Agatha Christie, the First Lady of Crime, enjoys supremacy over other writers of the Golden Age of Detective Fiction. Popularly known as the "Queen of Crime", she is one of the most widely read authors of the twentieth century. Volume 48 of Contemporary Literary Criticism states that her popularity can be determined by the fact that her novels have been translated into more than one hundred languages. She is the third best seller next to the Bible and Shakespeare. She is a British conventional classic detective story writer offering her readers a cryptic mystery and a surprising yet logical solution to the crime. Her stories are of varied ingenuity and constant liveliness. In Symons' words:

The deception in these Christie stories is much more like the conjurer's sleight-of-hand. She shows us the ace of spades face up. Then she turns it over, but we still know where it is, so how has it been transformed into the five of diamonds?  

Christie in her autobiography tells us how she becomes a detective story writer. While discussing a detective story with her sister, Christie said she would like to try her hand at a detective story. Madge, her sister firmly believed that she couldn't do it since detective stories are very difficult to write. From that moment onwards Christie was determined to write one.

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though she began later. While working in a dispensary, she first conceived the idea of writing a detective story. With her sister's challenge at the back of her mind, she began to consider the kind of detective story she could write. Since she was surrounded by poison, she decided to have death by poison, as the method of killing. She could not easily decide on the criminal, the victim, and the motive for murder. She sees that a husband murdering the wife is the most usual kind of murder. She wanted to have a very unusual kind of murder for a very unusual motive. This idea was dismissed as it did not appeal to her artistically. She felt a good detective story should have an obvious criminal but for some reason the readers would find that it was not obvious and could not have possibly committed the murder, though he had actually done it.

The characters came to her in a flash while she was sitting in a train. She saw a man with a black beard sitting next to an elderly lady who was chatting. The man, she decided would be her criminal. There was also another woman sitting a little beyond them. She decided these would be her main characters. The woman a little beyond would be Evelyn, a poor relative or a companion. The man would be the murderer, and the elderly lady his rich wife, to be murdered for money.

The task of choosing her detective was much more difficult. She did not want him to be an imitation of Sherlock Holmes.
Arsene Dupin did not suit her as a model. She would like to invent some one, who hadn't been used before. Finally she decided on a Belgian retired police officer as her detective. She made him a tidy little bald man with "little grey cells". Naming him was equally difficult though she finally decided on the ironic Hercule. She didn't remember how she settled on the last name. She might have seen it in a newspaper or written on something. Thus Hercule Poirot came into existence.

She found great difficulty in publishing her first novel The Mysterious Affair at Styles (1920). She sent it first to Hodder and Stoughton who returned it with a plain refusal. Methuen was much more kindly in refusal. She finally sent it to The Bodley Head and forgot about it. Two years later the Bodley Head published it with alterations, with a contract binding her to offer to the firm her next five novels at a slightly increased royalty. 2000 copies were sold and that was a good beginning for a detective story by an unknown author. "And so it all began, a saga that was to bring the young Agatha fame and fortune to an extraordinary extent, to make her name synonymous with detective fiction, the world over". ¹

Hastings, a young officer has been invalided home and is on sick leave. He is met by his old acquaintance John Cavendish who invites him to spend his leave at Styles. He is the elder

son of the late Cavendish. He has given up his practice as a barrister and has settled down to the life of a country squire; he is unwilling to go back to work for a living. He is very unhappy since his financial position is not sound enough to buy a house for his wife Mary and himself. He has been married for two years and his wife is regularly working 'on the land'. He wishes his step-mother would increase his allowance.

Lawrence, his younger brother, like him, has given up his practice as a doctor and pursues literary studies. The household includes Cynthia, a protegee of Mrs. Mary Inglethorp, (formerly Mrs. Cavendish) an orphan who stays with them and works in a nearby dispensary.

Evelyn Howard is Mrs. Inglethorp's "factotum, companion, Jack of all trades". 3 John feels that there is no other staunch friend than Evelyn Howard. Apart from the household members there lives in the village a mysterious foreigner, Dr. Bauerstein recuperating after a nervous breakdown. He is considered to be one of the living experts on poisons.

Emily is remarried; Alfred Inglethorp, her former secretary has now become her husband. No one has a kind word to say about him. He is a 'rotten bounder', and a sycophant who obviously has

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married Emily for money since he is much younger than she is. It is this marriage and his presence at Styles that make John unhappy.

At the beginning of the story we find Evelyn leaving the house fighting with Emily on account of Alfred Inglethrop. Though Evelyn and Alfred are distant cousins, she never acknowledges their relationship. She is scandalised by his intrigue with Mrs. Raikes, a neighbouring farmer's pretty wife. She requests Hastings to look after 'dear Emily' and leaves the house. A few days after, Mrs. Inglethrop dies and it is found that she has been murdered by strychnine poisoning. Everyone is disturbed. At Hastings' request Hercule Poirot is invited to investigate the case. With Poirot's entry the ritual of investigation begins. He first examines the room of the deceased thoroughly and collects certain clues. A crushed coffee cup, the remains of cocoa in another cup, the stains on the carpet, the locked despatch case, the thread on the floor, the burned fragments of paper in the fireplace, and an empty box of bromide powder. After interviewing the people at the household he learns more than what he has learnt from Hastings; he concentrates on certain happenings on the day of the crime. As he says, he has a certain order in his method. He suspects everybody since it is always safe to suspect everybody until he can prove logically that they are innocent.
John Cavendish is suspected because of his financially weak position. His restlessness, his intrigue with Mrs. Raikes and his ensuing quarrel with his step-mother, are all points against him. The burnt fragments of papers, the will in favour of Alfred is suspected to have been burnt by him. The difficulty in finding an alibi makes his situation worse.

Lawrence is suspected because of his evidence at the inquest and because of his suggestion that his mother may have been accidentally poisoned by means of the tonic she has been taking. Poirot considers such a suggestion strange. From the beginning his behaviour has been peculiar. Of all the people he alone would have been able to recognise the symptoms of strychnine poisoning and yet he is the only person to hold on to the theory of death from natural causes.

Mary Cavendish is another suspect since the fragment of green material caught in the communicating door between Cynthia's room and Mrs. Inglethorp's belongs to her. That proves her presence in Mrs. Inglethorp's room. Why did she go there? Her lie at the inquest that she heard the sound of an overturned table in Mrs. Inglethorp's room makes Poirot suspect her. Everyone suspects Alfred Inglethorp. He is to benefit by the death of his wife. His refusal to say where he has been at 6 O'clock on Monday, and his supposed quarrel with his wife include his name in the list of suspects.
Poirot suspects Cynthia, because of her undisturbed sleep and Dr. Bauerstein because of his presence at that time of the day at Styles.

Only Evelyn Howard is beyond suspicion as she had left the place much earlier than the occurrence of the crime. Poirot eliminates the suspects one by one. First he starts with the green material. The fragment matches a tear in Mrs. Cavendish's dress. Her lie at the inquest is verified by Poirot. She has overheard the main part of the quarrel between Mrs. Inglethorp and John; she has gone to her mother-in-law's room in search of something, the supposed letter revealing the infidelity of her husband. Before she can find it, her mother-in-law awakens and because she is seriously ill she pulls the bell of the alarm. Startled by the unexpected turn of events Mary drops her candle, picks it up and quickly goes to Cynthia's room causing the grease stain on the carpet. She has drugged both Mrs. Inglethorp and Cynthia with a safe dose of narcotic. That is proved by the analysis in a cup with the remains of cocoa. She is scared since she believes that her drug has killed her mother-in-law. Only when she knows that it is strychnine that murdered Mrs. Inglethorp that she is relieved. The broken coffee cup is Mrs. Inglethorp's work. As she was trying to take the coffee cup from the table, the table tilted and the cup fell down and broke. She might have picked up the broken cup and placed it on the table by the bed. The burnt fragment of paper, a will in favour of Mr. Inglethorp
burnt by her is proved by the fact that she has ordered a fire in her room on a hot day. This means she wants to burn something. Poirot knows that Emily has written a will in favour of Alfred earlier but something has made her change her mind within a very short period and she has burnt the will in favour of Alfred. What made her do so? This leads to the discovery of the letter to Evelyn by Inglethorp revealing his treachery. Bromide, introduced into a bottle of strychnine would precipitate and the last dose with strychnine would kill the person who takes it. Evelyn's hatred of Alfred and the later's insistence that he should be arrested made Poirot suspect them. Why should Alfred Inglethorp refuse to tell them his whereabouts? When Poirot knew that Alfred has been accompanying Mrs. Raikes for nearly 2½ miles he knew the truth. It was John who had caused a scandal with Mrs. Raikes and not Alfred Inglethorp. Further his insistence that he should be arrested reveals to Poirot that according to the British law - a person who is acquitted once for a crime can never be arrested again for the same crime. If Alfred Inglethorp were arrested John could prove his alibi and escape punishment.

