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Crime and punishment: Re-reading Agatha Christie's novel murder on the orient express

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Abstract

Agatha Christie was one of the most prominent writers during the Golden Age of Detective Fiction. She was at the height of her success in the 1920s and 30s and was often called the “Queen of Mystery” by her fans and lovers. She is even more important in the historical context since she started writing at a time when not many female authors were writing. Her contemporaries and predecessors mostly included male writers. When she started writing, Sherlock Holmes was at the pinnacle of stardom and it was a challenge for Christie to create a detective that would be different than Sherlock and yet appeal to the readers. Credit goes to Christie for taking up this challenge and making a position of her own. It is said that only Bible and William Shakespeare have outsold her. Many of her novels were listed in Guinness World Records for the number of copies sold. Christie wrote 66 detective novels and 14 short stories collection. She also wrote 5 novels under the penname Mary Westmacott. Among the many sleuths and detectives whom she created, two became widely famous and enjoy the immense amount of success even today, namely Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple. “Murder on the Orient Express” is one of the most famous and successful novels written by Agatha Christie featuring Hercule Poirot, the Belgian detective. It has been adapted into popular culture such as TV and cinema number of times. Poirot has stood the test of time and remains one of the most popular detectives in the literary world. This research paper will critically analyse and evaluate the novel “Murder on the Orient Express”. The reason for selecting this novel was its fame, success and the author who wrote it. This novel has been adapted into cinema various times. Two such noteworthy movies would be one from 1974, directed by Sidney Lumet and another one released in 2018, directed by Kenneth Branagh. This novel has been reprinted hundreds of times. Many readers have reread it. Being a mystery novel, once a reader has read it and has known the mystery, one would think there would be no incentive behind reading the same mystery novel a second time. But this is not the case with Christie's books. MOE is one such novel and thus it was felt that a deeper understanding of this mystery novel by a critical evaluation is essential from the academic context. Another reason for selecting this novel for the purpose of analysis is that this novel was a lot different than the other whodunit mystery novels penned by Christie. The setting of the story is the same. There are typical elements in the novel one would see in any Agatha Christie novel. What sets this one apart is the number of culprits involved in the murder, the way all the suspects are related to each other and the victim and the moral issues and sense of justice served in the end. In fact, the sense of justice as shown by Poirot in this novel differs from his usual mannerisms in the other novels. This novel is important because Christie chose to break away from the formulaic plot and broke the rules of the genre to write a story which was a breath of fresh air. This paper will critically analyse the aspect of justice, ethics and morality and will try to analyse if the victim in the novel was really the victim or whether the 12 suspects were the real victims. This research paper will also analyse the source of inspiration for the novel, narrative style used in the novel and the presence of stereotypes and their importance in the novel. This research paper will also critically analyse the aspect of moral judgement and justice shown.

Keywords: Detective, ethics, justice, morality, mystery

Introductions

Mystery Fiction is one of the most popular genres in the world of Literature. Detective Fiction is a subgenre of Mystery Fiction. Detective Fiction often has a character who is a detective and is assigned the task to solve the mystery which usually is a murder or some other crime (Rzepka, 2016) ^[11]. The story will introduce various characters to the readers and gradually various facts will be laid out and eventually the detective in the story solves the puzzle by logical deduction of the various information gathered throughout the story rather than just stumbling upon the evidence by chance (Wilhelm, 2001) ^[13].

