out by Poirot.

In *Death on the Nile* (1937), the investigation proceeds in an intellectual manner, Poirot collects each and every characters' behavior, gestures and speech. Although Jacqueline de Bellefort and Simon have launched heinous crime accompanied by preliminary planning Poirot utters the truth when he says:

And it was wrong! This was no spontaneous crime committed on the spur of the moment. It was, on the contrary, very carefully planned and accurately timed, with all the details meticulously worked out beforehand, even to the drugging of Hercule Poirot's bottle of wine on the night in question (388).

Simon Doyle and Jacqueline de Bellefort's lies and deceits are revealed by Poirot with his own intellectual observation. And the conclusion brought out by the detective is “enough proof for logical mind” (402). In this manner the three works of Agatha Christie denoted earlier have demonstrated that crime fiction is not a form of popular expression nor is it normalizing propaganda but it is the space in which the two investigations of penal practice met.

“Crime, like an economic recession, a lack of affordable housing, or inadequate health care, is experienced as both a private trouble and a public issue” (Sacco 142). The significance and vastness of crime fiction can be grasped in the manner in which Christie has

highlighted the relationship between crime and media. The relationship between crime and media has long been a matter of recurrent controversy. It has grown out of a broader concern with the development of popular daily press. Media is central to the interplay between an individual's private troubles with crime and the social issue of crime. The news media, in particular, provide an important forum in which private troubles are selectively gathered up, invested with a broader meaning, and made available for public consumption (Sacco 142).

Richard V. Ericson exclaims:

The mass media provide direct assistance to the police both in particular circumstances and on an institutionalized basis. In particular circumstances the mass media communicate police warnings about emergency situations, and help the police by asking the public for information about suspects, missing persons, and events they may have witnessed. On an institutionalized basis the mass media publish major news occurrence reports fed to them by police (223).

Fear of publicity has been one of the most prominent characters of Poirot. Although he possesses the authority and freedom to investigate crime based on his "little grey cells" he has confessed his ardent dislike for publicity:

I have intended to take up the case again. Above all things, I have the horror of publicity. I must beg, that in case of my being able to contribute something to the solution of the mystery, my name may not be mentioned" (*The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, 107).

Poirot's statement in deliberating his horror of publicity provides doubts and curiosity. He seems to have expressed that he is an isolated hero who is inclined to establish truth, free the innocent and condemn the guilt without the acknowledgement of the public.

Publicity does not bother him in the least, because his main intention is to solve crime without the aid of recognition.

In *Murder on the Orient Express* Christie depicts the affiliation between crime and media. In the novel the dramatic value of crime that is represented by media is heightened:

There must be some rescue work in progress. They are slow in these countries... it is hours before anyone thinks of doing anything. And the police of these countries, they will be most trying to deal- puffed up with importance, touchy, on their dignity. They will make a grand affair of all this. It is not often that such a chance comes their way. It will be in all the newspaper (276).

Media representation is the crucial moment in the formulation of public discourse concerning crime. Besides, they are the culminate result of the strategies and practices deployed by sources and media personnel and is the pathway by which audiences make conclusion (Schlesinger, Tumbler, Murdock 400). In the novel, it is clear that crime has been one of the most debated issues in the field of media. It is apparent from the passage that the function of the police is prominently featured, despite their inability in performing rescue work. The novel stands as an important forum for critiquing the politics of the media. Despite their ceaseless effort to solve the criminal, Poirot and his companions are in a dilemma because although the police are facile in rescuing work, their dignity will be featured abundantly in the newspaper.

In *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926) the insufficiency of mass media as a contributory factor in depicting crime and deviant behavior is stressed when Poirot says:

“Newspaper paragraphs are not always true...The truth is what we need to know”
(314).

Poirot is keenly aware that it is futile to depend on newspapers and prefers to stick to the truth by using his personal methods. Being an experienced man in the orientation of crime, Poirot has dismissed the knowledge provided by the media because he is aware that mass media has the power to transmit distorted information. Poirot assures that the nature of the coverage can be altered, framed and filtered. The boundary that exists between representation and truth is stressed by Christie in the novel which makes it discernible that newspapers provide only sparse details about victims and offenders. At the same time, the novel makes it clear that media cannot be considered as the foundation of truth. The local newspaper in the novel denotes that Ralph Paton has been arrested, as he is one of the suspects. Flora Ackroyd feels that it is useless to proceed the investigation as the newspaper has already contextualized crime report which will shape public consciousness.

In *Death on the Nile* (1937), the author has given an extract from the social column of the *Daily Blague*:

Among those supping at Chez Ma Tante I noticed beautiful Linnet Ridgeway, She was with the Hon. Joanna Southwood, Lord Windlesham and Mr Toby Byrce, Miss Ridgeway, as everyone knows, is the daughter of Melhuish Ridgeway who married Anna Hartz. She inherits from her grandfather, Leopard Hartz, an immense fortune. The lovely Linnet is the sensation of the moment and it is rumored that an engagement may be announced shortly. Certainly Lord Windlesham seemed very epris!! (11).

Mass media is an ideological apparatus that maintains class formation (Ericson 221). A critical reading of the extract denoted by the author assimilates that media becomes a powerful source to integrate the private world of the bourgeoisie in to the political order of social and public life. The column of the *Daily Bough* documents the immense fortune, which

Linnet Ridgeway inherited from her grandfather, which is considered to be a private affair. At the same time, the documentation of rumors about Linnet engagement by the columnist sounds odd and the news operates differently. The extract manifests that media exhibit the power to generate enforcement from the columnist's personal point of view, which is discernible from the way in which the columnist dramatized Linnet. Indirectly, he employs his technique to constitute and express authority and employs the column to generate his own knowledge including the rumors and further denote his capacity for action.

Central to the narrative of crime fiction is the detective, whose presence is the essence of the detective story. The word detective first appeared in 1843 which means "plain clothes policemen". With the passage of time, the meaning of detective has been widened and the second definition defines detective as "one whose occupation is to discover matters artfully concealed.... *Private detective*, one not belonging to the police force, who is in private capacity, or as attached to a detective agency or Bureau, undertakes similar services for persons employing him" (Bargainnier, *The Gentle Art of Murder* 41). According to Nicolas Blake:

"The detective is ... the Fairy God mother of the twentieth century of the folk myth, his magic capabilities only modified to the requirement of a would-be scientific and rational generation"(41).

Why do we need the detective? An in-depth analysis of detective fiction brings forth the role of detective and the contribution that has been to the society. Heather Worthington in her book *The Rise of the Detective in Early Nineteenth-Century Popular Fiction* claims:

The certainty afforded by a religious belief that has assumed an omnipotent and omniscient God would ensure justice and guarantee legitimate retribution was no longer sufficient in an increasingly rational and secular society. The

anxiety over circumstantial evidence which is apparent in the numerous articles and essays on the subject that appeared at the time indicates the perceived necessity for a better more reliable and preferably empirical system to establish guilt or innocence (71).

The statement emphasizes the ardent need for the creation of the private detective and calls for the re-evaluation of social values while assuring that the job of the detective is to vindicate the innocence and detect the guilt. In Christie's *Death on the Nile* the detective is firmly situated as the hero of the novel and his action ensure the investigation of the criminal. The novel has highlighted personal problem including matrimonial enquiries that can be supervised only by the detective. Besides exploring the crime that takes place in the river Nile the novel dwells extensively on private matters in which public encounter is excluded. In the novel, Poirot has succeeded in establishing guilt in the character of Jacqueline:

“No, it's no use being sentimental. I might do it again... I'm not a safe person any longer. I can feel myself....It's so dreadfully easy-killing people. And you begin to feel that it doesn't matter... that it's only you that matters! its dangerous” (403).

Jacqueline later commits suicide because she is incapable of carrying the guilt inside her. The formation of guilty feelings in a person according to Poirot is more humane in nature rather than execution. Therefore, his main intention is to structure guilty feelings that can be considered as an unbiased punishment. The detective's practical system makes Christie's readers discern that his verdict is neither violent not sexual in nature.

Christie's Poirot acts according to the interest and sentiment of the victim. In *Murder on the Orient Express*, the role and uniqueness of the detective is denoted and it incorporates the corruption of the police. Martin Gill and Jerry Hart in their essay *Exploring Investigative Policing: A Study of Private Detectives in Britain* claim:

The private investigator's role in a criminal defense is to verify the accuracy of the police evidence and attempt to locate witnesses or other sources of information which undermine the case of the prosecution. It is sometimes possible for a private investigator to obtain evidence which the police have not discovered because witness may be more prepared to talk to them (557).

So, the role of the detective is to explore the incompetency of the police acting as figure of personal authority while employing his intellect to conquer the chaos. In the novel, the Armstrong family's nursemaid, Sussane in America dies a tragic death:

The police were convinced that she had some knowledge of the crime. They refused to believe her hysterical denials. Finally in a fit of despair, the poor girl threw herself from the window and was killed. It was proved afterwards that she was absolutely innocent of any complicity in the crime (97).

The detective's methods of handling the crime and the police procedures of investigating the crime are totally different. In the novel, the nursemaid dies a tragic death in spite of her denials, and her voice is ignored by the police. The corruption of the police and their incompetence is demonstrated visibly when M. Bouc recollects the incident:

About six months later, the man Cassetti was arrested as the head of the gang who had kidnapped the child. They had used the same methods in the past. If the police seem likely to get on their trial, they had killed the prisoner, hidden the body, and continued to extract as much money as possible before the crime was discovered (97).

The tragic nature of detective fiction is brought out through the representation of crime and the character of the scapegoat. The scapegoat Susanne dies a tragic death because

the police focused only on the circumstantial evidence. She is wrongfully accused of involving in the crime and her denials are dismissed and unacknowledged and she eventually died.

In *Death on the Nile* the inaccuracy of the police is demonstrated when Poirot says:

“Most police searchers respect religious symbols unless there is something queer about them” (386).

In stating this Poirot attempts to state that circumstantial evidence cannot be perceived as a reliable fact and truth. It is often partly due to the presence and production of circumstantial evidence that the wrongful accusation of the innocent occurs. Besides, the statement makes it clear that possibility is not sufficient proof of criminality.

Being a unique figure who features in crime fiction, Christie's detective exhibits a unique process of inspecting crime. For Hercule Poirot, each and every piece of information whether seemingly trivial or consequential serves as an important trajectory in discovering the truth. The proceeding of the detective fiction can be divided into three categories namely technical mode, historical mode as well as ideological mode. Technical mode includes the external devices which makes the process of investigation easier and simple. The historical mode is a momentous mode for Poirot because without the narration of history any investigation is not possible. The historical mode is conducted in the form of interviews as well as face to face communication. Lastly, another prominent mode that Poirot employs is the ideological mode. The ideological mode comprised ideas, belief, intellectual analysis, logic including psychology. The three modes of investigation employed by Poirot facilitates in making his discovery ceremonial, licensed and authentic.

In *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* Poirot first and foremost step is to access critically the obvious evidence:

And the body was found- where?

As precisely as possible, I described Ackroyd's position. The arm-chair still stood in front of the fire.

Poirot went and sat down on it

The blue letter you speak of, where was it when you left the room?

