

**Justice in Crime Fiction:
Edgar Allan Poe's "The Murders in the Rue
Morgue" and Agatha Christie's Murder
On the Orient Express**

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"العدالة في آدب الجريمة: إدجار الان بو في قصة "مقتل في شارع رو مورج" ورواية أجاثا كريستي *مقتل في قطار الشرق السريع*"

يهدف البحث الراهن لدراسة مفهوم العدالة في آدب الجريمة كما تم عرضه في قصة ادجر الان بو "مقتل في شارع رو مورج" ورواية أجاثا كريستي *مقتل في قطار الشرق السريع* . فيتناول البحث أيضا دراسة مقارنة بين المعالجة الذكورية والنسائية للكاتبين لمفهوم العدالة مع الاخذ بالاعتبار الاختلاف بين نشأه بو ككاتب امريكي وكريستي ككاتبه بريطانية وخاصة كريستي تعتبر امتداد لبو الذي انشأ آدب الجريمة في بداية القرن التاسع عشر و جاءت كريستي لتكمل مشواره حتى بداية القرن العشرين.

تناولت الدراسة تعريف ادب الجريمة ونشأته وخصائصه وكيفية تطوره وهدفه في البحث عن الحقيقة الغامضة في آدب الجريمة وتحقيق العدالة والاخلاق عندما فشلت مؤسسات الدولة من تحقيقه في تلك الفترة.

أجرت الباحثة دراسة مقارنة بين الجريمة والتحقيقات حولها لكشف غموضها وشخصيه المخبر والقائل والأدلة والحلول في كلا من العملين وكيفية تحقيق العدالة في نهاية الرواية. وهل تحققت ام لا؟ وإذا تحققت ما هي العقوبة؟ وهل تحققت بدافع الانتقام من القائل ام لا؟ ولماذا اختلفت شخصيه القائل في قصة بو عن القائل في رواية كريستي؟ وما هي دوافع القائل في كلا من العملين المختارين؟ قامت الباحثة بالإجابة على كل هذه التساؤلات من خلال معالجه قصة ادجر الان بو ورواية أجاثا كريستي المختارين.

كلمات مفتاحيه: آدب الجريمة -العدالة- العدالة الأخلاقية -مفهوم الانتقام-أجاثا كريستي- ادجر الان بو.

Abstract

This research aims at investigating the concept of justice in crime fiction as represented in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841) and in Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934). It is an attempt to bring fresh perspectives and interpretations to the genre- its definition, origin, history and elements are all explored- through a comparative analysis of two different writers in order to discover new readings and discussions of their biography and literary legacy. In addition, the researcher aimed at comparing between the male/female and American/British manipulation of the chosen works, especially Christie can be considered an extension to Poe. Furthermore, the researcher explored two different ages in two different countries in order to monitor the changes occurred to the genre, starting from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. In addition, the similarities and dissimilarities between Poe's short story and Christie's novel are all examined.

This study also manipulates a general background of crime fiction as a genre, its origin, characteristics, stages for development and its aim to arrive at the truth and achieving justice among societies. The researcher manipulates a comparative study between the two-selected works to discover the hidden motives beneath the crime, the character of the detectives, the clues, solutions, criminals and how to achieve justice at the end of the selected works.

Key words: crime fiction- justice-moral justice- revenge- Edgar Allan Poe- Agatha Christie.

Justice in Crime Fiction:

Edgar Allan Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*

The purpose of this research is to investigate the concept of justice in crime fiction as presented by Edgar Allan Poe in his short story "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841) and by Agatha Christie in her novel *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934). In this comparative study of how the two writers dealt with the topic of justice the two works, I will throw light of the dichotomy of male versus female as well as that of American versus British, especially that Christie can be considered an extension of Poe. Furthermore, the researcher will explore the changes that occurred to genre, from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth.

Crime fiction is one of the exceptional fictional subgenres which introduced more suspense to fiction. Rachel Franks affirms that "suspense and mystery are key elements that are nearly ubiquitous to the genre" (60). It fictionalized crime, describing criminals, clues, evidences, victims, detectives, suspects and suggested solutions for the mystery of the crime as an attempt to achieve justice and preserve order within societies.

Crime fiction developed gradually and took years to be acknowledged. In reference to this feature of the subgenre, Lucy Sussex explains that "the development of the genre was not a straightforward progression. It was initially, amorphous, lacking definition and even a name" (7). Crime Fiction began to be acknowledged as a new and established subgenre of fiction in Britain,

USA and France in the 1840s. With the turn of the century, it became a major subgenre of literature. Maurizio Ascari declares that "the 1840s were an eventful decade in the development of Crime Fiction" (93). In the 1930s this subgenre gained even more recognition through its influence on other literary genres as Stuart Sim makes clear (2).