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This genre which was once considered of not having significant value for the purpose of academic research now attracts many researchers and scholars, thanks to Post Modernism and Cultural Criticism (Kenley, 2015) ^[16]. Mystery and Detective Fiction was popular among readers even before the genre started gaining importance in the academic context. Urbanization and World Wars saw a growth in criminal activities in the urban cities due to lack of employment, poor living conditions and various other factors (Messkoub, 2008) ^[7]. The public was in need of vigilantes who would stop crime and help people in distress. Although popular among the masses, this genre did not gain attention from the academic groups. However, this genre later presented scholars and researchers with interesting subjects such as analysis of the human mind, society and the factors that triggers the notorious behaviours in human beings (Clark, 1966) ^[5]. MOE was first published in the year 1933 in Saturday Evening weekly magazine. MOE starts in a fashion similar to the plots of many mystery stories. It introduces many characters in the beginning. All the characters board the train in Stamboul, modern day Istanbul. Since the plot of the story is set in the train, there was no requirement of having characters who are native to Turkey. The detective Poirot too boards the train to go back home in Europe. The journey starts and gradually the character development takes place. The entire story takes place in the Calais coach of the train where most of the prominent characters of the novel exist (Martín, 2019) ^[8]. A character is then murdered. The murder happened on the moving train. The story gradually develops into a “Mystery Locked Room” formulaic plot. No one from outside the train could have murdered. The usual suspects are all the passengers on the train. Interaction between various passengers tries to give readers clues with regards to the motive of crime and indication of who might be the perpetrator of the crime. Poirot is assigned the case. He interacts with all the passengers and through these conversations, further information is provided to the readers. However, the twist ending not only comes as a surprise, but it was far ahead of its time. The concept of “They all did it” was very different from the usual single murderer or the perpetrator of the crime getting caught in the end. In this novel, the motive behind the crime was also not lust or greed or anger but was a sense of retributive justice. Usually in a mystery novel, the perpetrator of the crime is caught to be tried by the judicial system or the law in the end (Makinen & Patrick, 2016) ^[6]. This is another area where this novel differs from the other stories of this genre. These differences are what made this novel unique at the time it was published and hence this has been selected for the critical evaluation for this research paper.

The story shows Hercule Poirot, the famous Belgian detective on board the Orient Express. The story introduces many characters and readers are given brief glance at their behaviours and mannerisms. One of the passengers on board the train, Mr Samuel Edward Ratchett is murdered: stabbed 12 times in the chest. The train is then stuck in the snow due to blizzard. Thus, the story becomes a perfect Locked room mystery. Poirot gathers clues and readers keep inching closer towards catching the culprit. Gradually the focus may shift from one character to another and reader may alternate between thinking he is the murderer or she is the murderer. Similar to any story written by Christie, this one too has many characters from different ethnic backgrounds. There

was a Princess Natalia Dragomiroff of Russia and her maid Hildegard Schmidt, Miss Mary Debenham who returned from serving in Baghdad, Samuel Ratchett who was shown as a man with bad manners from the start, Hector Macqueen who was Ratchett’s personal secretary and Edward Masterman who was Ratchett’s valet, Countess Helena and her husband Count Rudolph Andrenyi, Greta Ohlson, Cyrus Hardman, an Ex American Cop, Mrs Caroline Hubbard, Dr Stavros Constantine who checked upon the stab wounds and declared the time of death, Col John Arbuthnot, a man who has served in the Army (Wilkinson, 2013) ^[14] and who is shown to have been attracted towards Miss Debenham. Poirot eventually cracks the case and provides two solutions to the case in the end: one of the solutions was not possible and other was what actually happened. What makes this story different from the other stories in the genre is that not one or two of the suspects but all twelve of them were culprits. Ratchett was involved with the kidnapping of a young girl named Daisy Armstrong and eventually her death. All the passengers aboard the train were somehow related to this young girl and her family and the murder of Sam Ratchett was a revenge killing. What makes the story further unique is the way justice was served in the end. Unlike other stories featuring Poirot where judicial system takes care of the culprit after Poirot catches the culprit, Justice in MOE is served outside the boundaries of the law. The absence of legal justice system in the story makes it similar to the very first story in the Detective Fiction genre “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” written by Edgar Allan Poe (Owais, 2018; Ahmed, 2018) ^[1, 9].