Mr Ackroyd has laid it down on this table at the right hand

Poirot nodded

Except for that, everything was in its place?

Yes I think so

Colonel Merrose, would you be so extremely obliging as to sit down in this chair a minute. I thank you. Now M. le docteur, will you kindly indicate me to the exact position of the dagger? (110).

Poirot in interrogation through all these questions has attempted to collect evidence because every kind of object and their positioning supplements clue for him, which in turn posits the necessity for an expert and professional figure. Poirot wants his investigation succeeding each other in a neat and orderly manner and first forms an imaginary portrait of the murderer from the clues. In *Death on the Nile*, Poirot's primary clues and evidence solely rests on the technical mode. With the assistance of technical devices, Poirot is able to conclude his theory while concluding that the crime is not a chance; it is rather a design.

In *Murder on the Orient Express* the possibility has been foreseen and provided for the detective through the technical mode. For Poirot, the dented watch which was placed in Ratchett's pyjama pocket gives him a clue because it is an uncomfortable and unlikely place to keep one's watch especially as there is a watch hook provided just by the head of the bed. With the positioning of the watch he blatantly concluded that the watch has been deliberately placed in the pocket and faked, and also that the crime had not been committed at a quarter past ten.

Coming to the second method, historical modes provides an official account of the crime and criminals chronologically and consistently. Anne Hart in her book *The Life and Times of Hercule Poirot* states:

To discover the antecedents, the bona fides or otherwise of the people involve, there also began the tete a tetes the little gossips at which Poirot, retentive as blotting-paper was so adroit (275).

In the novel, history, gossip, belief and assumptions plays a vital role in shaping the consciousness of the characters. The narrator of the novel has given a descriptive account of King's Abbot and says:

Our village, King's Abbot is I imagine, very much like any other village. Our big town is Cranchester, nine miles away... Able – boiled men are apt to leave the place early in life, but we are rich in unmarried ladies and retired military officers. Our hobbies and recreations can be summed up in the one word, 'gossip' (17).

Poirot gathers most of his information and hints, from the conversation he has had with Caroline Sheppard. Both of them have established a firm relationship and Caroline

becomes an “imbecile nephew” (305). The history of the characters becomes a vital part of the investigation because without the narration of history, investigation cannot yield a fruitful result.

The importance of history is also demonstrated in *Death on the Nile*. It is undoubtedly true that a detective who does not have any connection with the criminal has to know the history and private life of a person. In one of the interviews in the novel, Andrew Pennington, who is Linnet’s American trustee, admits that he has been speculating upon Linnet’s fortune and he attempts to dupe her into signing legal documents that would exculpate him. He switches his plans when he realizes that Linnet is a shrewd woman who reads everything that she is asked to sign. He confesses that he had tried to kill her by dropping the boulder on her, which fails but he admits that he does not shoot her. The interview benefits the detective from making false theory, it provides him with another set of clues and these clues help him to move forward.

Murder on the Orient Express is a novel in which the past incident takes control of the present scenerio. Poirot pleads to Linda Arden:

“Yes. The reason for the murder lies in the past in that tragedy which broke up in your home and saddened your young life. Take me back into the past, Mademoiselle, that I may find there the link that explains the whole thing” (293).

The past had generated an enormous impact in matters that were related with crime. The history that remains concealed has significance because history always has a link with the present. By bring together the past and the present, Poirot tries to solve the crime so that truth might triumph and the innocent will be protected.

As far as ideological modes are concerned, psychology plays an important role which is the storehouse of knowledge according to the detective. The works of Agatha Christie which have been selected for the study advocated the importance of psychology for the detective which has been employed by him rather than scientific methods. Poirot says:

See you, my dear doctor, me, I am not the one to rely upon the expert procedure. It is the psychology I seek, not the fingerprint or the cigarette ash. But in the case I would welcome a little scientific assistance. This compartment is full of clues, but can I be sure that those clues are really what they seem to be? (*Murder on the Orient Express*, 89).

For Poirot, scientific assistance holds a secondary position when compared with psychology. In *Death on the Nile* he has also claimed that psychology is “the most important fact in the case” (82). Poirot is suspicious and he feels that it is futile to base his conclusion through scientific assistance. For him there is a possibility that scientific clues can be a form of deception that cannot be formulated as fact. Poirot in limiting his investigation of the criminal studies the behavior, speech, gesture, thoughts and reactions of the people. In *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* Poirot proudly says “I am very skilled in psychology” (195). Psychological observation like the other two novels assists the detective to distinguish between reality and intuition.

Michel Foucault, gives an intellectual account of crime and criminal. In his book *Power* Foucault stresses:

A paradoxical face: today one of the most solid roots of the death penalty is the modern, humanitarian, scientific principle that one must judge not crimes but criminals. It is economically less costly, intellectually less demanding, more gratifying for the judges, more reasonable in the view of the sober-

minded, and more satisfying for those keen on “understanding a man” than it is to establish the facts (433).

The establishment of truth has thus become an important obligation for the detective as well. It is the criminal not the crime that is needed for determining the sentence. The detective in Christie’s novels unlike the established institution, deviate away from various human sciences as well as established institution. Human sciences often take many years and several grouping efforts to determine who should be punished, how and whether punishing has a meaning and whether punishing is possible (434). So, thus unlike the regime of human sciences the implication of creating detective in Christie’s novels is to find out the truth. Truth always triumphs in Christie’s novel, Poirot declares:

“I mean to arrive at the truth. The truth however ugly in itself, is always curious and beautiful to the seeker after it” (*The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, 190).

Poirot’s passion is directed only upon finding the truth without public execution and torture. In Christie’s novels, the detective solves the crime without acquiring any ransom. He investigates the crime intellectually and consistently and separates the harmless lies from the vital ones. The uniqueness of the detective unlike the police and criminal justice system is obvious in the manner in which he relies on his skillful techniques and in terms of his focus on the criminal. He is destined by the author to discover the truth although it might be unattractive. Whereas in legal practice, Foucault felt that torture is embedded in order to reveal the truth and to show the workings of power through the body of the condemned:

If torture was so strongly embedded in legal practice, it was so because it revealed truth and showed the operation of power. It assured the articulation of the written on the oral, the secret on the public, the procedure of investigation

on the operation of the confession; it made it possible to reproduce the crime on the visible body of the criminal (*Discipline and Punish*, 55).

Torture is a part of a ceremony that reveals the truth of crime, strict judicial game, way of obtaining evidence, as well as a battle (41). The detective procedures of extracting truth and the legal system of extracting truth has become a distinguished trait that needs to be debated upon. The statement above has demonstrated that the horror of the crime by the criminal is synonymous with the horror that is imposed upon the legal system. Both of them are one side of the same coin, the former depicting the external crime and the latter depicting the internal dynamics of crime. Poirot's omission of torture in order to reveal the truth makes him a postmodern hero who sees the futility of torture that does not bear any significance in the reestablishment of justice. So, in the novels selected for the study, Christie attempts to denote the triumph of discovering the truth, without the inscription of torture and public execution.

Christie's works has taken her readers into an uncharted territory when it comes to crime and criminals. Her novels have explored the distinguished feature of the detective. Her portrayal of many aspects, of the police have challenged including the traditional account of the established institution. Reading Christie's novels makes it conspicuous that crime and criminality are no longer a simple matter of discovery, confession and punishment.

Christie's detective fiction revolves around the theme of power that is deviant, and not a purely one-way route. The relationship between crime and power is what the chapter will attempt to situate. The detective in Christie's novels procedures of investigating crime rests mainly on his power and the freedom he possesses. He becomes the central figure who is feared, and possesses the power to supervise and his final conclusion is regarded as the final justification for justice. The chapter will focus the ways in which power is transformed and is institutionalized. Besides, the chapter will render a coherent analysis on how the narrative of Agatha Christie employs alternative structure of power to counter the conventional modes of power. The chapter will give a comprehensive analysis of the dynamics of power by focusing on the Foucauldian theoretical paradigm and it will denote a comprehensive study of the dynamics of power which exhibits different characteristics.

“Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (Foucault, *History* 94). Power as Foucault states is something that is omnipresent which cannot be expelled or dismissed. The concept of power plays a significant role in the novels of Agatha Christie. The manifestation of power in Christie's novel varies from certain angles and the chapter will bring forth the interplay of power from different perspectives. Power is present in every form of human relationship which is transformed, analyzed and elaborated. According to Chris Barker:

Power is not simply the glue that holds the social together, or the coercive force which subordinates one set of people to another, though it certainly is this. It is also understood in terms of the processes that generate and enable any form of social action, relationships or order (10).

Power is an integral part of the description of social reality. It exhibits the capacity to strike a chord in many people because it has the ability to conquer anything in its path, to

stream roll not only the law, but economy, society as well as government. Power is dynamic and it does not bear only one single trait or characteristic. Since it encapsulates certain traits and characteristics, power is not something that has a single absolute meaning. The meaning and definition of power is varied and it cannot be solely associated with violence or force. Power can be represented through signs, symbols, knowledge, language and behavior including personality; it is not as always coercive as it appears to be. The well being and experience of human activities is enveloped by power, as it is present in all forms of human relationships. It is not to be thought of as something already constituted, rather it is a subject that makes us consider how human society is constituted by the historical relationship of power. Power has one important characteristic in that, it does not always repress or forbid it but instead gives an individual the full autonomy to exercise his will.

Foucault in his book *Power* (1994) stresses that the panopticon is a marvelous machine which produces homogenous effect of power. It is rather a form of power that rests not only on inquiry but it is something completely different which can be classified as “examination”. The inquiry itself is a procedure by which judicial practitioners try to find out what happened. It is the utopian of society and the type of power that is basically the society at present (58).

A deep analysis of Christie’s novels make it discernible that the detective in many ways resembles the panopticon from the ways and procedures in which he investigates crime. The detective has the privileged place for experimenting on men and analyzes with complete certainty the transformation that may be obtained from them. As mentioned in the former chapter Christie’s detective has his own procedures of investigating crime which is unique and special. The detective has the freedom to observe and inquire the suspects without any hindrance and he is feared, obeyed and trusted. Like the panopticon the detective functions as a kind of laboratory with his ability to penetrate in to men’s behavior, discovers new objects

of knowledge in every sphere in which he exercised his power. His ability to experiment makes him establish the truth, which is mandatory in order to render judgment. Foucault writes:

The practice of placing individual under ‘observation’ is a natural extension of justice imbued with disciplinary methods and examination procedures (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 227).

Observation stands as one of the requisite traits for the detective. Observation is accompanied by interrogation which enhances the disciplinary effect among the characters. Observation is a mechanism that coerces and being persuaded or forced means that an individual is observed constantly making one feels self-conscious and certain behavior automatically changes. It is an excellent example of operation of power that effects the body without causing any violence. In *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* Poirot says:

One must always proceed with method ...I made an error in judgment in asking you question. To each man his own knowledge. You could tell me details of the patient’s appearance – nothing there would escape you... To find out about the fire, I must ask the man whose business is to observe such things (112).