Poirot's investigation reveals the following facts. Evelyn mixes the bromide powder, is careful not to shake it as the last dose will precipitate strychnine and kill Emily when she takes it. She has impersonated Inglethorp and bought strychnine as Alfred forging John's signature. She writes an anonymous letter that takes John to a remote place where he will not be seen by anyone.
She put the phial of strychnine in John's room to throw suspicion on him. It is this overcaution of throwing suspicion on John and sending him away not to have an alibi that expose the scheme of Evelyn and Alfred. She is an example of the archetypal pattern of the apparently innocent turning guilty, a traditional reversal in detective fiction.

The victim is generous towards her step children. She is a generous woman and possessed a considerable fortune of her own. Like Roger Ackroyd she has no gift of commanding love. Her death is a shock and a distress but it is not passionately regretted.

The criminals - Alfred and Evelyn are cousins. Evelyn could not have committed the crime all by herself; she could have been an accomplice. She is the master mind of this scheme. According to their plan Alfred marries Emily and induces her to make a will in his favour. Then they plan to kill her with a very clever device adding Bromide to Emily's medicine, the last dose of which would kill her. They are a very cunning and unscrupulous couple. Since Evelyn is not suspected she can easily move in and out of the house and could easily plant evidence against John and manage to discover it in due course.

The crime here is murder of the benevolent mistress of the house. She is very generous. In fact she is the step-mother of John and Lawrence. In the words of Hastings, "Their step-mother
however, had always been most generous to them; indeed they were so young at the time of their father's remarriage that they always thought of her as their mother". 4 Nobody can complain about her. In fact it was Evelyn who first pointed out that "Emily was a selfish old woman in her way. She never let people forget what they have done for them - and, that way, she missed love". 5 With Evelyn as an accomplice, the murder is very carefully planned. To quote, Poirot, the crime is a 'very cleverly conceived crime'. 6

Poirot suspects Inglethorp because of the latter's insistence that he should be arrested, though Alfred's nature as a sycophant is enough to make him suspect Alfred. It is Evelyn's overwhelming hatred for Alfred that draws Poirot's attention towards her. He describes them as follows:

They are a very astute and unscrupulous pair, while suspicion was to be directed against him, she would be making quiet preparations for a very different denouement". 7

She arrives from Middlingham with all the compromising items in her possession. No suspicion is attached to her. No notice

5 Ibid., p. 68.
6 Ibid., p. 186.
7 Ibid., p. 186.
is paid to her re-entering the house. She hides the strychnine and glasses in John's room. She puts the beard in the attic. She will see to it that sooner or later they are duly discovered. Her part is greater in the crime as to make up the bromide powders and her clever male impersonations.

As for Alfred, he is the prime suspect - he and Evelyn had planned to throw suspicion on John by buying strychnine at the village chemist's, signing in the register as John. On that day when Emily has to take the poisonous last dose of her medicine Alfred arranges to be seen by a number of people at a spot far removed from the village. Evelyn "disguised as Alfred Inglethorp, enters the chemist's shop, with her story about a dog, obtains the strychnine, and writes the name of Alfred Inglethorp in John's hand writing, which she had previously studied carefully". Both of them 'tried to be too clever - and that was their undoing". They have chosen a Monday when Cynthia would be spending the night with her friends. Mrs. Inglethorp's bell is neatly cut so that "Mrs. Inglethorp would be quite alone in the right wing, completely shut off from help of any kind, and would have died in all probability, before medical aid could have been summoned". Unfortunately Emily in her hurry to go to the village entertainment fails to take the medicine on that day. Alfred has been

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9 Ibid., p.180.
10 Ibid., p.176.
trying to get himself arrested though Poirot was too clever to prevent arrest at that time. Alfred has tried to make good use of the British law 'that a man once acquitted can never be tried again for the same offence'. Since he has a perfect alibi he can easily escape, once arrested and he is safe.

The criminals, one the husband, and the other a trusted companion are dangerous to any household happiness. Even individual security is lost. They can kill the members of the family for their gain. The tension in the household adds confusion as interested parties try to save their friends disclosing certain facts - all prolong the unhappiness, restlessness in the household. Once Poirot starts his work as an avenger and saviour everything is changed. He appeals to Dorcas the maid in the course of investigation.

Your mistress lies dead, and it is necessary that we should know all - if we are to avenge her. Nothing can bring her back to life, but we do hope, if there has been foul play, to bring the murderer to justice.

The pattern here is that of double reversal - the innocent turn guilty and the guilty turn innocent. John the innocent one is considered to be guilty and arrested while Evelyn the guilty one is not even suspected. When everything is made clear.

12 Ibid., p.44.
John the guilty one is proved to be innocent and Evelyn the innocent, proved guilty. The master brain of the murderer and his accomplice would have been successful in carrying out the plan but for the scrap of paper of confession by Alfred - the incomplete letter written to Evelyn to save her from her anxiety about the success of the plan. The criminal is arrested and the punishment is "off" the stage.

With the detective's interference the dark gloomy atmosphere of the house becomes bright and cheerful with wedding bells ringing. Lawrence and Cynthia marry, John and Mary are happy with a better understanding of each other.

Hercule Poirot's superior intellect - his "grey cells", his independent attitude with his amusing idiosyncracies are reflected in this novel. The unravelling of the mystery is methodical and steady. In the words of the Saturday Review critic

The Mysterious Affair at Styles is a well-knit tale, which advances steadily to plausible conclusion without attempting the mystification of the reader by the introduction of unnecessary detail and false clues. Yet at one time or another suspicion is thrown on all the leading characters, and thrown on them with sufficient naturalness to be justified even after the story has reached its conclusion. Miss Christie writes with economy of incident, and the stereotyped properties of the usual detective of fiction.13

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In *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* the husband murders his wife for money and *Murder in Mesopotamia* (1939) also the wife is murdered by her husband not for money but out of love and possessiveness. Dr. Leidner is an archaeological head and several people work with him on an expedition. The group of workers include people of all sorts and nationalities: Emmott, Mr. and Mrs. Mados, Carey, Miss Johnson, Coleman, Reiter, Father Levigny and the boy Abdullah. Of these Coleman, Reiter and Father Levigny are the only newcomers. The rest have been members of the expedition right from the commencement of the work.

The group is a delightful mix of pleasant individuals; but there is a queer atmosphere of tension which has recently been felt by the group.

Dr. Leidner and his wife Mrs. Louise Leidner have been married for less than two years. Dr. Leidner loves his wife so passionately that he is worried about her health. He feels she is suffering from fits of recurring nervous terrors. To add to this she imagines things. So he employs Nurse Leitheran to take care of her health. He feels his wife would be safe with a well trained nurse like her.

Nurse Leitheran is taken up with the beauty and charm of Mrs. Leidner. Mrs. Leidner tells her the facts of her first
marriage with Fredric Bosner. When she had been married for a few months, she accidentally discovered that her husband was a spy in German pay. When she learnt that his information led to the sinking of an American Transport and the loss of hundreds of lives, she passed on this information to her father who was working in the War Department. Her husband was shot as a spy. After that lots of people wanted to marry her but she refused. It was curious that whenever she wavered about a man she would receive anonymous threatening letters from her former husband that he would kill her if she married again. She wanted to verify from her father whether her husband was really shot dead or not. Her father could only say that the body that was buried was that of her husband though there had been a certain amount of disfiguration. Whenever she is intimate with any man the threatening letters resumed. Finally, they stopped when she married Dr. Leidner. She concludes either the man is dead or gets tired of writing such letters. Two days after her second marriage, she gets her first letter followed by a second a month later. She shows both the letters to her husband. He feels that the whole thing is a hoax and is inclined to suspect that someone wants to blackmail her by pretending that her first husband is alive. A few days after the second letter Mr. and Mrs. Leidner have a narrow escape from death by gas poisoning. She feels for the first time it is Frederick because there was always something a little ruthless behind his gentleness. She comes down to this work spot and does not
return to America in the summer but stays in London and Paris. When everything seems normal she receives another letter with an Iraq stamp and a week earlier she finds a sheet of paper lying on the table with the message he has arrived. She feels that it may be Frederick who is going to kill her; or it may be his brother William who wants to avenge the death of his patriotic brother. She also has seen a dead man's face grinning at her against a pane. She feels her life is in danger. The nurse comforts her and then informs Dr. Leidner everything Louise has told her. The next day Mrs. Leidner is murdered and Hercule Poirot is called in to unravel the mystery.