Critical Analysis of “Murder on the Orient Express” Foundation and Source of Inspiration

A writer always creates characters, premises and plot of the story based on his/her observation of the events in the world. A writer draws some inspiration from a source to create the characters. Agatha Christie before writing as a professional writer, voluntarily served as a nurse during WW1. She was treating Belgian soldiers during this time. One can see the inspiration for Hercule Poirot, the Belgian detective. Poirot is in fact, introduced as a war veteran. Agatha spent time in Turkey and wrote “The Murder on the Orient Express” during her stay in Turkey. She wrote the novel in a hotel in Istanbul, namely Pera Palace. One can see influence of Istanbul in the novel. Agatha rode in the train for the first time in 1928 and she was fascinated by the travel so much that she not only found train travel having potential for a mystery story, she in fact made train travel the central premise of MOE. Christie wrote in her autobiography

All my life, I had wanted to go on the Orient Express. When I had travelled to France or Spain or Italy, the Orient Express had often been standing in Calais and I had longed to climb onto it (Federici, 2018) ^[15].

Orient Express provided perfect and yet a typical setting of a Christie novel. It helped introduce many characters from different backgrounds in the same place. Microcosm of different people is almost always a part of a Christie’s novel. There is also a similarity between the way a young girl, Daisy Armstrong is kidnapped in the novel and the kidnapping of young son of Charles Lindberg, an aviator. The train in the novel got stuck due to a blizzard. Hence neither the suspects can flee anywhere, nor was there a prospect of anyone else apart from the passengers within the

train committing the crime. Christie may have been inspired by a similar incident that happened in 1929. A blizzard trapped a train fifty miles away from Istanbul in 1929 (Wilkinson, 2013) ^[14]. Of course, there was no murder but it may have presented Christie with an idea for the plot and premise of the mystery story.

The enigmatic Poirot couple aboard the Orient Express nods to a bygone era of Murder on the Orient Express, and beloved Agatha Christie writes beautifully, dwelling on each character to unravel the mystery of who murdered the American tycoon aboard the luxury train. When writing *Murder on the Orient Express*, Agatha Christie meticulously noted the details of the carriages; clues such as the location of doorknobs would prove vital to Poirot's investigation. Of course, adjustments are needed to add more scale, with a strange moment of peace and action outside of the Orient Express in the white desert, including the traditional "rally" scene that almost makes you guess, and the details of that period. The style is beautiful, this is a wonderfully interpreted and interesting murder mystery.

Narrative style in "Murder on the Orient Express"

MOE has many characters from different ethnic backgrounds and each one of them has unique traits and characteristics which is very important for the development of the story. Like any other Christie's whodunit, MOE follows a formulaic narrative in which Poirot converses and interviews a culturally diverse group of people. These conversations gradually put light on relationships between various persons and their relationship with the victim. Christie has utilised third person omniscient style of narration. For most of the story, formal narrative pattern is seen. It gives depth and meaning to various characters without unnecessarily increasing the length of the story. The characters through their thoughts about other characters reveal many information. Christie also does not give away too much information and thereby holds back the required information to keep the readers guessing about the perpetrator of the crime. For example, when Mrs Debenham is introduced to Poirot, Christie gives information to the readers of Mrs Debenham's life up until that point and at the same time through her thoughts on Poirot, readers are given information about characteristics and mannerisms of Mrs Debenham. Although none of this information can help reader guess that Mrs Debenham was one of the perpetrators of the crime. This sort of third person omniscient narration is seen throughout the novel where sufficient information is conveyed to bring the characters to life without giving away too much to help readers solve the crime. Tateishi (2014) ^[12] states that

Third person omniscient narrative is a method used by authors and writers to provide the readers with insights into the perspectives of the characters and at the same time, clears ambiguity and may perhaps lead to different type of understandings. ^[12]