In stating this, Poirot attempts to claim and readdress before the characters that he exhibits, the power to examine and observe incidents and situation with the assistance of the other characters. His ideal way of investigating crime rests on the subject of knowledge, for him examination and observation becomes part and parcel in order to establish truth. In stating this, Poirot stresses his intention to get clues by the observation made by others as well as his own personal observation. The detective does not exclude or repress, for him an individual’s knowledge is functional in formulating a theory about the crime. The other

characters whom the detective addresses are constituted by the power that the detective possesses.

In *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934) the narrator of the novel describes how the detective's gaze switches from one person to another person. The detective's gaze becomes the internal mechanism in which an individual is caught up. Through his gaze the detective becomes the museum of human nature and identity.

At the next table, a small one, sat Colonel Arbuthnot alone. His gaze was fixed upon the back of Mary Debenham's head... His glance shifted to the other side of the carriage. At the far end, against the wall, was a middle- aged woman dressed in black with broad expressionless face. German or Scandinavian, he thought (41).

Power in the novel is exercised by the detective spontaneously without any noise, and acts directly on an individual. Poirot employs his power unlike the rigid and heavy constraints and amplifies his intuition to penetrate in to men's behavior. The gaze of the detective proves to be essential and fruitful in tracing the history of the perpetrators. From the very outset of the novel, Mary Debenham who is actually Sonia Armstrong's secretary and Daisy Armstrong's governess attracts Poirot's attention. Poirot carefully gazes into her behavior and speech, making him conclude that she is associated with the Armstrong family from her conversation as well as the telephone call she makes. The functioning of observation reaches its zenith when Poirot claims that he overheard the conversation between Miss Debenhem and Colonel Arbutnot. Poirot reveals that, the fact that Colonel Arbuthnot calls her Mary is clearly on terms of intimacy, even though the Colonel is only supposed to have met her a few days ago. He silently observes the passengers in the train while examining them making the passengers as cases that can be analyzed and described.

Similarly in *Death on the Nile* (1937), the slight glance of the detective becomes extremely beneficial and crucial. The novel deliberately stresses on how the power of gaze leads the detective to analyze something specific about the character of Linnet Ridgeway:

I saw, Mademoiselle, dark lines below a woman's eyes. I saw a hand that clutched a sunshade so tight that the knuckles were white... I mean that all is not the gold that glitters. I mean that, though this lady is rich and beautiful and beloved, there is all the same something that is not right. And I know something else (59).

Astute observations made by the detective in the novel marshal available resources for the readers to detect that Linnet Ridgeway is not in a stable state. The detective's observation turns out to bring the readers in to the right track because Linnet Ridgeway blatantly manifests to Poirot that she is afraid of everything like never before. She reveals her insecurity and confesses that she is surrounded by "enemies" (120). She feels that everything is unsafe for her that drags her into intense fear while making her life terrible and trapped. The technique of observation and surveillance in the novel paves a way for the detective to penetrate deep into the insight of human beings and this aspect becomes central to the function of the detective.

Knowledge in Christie's novels is implicated in the regime of power. In Christie's detective fiction along with the creation of the detective, her novels often feature the character of a doctor. In the three works selected for study, doctors are present who have ceaselessly assisted the detective in investigating crime. At certain points of time the conclusion drawn by the detective and the doctor is different although they both possess the power to observe and examine, making it visible that knowledge at times is a matter of point of view. The point of view of the doctor representing the knowledge of science is privileged,

has contributed immensely for matters of establishing empirical truth. Heather Worthington in her book *The Rise of the Detective in Early Nineteenth- Century Popular Fiction* states:

The skills of the physician are directly relevant to the construction of the detective figure. These skills drew upon the physician's medical knowledge, but its practice relied on the observational and analytical ability of the practitioner... The physician is empowered by his special knowledge- which is indissolubly related to the gaze that enables decision and intervention in cases of illness. The relationship between physician and patient constructs the patient as the object of the physician's gaze and subject to the power inherent in that gaze...the physician gaze then has a disciplinary effect (49).

In *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926) Dr. Sheppard acquires similar status like Hercule Poirot. He is a figure whom everyone trusts in King's Abbot. Dr. Sheppard's medical knowledge and experience assisted the detective in scrutinizing the crime. Sheppard panegyricizes his analytical ability when he says:

“One advantage of being a medical practitioner is that you can usually tell when people are lying to you” (169).

The fact that Sheppard is bestowed with the power to distinguish between the truth and lie, rests solely on his skill of observation. Through observation he is able to perceive how Poirot conveys his innuendoes by means of his eyebrows and his shoulders. During the process of investigating the crime, Sheppard's exercises virtual monopoly on medical care and his methodologies are paradigmatic. Mrs Ackroyd willingly admits she can trust him not to misjudge her and represents the matter in the right light to Poirot. She confesses that she has entered Roger's study searching for Roger's will. While Mrs. Ackroyd narrates her secret, Sheppard has noted a momentary hesitation and knows that there is still something she

is holding back. Later Mrs. Ackroyd confesses that she has left the silver table open. Dr. Sheppard's gaze encapsulates a disciplinary effect and by making Mrs. Ackroyd feel guilty she began documenting to him the secret that she has not revealed earlier.

In *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934) Dr. Constantine confidently claims that the crime that occurs in the train is the most "unscientific crime" (65). He observes the deceased body. He accurately examines the corps while concluding that "somebody had shut their eyes and then in a frenzy struck blindly again and again" (65). His observation about the corpse rests much on his knowledge while making it clear to the readers that the criminals are not trained because some of the blows glanced off, while doing hardly any damage. His ability to distinguish between scientific crime and his so called "unscientific crime" denotes that Dr. Constantine has his impulse to control and dominate through his acquired knowledge. Besides, the character of Dr. Constantine displays how truth at times becomes a matter of interpretation which is embroiled in power.

In *Death on the Nile* (1937) Christie has *introduced* Dr. Bessner who is a professional investigating figure to diagnose a specific problem. In the novel he has utilized his medical knowledge but in practice he relies on the observational and analytical ability. His close observation permits a reading of the deceased body, even as he claims that Linnet Ridgeway is shot just above her ear and the pistol is held close against her head. He boldly claims that Linnet Ridgeway "was asleep; there was no struggle; the murderer crept up in the dark and shot her as she lay there" (189). But his observation is contradicted by Poirot, because he has noticed a tiny hole above Linnet's ear with an incrustation of dried blood round including a letter J scrawled in the white painted wall which Dr. Bessner fails to notice. Dr. Bessner has controlled the operation of the crime through his own methods, while eliminating other theories of witness. According to him, Simon Doyle is not in a position to leave the lounge to

kill Linnet Ridgeway, but in reality, it is Simon who shoots Linnet in the cabin and he faked being wounded.

The three novels selected for study have coherently manifested how power is exercised through the disciplinary figure of the detective and the medical practitioner. The analysis concludes that knowledge and truth is purely the outcome of power. Besides, though the methodologies of medical practitioner, knowledge at times is shown to be the outcome of a personal perception which is not universal. The portrayal of the two characters also depict that ideas such as psyche, conscience and good behavior are effects that are created by a particular regime of power and knowledge.

Characters in Christie's novels comprise various nationalities and classes belonging to different age and social background. The system of class is clearly portrayed from the manner in which her characters have featured in her novels. There are a group of characters belonging to the upper class as well as lower class. Christie has taken an unique approach in portraying the relationship between the two classes because unlike the conventional portrayal of class she has instead unraveled the structured binary opposition existing between the two.

Power comes from below; that is there is no binary and all- encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations, and deriving as a general matrix –no such duality extending from the top down and reacting on more and more limited groups to the very depths of the social body (Foucault, *History* 94).

Foucault challenges the traditional notion that power is associated with authority because according to him power does not only spring from the seemingly authoritarian figure when he says “power comes from below”. The statement also makes it discernible that power is a mode that is exercised and can be cultivated by every individual without any limitations.

When it comes to crime power is generated from both top and below in Christie's novels. So, in Christie's novels the nature of power is portrayed from a different sphere. The system of class which has different characteristics, that has contrasting binary divisions is unraveled. Instead in her novels power lies more or less in an individual's personality.

In *Death on the Nile* (1937) the character of Louise Bourget, Linnet's maid restores her power by falling in to the game of blackmailing. Blackmailing can be interpreted as a powerful source of exercising one's power; Bourget has blackmailed Simon Doyle for her silence and she demanded money in exchange for her silence. She is represented by the author who possesses the full autonomy although she belongs to the inferior class. Christie has been extremely conscious in representing her characters and situates the vast extent to which an individual has the full autonomy to exercise his or her power. Louis Bourget silently exercises her power as silence has myriad connotations with power. Her courage to blackmail her mistress' husband makes her an admirable figure. She possesses the value of her mistress' society making her value most visible by blackmailing Simon Doyle.

In *Murder on the Orient Express* class system stands as one of the most prominent themes in the novel and the author has deliberately located the structure that has existed between the aristocrats and the working class passengers. The novel has deliberated upon the ways in which power is exercised both from the upper and the middle class passenger. The seemingly authoritative figure like Ratchett who possesses the wealth to escape from his heinous crime is defeated again through his own death. The murder of Ratchett also makes it blatant that power is "exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations" (Foucault, *History* 94). In the novel characters vary in features, appearance and social background and depending on their class they have disguised themselves with a particular profession. The congregation of the characters from two distinct

classes with a similar purpose of seeking justice thereby defeating their enemy signifies to the readers that power is portable, changeable as well as unbiased and democratic.

In *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* Ursula Bourne is presented as an extremely liberated free spirit in the novel. Ursula Bourne as he narrator describes, is from an impoverished Irish family. After the demise of her father, she is under compulsion and is determined to earn her living and is not attracted to the idea of being a nursery governess, the only profession open to an untrained girl. She preferred the job of parlourmaid and claims that she enjoys her work and has plenty of time for herself. The narrator of the novel says:

“She would be the real thing....At Fernly, despite an aloofness which, as has been seen, caused some comment, she was success at her job quick, competent and thorough” (316).

Ursula is able to fulfill her life's dream by working as a parlourmaid despite her impoverished background. The job of a parlourmaid is to be trapped within a rigid social function which demands industriousness, subservience and self sacrifice; but she is an upper class servant furnished with imaginative awareness and cultivated sensibility. She is aware that she is isolated and rejected because of her poverty but she still survives. Ursula's power in the novel has a lot to do with her personality. Her personal life asserts her deliberate difference from the upper class female characters around her especially Flora Ackroyd. She is much more economically liberated than the other female characters in the novel. She knows exactly what she wants to achieve in her life and how to go about it. Her liaisons and secret marriage with Ralph Paton makes it blatant that she has attempted to bridge the gap between her and the emerging middle class society.

In Christie's novels, the interplay of power becomes another important concept. In her novels there is a gradual transition from the formal division of power which although

imaginary, but bears a strong resemblance to reality. In Christie's novels the institutional frameworks of execution is challenged and unravelled by the detective. Moreover, in Christie's novels the modern penal system in which public execution, capital punishment and law is ceremonious and is altered and framed.

Susan Rowland in her book *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell: British Women Writers in Detective and Crime Fiction* claims:

Criminal justice presupposes that an individual is responsible for the crimes he/she commits, and that the duty to uphold the law is a moral absolute beyond other loyalties. It therefore entails a sense of a stable self (not mad or fragmented or programmed by other forces), and equal applicability of the law's demands to all in society. Such an ideology of the law places pressure on a detective who may not be wholly detached from the circle of suspects, and so is not a simple embodiment of the law's claim to neutrality and objectivity (45).