Hercule Poirot starts his investigation with his usual statement that everyone is a suspect. In a house where murder has been committed every inmate comes in for a certain share of suspicion. First he will assure himself that everyone in this room is innocent and then look for the murderer elsewhere. He interviews them and learns that each suspect's alibi is supported by another; Dr. Leidner has been on the roof, the others busy with their work; no one has gone to Mrs. Leidner's room. Any one passing through the courtyard will be noted by Emmott since he is working with the boy. But there were ten minutes when Emmott and the boy were absent and the courtyard was empty. Poirot concludes that the murder must have been committed only during those ten minutes.
Poirot's starting point is the personality of Mrs. Leidner. He knows her influence on the members of the expedition. She is beautiful and intelligent. Secondly, he records the reactions of those who form her immediate circle. The first problem to be solved is that of the anonymous letters. There were three possibilities as to the writer of these letters. First — they might have been written by Mrs. Leidner herself. Secondly, Fredrick Bosner or his brother William Bosner might have written them. Thirdly they might have been written originally by Mrs. Leidner or her first husband but now are forgeries and written by a third person who is aware of those earlier letters.

Next he examines the opportunities that each person has for murdering Mrs. Leidner. Three persons are first eliminated. Dr. Leidner as he was on the roof, Carey as he was on duty at the Mound and Coleman was in Hassanieh. But even here whether Carey has been on the mound all the time and whether Coleman has actually been in Hassanieh is rather doubtful. As far as the motive is concerned everyone could be credited with a motive. He eliminates Dr. Leidner because his love for his wife is the mainspring of his existence. The Nurse is a thoroughly competent hospital nurse.

Mrs. Mercado is too frail to commit a murder. Mr. Mercado is a drug addict, and might have some discreditable criminal
incident in his past which he might have confided in Mrs. Leidner, but Mrs. Mercado has successfully hushed it up. Mrs. Leidner may reveal this secret at any moment which will have disastrous effects. So both of them have a motive. They also have had the opportunity when the courtyard is empty for ten minutes.

Miss Johnson is capable of committing murder since she is a person of strong will and iron self-control. She could have committed the murder for Dr. Leidner's sake, since she feels Mrs. Leidner is spoiling her husband's life and the deep unacknowledged jealousy far down in her would leap at the chance of a plausible motive and give itself full rein. There is a possibility that Carl Reiter might be William Bosner. In that case he would be the most likely person to have committed the murder. But this assumption is ruled out since Reiter loved Mrs. Leidner. His indiscriminating adoration is despised by Mrs. Leidner. So she is deliberately cruel to him to insert a gibe here, a prick there to make the poor young man's life hell. Her torment might have led him to murder her.

William Coleman's behaviour is suspicious; he might have been a forger to have copied the threatening letters without difficulty. He might be suspected of being William Bosner. Emmott might be a possible shield for the identity
of William Bosner; whatever personal reasons he might have for the removal of Mrs. Leidner he would not betray himself. As far as the character and capacity are concerned Emmott seems to be the most fitted to commit a well-timed crime satisfactorily. Richard Carey is drawn towards the calamitous magical beauty of Mrs. Leidner. Carey can easily attract any woman to him. Both fall in love with each other. At first he is indifferent. Mrs. Leidner isn't able to bear his indifference. So she sets herself out to snare Carey but she herself falls a victim; and he is unable to resist her. He hates her for undermining his loyalty to his friend. Since Louise Leidner's murder is a crime passionale there is a possibility he might have killed her.

Father Levigny is not known to anyone before he comes to the expedition. He may be impersonating somebody, but not Frederick Bosner. He is Raoul Memir, one of the cleverest thieves known to the French police. He has impersonated Father Levigny who is ill. He and his accomplice Ali Yusuf, a first class working jeweller are interested only in theft. "Father Levigny" takes wax impressions of valuable objects and Ali makes clever duplicates of them. Father Levigny would effect the substitution of the false one for the genuine articles at night. But now Father Levigny has disappeared along with his companion. Later we know that these two are arrested.
The criminal is a good schemer. From the time he escaped death he had been watching his wife. His earlier position as a spy before he married Mrs. Leidner has helped him greatly to gather information about every movement of Louise and to send threatening letters. He also marries her as Eric Leidner. He is possessive and his love for his wife is so deep - the only passion in his life - that life would have been pleasant and happy. But when Louise falls in love with Carey he reveals his ruthless nature by murdering her. She is only his and should not belong to anybody else. It is this primitive instinct of jealousy and possessiveness that turns him into a murderer.

The victim is given more importance in this novel than any others in Christie's novels. In other novels we only hear about the murder and the victim is important only as a corpse and nothing else. But here the mystery of the murder is solved only with the analysis of her personality. Everyone comments on the attractive quality of her beauty. Leidner worships the ground she walks on and she expects everyone to do so. Her tastes are simple and she is not a luxurious woman. She is a woman of artistic and fastidious taste. Her beauty is fatally attractive. According to Poirot such women usually leave a trail of violent happenings behind them. They bring disaster, sometimes on others and sometimes on themselves. She wants
to be always the centre of attraction. When people are easily drawn towards her she indulges in the more cruel side of her nature as is seen in her treatment of Reiter. It is surprising that she is drawn towards Carey. We, the readers, are inclined to share Nurse Leatheran's feelings about her.

Sometimes it seems to me she was just a terrible woman - and other times I remember how nice she was to me and how soft her voice was - and her lovely fair hair and everything - and I feel that perhaps, after all, she was more to be pitied than blamed.14

The archetypal pattern here is someone apparently innocent turning out to be guilty. Dr. Leidner, the criminal is outwardly kind and generous. But in reality he is an obsessed fanatic plotting to kill his wife and kill anyone who knows his guilty action. Poirot who realises the danger of the criminal to society finds out the truth. But Dr. Leidner could not be proved as a murderer since there is no evidence. Fortunately for Poirot Dr. Leidner though wicked admits that he has murdered his wife. When Poirot explains how Dr. Leidner has committed the murder he only says

there is no proof. But that does not matter you know that I would not deny truth... I loved Louise and I killed her.

Though this is a domestic murder it might extend to society outside when the crime is found out by anyone. A criminal is always dangerous and he has to be punished. Poirot exposes the criminal and punishment is left to the police.

Just as a psychological study of Mrs. Leidner, the victim in *Murder in Mesopotamia* helps Poirot to solve the mystery, a study of the character of Mrs. Arlena Marshall does the same in *Evil under the Sun* (1941). She is like Mrs. Leidner in many respects and around this corpse Poirot starts his investigation with his accusing finger pointing to everyone until it finally settles on the criminal.

Captain Marshall marries Arlena Marshall after his first wife dies giving birth to a daughter, Linda, a year after their marriage. He comes to Leathercombe Bay a famous holiday summer resort with his wife and daughter. Arlena is attractive and men are drawn towards her. There is a crowd of people who have come to enjoy the summer season. The regular visitors are the Cowans, and the Mastermans. Along with them Poirot finds Mrs. Gardener, Mr. and Mrs. Redfern, Mayor Barry, Miss Emily Brenster and the Rev. Stephen Lane; all these people dislike Arlena and they feel that she is evil. Their hatred increases especially when they know that Patrick Redfern pays more attention to her than to his wife Christine. Everyone sympathizes with Christine.
Arlena is murdered, strangled to death in a lonely place, the Pixy Cave. The body is found by Patrick and Miss Emily Brewster when they go out for a boatride that morning. Patrick stays with the body and Emily comes back to Leathercombe Bay and informs the police. Poirot has seen Arlena that morning rowing alone. All are suspected. A list of members staying in the hotel is taken from the hotel register and the regular summer visitors the Mastermans, the Cowans and the Gardeners are eliminated. According to Inspector Colgate in every murder "a husband is the obvious suspect" and hence Kenneth Marshall is suspected. Linda is also included in the list of suspects as her hatred towards Arlena is known to others; Patrick is suspected as he pays more attention to Arlena, neglects his wife and makes her unhappy. Miss Darnley Marshall's childhood companion is not exempted from suspicion. Hercule Poirot comes forward to solve the mystery.