The subgenre was greatly influenced as Sim says "by the format of Classic American crime fiction of the 1930s to 1950s" (2). Moreover, there was a global desire to feel, see, achieve human salvation, fulfill justice and cultivate social regulations and morality among human being for the purpose of better world. Bill Philips assumes that "it is a vehicle for identity, politics, nationalism, transnationalism and neocolonialism. But what has become increasingly prevalent over recent decades is its concern for social justice and the betterment of our world" (13). In other words, the society needs to issue fair judgments upon people and classify them according to their deeds, not their ranks or positions in life. Hence, criminals should be punished and virtuous people should be rewarded. In his *Autobiographical Considerations of the Dupin Tales*, Richard Kopley denotes that "the genre emerged from suffering. And its purpose was redemption" (85).

Similarly, the genre aimed at finding truth behind the mystery of crime. Frankie Y. Bailey assumes that "Historically, crime fiction has evolved parallel to political and criminal justice systems" (1). Besides, the writers of that genre presented solutions through portrayals of intelligent and talented detectives which largely help to re-regulate the laws of their societies and, in turn, attempt to spread morality and equality as well. Peter Baker & Deborah Shaller declare that:

What we may gain from these assertions that crime fiction represents equal rights for everybody in instigating criminal investigations regardless of the status of the victim in question- is the emphasis on moral metaphysics and ethical essentialism (144).

Crime fiction held a significant position for the mental and intellectual atmosphere created through analyzing the crime's evidences and clues, a process which triggered the mental curiosity of the readers to create the demanded suspense and to discover the identity of the murderer. It will also highlight the hidden motives behind the crime and the clues to solving the mysteries. The readers, will then have more light thrown on the psychology of criminals. Richard Bradford mentions that "in the classic detective novel the reader and the detective share the same perspectives and objective; to solve the crime and identify the perpetrator" (2).

Consequently, this intellectual process resulted in the readers' increased maturity and self-consciousness, since this genre owed much of its success to the mental response between readers and writers. Julian Symons affirms this fact when she says that

the pleasure the intelligent reader gets from reading detective stories is thus partly the fascination of engaging in a battle of wits with the author, something more nearly akin to a game of chase or a crossword puzzle than to the emotional rewards commonly looked for in reading fiction (8).

It adds to the reader's experience and enrichment of his psyche which adds to his "self esteem" as Kopley says. (85)

Besides these psychological and intellectual functions of crime fiction, it also has social functions. It cautions and warns readers of

future dangers and helps them work on detecting similar mysteries in their lives. It, in a sense, adds to the social stability and establishing peace and security in life. This feature accounts for the era of its appearance. Lawrence Frank tries to find this link when he says: "it is possible to argue that the detective story appeared at a moment of social and intellectual crisis that it both recognized and defined" (30). The Industrial Revolution caused migration in big numbers from the rural to urban areas. This migration resulted in the increase of the number of criminals in big cities and the appearance of Crime Fiction. Ascari explains: "the nineteenth-century growth of crime fiction was closely associated with increasing urbanization" (109).

Accordingly, Writers regarded Fiction as the most suitable literary form for manipulating themes related to social realism such as justice, revenge, truth and morality for many reasons: first; it enables writers to convey the emotions of characters to readers more appropriately than other genres. Second, Fiction allows for enough space and time to present the circumstances and consequences of the crime and to give details about the truth behind it. Finally, the comprehensive, lively and flexible nature of novel helped to fictionalize crimes and to discover their mysteries as an attempt to establish justice within societies through providing authentic portrayals of communities. Accordingly, writers preferred fiction to other literary forms to write about regulating societies by achieving justice through punishing criminals and defending the victims' rights and achieving social order. XU Wenru affirms that social order can be established or restored through Crime Fiction (58). Kimtoft Hansen (143) and Heather Ostman (1) assert the social function of Crime fiction. It, from their similar points of view, asserts the reinstallation of order, regulations and morality in societies.

The roots of crime fiction are traceable to the earliest human narratives for over thousands of years: the first crime on earth was of *Abel* who killed his brother *Cain* in his anger and jealousy. Allah said in

The Glorious Quran: "The (selfish) soul of the other led him to the murder of his brother: he murdered him, and became (himself) one of the lost ones" (Al-Maaida 5: 20).

In literature, the roots of Crime Fiction appear in Drama. Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, can be considered the earliest brilliant literary work which applied the characteristics of crime fiction through introducing the crime from a different angle. Oedipus contributed to the discovering of the truth about the murder of king Laius and the discovery of the murderer, himself. In this concern, John Scaggs declares that "The story of *Oedipus the King* draws together all of the central characteristics and formal elements of the detective story, including a mystery surrounding a murder, a closed circle of suspects, and the gradual uncovering of a hidden past"(9). Similarly, In William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the crime has been committed before the narrative begins by the killing of old King Hamlet by his own brother Claudius, to be the new king. Supernatural elements and the actors in the play within the play, play the part of the detective in *Hamlet*.

In Crime Fiction, or what Michael Clay Thompson (9) and J. Brander Mathews (594) call "detective Fiction," the crime should be central to the plot (Bailey 1). If the crime has a reason, the work itself is called "*hard-boiled fiction*," as Scaggs says (55). Besides crime, other elements of Crime Fiction include criminals, investigation, exploration of hidden motives behind the crime, detective or the protagonist who is portrayed as a person of high intellectual qualifications, suspects which are misleading clues and evidences to maintain suspense and anxiety, solutions and the final judgment of guiltiness for the sake of achieving justice.