In Christie's context imprisonment, execution, torture, law and capital punishment does not hold any significance. Law is not applied within the context of her novels, instead the detective's knowledge and the truth discovered by him is considered as an accurate identification for justice. At the climax of the selected three novels the detective acts as a preceding judge and magistrate who ties up the case. In Christie's novels death becomes an important way of defining justice.

Death in Christie's novels acts a generating force in order to understand law, and the nature of crime and punishment. In her novels death is portrayed to be a preferable option which is more appealing and sympathetic. Aside from arrest, the three most common ends for

Christie's murderer are suicide, total insanity or death by another hand. In some cases, the detective allows suicide to take place without hindrance (Bargainnier 129).

In *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* death becomes an important way of escapism for the criminal. Poirot suggests that Dr. Sheppard should commit suicide:

“But for the sake of your good sister, I am willing to give you a chance of another way out. There might be, for instance, an overdose of a sleeping draught” (362).

Death in the novel serves as an important trajectory when it comes to justice. Death in her novel provides meaning to an individual and thereby unraveling the archetypal concept of death which is often threatening. Mrs. Ferrars has committed suicide because of her fear of publicity. She chooses death so that the whole secret would be revealed and prefers to die as it is “the only road open to her” (62). Tormented by her blackmailer, Mrs. Ferrars is unable to face reality and choose death, hoping that the whole truth would be revealed. Dr. Sheppard and Mrs. Ferrars both die, thereby escaping from the kind of punishment that is likely to happen to them.

In *Death on the Nile* instead of applying the modern penal procedures of handling crime, death becomes another way of punishing the criminals. Death similarly like *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* becomes the more humane way of dying. At the climax of the novel, Jackie seizes an opportunity and shoots Simon before killing herself, which according to Poirot “is an easier death than he deserved” (415).

Death becomes a controversial issue in the novel. The reason why the detective calls suicide as an ‘easier death’ becomes a teasing phrase. Death as portrayed in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* becomes more humane way of dying. Suicide being an “easier death” according to the perception of the detective, challenges torture that is often practiced and embedded in the legal practice. Although torture and suicide are ways of demonstrating the

working of power through the body, suicide becomes a more humane way of exercising power according to the detective.

Power is “essentially a right of seizure: of things, time, bodies and ultimately life itself; it culminated in the privilege to seize hold of life in order to suppress it (Foucault, *History* 136). The detective firmly places himself as the epitome of the sovereign who exercises his right of life, making the criminals submit. Through suicide Christie’s criminals subverts the power of death that symbolize sovereign power because they have supplanted the notion that death is a form of administering the bodies and the calculated management of life. They have instead affirmed that they have the power and right of their own body while reversing the idea that death is based on the right of the sovereign.

In *Murder on the Orient Express*, criminals are motivated by the perceived inability of the law to deliver its promise of justice. Michel Foucault in his book *Discipline and Punish* describes the nature of justice as well as penal operation which has taken extra judicial elements:

Today, criminal justice functions and justifies itself only by this perpetual reference to something other than itself, by this unceasing reinscription in non- judicial systems. Its fate is to be redefined by knowledge (22)

In the novel Poirot asserts that he has clear evidence before him but being aware of the injustice experienced by the Armstrong family, he reconsiders the case. Linda Arden insists that the evidence could be skewed to implicate her and she declares she would gladly go to prison if the other passengers are spared. She points out that everyone present has suffered because of Ratchett’s misdeeds. Linda also claims that Ratchett is not only responsible for her daughter and Daisy’s death but the death of other children as well. So, at the climax of the novel, Poirot sympathizes with Linda Arden and finally agrees with M.

Bouc suggestion that her suggestions will be the solution that they will offer to the Yugoslavian police. Poirot has propagated a different form of criminal justice based on his knowledge and his own individual perception of right and wrong. By altering the evidence of the crime, the detective challenges the criminal justice system, thereby portraying the instability of the law. By altering the evidence, he becomes the figure of power, who becomes the judge of the innocent. Additionally, the novel makes it conspicuous that law does not always embody justice.

The concept of justice plays a significant role in the realm of crime fiction. The fictional narrative of Agatha Christie's novels follows a unique approach in defining justice. In Christie's novels the concept of justice is defined and cultivated by the detective. In Christie's novels, judgment is passed on the basis of the motives, passions and instinct of the criminal. Punishment does not function as a form of justice, and emphasis is laid on supervising and directing an individual. Moreover the offence functions as a source of knowledge.

In *Murder on the Orient Express* justice is brought out according to the will of the detective in keeping the interest on the offender's motives, instinct and passion. The organized crime presented in the novel calls for the question of justice. The main issue that is debated in the novel is justice and has been the primary reason for the crime committed. The system of laws that is practiced out in courts and the system of justice propounded by the detective is totally different. In the novel, the passengers in the train initiate to commit crime in order to meet their wishes.

Poirot's personal process of handling justice is absolutely different from the ways the penal system arrange justice. From the three selected novels it is discernible that Poirot's procedure of making his verdict is more humane and appealing. The detective in Christie's

novels evidenced his power over life through death which he is capable of administering. Justice is formulated not on the basis of law, rather it is based on the consent of the detective. History, psychology, interview and personal communication is mandatory for the detective. His procedure of formulating the verdict makes him a prophet who can be viewed as a sort of savior for his defense of moral order. Although he is a fictional construct, he has exhibited certain latitude in representing reality.

As far as power is concerned, the concept of “red herring” becomes an important phenomenon that has highlighted the aspect of power. As mentioned in the earlier chapter Christie has intertwined certain techniques which have contributed to the creation of suspense and mystery in her novels.

Riddling is a form of social interaction that involves an asymmetric power relationship. The poser of the enigma maintains the right to impose a pre-determined solution. Alternative solutions, even if cleverer than that of the poser, are automatically rejected as incorrect. Like- wise, in the whodunit, the writer is the authoritative source. The murderer is whomever the author, not the reader, chooses it to be. But this asymmetry is not institutionalized; it is a product of choice within the social interaction itself. The hearer or reader also retains a degree of power, albeit of a higher logical type (Singer 158).

With the presence of the “red herring” and certain other forms of clues readers, often perceived who the criminals would be at the back of their mind. Riddle provides scope for the readers to determine who the suspect would be, and has served as an important trajectory by highlighting the power relationships between the readers and the author. The presence of the riddle in Christie’s novels has precipitated the battle between the author and the readers in which readers are often misdirected and the author has often rejected the suspects, thereby

making the least likely suspects the murderer. The reader possesses the full autonomy to guess and predict the criminal before the detective proclaims the criminal at the climax of the novel. In Christie's novels, riddle is represented in the form of "red herring". It is through the constant employment of the "red herring" in her novels that the riddle takes its proper shape and figure.

In *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, the suspect turns out to be innocent at the same time that the least likely suspect turns out to be the criminal. Unlike the other two novels, the novel encapsulates an unique approach in terms of narration and plot. The narrator in the novel is the murderer, who has assisted the detective in investigating crime ceaselessly. The complex "red herring" which is denoted in the novel misleads her readers and it demonstrates the complex nature of power that has existed between the reader and the author. Suspicions for the readers fall on Ralph Paton because his pair of boots is found in Ackroyd's room and his long disappearance make him an object of doubts and suspicion. Besides, Ralph Paton, characters residing in the house of Roger Ackroyd become the suspects as they have a personal secret which remains unrevealed. The novel becomes a crime within a crime as apart from the main crime that is committed there are certain layers of other crimes which can be associated with the major crime. The guess work depends on the readers who often fall into the trap that is laid out by Christie, but at the end of the novel it is the duty of the author to proclaim the criminal. Readers have the full sovereignty to suspect and to judge and the author subverts their sovereignty by excluding all forms of the boundaries that has existed between the false and the true clues.

In *Murder on the Orient Express*, certain objects, situation, speech and gestures leads the readers on to a false track. The schemes of the crime has been designed and created in order to hinder conclusion and truth from the investigators. The criminals have designed their crime astutely as they have a purpose behind; sometimes they would plan in such a way that

suspicion would not have been attached to them. The novel has defeated the readers in terms of clues and suspicion because the setting of the novel takes place inside the train. Although the settings of the novel takes place in an isolated place, limiting the number of suspects, the author has succeeded in confusing her readers by the enormous employment of the “red herring”. For her readers, the author’s ways of presenting her characters is absolutely opaque. Since her characters belong to various nationalities and classes who assemble from various communities, the suspects differs from person to person. The grotesque imagery which is employed by the author has contributed immensely from gathering clues and assumptions for the readers. The description and impression of Poirot on Ratchett is grotesque when he stated his opinion. For him, the appearance of Ratchett resembles a “wild animal- an animal savage” (29). The attention of the readers is focused solely on Ratchett, who is purported to be the only criminal in the novel. However, as the plot of the novel progresses, the passengers in the train including the maid, Ratchett’s secretary, the valet, the cook, the Swedish missionary, the train conductor are all involved in the crime and everyone is seemingly guilty.

In *Death on the Nile* Christie has presented a crime which occurs between close groups of acquaintance, in which the crime becomes a purely personal matter. Christie has exercised her skills and techniques and proves her designation as “The Queen of Crime” especially in this novel. Her unique and specific manner in which of dealing crime is discernible from the manner in which she has created complex kind of crime in this particular novel. It is obvious for her readers to assume that the murderer of Linnet Ridgeway would either be Simon Doyle or Jacqueline de Bellefort. Besides, the murder of Linnet Ridgeway, the murder of Louis Bourget and Mrs. Otterbourne occurs in the novel. In the novel, Christie has introduced other forms of crime besides the murder of Linnet Ridgeway; she has introduced the character of Tim who is a jewel thief, working in partnership with his cousin. Tim steals the pearls from Linnet's cabin before she was murdered and substituted the fake

string. Additionally, Andrew Pennigton's intention to kill Linnet by throwing the bolder on her, makes readers dislodge their first suspect and Jacqueline and Simon the least likely suspects in the second half of the novel. The atmosphere of suspicion is heightened with the presence of other crimes taking place in the novel which has directly confused the readers. At the climax of the novel the author has stressed that the crime has been organized in advance by Jacqueline and Simon.

The analysis of the three novels denoted in this chapter makes it conspicuous, that power is omnipresent and is discernible in all forms of relationship. At the same time, it is undoubtedly clear that "Power exist only as exercised by some on others, only when it is put into action" (Power, 340). The analysis also makes it clear that power is asymmetrical and it has a dual aspect and its outcome does not follow a liner pattern and similarity. The observation made by Foucault can be applied to Christie's portrayal of crime in her novels. Crime in Christie's novels comprises murder, kidnapping, blackmailing, robbery, suicide, mayhem, assault as well as battery. The various forms of crime which Christie has demonstrated in her novels are amongst the ways in which power is manifested. Moreover, they are the patterns in which the exercise of power becomes a mode of action that is acted upon others.