Poirot looks at the problem from a different angle. His study of Arlena makes him disagree with the others that Arlena is evil. While others think she attracts men, Poirot realises Arlena's passion for men will make her "a predestined prey for an unscrupulous man of a certain type". He feels Patrick Redfern is the kind of man who "makes his living one way or another out of women". He concludes that

16 Ibid., p.204.
17 Ibid., p.204.
Arlena is Patrick's victim and not the other way as the rest of the group feel. Since Patrick is running after Arlena leaving his wife everybody concludes that Patrick is Arlena's victim.

Poirot's investigation brings out certain points. Arlena had recently come into a large sum of money left to her by an elderly admirer. Patrick easily induces her to hand him large sums of money for investment quite often. He always indulges in such activities and knows how to escape. If Arlena's husband comes to know about it, all he has to do is to shift his attentions to someone else. His accomplice is his supposedly innocent and neglected wife whom no one suspects. She is calm, cool and passionless. She is often referred to as small made while in reality she is tall and strong but with very small hands and feet. She is known as a school teacher while in reality she is a games mistress. Arlena and Patrick plan to meet alone in Pixy Cave. Accordingly she goes there without her husband's knowledge, as she has now become slightly afraid of her husband. As instructed by Patrick she has to hide herself in Pixy Cave if anybody comes there. As ill-luck would have it Arlena sees Christine and hides inside the Pixy Cave. Christine with her brown suntan lotion, wearing a hat like Arlena's and lying on the beach is mistaken by Emily as a deadbody. When she and Patrick come rowing that side, she is
not willing to be left alone with the supposed dead body and
goes back to the hotel to fetch the police. Christine changing
into her bathing suit runs back to the hotel, washes off the
brown suntan application and joins Linda. Meanwhile, Patrick
goes to the cave. Hearing Patrick she comes out of her hiding
place and he strangles her without any difficulty. She doesn't
seem to have put up much of a struggle since she is taken by
surprise. It is a nasty business. Christine brainwashes Linda
to believe that she has killed her step-mother. The poor
child takes a sleeping dose and she is discovered in a serious
condition with a confessional letter that she has killed Arlena.
Poirot explains in the last chapter to the entire gathering
how the murder is committed, exposing the murderer and his
accomplice. He remembers a similar type of murder - murder
committed after the death is reported to the police. The
method of strangulation was in harmony with Patrick's nature -
'a killer for pleasure as well as for profit'.

So he asks
Inspector Colgate for a list of women victims of strangulation.
The death of Nellie Parson strangled in a lonely place reveals
the possibility that Patrick may be the murderer. But the
death of Alice Corrigan proved that he is definitely the
murderer. It is the same method that is adopted. A murder
committed not before as it is supposed to have happened but
afterwards.

Ltd., 1941), p.213.
The crime here is a well-planned murder as in *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*. The pair here played the part of husband and wife, a wife much neglected by the husband for another woman. If the slip of paper exposed the villainy of Alfred and Evelyn in the earlier novel here it is the method of murder that exposed the criminal and his accomplice. Both are very good schemers. Christine is a meek and neglected wife who wins everyone's sympathy. The murder is committed for money. Poirot feels that murders were committed in the past, and murders will be committed in the future as the murderer has a tendency to repeat his crime. Here again it is the reversal — the innocent turning guilty. The criminal is identified and punished. The priest in the guise of the detective has ritually purified society.

The husband murders the wife in *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* for money, and for love, in *Murder in Mesopotamia*. In *Thirteen at Dinner* (1933) the wife murders her husband to marry a Duke. The former Jane Wilkinson, now Lady Edgware, the second wife of Lord Edgware wants a divorce from her husband Lord Edgware. She approaches Hercule Poirot as her attempts fail. She tells him that if he refuses to help her "I'll have to call a taxi and go round and bump him off myself". 19 She was earlier friendly with Bryan Martin an actor

and intended to marry him. But now she has changed her mind
to marry the Duke of Merton to enjoy wealth as well as position.

Charlotta Adams, an actress impresses Jane Wilkinsen by
her imitation of various persons including herself. When
complimented by Jane, Charlotta is pleased and happy.

Poirot approaches Lord Edgware on behalf of Lady Edgware
only to know that the Lord has already sent his consenting
letter for a divorce. When Poirot informs Jane she seems not
to have known it. This puzzles Poirot.

Lord Edgware is murdered in his house in Regent Gate
next night - stabbed in the neck. The police officer who
brings the news to Poirot informs him that Lady Edgware is
suspected of the murder. But Lady Edgware was at the dinner
given by Sir Montagu Corner at that time. Her presence is
proved by Sir Montagu's butler who says that she has been
talking over the phone for ten minutes. But the secretary and
the butler of Lord Edgware say that they have seen Lady Edgware
at Regent Gate at 10 O' Clock. How could lady Edgware be
present in two places at the same time? The Lady at Regent
Gate wore a black dress. Poirot's interview with Lady Edgware
proves that she never wears black dress since she detests it.
There are a few suspects. Brayan Martin and the Duke the suitors to Jane may wish Lord Edgware dead. Other suspects are Lord Edgware's daughter who hates her father and her cousin Ronald who is sent out of the house three months earlier. Ronald himself had a motive. "Hard up and none too scrupulous over money", he has met his uncle the previous day to ask for money and has been refused help. That evening Lord Edgware dies and now Ronald inherits the title. Even the Duchess, the Duke's mother, could have committed the murder as she told Poirot that she would do anything to prevent her son's marriage with Jane.

Charlotta Adams is found dead, death caused by an overdose of sleeping tablets. The contents in her handbag lead to certain discovery. The pince-nez found in her handbag does not belong to her. Poirot finds out more about her from her friend and sister. He traces her letter to her sister and knows that she has a bet with someone which would make her rich. Since she loves money, she accepts the bet but unfortunately dies. Hence Poirot suspects it to be murder.

Poirot meets Ross an actor at a luncheon party at Sir Montagu who was also present at the dinner on the fatal night. Ross realises that it was not Jane who was present at the

dinner but somebody who impersonated her. Before he can pass on the information to Poirot he is murdered. Poirot's investigation reveals the fact while Charlotta impersonated Jane at the dinner Jane herself has gone to Regent Gate and murders Lord Edgware. When she knows that Charlotta has exposed her secret to her sister she murders her. When she accidentally overhears Ross's desparate attempt to contact Poirot she murders him as well. She kills everyone who tries to expose her guilt. But Poirot is too clever for her and she is proved guilty. Her confession letter to Poirot explains how she has committed these murders.

The crime here is murder. Murder for individual gain and happiness and murders to silence the exposure of villainy. Jane is a shrewd contriver. From the time she decides to marry the duke she also decides to murder Lord Edgware. The duke whom she wants to marry might not marry her when her husband is alive. She makes use of Charlotta Adams though she confesses she despises her attempts to imitate her. Charlotta easily succumbs to her plan without realising that she has been used by Jane as a tool to murder her husband. When Charlotta and Ross become dangerous she murders them both. The murderess does not feel the slightest compunction for her action. To quote Poirot, "Did she feel the slightest pang of remorse for any of these crimes? I can swear she did not". 21 She is very

clever. In the words of Martin "She's clever - devilish clever in a kind of half-wit way". That strange brain, childlike and cunning could deceive anybody. She had learnt from a doctor how to use a knife to kill a man. The two victims are innocent people. Charlotta is happy that her imitation is so close to the real person that she is paid ten thousand dollars for her talent to imitate Lady Edware in an excellent manner. Ross is killed before he could inform Poirot his knowledge of the criminal.

Like all Christie criminals Jane is very proud of her crime and states in her letter to Poirot "I'm sure there's never been a murderess like me before".

The archetypal pattern of ritual cleansing here is punishment by law. Jane is handed over to the police and it is assumed that she will be hanged. There is peace and even wedding bells, celebrating the wedding of Jennie and Martin to prove that normalcy has been restored in society. This is one of her most brilliantly plotted novels. The characterization too is richly enjoyable.

Death in the Clouds (1935) and Cards on the Table (1936) follow a typical Agatha Christie pattern - gathering a number

23 Ibid., p.126.
of people together in a particular place preliminary to one of them being murdered.

The midday air service to Croydon - 'The Prometheus' - contains twenty one passengers - ten in the forward section and eleven in the rear one. It has two pilots and two stewards. Just before the landing Madam Giselle is found dead. There is a red mark on her neck corresponding to wasp sting that leads to the conclusion that she had been bitten by a wasp. A dead wasp is shown as a proof. But the presence of a blow pipe suggests that a native dart has been aimed at by the blow pipe. The lady might have been murdered with the poisonous dart.