Besides being the father of crime fiction, Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) is considered the master of the Gothic or Horror Fiction as

Arthur C. Rickett says (630). He is also one of the most brilliantly-gifted American poets, short story tellers, critics and lecturers.

From his childhood, Poe lived tragic circumstances among his family; his father disappeared after his birth and his mother died at the age of three. He lived with a friend of his parents. Due to the financial help of his parents' friend, Poe completed his education and began to establish his literary reputation and professional career, but after a short time he experienced the same bitter feelings at the death of his parents' friend.

Poe's life was very sad and depressing, a fact which contributed to his inclination towards horror fiction. The death of his wife added to his tragedy afterwards. In a letter dated 30 January 1847, he wrote:

I have absolutely no pleasure in the stimulants in which I sometimes so madly indulge. It has not been in the pursuit of pleasure that I have periled life and reputation and reason. It has been in the desperate attempt to escape from torturing memories- memories of wrong and injustice and imputed dishonor- from a sense of insupportable loneliness and a dread of some strange impending doom (qtd. in Rickett 630).

Poe, as Thompson says, became one of the first writers "to earn a living exclusively through his writing" (9). In 1849, he died at the age of forty through mysterious circumstances as if he were a character in his fiction. After his death, his crime fiction took "decades before its full influence was felt. In the meantime, crime continued to be written, and avidly read" (Sussex 25).

The publication of his first short story "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841) left an enormous impact upon Crime Fiction as a whole. Symons affirms that "the father of detective fiction, in any serious sense, was undoubtedly Edgar Allan Poe"(10). Scaggs also reached the same conclusion about the influence of Poe on the genre (7).

Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841) was greatly praised by his contemporaries and readers during and after his life. In 1841, it was first published in *Graham's Magazine* and the response of his readers was immense and far-reaching. Kenneth Silverman mentions that "upon its release, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and its author were praised for the creation of a new profound novelty" (173). The work is classified as the first detective story which created the whole genre. After its publication, Poe actually began a new literary era which witnessed a tremendous change and a remarkable development in the field of Crime Fiction. Thompson declares that "to read "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" is to be present at the inception, to witness the very point in intellectual history at which one of our great literary traditions began" (P 9).

In the two-selected works as the focus of this study, crime is the main incident around which the two-works revolved. Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" began with a brutal crime of murder that took place in Rue Morgue in Paris in the summer of 1840. Two white women – a mother and her daughter referred to in the short story as Madame and Mademoiselle L' Espanya, were savagely killed in their locked apartment. The mother was mutilated with a razor and the daughter was strangled and stuffed in the chimney.

Poe's chosen language for the description of the brutality of the murder increased the horror and amplified the drama of the plot. Poe described the dead body of the daughter saying that it "was still warm. There was blood on the face, and on the neck, there were dark, deep marks which seemed to have been made by strong fingers" (43). This very description of the dead body helped in solving the mysteries of the crime and helped readers and characters to be involved within the incidents of the story.

Poe's usage of the passive voice in multiple locations throughout the short story is intentional, since it enhances the mystery leaving the readers perplexed about the criminal's identity. He wrote that the dead body of the two women "had been taken and thrown", It "seemed to have been pulled", and then it "had been thrown". Later on, it "was found", and so on (43).

In the short story, Poe uses words of horror to intensify the sense of terror in the readers' minds. He described the screams of the victims as "long and loud, terrible, fearful sounds" (MRM 45). The unnamed narrator also uses the first person throughout the story. The fact that the narrator is different from the detective, or the story's protagonist, adds to the multiplicity of the views about the horrible incidents of the story. Multiplicity of points of view adds to the mysterious nature of the crime. The narrator also functions as an observer and commentator on the story's action. His comments add to the mystery of the story's action. He describes the detective as follows:

But I could see in his eyes that cold, empty look which told me that his mind was working busily. When he asked me what I

thought of all this, I could only agree with all Paris. I told him I considered it a very difficult problem — a mystery, to which it was not possible to find an answer (46).

The masterly portrayed character of Dupin the detective in the story played a central role throughout the story's action. Poe's presentation of the character of C. Auguste Dupin is one of the most brilliant detective characters in the history of Crime Fiction. Poe presented him as an intelligent detective with special intellectual characteristics which enabled him to discover the truth independently. He, as noticed by M. Artnfield, "does not have secondary characters with whom he needs to share the spotlight" (56).

The story highlights the detective's intellectual power and analytical talent to solve problems and the mystery of crimes through deduction and intuition. Axel Gelfert explains that "the actual detective story is presented as a mere illustration of these more basic considerations of the human cognitive apparatus" (596). Poe's superiority was due to his masterful ability to energize the readers' investigative power with their imagination. Rickett points out that the reader is supposed to exercise both his intellect and imagination to understand the story properly (630). It is a kind of intellectual battle in which the readers and the detectives are their main characters. Poe was also obsessed with finding a relationship between his readers' intellectual intuition and the psychological inquiry of his characters.