Christie has succeeded in directing her readers in which power rests on an acutely observant eye. The exposition of power is often unstable and changeable which is directly associated with social conditions. Power narratives in Christie's detective novels does not arise in isolation, it incorporates practices and construction. The narratives of her novels has firmly located the failure of religious observance, in which her novel has becomes a god less society unraveling the assurance by religious belief that would guarantee justice. Her novels have highlighted a revamped version of power through the medium of her characters and narratives. To a great extent, she has represented that truth can only be produced by power by

excluding the legalistic statement. There is both positive and negative representation of power that has created discursive space for power. Her fictional narratives draws on the structure and form of power but moves away from the structured and conventional modes of power while dislodging the rudimentary approach of power.

The chapter will denote the relationship between stereotype and power by stating that stereotype is the exaggeration and perpetuation of false notions. The chapter will be divided into three parts in which the first part will denote how racial stereotype acts as a medium of identification in her novels selected for study. The second part of the chapter will focus on the concept of Englishness. The chapter will highlight how Englishness is shown to have distinguished features and at the same time it will reflect upon how Englishness is diffused in the imaginative life of a complex system of codes. The last part will demonstrate how crime itself is stereotyped in Christie's novels.

Christie's detective fiction navigates around a series of cultural aspects besides functioning as a genre that entertain. It encapsulates a foundation upon which emphasis is laid upon criminal narratives, thus making her novels almost an adventure, imparting intellectual excellence of her contemporary detective writers including her readers. Her criminal narrative dominates an important aspect where stereotype serves as an important component of power in generating meaning. In her novels, Christie provides what is expected and at the same time what is not expected, to denote the distinctiveness of her works. One of the most important unique features of Christie's detective fiction is the arrangement of her characters. Her characters are not confined only to a particular nationality, it consists of characters who have assembled from various parts of the world. The wide selection of her characters has a huge impact because it represents how the mixing of different cultures creates new meaning and identities. Besides, her universal characters depict that stereotypes are vivid yet simple representations which reduce a person to set of exaggerated negative traits through the operation of power.

The diverse selection of her characters makes her novels universal by appealing to the audience. Her novels represent the experience of every nation in which each and every particular individual represents his or her specific culture. In her novels, the conglomeration

of characters has resulted into fruitful results for her readers because the diverse perspectives of every nation are heard and that has yielded distinctive results. Her characters have different opinions and perceptions about oneself which is often the outcome of the established stereotypical traits. In Christie's detective fiction the problem of identity has been denoted by the author at innumerable length. She has deliberated upon the ways in which stereotype is coincided with identity. The ability to judge the stereotyped image connotes rigidity as well as unchanging order, including order acting as a mode of knowledge. The term "stereotype" itself was originally coined in 1798 by the French printer Didot to refer to metal casts of print from which fixed texts could be repeatedly struck off... Stereotype is the *stereo* (the fixed or solid) *type* (the stamp or seal) from which every individual impression takes its form in thought, so that the particularity of the impression, even when it occludes, distorts, or breaks the image of the seal, is nevertheless conceived of as its more or less imperfect impression and hence always as a variant of it (Cantwell 63).

Stereotype in Christie's detective fiction can be associated with power as the ability to stereotype stems from power itself. Racial stereotype in Christie's novels is linked with the concept of identity. Her novels are fuelled by the politics of identity. Identity in her novels becomes an inquiry in which others see us and at the same time as to how we see ourselves. Identity in Christie's novels becomes a phenomenon in which there are no fixed entities and identity is expressed through forms of representation. According to Homi Bhabba:

The stereotypes, which is a major discursive strategy, is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place', already known and something that must be anxiously repeated... as if the essential duplicity of the Asiatic or the bestial sexual license of the African that needs no proof, can never really, in discourse, be proved (*The Location of Culture*, 95).

In Agatha Christie's novels stereotype occupies its space abundantly and the conversation that takes place between the characters from different walks of life discuss their culture and identity. Through the employment of stereotype in her novels, Christie displays how human beings assign fixed and uniform traits which become a dehumanizing factor, as the fixity of traits is an illusion. At the same time, her novels make it discernible that stereotype produces socially figurative statements in order to make sense, and this ultimately results in the formation of one's identity.

In *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934) besides investigating the crime, Christie's characters are propelled to identify their fellow passengers in the train. The novel plays a remarkable role in highlighting how different classes and nationalities are stereotyped. Characters in the novels assemble from America, Italy, Sweden, Russia, Germany, Hungary, Greece and Britain. They are shown to exhibit different traits and characteristics in which they appear mysterious. From the very outset of the novel, stereotype animalizes, demonizes and assigns them the traits of animals. Princess Dragomiroff is described to have a personality as "ugly as sin" (40) who makes her presence felt and the other woman as "amiable face rather like a sheep" (40). The character of Antonio Foscarelli face is described to have "a typical Italian face, sunny looking and swarthy" (189). Italians are stereotyped in the novel. M. Bouc says:

"He has long been in America ... and he is an Italian, and the Italians use the knife! And they are great liars! I do not like Italians" (193).

The statement manifests that identity is nested in stereotypes which is animated, they are composed in the way the occasion demands. Since Antonio Foscarelli is a big swarthy Italian he is perceived to be a ghastly being who has murdered Ratchett. The stereotypic representation makes Antonio embrace the impression that he is perhaps a liar who signifies

the activity of his own community. The stereotyping of Antonio Foscarelli manifests that stereotype is often a matter of traits that are supposed to be shared by all members of a given class and has offered to predict social reality, but in reality it acts as a model for creating social reality. Since, the deceased body in the train is stabbed several times, he is suspected to be the murderer, labeling him with the established inherent characteristics for indicating Italians. The description of Antonio Foscarelli reveals that identity is often the outcome of a figurative statement in which the foundation is nested the regime of knowledge and freedom to increase and expand.

In *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* Christie has introduced comic characters in her novels especially when Poirot is examined. The examination of Hercule Poirot by Dr. Sheppard and Caroline Sheppard has invented a question as to whether one's identity is elaborated in terms of symbols particularly of course in gestures and appearance. According to Caroline, Poirot's name "conveys an odd feeling of unreality" (31). Without any logical proof, both of them formulated their theory entirely out of their personal perceptions:

My dear Caroline, I said. 'There's no doubt at all about what the man's profession has been. He's a retired hairdresser. Look at the moustache of his.

Caroline dissented. She said that if the man was a hairdresser, he would have wavy hair – not straight. All hairdressers did (31).

There is a surprising note denoted in the conversation that takes place between Dr. Sheppard and Caroline. Poirot's "egg-shaped head, particularly covered with suspiciously black hair, two immense moustaches and a pair of watchful eyes" (32) becomes the centre of attention for both of them. Marks of difference in relation to the biological become the identifying traits of the other races as well as indicators of differences especially depending on the social tension surroundings it. Caroline's superficial judgment ranges powerfully, in

one aspect confirms her racial attitude and in another part indicates her primitive thought. For her, Poirot's name does not bear any reality as it conveys the unreality lurking in her imagination. Their misconception is unraveled only after the identity of Poirot is revealed. Though inherently unstable, stereotype is a sociological concept that makes individual follow false tracks that encapsulates participation in its artifices, while prompting an individual to follow what is known as illusion.

In *Death on the Nile* (1937) Christie has brought out the ways in which stereotype becomes information that passes between individuals and groups. The settings of the novel takes place in Egypt in which Christie's characters comprise different nationalities, class and age group. Characters in her novels are stereotypes of each other which inversely act as a record of the attitude of one group towards another. The description of the landscape itself becomes derogatory because the landscape itself is characterized to have specific traits, Rosalind Otterbourne says:

“There's something about this country that makes me feel wicked. It brings to the surface all the things that are boiling inside one. Everything's so unfair – so unjust.”
(118).

Rosalind Otterbourne has imaginatively stereotyped Egypt as a place of emblems of deterioration, and madness which is an embodiment of the prevailing forms of evil. Her statement manifests how Egypt becomes the Other. Instead of judging in terms material evidence she simply makes her judgment that stems from her mere psychic construction. Her statement becomes a primitive form of thought, rooted in metaphor with the energy and power of her intelligence.

Another incident which proves the otherness of the orient through the process of stereotyping is manifested towards the climax of the novel. Cornelia expresses her

earnestness uttering to Poirot that she will never forget the trip where three deaths occurs. The narrative of the novel continues as follows:

Ferguson overheard her. He said aggressively: That's because you're over-civilized. You should look on death as the oriental does. It's a mere incident-hardly noticeable.

That's all very well, Cornelia said. They're not educated, poor creatures (337).

Ideological biases ostensibly suited to the orient are located in the conversation taking place between Cornelia and Ferguson. The passage has an underlying connotation that the Orient is researched, administered and pronounced in discreet ways which bears traditional entitlement. What matters most in the conversation are the disparaging remarks that are vested towards the orient. The passage cited above makes it clear that stereotype is imaginative, part of the instrumentality of our own minds and its appearance on the human landscape is oddly hallucinatory while impacting the senses.

Christie's works selected for study explore that stereotype is a form of representation that essentializes to have inherent and natural characteristics. The analysis affirms that stereotype is a form of power that transmits information that practically control, fixing individuals and groups in one place. Stereotype has the power to identify a person based on fixed terms and traits and is a false representation of a given reality. Her novel denotes how the survival of stereotype transforms the social landscape into a gloomy field which created fear, hierarchy and ethnic distinction putting national groups to the margins. In short, it is a form of power acting as a myth, upon which all human thoughts are based. The deep stereotypes in Christie's novels have established the background of different cultures on the basis of physical feature, speech, dress, manners including the crime. The power of stereotype cited from the text manifests that it has a generalizing power that serves as

classifying device, creating binary divisions while continuing to be a strategy of authority. The significance of the diverse selection of characters is manifested at this point. The plot of Christie's novels show how culture perceive the mark of difference as the ultimate truth, wholly absorbed by her characters without any signs of doubts.

Englishness in Christie's novels is analyzed to be an outcome of psychic component. In her novels selected for study, Englishness is situated and organized to be an important yardstick. The term Englishness is associated with certain characteristics. The different types of traits and characteristics that are analyzed in her novels are represented in the form of speech, signs as well as language. Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* says:

One ought to remember that all cultures impose corrections upon raw reality, changing it from free- floating objects into units of knowledge. The problem is not that conversation takes place. It is perfectly natural for a human mind to resist the assault on it of untreated strangeness; therefore cultures have always been inclined to impose complete transformation on other cultures, receiving these other cultures not as they are but as, for the benefit of the receiver, they ought to be (67).

Said's statement has benefited immensely in matters that are related to stereotype. His statement makes it apparent that stereotype and knowledge are interlinked and this serves as a signifying activity. In Christie's novels the traits of Englishness is shown to be the outcome of a mere psychic component. Similarly like the other two novels, in *Death on the Nile*, Englishness is perceived in the form of various characteristics. Simon Doyle is stereotyped as a person who is "ordinary inarticulate Englishman" (396), Jacqueline de Bellefort says to Simon "You're so English- so reticent" (117). Whereas according to Linnet "Italians are really insupportable" (160) and "pretty hot tempered" (304) according to Simon Doyle. The

narrative of the novel claims that Tim Allerton is usually easy-going and good tempered who does not have “the ordinary Britisher’s dislike – and mistrust of foreigners. Tim was very cosmopolitan” (124). The stereotypical traits and customs that are attributed to the English are cited in the description of the character of Tim Allerton. The description makes it discernible that English dislike foreigners who hold strong grudges against them. Personality does not matter at all when the power of stereotype comes in to play. Every individual is represented to embrace the images labeled in it apologetically, abashedly and ashamedly. The impact which stereotypes have upon an individual can yield fruitful results and at the same time create an abominable impact which makes it dynamic.