In most of the story, readers read the story from Poirot's viewpoint. Readers are given access to information which Poirot accumulates without giving away too much information. In most of the story, the readers have access to the information available to Poirot. So, this hooks up the readers and presents them with a challenge to solve the puzzle before Poirot solves it. In Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, the narration is done by Sherlock's accomplice Dr Watson and hence there were information

accessed by Sherlock but which were kept hidden from the readers until the end when Sherlock solves the puzzle (Wilhelm, 2001). ^[13] There are instances in MOE where Poirot has certain information which readers do not have access to. For example, Poirot has information about the mercantile partnership of Debenham and Freebody. This piece of knowledge is kept hidden from the readers. This is mainly done for having dramatic effects that would lead to twists and turns in the story and eventually lead to exciting climaxes. But barring few such instances, much of the information that Poirot has access to, is conveyed to the readers as well. Whatever Poirot thinks, the readers hear him. This style keeps the readers interested in the story and helps the readers immerse themselves in the story.

Stereotypes in "Murder on the Orient Express"

A Mystery novel usually has a lot of stereotypical references. These references are sometimes gender centric and sometimes they are racial stereotypes. They are found in MOE too. Poirot while examining the body of Ratchett along with Dr Constantine came to the conclusion that some of the stab wounds seems to be inflicted upon by a woman. This deduction was based on the seemingly lack of intensity of the stab wounds as compared to some other stab wounds (Christie, 2001). ^[3] Now one would argue that this shows gender biasedness. But upon deeper analysis one can state that the author is not being biased towards any gender (Christie, 2001). ^[3] Poirot also made several other deductions upon carefully analysing the dead body of Ratchett. Poirot stated that some of the wounds were inflicted after he was dead, some of the wounds were right-handed and some were left-handed. All these deductions were scientific in nature. In the same way the deduction of a woman inflicting stab wounds to Ratchett was also scientific in nature and it could be said in favour of Christie that she never meant to remark any gender biased stereotype here. Gender biasedness was clearly visible in Sherlock Holmes stories where victims were almost always women and who were shown as helpless in nature (Oztekin, 2021) ^[10]. Many Christie's stories feature memorable women characters such as Miss Marple, Tuppence Beresford, Eileen Brent, Miss Felicity Lemon who were featured in more than one novel. There were few other characters who appeared in a single story such as Anne Bedding Feld in TMB and Mrs Hubbard in MOE. Had the author had biased views, so many memorable female characters would not have been penned by her.

Although Christie creates a stereotypical environment in MOE, every character in the novel is judged by their nationality and the readers are made to do the same. Where Christie excels is the way these characters defy the stereotypes that were planted on them. This is where Christie's writing skills was way ahead of time and very different from her male contemporary authors. Christie often used these stereotypes for dramatic effects and they act as perfect ingredients for twists and turns in the plot. Antonio in MOE was suspected due to his Italian roots and later makes the mockery of the same stereotype that was planted on him.

Without a doubt, that is the solution of the mystery. Doubtless he and this Ratchett were in this kidnapping business together. Cassetti is an Italian name. In some way Ratchett did on him what they call the double-cross. The Italian tracks him down, sends him warning letters first, and

finally revenges himself upon him in a brutal way. It is all quite simple (Christie, 2001).^[3]

Christie realised that people have a tendency to judge others on the basis of their skin colour, accent, ethnicity, physical appearance and used these patterns to develop characters in her stories. Of course, there were instances where these stereotypes were accurate. If the stereotypes were defied all the time, there would be no suspense left for the readers because they would know what was coming up. But there were instances when these stereotypes were defied by the characters.