The passengers in the rear section vary widely in character and class. Dr. Roger James Bryant is an ear and throat specialist. Jane Grey is a hair dresser, James Ryder, a business man, Armand Dupont and Jean Dupont archaeologists father and son, Lady Horbury, Venetia Kerr, Clancy a detective story writer, and Norman Gale, a dentist are the people in the rear section. Hercule Poirot is also present in the same section. Now all of them are under suspicion. Poirot includes himself also in the list of suspects as the blowpipe is found under his seat!

The first thing Poirot does is to know about the victim. Madam Giselle a French money-lender is keen on her business, never allows sentiment to affect her business. She has the
reputation of pursuing her profession with scrupulous honesty. It is her custom to lend money after knowing everything about the party concerned. She has her own intelligence service that gives her all the necessary information. She is faithful to those who are honest in their dealings. She would blackmail her dishonest dealers to get her money back. But she would not descend to this unless it were absolutely necessary. As far as her personal life is concerned she has a daughter who does not live with her; it is believed she has never seen her daughter though she bequeaths everything to her with the exception of a small legacy to her maid. The daughter might be twenty-four or twenty-five years old now. No one knows whether she is married or not. Nothing seems to connect her with the death of her mother.

The passengers in the plane deny knowing Madame Giselle. Madam's diary is destroyed by her maid as per her instruction early (in case of her death every document should be destroyed) maintaining her business records. One of the passengers may have borrowed money and as per the blackmailing theory he or she has to be found out. Lady Horbury has borrowed from her and her debts are cleared by her husband. But this time he has refused to pay and she is in a great financial crisis. James Ryder too is equally in a financial crisis and is in need of money. But all the passengers state that they do not know the victim.
Poirot is interested in two things - the presence of a wasp and the blow pipe. The blow pipe could easily be thrown out through the ventilating hole in the window. It appears that the murderer wanted the blowpipe to be discovered to mislead investigation that murder is committed from a distance while it is actually committed at close quarters. The murderer according to Poirot, has upto Madam Giselle's table, bent over her and killed her. The stewards have greater chances of going up to Madam Giselle and lean over her and nobody would notice anything unusual. Clancy is the only one who has passed immediately by madam's seat and he is the one first to draw their attention to the blow pipe. But the three of them do not appear like murderers. Investigation alone could prove their innocence.

The wasp theory makes Poirot understand that the murderer presents two separate solutions to the tragedy. First it is to make everyone believe that Madam is dead stung by a wasp and succumbed to heart failure. The second is to make them believe that madam was killed with the poisoned dart. Poirot concentrates on the wasp theory. In such case the murderer might have brought it in a small box and Gale has an empty match box in his pocket. But he never goes near the lady. The presence of a White Dentist coat similar to that of stewards in Gale's attache case only confirm Poirot's guess. Who will benefit from Madam Giselle's death? Apart from her daughter, the other beneficiary is Lady Horbury. She need not pay her debts to Madam Giselle, if she
is dead. Lady Horbury might have got the blowpipe from her friend an actor and bribed the Universal Airlines to ensure that madam travelled by the 12 O' Clock service. Though she has a motive but Poirot feels it is not possible for her to murder Madam Giselle. The stewards, Clancy and Gale did not have any motive.

The unknown daughter of the victim might be the wife of the four men mentioned above. On enquiry it is found out that the Stewards have not married Madam Giselle's daughter. Clancy is a bachelor and Gale is in love with Jane Grey. But Norman Gale's practice as a dentist is declining and he chose the profession only to please his uncle. When Poirot makes use of him to know something about Lady Horbury he proves himself a good actor.

Poirot has already known that Anne Morisot, Madam Giselle's daughter is married to Richard, an American. Poirot accidentally meets Anne Morisot and realises that she was on the 'Prometheus'. He also learns more about Anne. She is married to Richards. Immediately after her marriage she and her husband write their will leaving everything to the other survivor. Gale knows about Poirot's meeting with Anne. He suspects that Poirot might learn more about her, so he takes her out murders her in a railway compartment, forces an empty poison bottle in her hand and leaves her there.

Poirot knows that Norman Gale is actually Richard. He has met Anne under that name and marries her as he knows that she
would inherit a large fortune. He has also planned to murder Madam Giselle and put the blame on Lady Horbury as she is in heavy debt. But he never thought Anne will be going by the same plane he is travelling. Unfortunately the last minute whimsey of Lady Horbury makes him take her maid by the same plane. Gale has now fallen in love with Jane Grey and he wants only Anne's money and so he kills her.

Poirot explains how Norman Gale committed the murder. After serving coffee the stewards had gone to the other section. Gale goes to the toilet, puts on his linan coat, pads his cheeks with cotton wool rolls, comes out, seizes a coffee spoon from the box in the pantry opposite, hurries down the gangway with the steward's quick run, spoon in hand, to Giselle's table. He thrusts the dart into her neck, opens the matchbox and let the wasp escape, hurries back into the toilet, changes his coat and emerges leisurely to return to his seat. The whole thing took only a couple of minutes.

Gale had very carefully planned everything and would have even succeeded if he has not hastened matters. The moment he knows that Anne Morisot is going to inherit large sums of money, "the plan of the crime formed itself", in his head. "Giselle was to be murdered in such a way that suspicion would fall on Lady Horbury".  

wills leaving all they had to the other. He murders her by administering poison by force and leaves the dead body in a train. He thus hopes to inherit her wealth.

This notorious villain will be committing murders after murders for his gain and so he is to be arrested and punished by law. Poirot the archetypal priest spots the criminal, exposes him and restores the moral balance of the universe in which men exist.

In *Death in the Clouds* there are eleven passengers but only ten suspects as the eleventh passenger is Hercule Poirot. Here Christie plays around satirically with darts tipped with the poison of the South American Indians, but the real clues are things like an empty matchbox, an extra coffee spoon in a saucer. "Though her stories are intellectual puzzles of a certain rarefied kind, she manages to 'earth' them by constant use of commonplace objects from the life around us".  

The murderer is audacious. He commits the crime in full view of a cabin full of passengers and none of them seems to have noticed it happening. As a puzzle *Death in the Clouds* can be rated highly. At the end of the novel we

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find the gloomy atmosphere is gone and peace and happiness prevail.

If there are eleven passengers and one among them is a murderer in *Death in the Clouds* one is a murderer among the four playing Bridge in *Cards on the Table* (1936). Murder is committed here as in the earlier novel in the presence of everybody. Mr. Shaitana has invited Hercule Poirot to a dinner where he says he will introduce him to his "Black Museum". The invitees are eight in number - four sleuths and four common people. Along with Poirot Mrs. Ariadne Oliver, a detective story writer, Superintendent Battle a Scotland Yard representative and Colonel Race, esteemed member of His Majesty's foreign secret service form the sleuth side. The other four are Mrs. Lorimer, a woman of sixty, Major Despard, Anne Meredith and Doctor Roberts. After a delicious dinner the guests divide themselves into two groups to play Bridge. The sleuths form one group. Shaitana prefers to be left alone and he is reading a book. The sleuths finish their games first. When they go to bid good-bye to Shaitana they find him murdered. Shaitana had earlier told Poirot that he was going to introduce him to the murderers who have escaped punishment. So the other four who may be murderers may have reason enough to wish Shaitana dead.
Hercule Poirot and the other three sleuths start their investigation. Individually and together they collect information that reveals the following facts.

Mrs. Lorrimer has been a widow for twenty years. She, being a traveller might have met Shaitana on her travels. She is much respected by her friends and associates; but her husband seems to have died under mysterious circumstances.

Major Despard is a trained and successful hunter in Africa. He is respected by the natives. A cool headed person, he killed a tiger to save a man's life. He was a guide to Professor Luxmore, a noted botanist. He was with the Professor and his wife on an expedition to South America. The Professor is said to have died of a fever and Mrs. Luxmore is living in London.

Dr. Roberts has been friendly with Mrs. Craddock. Her husband who finds out their relationship, dies shortly from an infection from an anthrax contaminated shaving brush of cheap manufacture. Mrs. Craddock inoculated against typhoid prior to travelling in the near East, dies in Egypt. Death is due to some obscure poison.

Anne Meredith is an army officer's daughter. She has made her way as a companion and house-keeper. She moves from job to job, from the Isle of wight to Switzerland to Devonshire
(which she fails to mention) always receiving good recommendations from her previous employers. It is found out that during her employment at Devonshire her employer, Mrs. Elton has accidentally taken poison stored in a syrup of Figs bottle and died.