In *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926) the concept of Englishness is brought out by the author which is portrayed to have a distinguishing feature as compared to the other nationalities. In the novel there is an extensive boundary that has existed between the characters assembling from various portions of the globe. The English are described to “have a mania for fresh air” (222), Poirot interrogates “there is as saying, is there not, that Englishmen conceal only one thing- their love?” (226). The pride of being English is expressed by the author when Flora says:

“I thought doctor, you might put it to M. Poirot explain it, you know- because it’s difficult for a foreigner to see our point of view. And you don’t know-nobody could know- what I’ve to contend with” (208).

The term foreign is repeatedly denoted by the author in this novel, which has instead become a term that occurs most abundantly as compared to other terms. From Mrs. Ackroyd’s point of view, Poirot is an outsider who could not reconcile with the thoughts and sentiments of the English. Besides reflecting the otherness of Poirot, Mrs. Ackroyd demonstrates her own phobia about foreigners. She has attempted to raise a notion that the

custom of foreigner is unstable and that it is the reversal of English manners. She has a blunt-minded hostility and generalizing temper claiming her status to be a private affair. Mrs. Ackroyd has attempted to affirm the distinctness of being English, while finding it futile to appoint Poirot in the investigation. She rebukes Dr. Sheppard and says that Poirot is “dreadful little Frenchmen or Belgian- or whatever he is. Bullying us like he did” (205). Mrs. Ackroyd is attempting to enact the other’s expectation of conservatism linked with Englishness. She enacts them, and internalizes them while hoping that the other will become conscious within her community. Stereotype governs the relations among different groups in the novel while creating the pressure of expectation, self representation and conduct.

In *Murder on the Orient Express* Englishness is associated with the qualities of reticence, taciturnity, restraint, modesty, aloofness, detachment as well as coolness. Hercule Poirot has astutely perceived the qualities of Englishmen and displays his knowledge when he says:

I know Englishmen of the Colonel’s type. Even if he had fallen in love with the young lady at first, he would have advanced slowly and with decorum-not rushing things. Therefore I concluded that Colonel Arbuthnot and Miss Debenham were in reality well acquainted, and were for some reasons pretending to be strangers (335).

Poirot has blatantly stated the qualities that are attributed to the Englishmen, which become beneficial in expressing the common idea that is fraternized with Englishness. Poirot’s assessment and observation yields practical results, and both of them as Poirot states, are acting as if they were strangers in order to escape from suspicion. On the contrary, one can grasp how knowledge functions as a form of power. The ability to comprehend and accumulate the traits that are inherent in the English makes the detective a powerful figure.

The power and techniques of stating the traits depend on knowledge that creates and classifies individuals and knowledge derives its authority from certain relationships of power.

The projection of Englishness takes a different sphere in *Murder on the Orient Express* which is expressed in terms of habit, taste and practice. Mrs. Hubbard perceives that having tea is more an “English habit” (232). Besides, Englishness encapsulates other derogatory traits when M. Bouc says:

“The English are extremely cold. Probably it is because they have no figures... it is not easy to bribe the English, they are unapproachable” (275).

Society’s assumptions about a specific culture are denoted here. Certain traits that explain the concept of Englishness in Christie’s novels suggest that social conventions and social knowledge and practices are stabilized. The examples stated from the text makes Christie’s readers willingly accept that the image of Englishness is self constituted. It is constituted not only in specific relation to speech, behavior, gestures which includes all forms of expression and relations that are written into memory. The irony is that although Englishness is self constituted that does not embrace any scientific proof, her characters willingly believe it.

Although stereotype is a sociological concept, its power is seen even in personality too. Christie’s selected novels make it clear that that knowledge is established through the assistance of juxtaposition. Her novel affirms that there is no self- knowledge without the other and no knowledge of other without metaphor. The constructed image migrates across social boundary that lies in the consciousness of human beings that creates space and distance. As an English writer Christie’s novel has invented what is often conceived as the concept of Englishness. Christie has been preoccupied with the portrayal of Englishness which is demonstrated from various perspectives. The analysis of Christie’s fiction denotes

that the different types of traits that are attributed to Englishness are fixed traits, perceived from other's point of view rather than being inherently cultural. Stereotyped conceptions of Englishness become a reality that is used to address English characters. At the same time her novel shows how characters try to cultivate the specific traits that are labeled with because these traits are registered in to their consciousness while functioning as visual identification.

A broader approach of Christie's novels manifests that crime has an association with power which is solely the outcome of power. Crime in Christie's novels is represented and is linked with identity. Crime in her novels becomes an important trait to highlight one's identity and crime in other words becomes the machine in which one's identity is labeled which is often institutionalized. Christie's detective novels prove to be a significant genre because she employs the conventions of the genre as vehicles for social and cultural criticism. Moreover, it is no doubt visible that her novels reflect her understanding of cultural and political issues while making her readers aware as to how she represents them in her work.

Christie's detective fiction bears an unique approach in which her novels unravel the traditional assumptions about the genre. Her novels are transitional and do not substitute to a simplistic pattern of crime, pursuit and capture of the criminal. She has instead raised an important issue on the ways in which crime participates as an adequate space for formulating an identity through the medium of stereotype. Crime in her novels becomes a constitutive element that produces and reproduces the meaning of identity in a global society. Since crime is stereotyped, identity in her novels is portrayed to be the expectations and opinions that others have for us which is created:

Identity is an essence that can be signified through signs of taste, belief, attitudes and lifestyles. Identity is deemed to be both personal and social. It marks us out as the same and different from other kinds of people. We may

agree that identity is concerned with sameness and difference, with the personal and the social as understood through forms of representation (Barker, *Cultural Studies* 216).

In *Murder on the Orient Express* Christie has put forth the ways in which identity is represented through tastes, beliefs, attitudes and lifestyle. Christie's works is clubbed under the genre of crime fiction, which encapsulates accounts of crime and its investigation. "The developing genre of literature precariously balanced monitory, consolatory and policing functions with the entertainment factor demanded by commercial interest: the narratives were, after all, produced for profit" (Worthington, 2). A broadside view of Christie's crime fiction opens new road in accounting how crime becomes a metaphor in shaping an identity:

"Assuredly, Said Poirot. Especially in the heat of a quarrel. But this- this is a different kind of crime. I have the little idea, my friend, that is a crime very carefully planned and staged. It is a far sighted, long headed crime. It is not- how I shall express it? - a Latin crime. It is a crime that shows traces of a cool, resourceful, deliberate brain- I think an Anglo Saxon brain" (193).

The narrative explicitly suggests how crime has contributed immensely in denoting the difference between Latin crime and Anglo Saxon crime. The tone in Poirot's statement to a greater or lesser degree highlights the domain of fiction rather than fact. Since the crime that occurs in the train is a crime which is shown to be the outcome of a deliberate brain, Poirot automatically filters the crime to be committed by Anglo Saxon. Poirot has attempted to confirm beyond all doubts the identity of the criminal. The passage functions to criticize circumstantial evidence and proves the value of active investigation. Besides, the statement works to illustrate how criminals bend the evidence not only to evade punishment and actively implicating others in the furtherance of his own fraudulent plan.

In *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* Christie has focused on the distinction that is attributed to the foreigner. The foreigner has been abundantly used by Christie's in her novels. Christie has humorously portrayed the term foreigner, because it serves as a term that is used to address the unrecognized. For her characters, a foreigner becomes a casual term that passes between them, in order to highlight their prejudice. The foreigner in her novels is certainly the position in which her characters compose themselves in the way the occasion demands where her characters are the recipients of the foreigner:

One moment', cried Poirot, raising his hand and seemingly very excited. 'We must have everything in order. Just as it occurred. It is a little method of mine'.

A foreign custom, sir Said Parker. Reconstruction of the crime they call it, do they not? (229).

The alienated figure is constructed in the passage and his suggestion is discarded which does not facilitate acceptance. Poirot's familiarity with his personal process of investigating crime does not breed any contentment for Parker. Poirot does not attempt to reconstruct the crime; he is attempting to collect clues and incidents because circumstantial evidence is not sufficient enough to establish truth. He is trying to put all the clues and incidents in a chronological order to make it more logical. Stereotype lends its power here; the life of one group becomes a kind of fable to the other. The dialogue makes it discernible that human beings make metaphor not merely by yoking unlike things together, but by detecting in their unlikeness the hidden sympathy which invited the comparison to begin with. Poirot's procedures of investigating crime are treated as mere foreign custom and his identity as a foreigner is brought out before the scene. The dialogue states that identification often becomes a sort of identity and custom. Poirot's empirical process of investigating crime

is undermined, and which Parker fashions as the other. By misinterpreting Poirot's statement, Parker places him out of the mainstream society, signaling him as peripheral and irrelevant.

In *Death on the Nile* the narrative of the novel revolves around the theme of contemporary issues, enveloping the manner in which crime itself is stereotyped. The type of crime in the novel "demands certain qualities- courage, audacity, bold execution, lightning action" (309). Poirot says

For this crime, something was wanted that Pennington hasn't got ! This is a crime that needed audacity, swift and faultless execution, courage, indifference to danger, and a resourceful, calculating brain. Pennington hasn't got those attributes. He couldn't do a crime unless he knew it to be safe. This crime wasn't safe! It hung on a razor edge. It needed boldness. Pennington isn't bold. He's only astute (364).

The statement reflects the ways in which crime is stereotyped in the novel. Stereotype in Christie's novels becomes arbitrary because it possesses the power of discriminatory practices. Since the crime is the outcome of resourceful and calculating brain, crime permits only a few persons to be suspected and characters like Andrew Pennigton are assumed to be unfit for such bold activity. The statement indirectly manifests that characters who are not suspect are on the periphery, and they do not have the power and skills to initiate such a powerful crime. Subsequently, the statement makes it discernible that there is something intrinsically criminal about a particular culture, although it is not specifically denoted. The stereotyping of the crime distinguishes individuals who are capable to commit the crime as well as the incapable because it is the outcome of a resourceful and calculating brain.

Christie's detective fiction has contributed immensely in understanding the cultural scenario of her period which is still applicable today. Through her fictional narratives she has

imported her readers to experience the vastness of detective fiction. She has succeeded in highlighting the power of stereotype which is present in every form of human existence. Crime in her novels takes her readers to a new journey making her readers understand how crime can be stereotyped. Christie's novels have humorously portrayed that stereotype distinguish and segregate culture with false assumptions and ideologies. Stereotyping the crime makes the detective to declare the kind of crime specific cultures cultivate, which is solely the outcome of his intuition. From the manner in which crime is stereotyped it is undeniable that stereotypes are often fixed entities in which human beings recreate the world entirely according to the dictates of fears and desires. Her novels affirm that the stereotype fixes the character of an entire group, and facilitates social ideas in language and tends to flourish as formulae in oral expressions.