Justice is served

Usually, the detective in a Christie's story catches the criminal in the end and justice is served legally. This is slightly different in MOE. In MOE, firstly not one or two of the suspects, but all the twelve suspects were found to be guilty of crime: the murder of Samuel Edward Ratchett. Poirot correctly deduces about the involvement of all the twelve suspects and explains individually the motive for each of the characters and how they were related to the victim, a certain Daisy Armstrong and her family who were the victims of a heinous crime committed by Ratchett. What would have intrigued and baffled readers was how all the twelve passengers from diverse backgrounds were related to a single family. As described earlier, the racial stereotypes were used to keep the readers diverted and no reader could have guessed the connection between all of them until Poirot himself explains them in the end. Mrs Caroline Hubbard was revealed to be a famous actress, Linda Arden who also was Daisy's grandmother. Princess Dragorimoff was revealed to be Daisy's Godmother. Miss Debenhaum was former governess of Daisy. Col Arbutnot was in love with Mrs Debenhaum and was also Col Armstrong's best friend. Hector was revealed to be the son of the lawyer for the Armstrong family. Countess Helena was the sister of Daisy's mother. Countess Helena actually did not take part in the murder and her husband, Count Rudolph filled in for her who was shown to have a short temper in the initial pages of the novel during his introduction. Then there was Cyrus who was in love with Daisy's nurse who also committed suicide after the death of Daisy. Hildegard was formerly a cook at Armstrong's house. Edward was revealed to be valet for Col Armstrong. Antonio Foscarelli, another passenger was revealed to be Armstrong's chauffeur and he loved Daisy dearly. Daisy's killing resulted in five deaths in total. Daisy's mother who was pregnant at the time fell into shock and gave birth to a premature baby. Both the baby and mother did not survive. Col Armstrong shot himself following this traumatic episode. Daisy's nanny committed suicide after she was wrongfully accused of being an accomplice in the crime committed.

This leaves many critics and scholars asking if justice was truly served in the end by the righteous Mr Poirot. Although Poirot does not believe in "an eye for an eye", he allowed the call of the justice taken by the suspects outside the court of law. All the twelve suspects were shown to be somehow affected by the death of Daisy Armstrong. Ratchett was the reason of Daisy's death and her death cascaded into other people dying such as her nanny to start with. Eventually the lives of all the twelve suspects were altered and effected. Ratchett, whose real name was Lanfranco Cassetti as deduced correctly by Poirot could not be punished by the judicial system. The twelve members each stabbing Ratchett

once were hoping to serve proportionate justice to the person responsible for their mental trauma and were hoping to be relieved from the mental burden they were under. According to Carlsmith (2008)

Retributive justice is a system by which offenders are punished in exact proportion to the moral magnitude of the intentionally committed harms of the offender^[2].

This leads one to an argument that the passengers on the train were on a mission to serve retributive justice to the man who caused their sufferings and miseries. Another thing to note here is the number of suspects who were used in the story. It was twelve. It was neither eleven or thirteen. It was exactly twelve which is the number for the Christian theory of God having twelve apostles for carrying out God's work. It is this reason why there are twelve members in a jury (Clark, 1966)^[5]. So, it can be stated that the twelve suspects are seen as jury members who carry out the justice and are hence only punishing the person who had escaped the justice system earlier. This number, twelve may have been used by Christie to both challenge as well as confront this very question: Was justice really served? Was Poirot acting as a righteous detective the way he normally does? Poirot has the mind of a good judge. He is always a good judge of character. He is the perfect example of morality. It is this reason why Poirot's friend M. Bouc who was also on the train asks Poirot to take up the case after he finds out that Ratchett was murdered. Bouc knew that Yugoslavian police in their investigation would be partial because of their held stereotypes and the fact that the train had diverse group of people made things worse (Makinen and Patrick, 2016)^[6]. Bouc wanted Poirot to take up the case because he knew Poirot would not only be impartial but would be accurate and righteous in his judgement. The little grey cells which are often mentioned by Poirot in various stories featuring him was mentioned by his friend Bouc when he was pleading Poirot to investigate

Interview the passengers on this train, view the body, examine what clues are there, and then- well, I have faith in you. I am assured that it is no idle boast of yours. Lie back and think – use the little grey cells of your mind and you would know (Christie, 2001)^[3].