This victory of the detective could not be achieved without his special intellectual characteristics which qualified him to be a genius among other characters. Thompson affirms that

some of the elements of the genre include the detective as genius, the pal who narrates, and the shocking solution followed by the explanation of what Poe called the “ratiocination”—the reasoning (8).

Poe's procedure of logical revelation of the mysterious aspects of the crime characterizes the victory of reason in the genre of crime fiction from its appearance till the recent times. Michael Cook refers to Dupin's logical reasoning as the intellectual abstraction arrived at through a series of painstaking deductions, inferred from clues. This conclusion represents not merely the resolution of the mystery but the triumph of ratiocination over the chaos of improbability and uncertainty (11).

In the short story, Poe depended upon a chain of logical deductions based on clues inferred from his text to instigate the readers' attention, create suspense and make his detective more convincing than any professional police officer. In “Murders in the Rue Morgue”, the detective's logical and persuasive nature influences the readers and convinces them of his discoveries. The mechanism used by Dupin, as Artnfield says, is more convincing than that of any Police officer (58). According to N. Harrowitz, the principles of Dupin's mechanism "are these: never assume anything; the nature of the object under scrutiny must dictate the nature of the inquiry, it is necessary to keep sight of the matter as a whole, one must prove that "crucial impossibilities" are possible (indeed, they are so)" (193). When Dupin first found the money on the scene of the crime, he deduced that robbery is ruled out as a motive for the horrific crime. Then he found a broken nail in one window of the victims' room. Through investigation of that nail, he discovered that the nail belonged to an animal. Virginia Richter explains that "this ambivalent

positioning" of the nail "predisposes him to see the animal agency behind the ferocious deed in the Rue Morgue" (66).

After examining the dead body of the victims, the detective was convinced that the hair removed from the victim's fingers did not belong to human beings. In addition, the death scene emphasized his doubts, since he affirmed that no ordinary human being could inflict the beatings from which the mother suffered. Accordingly, Dupin was the only one who solved the mystery of the crime; his brilliant power of analysis combined with the clues analyzed throughout the short story led to the fact that the murderer of was not a human, but an animal an Ourang-Outang.

After solving the mystery of the murderer in such an ingenious way, Dupin appeared to be a model for many detectives in Crime Fiction. Dawn B. Sova points out that Dupin became the "prototype for many future fictional detectives, including Arthur canon Doyle's Sherlock Holmes and Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot" (162).

Part of the ingenuity of the character of Dupin is that the it makes use of the unique personality of Poe himself. Cook assumes that "Poe effectively imbues Dupin with a version of his own authorial power, so that his deductions from the clues of the voice, the hair and the nail, enable him to assemble effectively to write- the solution to the mystery" (12).

Poe's use of the animalistic element in the crime in the short story adds to the elements of suspense that existed throughout the story and to the element of surprise at its end. It also adds to the

element of ambivalence in the story because animals lack human reason and morality. The reader is then not sure about his approval of the punishment of the animal.

The detective alone won the honor of solving the mystery at the end of the story. This honor added brilliance to the detective's character, especially that animals could not speak or tell the truth. However, truth was deduced from minor clues that existed on the scene of the crime. Kopley explains that "imagining an Orangutan as the killer does effectually mislead inquiry- it defies expectation" (34).

Animal characters attracted the attention of the readers during that time and a discussion of Ape figures found widespread popularity during 1930s. Jessica Metzler points out that

during the nineteenth century, the figure of the ape-man- a beast that straddled the line between human and animal- occupied a far different position in public consciousness, and the mythology surrounding this figure made it a ripe target for appropriation (32).

Poe's motives behind writing about killing the two white women may be first attributed to autobiographical reasons, since Poe punished all women with uncertain reputation through the portrayal of that brutal scene. Although the death of the two women refers to his childhood experience of losing his mother and her friend, yet, it symbolizes his personal suffering from losing the closest two female persons in his life. In this short story, Poe seems to condemn his mother for her involvement in an illicit relationship. Poe, as stated in Kopley's *Autobiographical Considerations of the Dupin Tales*, regarded the Orangutan as

Poe's unconscious rendering of that partner and that its cutting Madame L' Espanaye and stuffing her up the chimney represent Poe's unconscious representation of this partner's making love to his mother and impregnating her (80).

His short story appeared to be a way to solve his personal unconscious question about the identity of the father of his sister. In the article quoted above, Kopley points out that the short story is an attempt to solve "the riddle of who was his sister's father? (81).

Poe might have had a racist motive for using the Ourang-Outang as a criminal in his short story. The Orangutan's killing of the two women raised a racist assumption that existed at the time of writing the story. The Ape's brutality, primitivism, marginalization, inability to speak are seen as qualities which associate the Orangutan with Blacks. In this concern, Metzler says that "Poe's Orangutan can easily be seen as representative of a certain type of nineteenth –century ... racism" (32). This fact may be due to Poe's fascination with Darwin's Theory about the *Origin of Species* which achieved a widespread popularity and attracted the attention of liberal thinkers and free intellectuals during the nineteenth century.