The analysis of Christie's detective novels is purely a cultural ecosystem of stereotype which possesses the power to shape identity, individuality, community as well as culture. Her novels selected for study affirm that stereotype has dual qualities because it is both external as well as internal that lingers in memory. It has arisen spontaneously in response to the ever more complex social negotiations that contemporary global civilization demands. Stereotype in Christie's novel becomes a metaphorical power that discovers difference. Stereotype in

Christie's novels is reinforced through speech, jokes, communication and most importantly the crime which occurs in all her novels. Although stereotype does not make a deep impression at once, it has the power to form deep seated attitudes and prejudices. In Christie's novels under the domain of stereotype, the social reality of the outsider can be realized only as a pattern that is formed from the insider's own established attitudes and assumptions.

The study has attempted to analyze the dynamics of power, and the dissertation pays close attention to the ways in which power is manifested in Christie's novels. From the analysis it is discernible that Christie has depicted the social scenario of her time which is experienced in every society. Her novels are in fact a reflection of society wherein crime and its significant accounts of investigation are highlighted in the paper.

The dissertation has denoted a brief biographical sketch of the author and highlights her contributions in novels that are selected for study. The comprehensive analysis of the three selected novels locates that Christie's crime fiction includes themes and subjects that are widely debated and discussed. The analysis of the novels draws the readers in to the realm of the nature of crime in her novels, which functions to meet the fear and anxiety of her readers. Besides the investigation of murder in the novel, the plot of her novels is blended with certain other types of crime that are represented in the form of robbery. The presence of other crime which is unrelated to the central crime often misdirects her readers which serve as an important technique and method.

From Christie's detective fiction it is clear that her criminals are not the conventional type of criminals. They are not the usual type of criminals that society has often perceived it to be. Her criminals are often the least likely suspects who are businessmen, men of property as well as defenseless respectable women. Christie's selection of the least likely suspect has an important implication because it unravels social perception of criminals retaining the reader's attention by creating complications in the narratives. Christie's criminals have a working knowledge of methods and practices which amounts to the detective's knowledge of criminal practices.

Christie's characters are universal and they are represented by the manner, in which she has selected her characters. Her characters assemble from various parts of the culture in

which racism is held to be the current problem. Issues of domination and subordination surface across the plot of her novels which breeds segregation, formation of knowledge including circulation of ideas and concerns. The pluralistic society represented by Christie with different cultures and customs add to the richness and variety of society. The diverse selection of her characters represents the voice of a specific culture stating clearly how identity is formulated from the observer's point of view.

The study has demonstrated the significance of Christie's detective fiction. The significance and relevance of her novels has put forth the ways in which crime becomes the outcome of society. Crime as Christie has represented in her novels is not solely based on the instinct or desire to kill, there are many social factors that have attributed to the cause of crime. It has been analyzed that crime is not always the outcome of personal matters; instead it has a deep connection with society.

The detective in Christie's novels is firmly located as the hero of the narrative. He has an unique procedure of investigating crime. His methods and procedures is solely based on the intellect which is referred to as his "little grey cells". Hercule Poirot in Christie's novels investigates crime in the basis of three modes namely historical, ideological as well as technical. History becomes an important phenomenon for Christie's detective because without the presence of history the investigation cannot be carried out. It is the presence of history that makes it easier for the detective to handle the crime in a practical manner.

History is extracted by the detective in the form of interview, where each and every character is interviewed by the detective. Interview and personal communication has contributed immensely for the detective in collecting the past incidents and events. In Christie's novels the revelation of the past makes the detective easily witness criminal acts rather than lying on the evidence of a chain of circumstances. Psychology for the detective

plays another significant role in investigating the crime. According to Hercule Poirot the foundation to establish truth rests on the subject of psychology. The psychology of the characters is drawn from their speech, gestures, and habits including how they have reacted to situations. The presence of psychology makes the detective a powerful figure.

Another important method the detective employs in investigating crime is the technical method. The technical method includes the investigation of all the external evidence and objects which makes the process of detection easier and simple for the detective. The fusion of different modes of investigating crime makes the readers and the detective to judge the crime in an intelligent manner. Additionally the detective personal modes of investigating crime affirms that Christie's detective novel is in one hand a professional crime fiction that employs the latest use of technology. The juxtaposition between the detective and the police procedures of investigating crime is depicted in the novels of Agatha Christie. For the detective his personal methods and methodologies remains pivotal. Whereas in Christie's novels, the police are depicted to rely more on circumstantial evidence. Christie's characters rely more on the detective rather than the police and the firm faith that is vested in the figure of the detective is what Christie has abundantly stressed in her character's dialogue. Her novels at times can be interpreted as a critique of the police; in her works she has dismissed the police role as protectors and servants while reminding her readers that they are not the social equals of her characters. Christie's novels blatantly states that the certainty which is afforded by religious belief is no longer applicable in the modern world, there is an urgent need for practical research in order to investigate crime coherently.

The study pays close attention to the patterns of shaping women's crime in Christie's novels. Christie's has denoted the ways in which women's crime and men's crime are interpreted in her novels. The pattern in which women's crime is denoted in her novels is purely the outcome of stereotype. Women characters in her novels are interpreted to have a

specific qualities and traits and qualities. The portrayal of women's crime differs in all the three novels selected for study which have a distinctive approach. The patterns in which women's crime is differentiated from men's crime highlights that gender is framed. The image of women concluded from the crime makes the boundary between what is considered as normal and abnormal creating binary divisions.

The study has deliberated upon the ways in which Christie's fiction documents not only the criminals, it examines the criminal's motives which has reflected the insufficiency of law by putting forward how organized crime is carried out. Besides, the analysis of Christie's novels highlights how money becomes an important motif for murder. The power of money and the greed of human nature are reflected in her novels. Money, fear and revenge proves to be an important contributor of crime. Christie's detective fiction portrays the ways in which there is a total absence of execution, law and intervention of the crowd in investigating crime. Crime is investigated coherently, intellectually and consistently. In Christie's detective novels emphasis is denoted more on the intellectual battle between the detective and the criminal. The intellectual debate and conversation is denoted at length rather than execution and torture. Taking Foucault view, criminal justice system in Christie's novels depends more on "non judicial system" (*Discipline and Punish*, 22). Criminal justice system in the study locates the importance of knowledge and the whole idea of criminal justice is debunked by the detective and his authoritative voice serves as a final conclusion for justice.

The analysis has paid close attention upon the relationship between crime and media. Christie's crime fiction has deliberated upon the ways in which media has contextualized crime, which at times is not reliable enough. Although she has denoted the issue of crime in her novels, each of the three novels takes a different approach. Media by and large in Christie's novels is shown to be instrumental for public consumption, but Christie has deliberated upon the ways in which media exhibits a dual aspect. In the analysis, it is clear

that media has played an important role in circulating information but it is not always reliable as supposed to be. The study also shows that media information and the detective's procedures do not synchronize. At the same time, media in Christie's novels is shown to be class bound. The study traces how media representation formulated public consciousness, which cannot be considered as the ultimate truth. It is a medium that occupies the centre of public life and culture, situated and sustained within the routine activities of everyday life.

An important question on the role of the detective which is often asked in reading crime fiction is addressed in the dissertation. The role of the detective is stressed in the study from different perspectives. In Christie's novels the detective acts like God, he is a figure who is trusted and who is in fact the hero of her novels. The detective role in Christie's novel is to establish truth and to protect the innocent. Besides, the role of the detective is discernible from the ways he investigates crime. Investigating crime does not necessarily mean finding the criminal or punishing the criminal. It requires a practical way of investigation in which personal matters and problems become mandatory. The private affairs and problems of Christie's characters are extracted only by the detective. His private conversation with characters has contributed immensely in establishing truth. Instead of prompting characters to confess before the public, he conducts personal conversation with them to express their thoughts and knowledge which saves them from all kinds of disgrace.

The study has highlighted the corruption of the police as well as the insufficiency of the investigative procedures of the police. In Christie's novels the police are shown to be less empirical than the detective which is represented through the dialogue of her characters. Characters in Christie's novels express their distrust for the police and are unacceptable by them. The presence of the police in Christie's novels only serves an ideological function which is out of reach for some of her characters. Her novels abundantly highlight the incompetency of the police. The study has documented the divergence between the detective

procedures of extracting truth and the legal system of extracting truth. The dissertation denotes that Christie, through the detective persona, launched more humane way of punishing criminals, protecting the innocent and making the criminals sink in guilty feelings.

The study examines the ways in which power is reflected in Christie's novels, which has different characteristics. Christie's detective becomes a disciplinary figure who resembles the panopticon which gives the ability to penetrate into the behavior of the characters. He possesses the power to examine, he serves as a private eye who sees everything and is reflected as the embodiment of Bentham's panopticon. Christie has skillfully created medical practitioners in her novels who are present in all the novels selected for study. The presence of medical practitioners has an implication and the study has analyzed the ways in which the practice of observation of the detective and medical practitioner becomes a form of disciplinary and examination procedures. For both the detective and medical practitioner, observation becomes mandatory, as both of them represent the disciplinary effect. A critical study of two prominent characters in Christie's novels manifests that power is exercised from both of them. Additionally, it demonstrates that knowledge and truth is purely the outcome of power.

Power in Christie's novels is analyzed to incorporate a different approach which is denoted as coming from below. The analysis of her novels has shown that there is no binary division between the rulers and the ruled. In Christie's novels, power becomes a mode that is exercised and can be cultivated by every individual. Power is represented in the form of blackmailing, murder, kidnapping, robbery, mayhem, battery including all other actions which is exercised and put into action. The various forms of crime which Christie has demonstrated in her novels describe the pattern in which the exercise of power becomes a mode of action that is acted upon others. The study highlights that there is a gradual transition from the archetypal concept of power which is regarded to come only from the top level.

Death in Christie's novels becomes an important phenomenon and the study pays close attention to the ways in which death is portrayed in her novels. Death is demonstrated to be a form of justice in Christie's novels which is more appealing and sympathetic. Death in Christie's novels functions as a kind of escapism. The detective allows suicide to take place and death in her novels is manifested as a form of administering the bodies while reversing the idea that death is based on the rights of the sovereign. Death in Christie's novels is analyzed to be one form of justice in which law is excluded. Justice in her novels is declared not on the basis of law and order, it rests solely on the consent of the detective.

An important concept of power which is analyzed in the study is the power relationship that has existed between the author and the readers of Christie's detective fiction. As already mentioned in the previous chapter Christie has employed an important technique called "red herrings" in her novels. "Red herring" in Christie's fiction evokes a power game between her readers and the author herself. Besides function as a technique "red herring" in Christie's novels evokes power game between two adversaries. Christie's portrayal of power dynamics in the dissertation has succeeded in the crucial identification of stereotype which is intrinsically interlinked with the perpetuation of power. Christie's characters differ in terms of culture and nationality which automatically puts forth racial stereotyping. She has presented a cultural system in which racial stereotype is considered to be a fixed trait that serves as a mode of identification. Stereotype in her novels is analyzed to be a form of knowledge which is repeated, practiced and repeated. Stereotypes are analyzed to be represented as an important component in generating meaning that forms a deep seated attitude and prejudice.