Bouc's belief in Poirot's system of investigation and his sense of justice establishes Poirot as the Judge in the story whereas the twelve passengers carrying out their own version of retributive justice become the jury. The victim, Ratchett actually becomes the criminal here. Poirot's morality is undoubtedly unquestionable. Before Ratchett was murdered, he wanted to hire Poirot as he was fearing someone will harm him. Poirot denies serving him as he had doubts on the moral values and ethics of Ratchett. As mentioned by Poirot, he analysed Ratchett closely when they first met at a hotel and he was not very amused by his initial analysis of Ratchett. When finally, Poirot establishes the motive behind Ratchett's murder, he does not submit the findings to the local police when the train arrived at the next station. Christie very skilfully first establishes the role of Poirot as judge, establishes him as the ultimate ethical person and then establishes the twelve passengers as jury. Poirot's decision in the end to let the twelve murderers go was based on the decision that if a criminal escaped the law and the justice system, the system is already violated to start with. Hence to kill such a criminal outside the judicial system is seen as correcting the judicial system that allowed a heinous crime to go unpunished in the first place. Ratchett

whose real name was Lanfranco Cassetti worked for a gang in America who kidnaps young children for money and then kill them. Daisy Armstrong was one of his victims with whom the twelve passengers are connected to. Cassetti was arrested and imprisoned. After imprisonment, he escaped by means of money and then changed his name. Poirot after finding out who killed Ratchett mentions that it was the justice system's failure which led to a criminal escaping away. If Ratchett was not able to run away, it would have been a win for justice system. But it was not to be. Thus, Poirot wanted to undo the wrong which was committed and hence did not hand over any of the passengers to police. Bouc also accepted this judgement as he had firm belief in Poirot's judgement.

Now, I will make clear to you this, my friend. Cassetti was the man! But by means of the enormous wealth he had piled up, and owing to the secret hold he had over various persons, he was acquitted on some technical inaccuracy. Notwithstanding that, he would have been lynched by the populace had he not been clever enough to give them the slip. It is now clear to me what happened. He changed his name and left America. Since then, he has been a gentleman of leisure, travelling abroad and living on his rents (Christie, 2001) ^[3].

When Poirot reveals all the passengers as murderers and establishes all of their motives behind doing so, Mrs Hubbard clears any remaining doubt by stating that it was her who planned this execution and gathered everyone. Antonio suggested that all the 12 passengers should do it together. Mary planned the entire thing with Hector. It was in fact Hector who explained them how Ratchett was able to escape the clutches of justice by means of money (Christie, 2001) ^[3].

In the end, murdering a man who killed innocent children was justified. When Poirot first deduced that Ratchett's real name was Cassetti and he was responsible for the death of Daisy and conveys the same during his conversation with each of the characters, they showed no sympathy towards Ratchett. This actually serves as a classic recipe in an Agatha Christie novel where everyone seems to be the murderer (Christie, 1977). ^[4] The only difference in here is that they all actually were murderers this time. Here are few examples of expressions from various characters in MOE when Poirot told them about the real identity of Ratchett.

Princess Dragorimoff during her conversation with Poirot expresses that strict justice was done (Christie, 2001) ^[3]. Similarly, Col Arbuthnot states that the swine got what he deserved and actually expressed that he would have been happier if he was punished legally, either hanged or electrocuted (Christie 2001) ^[3]. All the 12 passengers believed that they carried out justice and, in the end, Poirot too believed that Justice was served.