The theory assumed that men's close biological relationship with the animal world can be represented in the formation and appearance of Apes. According to Fatimah T. Rony, Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" is an example of this fascination with Darwinism (179). Speaking of a dominant view of this racist attitude of that time, James Snead says that at that time, "Blackness in such a context could not but mean 'the primitive', 'the elemental', as well as 'the marginal, the 'unproductive'" (62). Kopley, even, associates the Orangutan's attack on the two white women as suggestive of the "slave rebellion" against the whites of that time (35).

Wenru also affirms that in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue", Poe "employs the image of animal to represent the slaves...Poe reminded white Americans to wary of slavery and the abolitionist movement, showing his conservative political views" (61).

The Ape's motive behind its crime may be due to its desire to be a human being and to mimic human actions. The Orangutan imitated its master when it saw him shaving and aspired to be a human like him, looking at the mirror to start the process of humanizing himself, it started shaving its body hair which covered all its body:

Razor in hand, and fully lathered, it was sitting before a looking-glass, attempting the operation of shaving, in which it had no doubt previously watched its master through the keyhole of the closet (442).

The mirror scene emphasized not only the Ape's desire of imitating humans, but also its attempt to revolt against its animalistic body. Richter states that "The Ape tries to remove its facial hair-the mark of the beast- and thus not only to act, but to look like human" (66).

Related to the Ape's attempted process of humanization is his physical desire of the female body which can be regarded as his second motive. In this respect, Metzler, affirms that

the commonly held belief that primates sexually desired human women, a myth that frequently found its way into nineteenth-century natural history texts, became the basis for various representations of black sexuality as primal, insatiable, and indiscriminate (32).

The Ape's attack on the two white women reflected its lust for women in general and for white skin in particular, especially that during 1930s, the social order placed white Americans above blacks. Expressing the racist views of that time, Metzler says that "qualities like lust belong to animals and black, not to Euro-Americans" (33).

Though the short story gained more praise than criticism, it, like other great literary works, was subject to criticism. Exaggeration can be considered the main element of criticism of Poe's story. He was blamed for importing an unusual non-human element to the story, that of the orangutan. However, crime fiction was still immature during that time and the solution seemed to be acceptably imaginative and exciting.

Poe, might have used his imaginative power to attract his readers' attention and creating a horrific atmosphere.

Defending Poe against the claim of his over use of imagination Gelfert denotes explains:

Poe claims to have identified a new method of inference, which transcends deduction and induction in that it enables its practitioners to move imaginatively from our imperfect and fallible knowledge of everyday empirical matters to a deep understanding of the fundamental principles that govern the world of universal phenomena (590).

Similarly, Poe has also exaggerated in portraying the power of Dupin's reasoning abilities; especially that he was neither an official detective nor a police officer. Poe affirmed the incapability of the police to solve the mystery of the crime. He wrote:

who was this killer, this murderer? The Police had no answer. They had looked everywhere and found nothing that helped them. They did not know what to do next. And so-they did nothing. But not Dupin. He knew what to do (MRM 41).

Poe's choice of portraying his detective as superior to the French Police was an attempt to highlight the deficiency of the French Police as an official organization. Ascari says that "Poe was induced to set his hero's adventures in the French capital by the need to contrast the investigative talent of Dupin with the blundering efforts of the Police"(98). According to Michael Holquist the effectiveness of the French police in metropolitan cities " did not exist before the 19th century" (139).

Furthermore, Poe's choice of Paris as the location of the crime aroused criticism and even resentment of the French people who denounced the commitment of the crime on a land he was ignorant with its culture, traditions and laws. Ascari announces that the French writer. Taylor Forgues criticized Poe for his decision to set the story in a city he did not know. The French as Ascari says "were surprised to discover that the topography of their capital had been oddly redesigned" (100). Forgues, as Ascari says "could not "forgive Poe for a social blunder such as having a perfect of police seek the help of a primitive citizen Dupin"(100).

However, Poe's choice of the French Locale might be motivated by a desire to distance the negative reputation of police in his native country. Sim says that "compared to life in Western Europe, America can appear a very violent, crime-ridden, and politically corrupt society, especially in that society of sharp decline in moral values in recent decades"(2). Besides, locating the crime in Paris helped Poe to attract a group of French readers to his story without being trapped within

the ins and outs of French legal system. Finally, he believed that crime took place whenever mankind lived. In this concern, Arntfield affirms that crime is "a universally captivating subject matter" which "allows its stories to be told anywhere "(60).