With their past history Poirot is able to solve the mystery. He knows that only Dr. Roberts has wilfully committed the murders earlier and hence he will never like his guilt to be exposed to others by Shaitana. So when the other three players are busy, he has stabbed Shaitana.

The murderer here is a doctor and a notorious criminal. The crime is murder. The first murder of Mr. Craddock is committed to conceal his illicit relationship with Mrs. Craddock. The second murder is committed to silence Mrs. Craddock from revealing the truth. The third murder is again to silence Shaitana from exposing him to the world as a murderer. The criminal is a doctor who has to save mankind. Ironically his knowledge is used in murdering mankind. He is very clever as not to reveal his method of murdering people. The contaminated shaving brush and obscure poisoning cannot be particularly traced to Dr. Roberts. He uses subtle methods that will never point to him as the murderer. Here in the case of Shaitana Ann is seen to have gone near him and bent over him. That is later on found
out by Poirot to be because of her interest in trivialities and actions of theft. She has taken the pin from Shaitana's coat when she knows he is dead.

The archetypal pattern in this novel revolves around the unmasking of the guilty. Dr. Roberts is an apparently innocent person who is guilty of committing several murders. He, like other murderers, is a good schemer. Every one of the three players was playing with close attention and the grand slam was bid by Roberts and he bid it in Mrs. Lorrimer's suit so she had to necessarily play the hand. It was then that the murder was committed. Dr. Roberts murders Shaitana and calmly rejoins the others in the game. As a calculative and cool hearted murderer he a menace to society. If he is allowed to live unpunished he will indulge in killing everyone who is likely to expose his villainy. His knowledge and experience as a doctor is highly abused by him and his threat to society is removed only with his removal. So he is punished and handed over to the police.

The murder is audaciously committed. He has not left any tangible clue like finger prints or documents. Poirot describes his action as follows: "Pushed into a corner, he seizes a chance and acts at once.- sheer bold audacious bluff".26 If he had

stopped with Shaitana's murder alone he might not have been found out since it was so cleverly done. Though he cleverly planned to make Mrs. Lorrimer the scapegoat he didn't succeed in his attempt as he lost his nerve.

Of the four who have committed murders in the past Ann, Mrs. Lorrimer and Dr. Robert are punished. Despard is not at all responsible for the death of Professor Luxmore and so he escapes punishment.

The Murder of Roger Ackroyd (1926) is a landmark in the history of detective fiction. This made Christie more popular than her other novels. It raised a hue and cry among her readers, most of them accusing her of not playing fair trick and cheating them, violating the conventions of the detective story. It is the narrator Dr. Sheppard who murders Roger Ackroyd.

Mrs. Ferrars dies on a Friday morning. It is believed that she has committed suicide. She is expected to marry Roger Ackroyd a widower with a step-son Ralph Paton. Dr. Sheppard, a friend and physician of Roger Ackroyd learns from Ackroyd that Mrs. Ferrars has poisoned her husband, a good for nothing fellow whom she never loved in her life. This fact is known to someone else as well. That person has been blackmailing Mrs. Ferrars for huge sums. Unable to bear the increasing demands of the blackmailer, Mrs. Ferrars commits suicide. Ackroyd is sure that she
would reveal to him the blackmailer's name. The evening post has brought a letter to Ackroyd from Mrs. Ferrars. Dr. Sheppard wants him to read the letter but Ackroyd refuses saying he would read it alone. Dr. Sheppard goes to his house. Ten minutes later according to his statement he receives a phone call from Parker asking him to come to Ackroyd's house as Ackroyd is murdered. Hercule Poirot is invited by Miss Flora Ackroyd, the niece of Roger Ackroyd to investigate the murder.

The suspects are the household members to begin with. The family includes Ralph Paton, the step-son, Mrs. Cecil Ackroyd, Roger Ackroyd's widowed sister-in-law, and Flora Ackroyd, his niece. His friend Major Blunt, a friend of Roger Ackroyd is also living with them. Apart from these people there are servants - Ursula Bourne, the parlour maid, Miss Russell the house-keeper, Geoffrey Raymond, the secretary and Parker, the butler who also live in the house. There is also a mysterious and suspicious stranger seen asking for the way to Fernly Park. Everyone is suspected by Hercule Poirot as he always does at the beginning of every case. He learns everything that is to be known from Dr. Sheppard who narrates the incidents.

These people are suspected for various reasons. Miss Russell for her strange behaviour, Miss Ursula is very much agitated and is seen leaving the house after a quarrel with Roger Ackroyd. Mrs. Cecil Ackroyd and Flora are in need of money
though looked after very well by Roger Ackroyd. They would be benefitted by Ackroyd's death. Major Blunt during the dinner relapses into his usual taciturnity. The dagger present to Roger Ackroyd by him is the weapon with which the murder has been committed. The Butler is caught by Dr. Sheppard cavesdropping when he is strictly asked to keep himself away from Ackroyd's room.

But this Ralph Paton who is the prime suspect. He is in a financial crisis and Ackroyd has refused to clear his debts. This results in an estrangement between the father and the son. In fact Ackroyd doesn't even know that Ralph is at the Three Boars. After the murder of Roger Ackroyd, Ralph Paton has disappeared and nobody knows his whereabouts. His footprints from the window ledge leading to Ackroyd's room is a strong point against him.

Poirot's investigation reveals the following facts leading to the deletion of many names from the list of suspects. Miss Russell has a secret that is the cause of her strange behaviour. She is not married but has a son who does not know his mother's identity. He has been a drug addict and once he knows his mother's identity his demand for money increases and he wants to meet her at Fenly Park. Miss Russell who wants to prevent his meeting at Fenly Park goes to the summer house to meet him.
and while returning in a hurry to be on time for dinner is caught by Dr. Sheppard.

Miss Ursula is secretly married to Ralph Paton. Ackroyd wants Eaton and Flora to be married and he even announces their engagement in the papers. Ursula has to necessarily inform Ackroyd that she is secretly married to Paton. This results in an angry exchange of unpleasant words on both sides and Ursula leaves the house. The secret marriage is the cause of her agitation. Blunt is in love with Flora but not sure whether she would reciprocate his love. The announcement of her engagement to Paton makes him restless. The butler has been successful blackmailer earlier and so by eavesdropping he is trying to get another chance for blackmailing. He is a blackmailer but not a murderer.

Hercule Poirot solves the mystery of Paton's disappearance. He learns that Dr. Sheppard has sent him to a nursing home for the mentally unfit. Paton who believes Dr. Sheppard, obeys his instructions and stays at the hospital. He also finds out that Dr. Sheppard has taken Ackroyd's dictaphone with which he created an impression that Ackroyd is speaking to someone when he is actually dead. Poirot further learns that Dr. Sheppard took Paton's shoes to create the footmarks near the window of
Ackroyd's room. With all these facts Poirot proves that Dr. Sheppard is the criminal. Dr. Sheppard is given an honest way out and he takes veronal and dies.

The crime here is blackmail and murder. The blackmailing of Mrs. Ferraris led to her suicide. Dr. Sheppard is afraid that she might have revealed his name to Ackroyd. So he murders Roger Ackroyd. As a respectable and responsible citizen he has to save the life of people. Ironically the saviour of life becomes a murderer. He does not feel sorry for Mrs. Ferraris's death. In fact he feels that her death is "the direct consequences of her own actions".\(^\text{27}\) He takes veronal though he feels that by taking veronal 'there would be a kind of poetic justice',\(^\text{28}\) because Mrs. Ferraris's dies of an overdose of veronal. He feels justified in murdering Ackroyd as he "urged him to read the letter before it was too late",\(^\text{29}\) thus giving him a chance. But his subconscious mind tells him it is better that he does not read it. Ackroyd knows his life is in danger but he never suspects Dr. Sheppard to be the source of the danger.

The Archetypal pattern here again is the unmasking of the narrator, guilty. But Christie deliberately makes the criminal himself the thereby preventing the reader from suspecting him. The device


\(^{28}\) Ibid., p. 235.

\(^{29}\) Ibid., p. 233.
the narrator becoming the murderer raised a big hue and cry among the readers for cheating them. Christie has violated the archetypal pattern by displacing the function of the Priest-detective and fusing the 'Pharmakos' and the Priest.