A Different Hercule Poirot: Analysis of his investigation method in "Murder on the Orient Express"

Hercule Poirot has had high benchmarks when it comes to investigative techniques. He uses his little grey cells the same way Sherlock Holmes uses science of deduction (Martin, 2019) ^[8]. Almost in all the stories featuring Poirot, he catches the criminal not by sheer luck but by brilliant display of the work of his mind. This seems to take a backseat in MOE. It is very well known by now that Christie took a slightly different approach in MOE. Instead of one murderer, all the suspects were guilty. Instead of an

innocent victim, a bad guy who escaped justice system was murdered. In any mystery novel, to connect one suspect to the murder and then prove it is a herculean task which Christie excels at. To connect all the suspects to the murder was altogether new. The third person narrative did help the readers but the manner in which Poirot confirms Ratchett's real name to be Cassetti is a bit ambiguous. The way Poirot stumbles upon few words of writing from a letter – he uses moustache tongs, wire and a stove to do it, was a bit of a lazy approach from Poirot's standards. Confirming Ratchett to be the evil Cassetti who kidnapped Daisy Armstrong few years back just on the basis of words "Remember Daisy Armstrong" is not satisfactory. It could easily have been planted by the suspects in order to convince Poirot that they were serving justice to the bad guy. Confirming the real identity of the murdered person just on the basis of three words was very atypical of Poirot and it almost seems like the detective is forced to wrap up the investigation and declare that justice is served. Most of the revelations barring few are based on Poirot's past recollections and memories about the kidnapping case. In fact, it was Edward who first discloses that Ratchett was actually Cassetti and Poirot just acknowledges to it positively. Poirot never considered the old man with a lame leg who was beside his coach in the train as a suspect (Christie, 2001) ^[3]. This is very different from any other Christie's works where everyone present at the scene of crime is a suspect irrespective of their health, age and gender. Suspect until proven guilty and guilty only if there is enough evidence is always the essence of whodunit stories by Christie. Although MOE falls into the category of a Locked Room Mystery, there was however one mode of exit point, open window in the victim's room. Poirot rejects possibility of the window as a path to escape without justifying it with a valid reason. Another example of laziness was the manner in which luggage of the passengers were checked after Poirot takes up the investigation. It seems as if Poirot knows the end of the story and searching through the luggage seems pointless. He actually gives the task of searching to his friend Bouc which he would not have done in any other story. Poirot also connects Col Arbuthnot and Miss Debenhaum to the crime on the basis of a conversation they both had which Poirot overheard. This was not how Poirot worked his way in a case. He never stumbled upon evidence. The only deduction that Poirot seems to have done here using his grey cells was that a handkerchief which was found at the scene of crime belonged to Princess Dragorimoff. He deduced this by drawing the logic that Princess Dragorimoff's real Russian name was Natalia Dragorimoff and N in Russian looks similar to capital English alphabet H. H was imprinted on the handkerchief. Poirot also deduced that the sounds and noises that were made till 1:15 am was just to show Poirot that all the passengers have an alibi at 1:15 AM. Since Ratchett's watch was found stopped at 1:15, it was assumed that the murder happened at that time. The murder actually happened an hour earlier and Ratchett's watch was found stopped at 1:15 since he forgot to set it. Making noises and sounds for presenting an alibi is a cliché and Poirot is not expected to fall to this kind of trickery.

Conclusions

It seems as if the mannerism of Poirot was just for the sake of distracting the readers from coming to the conclusion of the likelihood of all the passengers being murderers. If

Poirot would have carried out the investigation technique, he is so famous for, the readers would also come closer to solving the puzzle and thereby would not be shocked and surprised which they were in their first reading of "Murder on the Orient Express". Even after all these shortcomings, MOE still stands the test of time and will always be remembered for breaking away from the rules of the genre. In order to break away from the formula, few new things had to be incorporated. MOE also offers readers with a great readability value. A critic can re-read the entire novel and further analyse each and every character and find something new in the process. MOE will continue to impress scholars and researchers in time to come. It is clearly evident from many adaptations of the novel. With no fewer than eight film, television, theater and video game releases since 1974, when the first feature film based on the novel was released, Murder on the Orient Express remains one of Agatha Christie's three favorite detective stories, as well as one of the most popular thrillers.

List of Acronyms

1. MOE: Murder on the Orient Express
2. TMBS: The Murder in the Brown Suit
3. WW1: World War 1

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