Agatha Christie's Crime Fiction can be considered a convenient continuation of the subgenre Poe invented. She is one of the most important modern crime fiction writers who completed what Poe started. Her literature is mainly based on the principles put by Poe, as Karam Nayeypour says (1). However, the circumstances of her life are different for Poe's. She was born in England to a rich American father and an English mother. Unlike Poe, Christie's childhood was happy and prosperous; she was surrounded by a strong and independent mother. She belonged to the upper-middle class in which she was greatly interested. Her characters and themes mainly revolved around them, whereas, working class characters are rarely central to her stories. Her novels largely described the lives of rich English people and international tourists. Dominic Sandbrook explains that her characters are "overwhelmingly middle class- secretaries, salesmen and shop girls as well as retired colonels and vicar's ladies" (4). She was the leading British writer of murder mysteries during her life time and remained so after her death. She, like Poe wrote romances, plays and poems.

Christie is one of the most widely published authors of English horror novels. Agatha Christie was granted many titles and awards during her lifetime and after her death. Her books continued to sell more than two billion copies all over the world even after her death in 1976. Sandbrook describes her novels as "abstract, enigmatic, logical and completely ruthless" (3). Her works were translated into many languages and her mysteries have been directed and filmed in many in many countries of the world. Mate Barton emphasizes that Agatha

Christie is the world's "foremost author of mystery novels. Her works ... continue to thrill millions of readers even today" (3). Due to her numerous contributions to the field of Crime Fiction, she was awarded the title of "Dame of the British Empire" in 1971.

Crime fiction flourished to a remarkable position during her time and specially, between the two World Wars, which is known as The Golden Age of crime fiction. J. C. Bernthal declares that Christie is usually said to "typify the [Crime Fiction] Golden Age, partly because of her memorable sales figures, but also because of her strict adherence to the puzzle format, which has become the trademark of the period (3).

In 1920, Christie presided "The Detection Club," a group of writers of Crime Fiction and crime detection in general. The members of this club put a set of regulations for writing this genre affirming that a detective novel should "as its main interest the unraveling of a mystery; a mystery whose elements are clearly presented to the reader at an early stage in the proceedings, and whose nature is such as to arouse curiosity, a curiosity which is gratified at the end" (Bernthal 4).

Unlike most of the children of her time, Christie's education was distinctive and advanced. Her parents provided her a chance to be very well educated, but at home, by a governess and tutors. In 1901, her father passed away when she was eleven and in 1926, she was, like Poe, deeply distressed by the death of her mother which caused her to suffer from a severe loss of memory and illness. In 1930, she got married to a young Archeologist, who accompanied her to numerous travels to the Middle East and much of her knowledge and

writings stemmed from her accompany to her travels with her husband. She died in 1976, leaving behind her masterpieces which continued to be sold, read and praised till the present time.

Murders on the Orient Express (1934) is one of Christie's most illustrious classic crime novels which includes murder, confusing clues, a group of interesting characters, and a surprising solution by a clever detective. Barton praised the novel for its unique "puzzles and characters"(4). The popularity of this novel goes beyond the printed pages; it was filmed in 1974. The movie was praised as one of the most celebrated British films ever made and it was highly reviewed by both the public and specialists (Bookie Cookie 3).

Murders on the Orient Express starts with the introduction of Hercule Poirot as a private detective, who was, unlike Poe's Dupin, a retired Police officer. Both detectives worked outside an official organization. In Christie's novel, Poirot happened to be on the train travelling from Istanbul to London. Christie's choice of the train to be the setting of the crime was intentional, since the train carries people from different nationalities and it passes through a number of countries. The different classes of the train helped in classifying the passengers according to their social standards. This classification helped the detective identify the criminal. Christie also preferred a closed setting for her plot to make the detective's mission easier. Scaggs remarks that the circumstances of the crime reflect Christie's "conservative social vision" when she limits the suspects of the crime to the upper middle class semi-rural passengers"(48).

In Murder on the Orient Express, Mr. Samuel Ratchett –an American businessman, requested the protection of Poirot, the

detective. He told Poirot that his life was in danger and he wanted to hire him during the trip. Poirot refused to be hired in spite of the increasingly considerable sum of money offered to him by Mr. Ratchett. In the next morning, Poirot heard a loud voice of blowing and he was informed that Ratchett has been stabbed to death and the killer was still aboard.

On examining the body of the victim, Poirot, discovers that some of the twelve wounds were very profound, some have been caused by a right-handed person and others by a left handed one as if the criminal tried to perplex whoever examines the dead body of Mr. Ratchett. Bernthal remarks that Agatha Christie's detective novels "display the difficulty of interpretation at work" (6).

Unlike Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue", Christie's novel is composed of a set of a big number of confusing clues and evidences: First; the window of the victim's cabin was left open to confuse the detective, but there were not footprints outside the inside window. Second; the door is locked firmly. Third; a glass revealed to be drugged. Fourth; a woman's linen handkerchief with the initial "H" was found within the victim's room. Fifth; there was a pipe cleaner. Sixth; a small pocket watch was broken and stopped at 1:15 am, 38 minutes after the crime was committed. Seventh; there was a different match from that of the victim. Eighth; there was a charred piece of paper with the name "Armstrong". Ninth; there was a button from a conductor uniform.