Notwithstanding this narrative solepsism the novel is brilliant. As Charles Osborn says,

"It is not simply because of its startling denouement that The Murder of Roger Ackroyd has remained one of Agatha Christie's popular novels. The story is believable, the characters convincing and Mrs. Christie's ear for dialogue is accurate.... Dr. Sheppard, the narrator of Roger Ackroyd, is a fully rounded and perfectly convincing character, and his loving, exasperated relationship with his sister Caroline, an amusing and acutely observed character, is beautifully conveyed. Another important ingredient in the success of the novel is the background of Enlish village life which Mrs. Christie provides. It is never obtrusive but it is there, and it is important."

The novel is an exercise in authorial self-indulgence. Christie, like a master musician, improvising, gets away with the violation of the code of the detective story writer i.e. placing the reader in incomplete possession of the necessary clues.

Christie had hit her stride. Although Poirot's explanations are still somewhat lengthy, the book is considered one of her best. It is

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chiefly noted for the precedent it set in
detective fiction. The first person narrator,
Dr. Sheppard, turns out to be the murderer.
The skill with which this is revealed and
concealed is perhaps Christie at her most subtle.
....Christie allows herself to gloat at her own
fiendish cleverness through the very words that
Sheppard uses to gloat over his crime when he
refers back to a part of his narrative (the
story itself is supposedly being written to
help Poirot solve the crime) where a discerning
reader or sleuth ought to have found him out.31

Another point of view justifies the narrative validity
of Christie's technique

In Roger Ackroyd we exclude a character from
our suspicion; because we see the action through
his eyes; in this strategy we exclude him
because we are pleased in a position of sympathy
with him from the beginning.32

In *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934) Christie's trick
is more dazzling than the one in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*.
She wrote the novel for two reasons - one inspired by the
romantic image of the train and second by the tragic Lindbergh
kidnapping. Charles Osborne states that the solution to the
problem was suggested by her husband Max Mallowan to whom the
novel is dedicated.

31 Frank N. Magil (ed.) *Great Women Writers: the lives and
works of 135 of the world's most important women writers from
32 Jess Chapman, Christopher Gerouse, Bringham Narions (ed.)
*Contemporary Literary Criticism*, (Detroit, Gale Research
In the Taurus Express Poirot watches many passengers. Mary Debenham and Colonel Arbuthnot are the first to be seen by Poirot. He considers Mary a cool efficient young lady and the Colonel he learns has travelled all over India. The others include a Princess, a lady's maid, Russians, Americans, Hungarians, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Italians, a Swede and a German. Each one in the entire lot holds the other in disdain. These people reveal more about themselves while chatting in the dining room. The American is boisterous while Mrs. Hulband bores everyone with tales of her wonderful daughter. The Hungarian Count and Countess silently avoid her boredom, the others following suit. Poirot alone is left in the dining room. Ratchett, a wealthy American requests Poirot to help to save him as he has enemies around him. He offers a huge amount but Poirot refuses to accept his offer.

Next Poirot receives the news of the murder of Ratchett with a dozen knife wounds in his body. The doctor's report says that Ratchett may have been murdered at 1 a.m. The train has been stuck in a Yugoslavian snowbank since 12.30 and no footprints are seen leading to or from the compartment window. So Poirot feels the murderer must be inside the compartment. All the suspects in the compartment are perfectly respectable looking people.
Poirot's inspection of Ratchett's compartment enables him to find many clues. First of all several wounds on the corpse are deep but delivered to an already dead man. Some of them are by right-handed persons while others are by left-handers. It also shows the varied nature of people who have stabbed Ratchett; a man of great strength, a feeble man and a woman. The empty glass nearby shows that the victim has been drugged to sleep before his death. A dainty handkerchief with the initial 'H' embroidered and a pipe cleaner are also found in the coach. Ratchett's watch showed the time as 1.15. But of all these clues Poirot is interested in a charred fragment of a paper. "-member little Daisiy Armstrong". This reminds Poirot of Cassetti an ignoble American kidnapper who kidnapped and killed the child from the Armstrong family. He concludes this Ratchett must be Cassette.

Two women have the initial 'H' - Mrs. Hubbars and Hildegonda Schmidt the maid of the frail Russian lady, Princess Dragomiroff. The train conductor suspects the only Italian on the board - Automo Fascarelli though he is a decent young man. Poirot feels this crime shows traces of a cool, resourceful and deliberate brain.

Poirot's investigation reveals the following facts. He remembers the remark of M. Bonc in the restaurant car that the
company assembled there is interesting because it is so varie-
representing all classes and nationality. His knowledge of
the Armstrong case, connecting it with the burnt fragment -
the victim's compartment makes him realise that all the
passengers in the compartment are involved in the murder. It
is an improbable and suspicious coincidence that all the
people connected with the Armstrong case are travelling by
the train. So he concludes that it is deliberate - it is a
jury since it consists of twelve persons. Twelve passengers
stabbing Ratchett twelve times. Ratchett has escaped justice
in America. There is no question as to his guilt. These
twelve punish him acting as his executioners. They have
planned and worked out every minute detail of their evidence
beforehand.

Colonel Arbuthnot is the best friend of the Armstrongs.
The maid Hildegarde Schmidt, Hardman, Mrs. Hubbard and Mrs.
Armstrong's mother Linda Arden, the actress - all of them planned
and punish Ratchett and now Hercule Poirot finds out the
truth. But since so many people are involved and punishment
is given to a notorious kidnapper whose death would avenge
the anguish he has caused others. Poirot allows them to escape.
It would be reported that some enemy of Ratchett had entered the
compartment at Belgrade by the door left open by Colonel
Arbuttnot and Mr. and Mrs. Queen who have just descended to the
platform. After committing the murder he must have left the train just before it started. This solution is accepted by everyone.

The crime here is murder but it is more in the nature of the execution of a criminal who has escaped legal punishment. The archetypal pattern here is a expanded version of the cleansing ritual where instead of the Priest there are twelve... Poirot merely endorses the 'execution' of Ratchet who has kidnapped Daisy Armstrong, the daughter of Colonel Armstrong, an Englishman. An impossibly high sum is demanded as the price for her return. After the amount is paid her dead body is discovered, having been dead at least a fortnight. Mrs. Armstrong who is expecting another child is shocked at the discovery. She gives birth to a still-born child and herself dies. Her broken hearted husband shoots himself. So it is the cruelty of the victim that has led the twelve friends and relatives to murder him. The victim is a dangerous villain and for society's peace he has to be removed.

The "criminals" here have one common motive - to punish the victim who has escaped the law. The cause of the murder is to prevent the death of any child who might be alive and happy at present. To quote Linda Arden, "It wasn't only that he was responsible for my daughter's death and her
child's, and that of the other child who might have been alive and happy now. It was more than that. There had been other children before Daisy - there might be others in the future. Society had condemned him; we were only carrying out the sentence". 33

Curtain: Poirot's Last Case (1975) is significant for many reasons. Poirot met his friend Hastings at Styles and his first case was at Styles court. He investigates his last case at Styles and dies there. In the first case Hastings requests Poirot to come over to Styles while in Curtain, it is the other way round. It is a novel with a disturbing twist. Hercule Poirot himself commits the murder.

Hastings arrives at Styles at Poirot's request. He is sorry to find Poirot old and crippled with arthritis. He is told by Poirot that they will have to work together on an investigation. The people living there are the Luttrells, Norton, Boyd Carrington, the Franklins, the nurse who attends on Mrs. Franklin, Hasting's daughter Judith, Allerton - something of a lady killer, and Miss Cole, a woman in her thirties. All of them according to Poirot are nice people though one among them is a murderer. He also feels since the murderer is living at Styles "a murder will shortly be committed". 34

Poirot gives an account of five murders committed earlier at different places among different classes of people the motive being jealousy, to get rid of a husband, and money. The murderer is now in the house and Poirot feels that he will not be able to stop the murder though he may catch him.