The stereotyping of crime has been deliberated by Christie in her novels. The stereotypical representations of crime in her novels generate a conclusion that stereotyping is a form of representation and identification that transmits information. Besides the

stereotyping of individuals, crime is also stereotyped, and it formulates social and political actions. Englishness in Christie's detective fiction is analyzed to be self constituted at the same time it is an exterior design which is shaped by time and experience. The traits attributed to Englishness denote how culture has imposed corrections upon other cultures with the assistance of knowledge and social intercourse. Englishness is analyzed to be traits held in common for English and promulgate an individual identity in to it. Stereotype in Christie's novels as discussed in the former chapter is part of human existence, which offers a sign of the whole, soliciting judgment, presenting the different facades which we ourselves have fashioned for the other.

The works of Agatha Christie selected for study have demonstrated how power has wielded human relationship. The analysis has portrayed the manner in which an individual is controlled, trained, supervised and corrected. The study brings forth the manner in which power relations are produced through the production and exchange of signs. Besides, the study portrays the manner in which the production and circulation of meaning is nested in the realm of power. The dissertation manifests that the exercise of power creates and causes to emerge new objects of knowledge and accumulates new bodies of information. The study examines the manner in which power is a central phenomenon in the history of societies, in a massive and global form. Christie's detective fiction holds an important task in bringing out an implicit connection within the construct of power and human society. The study concludes in the light of the observation that power is everywhere. Thus the dynamics of power is well etched in the works of Agatha Christie and the underlying power narrative that are pertinent to the same.

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APPENDICES

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- iii) Visited the following out-of-state libraries for the purpose of the research:
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 - b. Jadavpur University Library (Raja Subodh Chandra Mullick Road, Kolkata)
 - c. National Library of India (Alipore, Kolkata)
 - d. Presidency College Library (College Street, Kolkata)
 - e. The American Library (Nehru Road, Kolkata)
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ABSTRACT

A Study of Power Dynamics in Select Novels by Agatha Christie

Submitted by

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Agatha Christie is one of the most respected modern British detective writers who is called “The Queen of Crime”, “The Mistress of Fair Deceit”, “The First Lady of Crime”, “The Mistress of Misdirection”, “The Detective Story Writer’s Detective Story”. Her body of works consists of sixty seven novels and one hundred and seventeen short stories of detection and mystery. She was born just outside Torquay, England, on September 25, 1890 to Frederick Alvah and Clarissa Margaret Boehme Miller and died in 1976 in Wallingford, England (Kellegham 154). Christie has established a pattern of extraordinary resilience with the publication of *The Mysterious Affairs at Styles* which was published in 1920. She has contributed immensely for the development of the detective novel, which includes the development of the country house murder. In Christie’s works the settings of her novels take unusual surroundings in specific locales which are often isolated. The main implication of the isolated settings is to limit the number of suspects. The close circles emphasize the abnormality of the crime by isolating it from everyday matters of the world around it which automatically creates tension and suspense (Bargainnier, *The Gentle Art of Murder* 22)

The study has explored the dynamics of power in Agatha Christie’s novels namely *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926), *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934) and *Death on the Nile* (1937). In Christie’s detective fiction, power is represented to be the crux, which has a generating force that circulates through all levels of society and all social relationships. Power in Christie’s detective fiction becomes an integral part in formulating meaning which is exercised rather than being possessed. Christie has depicted the manner in which power is mutually constitutive and which designates relationships between partners. Christie’s approach towards power aims to declare that power has a reciprocal appeal, a perpetual linking and a perpetual reversal.

The detective novel is a genre of literature that deals with crime, which is subsequently followed by investigation, and the revelation of the criminal. It has contributed immensely towards the growth and development of literature. It has served as a text that has depicted the consequence of crime and therefore discouraged others from criminal activities by suggesting that crime is not only rampant but is containable in society. In the detective novel, the main protagonist of the novel is the private detective who serves as a private eye. Characters in a detective novel pin their hope upon the detective while hoping to get justice and they focus solely on the detective in order to locate the perpetrator of crime. The genre serves as a trajectory in mirroring society. Most of the incidents and motifs that are portrayed in Christie's novels are the kind of events that are undergone and experienced in every society. Apart from the crime committed, the presence of mystery and suspense has gripped the reader's imagination but it has inversely served as a distinguishing feature of the genre. The genre serves not only in terms of entertaining the readers but it has equipped the readers to police the present scenario of the society and it has become a profound social document.

Power is an integral part of the description of social reality. It exhibits the capacity to strike a chord in many people because it has the ability to conquer anything in its path, to stream roll not only the law, but economy, society as well as government. Power is dynamic and it does not bear only one single trait or characteristic. Since it encapsulates certain traits and characteristics, power is not something that has a single absolute meaning. The meaning and definition of power is varied and it cannot be solely associated with violence or force. Power can be represented through signs, symbols, knowledge, language and behavior including personality; it is not always as coercive as it appears to be. The well being and experience of human activities is enveloped by power, as it is present in all forms of human relationships. Power is not to be

thought of as something already constituted, rather it is a subject that makes us consider how human society is constituted by the historical relationship of power. Power has one important characteristic in that, it does not always repress or forbid it but instead gives an individual the full autonomy to exercise his will. Michel Foucault in his book *Power* stresses:

Power exists only as exercised by some on others, only when it is put into action, even though, of course, it is inscribed in a field of sparse available possibilities underpinned by permanent structures. This also means that power is not a matter of consent (340).

Therefore, power connotes different varieties of crime which have been consistently depicted in the novels of Agatha Christie. The argument certainly holds true in Agatha Christie's novels. Crime in Christie's novels comprises murder, kidnapping, blackmailing, robbery, suicide, mayhem, assault as well as battery. The various forms of crime which Christie has demonstrated in her novels are the ways in which power is manifested. Moreover they are the patterns in which the exercise of power becomes a mode of action that is enacted upon others.

The study has laid emphasis on the significance of the detective novel and at the same time it incorporates the dynamics of power in Christie's novels. Agatha Christie's detective novels encapsulate the significance of the detective novel by criticizing materialism, the injustice of the social and political system, the corruption and incompetence of the police and the social structure in which women's crime is defined. Christie's novels have highlighted the patterns of shaping women's crime, which has a stark difference from the crime that is committed by men.

The study explores the significance and vastness of crime fiction and has highlighted the relationship between crime and media. The relationship between crime and media has long been

a matter of recurrent controversy. It has grown out of a broader concern with the development of the popular daily press. Media are central to the interplay between an individual's private troubles with crime and the social issue of crime. The news media, in particular, provide an important forum in which private troubles are selectively gathered up, invested with a broader meaning, and made available for public consumption (Sacco 142).

The study has explored the manner in which there is an absence of execution and punishment, but investigation has become an important phenomenon with the exclusion of intervention of the crowd. In her novels, accounts of execution become the account of investigation and it has parted away from confession to the intellectual struggle between criminal and investigator. Foucault states:

If torture was so strongly embedded in legal practice, it was so because it revealed truth and showed the operation of power. It assured the articulation of the written on the oral, the secret on the public, the procedure of investigation on the operation of confession: it made it possible to reproduce the crime on the visible body of the criminal (*Discipline and Punish* 55).

Torture is a part of a ceremony that reveals the truth of crime, the strict judicial game, the way of obtaining evidence, as well as a battle (41). The detective procedures of extracting truth and the legal system of extracting truth has become a distinguishing trait that needs to be debated upon. The statement above has demonstrated that the horror of the crime by the criminal is synonymous with the horror that is imposed upon the legal system. Both of them are one side of the same coin, the former depicting the external crime and the latter depicting the internal dynamics of crime.

“Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (Foucault, *History* 94). The concept of power plays a significant role in the novels of Agatha Christie in understanding its relationship with crime. Christie’s detective fiction signifies how power is constituted through the accepted forms of knowledge, scientific understanding and truth.

The dynamics of power gives importance to the analysis and understanding of power relations based on the detective and his procedures of investigating crime. The detective in Christie’s novels procedures of investigating crime rests mainly on his power and the freedom he possesses. He becomes the central figure who is feared, and possesses the power to supervise and his final conclusion is regarded as final justification for justice. The study renders a coherent analysis on how the narrative of Agatha Christie employs an alternative structure of power in order to counter the conventional modes of power.

Foucault challenges the traditional notion that power is associated with authority because according to him power does not only spring from the seemingly authoritarian figure when he says “power comes from below”. The statement also makes it discernible that power is a mode that is exercised and can be cultivated by every individual without any limitations. When it comes to crime, power is generated from both top and below in Christie’s novels. So, in Christie’s novels the nature of power is portrayed from a different sphere. The system of class which has different characteristics, that has contrasting binary divisions is unravelled. Instead in her novels power lies more or less in an individual’s personality.

The study has explored the manner in which the concept of “red herring” becomes an important phenomenon that has highlighted the aspect of power. With the presence of the “red

herring” and certain other forms of clues, readers often perceived who the criminals would be at the back of their mind. Riddles provide scope for the readers to determine who the suspect would be, and they have served as an important trajectory by highlighting the power relationships between the readers and the author. The presence of the riddle in Christie’s novels has precipitated the battle between the author and the readers in which readers are often misdirected and the author has often rejected the suspects, thereby making the least likely suspects the murderer. The reader possesses the full autonomy to guess and predict the criminal before the detective proclaims the criminal at the climax of the novel. In Christie’s novels, riddles are represented in the form of the “red herring”. It is through the constant employment of the “red herring” in her novels that the riddle takes its proper shape and figure.

Besides, the dynamics of power is reflected from the manner in which stereotype serves as a form of knowledge and identification that fixes the character of an entire group acting as formulae in oral expression. Power is exercised in Christie’s novels through human communication, by means of language, system of signs and other symbolic medium. Power depicted from different subject matter has resulted into different encounters and experiences. The analysis of Christie’s detective novels is purely a cultural ecosystem of stereotypes which possess the power to shape identity, individuality, community as well as culture. Her novels which have been selected for study affirm that stereotype has dual qualities because it is both external as well as internal. Stereotype in Christie’s novel becomes a metaphorical power that discovers difference and is reinforced through speech, jokes, communication and most importantly the crime which occurs in all her novels.

Christie’s detective fiction has taken her readers into an uncharted territory when it comes to crime and criminals. The works of Agatha Christie that have been selected for study

have demonstrated how power has been wielded in human relationships. The analysis has portrayed the manner in which an individual is controlled, trained, supervised and corrected. The study brings forth the manner in which power relations are produced through the production and exchange of signs. Besides, the study portrays the manner in which the production and circulation of meaning is vested in the realm of power. The dissertation manifests that the exercise of power creates and causes to emerge new objects of knowledge and accumulates new bodies of information. It has concluded that power is a central phenomenon in the history of societies, in a massive and global form. In doing so, it asserts that Christie's detective fiction holds an important task in bringing out an implicit connection within the construct of power and human society. Thus, the dynamics of power is well etched in the works of Agatha Christie and the underlying power narrative that are pertinent to the same.

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