These clues suggest different suspects. Some of them give the reader or even the detective the impression that some of these clues were planted to give a vague scene and to mislead the examiners. It seems like a puzzle based case as Bernthal points out (4).

By compiling and reconstructing the parts of the burned letter, he discovered that Rachette's real name was Cassetti and that he was a dishonorable escapee from the United States. He kidnapped an heiress named Daisy Armstrong. She was three years old when he kidnapped her five years earlier. He was responsible for the death of both Daisey and her mother who fell dead when she knew about her daughter's death. Daisey's father, Colonel Armstrong, shot himself out of grief. Susanne, Daisey's nursemaid, threw herself out of a window and died because she was suspected to be involved in the crime.

Like Poe's detective, Christie's Poirot seemed to be one of the most intellectual characters in the novel; his intelligence and shrewdness helped him reach the crime's clues and solve its mystery. By the end of the novel, Poirot's analysis proved that he is a very talented detective. He had his own values which urged him to solve the mystery of the crime for the sake of the establishment of justice. Wenru emphasizes that in the detective fiction, usually the detective stands for good and the criminal stands for evil (58). Poirot reflects Christie's aspirations towards a guiltless conservative community away from anything evil. In this respect, Bernthal asserts that Christie's detective novels defend the idealistic conservative principles which "represent society as it should be, cleansed of guilt"(215). Sandbrook says that in her autobiography, Christie wrote that people who killed were 'evil', representing 'nothing except hate' (7). The novel ends with the death of several innocent characters, but most importantly, it ends with the death of the criminal. M. Bouc in the novel says that the criminal "got what he deserved" (19).

Rachette, the criminal in the novel is presented as an incarnation of evil. Christie, intentionally, wanted the reader to have no mercy of or sympathy with the man. Throughout the novel, the criminal's motive to kill the child was not clear. It may be his sole tendency to evil, which adds to the sense of repulsion towards him.

Like Poe, Christie, Sandbrook affirms, does not present the moments of the crime to the reader. Both writers are interested, not in the crime itself, but in the motive which caused the crime (7).

Being interested in reforming the social order, Christie invokes the state to strike hard on criminals. The twelve relatives of Mr. Armstrong punished Rachette and stabbed him to death. The number twelve is significant because it is the same number of the jury in courts. The twelve men's punishment represents the punishment of the state that should have no mercy on the criminal. This revengeful attitude of the Armstrongs is a warning to the state that if they do not establish justice, revenge might be the option left to the relative of the murdered. Sim asserts that revenge is "a gesture of utter frustration at something that apparently cannot be contained"(118).

Christie's presents the job of crime detection as a socially constructive one that helps in establishing peace and justice in a society. The fact that both writers Poe and Christie present private detectives as probably smarter than the official police officers is a reflection of the common people's mistrust of the police institutions in the two countries.

Moreover, the system of punishment was missing, inadequate and the fact that being punished for criminal offence was not necessarily an inevitable consequence. In his article "Justice in the Twentieth Century," published in *California Law Review* Jerome Hall refers to the ineffectiveness of the system of punishment in the Western World in general. He says that

after centuries of punishment, crime seems to be on the increase, penitentiaries are written off as schools of crime and retribution is sharply disparaged, as, at the best a disguised form of vengeance. Accordingly, if both deterrence and retribution are excluded from the orbit of a legal policy, only rehabilitation remains as the single rational goal (753).

Accordingly, revenge seemed to be the only solution for people who wanted to justice into action. Christie's novel explores the question whether The Armstrongs' behaviour was right or wrong, just or unjust? This question has two contrasted answers: the first one regards the Armstrongs' behavior as illegal and should be condemned. The other one justified the family's act of revenge and considered it as just, because the murderer was a former escapee from a former punishment. They put into action what might be termed moral justice. The novel's criminal is responsible for the death of a child and four other members of the same family. Thus, he deserved the punishment; especially that the police took no action of retribution.

In Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and in Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*, the absence of the legal justice leaves room for the moral justice which is adapted in both works. For example, Poe punished women with uncertain reputation by the orangutan. Similarly, in Christie's novel, the punishment took place by twelve characters as a self-appointed jury.

Thus, the two writers seem to defend the creation of a new moral system of punishment. In this concern, Gary Gutting affirms that "justice is not the law. Justice is what gives us the impulse, the drive, or the movement to improve the law" (312).

Crime fiction seems to create its own moral system of justice. It sees the present legal system as insufficient to protect the weak and helpless. Prisons, from the point of view of Crime Fiction are nursery schools for more dangerous criminals. This kind of fiction gained popularity because readers saw that in this kind of fiction, justice is more effective than in real life in which criminals can easily escape retribution. It helps in protecting the likely victims from the clutches of evil criminal. This moral system of punishment establishes order and restores justice in societies.

The establishment of justice has always been a target in civilized communities. It is worth mentioning here the philosophical interpretation of justice. This concept may go back to Aristotle who saw justice as essential to the establishment of order in states ("Justice" *Encyclopedia Britannica* 1).

The establishment of justice in a work of art is a source of happiness to the victim's relatives. Readers also identify with the relatives of the victim, and feel satisfied on their own part. Hans Kelsen asserts that "justice is social happiness" (2).

In Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*, the Armstrongs' revenge resulted in their feeling of victory and happiness at the killing of Mr. Rachett. Princess Dragomiroff herself regards Mr Rachett's

death as "an entirely admirable happening"(156). It is regarded by most of the novel's characters not as a murder for revenge, but as an implementation of justice. The Princess says to Poirot: "In this case I consider that justice, strict justice has been done" (300). Also, Colonel Arbuthnot refers to the criminal as swine. He says: "then in my opinion the swine deserved what he got. Though I would have preferred to have seen him properly hanged, or executed, I suppose, over there" (175). In the same way, Mr. MacQueen shared the same opinion with the above-mentioned characters. He regarded the death of Mr. Rachett as the core of justice. "If ever a man deserved what he got, Rachett or Cassetti is the man. I'm rejoiced at his end. Such a man wasn't fit to live!" (114). Moreover, Mrs. Hubbard says that she would have murdered Mr. Rachett if she could (136). Undoubtedly, readers share such feelings of happiness and satisfaction with the characters above mentioned. It fulfills their need for justice which helps in establishing order in societies.

Suffering from an inner feeling of guilt, Mr. Rachett felt vulnerable. At the very beginning of the novel, he told Poirot that he had received threats from someone onboard and wanted to hire him for protection (7). Though he was wealthy, yet, Mr. Rachett lived a miserable life and felt unsafe. At the end of the novel, he paid a great price for his crimes (7).

In the two-literary works of Crime Fiction, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and *Murder on the Orient Express* the authors use similar techniques. Both of them started with pinpointing the clues, then deciphered them through thorough investigation to establish the desired moral justice in the works. Through this investigation, the two intelligent detectives could solve the mystery of the crime which seemed insolvable to readers. The two authors focus on the detailed

presentation of the characters of the two detectives. The two detectives are presented to the reader as "methodical detective" to use Scaggs's phraseology. By this term, Scaggs refers to "the detective who follows a particular method" (144).

The two writers use the element of contrast to highlight the intelligence of the detectives. Both detectives use close friends of the detectives as narrators. The inability of the narrators throws light on the characters of the detectives. The two detectives alone could solve the mysteries of the two crimes as Scaggs remarks in his book *Crime Fiction* (21). The two narrators help readers know about the physical data upon which the detective's analytic ability depends (Scaggs 21). In "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" the narrator says "Dupin showed me once again his special reasoning power" (42). In *Murder on the Orient Express* the detective declines the help offered by his friend, the narrator, but Bouc insists "We will help you in any way that we can" (13).

It is important that the two writers use different kinds of mystery; Poe uses what is known as the locked-room mystery whereas Christie uses the kind known as 'Armchair Detection' of the mystery.

In "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" Poe uses the locked-room mystery, which Cook defines as a mystery "in which a dead body is found in a room which is effectively sealed or locked from the inside" (14). The most important element of the locked room mystery as Cook says is the presence of a locked room and a space around it. Then, the detective's contribution is to find a relationship between them (14). The plot of this kind of story is usually perplexing and misleading to the detective, a fact which challenges his intellectual abilities.

In Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* the mystery can be classified as an 'Armchair Detection' in which the detective alone can find the truth behind the crime through a series of logical discoveries and deductive reasoning as Scaggs says (144). Dealing with such a crime, the mystery is solved "purely on the basis of second-hand information, without the detective ever leaving his or her armchair, as it were, to visit the scene of the crime or personally observe the evidence (Scaggs 144). In Christie's novel, Poirot, the detective used his logical reasoning to solve the mystery of the crime committed by Rachett.

In his book *Crime Fiction*, Scaggs refers to the dominance of male detectives and even narrators in Crime Fiction. He explains that Crime Fiction was used as a "powerful ideological tool that consolidated and disseminated patriarchal power, and its voice was the rational, coolly logical voice of the male detective or his male narrator"(20).

Both of Poe's "The Murders of the Rue Morgue" and Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*, the characters of the detectives and the narrators were personified through male figures. This subgenre emphasizes the dominant idea of male dominance which the two writers experienced. The absence of female detectives or narrators in most detective literary works caused some feminists to criticize the genre as does Glenwood Irons in her introduction to *Women's Detective Fiction*.

Finally, we can emphasize the social function of Crime Fiction in that it helps in fighting crime and in establishing order and maintain safety in societies. It provides the readers with the details of the darkest corners of society, from the highest and richest levels to the

lowest and poorest ones with different and various motives for committing crimes. This subgenre also warns governments against the tardiness and sometimes the ineffectiveness of the legal system in dealing with crimes. It is a trend which is emphasized by Charles Dickens in many of his novels. For these reasons, crime fiction gained a widespread popularity and recognition worldwide. These social functions are masterfully presented through the two-great detective literary works written by two great masters of the art of Crime Fiction. They brilliantly used their own tools and techniques of writing to present two of the most outstanding detective literary works.

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