Poirot analyses the cases and presents the facts. The murderer was actually away from the scene of the crime when the murders were committed. The first case is the case of Leonard Etherington. Mrs. Etherington kills her husband who is a drug addict and a drunkard. She is friendly with a man in the civil service returning to India. Though she is acquitted she dies taking an overdose of sleeping tablets. The second case is that of Mrs. Sharples, an elderly spinster. She is looked after by her niece, Freda Clay. The old lady dies of an overdose of morphia. Freda admits her crime. She states that unable to see her aunt suffer she has given her an overdose of morphia. Insufficient evidence sets her free. The third case is that of Riggs. He feels his wife is not faithful to him. His wife and Craig the lover are found shot. Riggs surrenders and says he doesn't remember anything. His death sentence is commuted to penal servitude for life. The fourth case is that of Derek Bradley who has an intrigue with a girl. His wife, knowing this threatens to kill him. Bladley dies of Pottassium cyanide in his beer. Mrs. Bradley is convicted and hanged. The last
case is that of Matthew Hitchfield, an elderly tyrant. His tyranny drives the older daughter to kill him. She is adjudged insane and is committed to Broadmoor, but dies shortly. All these cases are clear cases of murders. Hercule Poirot feels that whoever was responsible for the murder might have instigated the others to commit murder though he himself did not do it. The murderer is now at Styles. Poirot wants to prevent a murder and identify the brain behind those murders. Poirot's investigation proves that Norton is the culprit. His careful study of Norton's life proves that he is a very insignificant person. Norton dislikes blood and violence. He is a good listener and sympathises with people. He realises that he is capable of penetrating into the secret thoughts and wishes of people. With this gift he is able to make people do things they do not want to do. Thus he is able to make other people commit the murder. His involvement stops with giving ideas for murder and drives others to commit it. He is more dangerous than the actual murderer as he always escapes punishment as he cannot be traced. Poirot not only traces him but also punishes him by murdering him.

The punishment here is quasi-judicial. Instead of the agencies of the law punishing the criminal the detective himself punishes him - a sort of vigilance justice being administered. Poirot takes the law into his hands since he
feels that his murder of the criminal is justified. As the criminal has been escaping judicial punishment someone should punish him to save society from producing people who induce others to commit murder. It is not only the criminal but also the people who have developed criminal minds under his control who would destroy people in large numbers that are dangerous to society. Hence the execution of this criminal in the detective fiction ritual cleanses the society of its evil influence according to the archetypal pattern enunciated by Northrop Frye.

The criminal, an apparently gentle hearted, loving man was a secret sadist. He finds victim after victim. Though Poirot refers to only five cases there would have been more than five. In the present case for example Norton psychologically drives his victims to commit murder. Knowing that Franklin loves Hastings daughter he puts in his mind the thought that his wife's death would enable him to marry Judith. "There is the perfection of the art of murder. Not even a word of direct suggestion. He is always holding back others from violence, refuting with horror suspicions that have not been entertained until he mentions them". He could not succeed with Franklin since the latter was a man of strength and character who is loyal to his wife. So he approaches Judith.

Since Mrs. Franklin is a rich person he makes Judith believe that there is nothing wrong in ending a useless life. He would take the opposite view and ridicule that "It is the kind of thing that all young people say but never do!" So with the useless Barbara Franklin out of the way Judith could easily marry Franklin. Barbara Franklin becomes easily susceptible to his plans of murdering Franklin since she is in love with Boyd Carrington. Boyd is old fashioned and doesn't accept divorce. If Franklin were to die - this idea planted in her mind by Norton works out but unfortunately results in the death of the schemer himself. Barbara makes use of the research work of Franklin. She prepares the coffee with Calabar alkaloids for Franklin but by an ironic twist she drinks the poisoned cup. But for Norton's influence she would never have tried to poison her husband.

In the same way he tempts Hastings saying that his daughter is friendly with Allerton. Hastings's mind working in Norton's direction contemplates murdering Allerton with the tablets. Due to Poirot's interference Hastings fails in his attempt. In the same manner Colonel Luttrell is tempted by Norton and he almost shoots his wife. Fortunately for him his love for his wife over-powers his wish for killing. The above

two are the failures of not the individuals concerned but of Norton himself. But for Norton's influence the murders and attempts would never have been made. His victims are vulnerable. Hence Poirot feels justified in killing Norton when he escapes judicial punishment. Probably the most basic whodunit expectation is that the murder must be committed by the murderer. But in Curtain, as is appropriate for Christie's final Poirot mystery, even this expectation is broken. Stephen Norton does not murder anyone; yet as a catalyst he is the murderer.

In Ten Little Niggers (1943) the murderer after committing nine murders, commits suicide. It is a collection of criminals who have committed murders in the past but escaped punishment—Justice Wargrave, General Macarthur, Philip Lombard, Vera Claythorne, Anthony Marston, Emly Brent, Dr. Armstrong, Blore and Mr. and Mrs. Rogers, the cook and the maid to help him. All of them have a good dinner. In everybody's room the nursery rhyme 'The Little Niggers' is framed and hung up. A gramaphone record is played according to the instruction of the host Owen (whom no one has seen) which accuses everyone guilty of some murder in the past. Though each one feels guilty no one shows it to the others. One by one nine of them are murdered in the manner narrated in the nursery rhyme. The tenth one commits suicide. The mystery would have remained unsolved but for the written confessional statement sealed up in a bottle and thrown
into the sea. It is Justice Wargrave who has committed all the murders. He has always been fascinated by crime and its punishment. He is aware of the change in him - he has developed a desire to commit murder; it should be a fantastic crime and out of the common. He decides to commit murder on a grand scale of those criminals who have escaped the Law. He chooses these nine persons very carefully and commits the murders carefully and cleverly following the sequence in the nursery rhyme. He is sure that people who come to the Nigger Island when the sea goes down will find ten dead bodies and an unsolved problem.

The murders that are committed are not stereotyped. The pattern varies closely following the nursery rhyme. One is choked to death, the second one over-slept, the third one stays alone and dies. The next one chopped himself to death, while the other was stung by a bumble bee. Of the rest one got into the Chancery while the other was swallowed by a red herring. One was hugged by a big bear while the other got frizzled up and the last one went and hanged himself. So ultimately there was no one.

The murderer's confession of the murderer reveals his personality. He says, "I have a definite sadistic delight in seeing or causing death". 37 With his lust to kill he also had

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a strong sense of justice". It is abhorrent to me" he says, "that an innocent person or creature should suffer or die by any act of mine. I have always felt strongly that right should prevail". So he collects people who have committed murder earlier and punishes them.

Like the detective punishing the criminal in *Curtain* Justice Wargrave punishes the criminals here aducing the reason that the innocent must not suffer. This novel is peculiar in the sense that the solution, again as in *Curtain* is given by the criminal and no investigation solves the problem. Poirot and Justice Wargrave show the ingenuity of Agatha Christie which makes it impossible for the readers to guess who the criminal is. Whether it is a detective or a Judge who is a criminal Agatha Christie does not want crime to go unpunished. Commenting about *Ten Little Niggers* Ralph Partridge says "No one else in the world would have attempted seriously to manipulate a plot like that of *Ten Little Niggers* without a hopeless presentiment of failure.... Mrs. Christie disdains contraptions. She faces her readers with her bare hands and her sleeves rolled up; and she sells them ten dummnis beautifully, one after the other, with the exquisite timing of a Rugby International three-quarter going through a pack of clumsy yokels to score a try under the posts ... There are ten people

cooped up on Nigger Island who put on a gramaphone record and hear their death-sentence. After sentence has been executed Scotland Yard asks 'Who did it?' But only Mrs. Christie survives to tell".39 Though we are able to know the thought of every character we are not able to guess. Isaac Anderson opines that "it is the most baffling mystery that Agatha Christie has ever written, and if any other writer has ever surpassed it for sheer puzzlement the name escapes our memory. We are referring, of course, to mysteries that have logical explanations, as this one has. It is a tall story, to be sure, but it could have happened".40

Justice Wargrave, instead of the detective-Priest performs the archetypal function of the cleanser of society.

In *Sad Cypress* (1940) Elinor Katherine Carlisle is charged with the murder of Mary Gerrard and she pleads not guilty. There is strong evidence against her and Hercule Poirot, as usual solves the mystery and secures her conviction.

Elinor's old and wealthy aunt Laura is very sick. She gets an anonymous letter that the aunt may be killed if Laura and her nephew Roderic Welman who is engaged to Elinor do not go to Hunterbury at once. So both of them immediately go down to see her.

40 Ibid., p. 114.
Aunt Laura is looked after by two Nurses - Nurse O'Brien and Nurse Hopkins. In addition to them there is Mary Gerrard, the daughter of the people at the Lodge. Aunt Laura is fond of her and has given her school education, piano lessons and so on. Aunt Laura dies without leaving any will. But she has requested Elinor to make provision for Mary Gerrard. Roderick Welman falls in love with Mary and his engagement to Elinor is broken. Elinor has provided Mary with a lumpsum amount as requested by aunt Laura before her death. Elinor disposes off the house getting it ready to hand it over to the purchaser. She sees Mary and Nurse Hopkins talking. Nurse Hopkins tells Elinor that Mary is writing a will. Elinor invites them to have lunch with her. They eat the sandwiches and have their tea. Mary dies and Elinor is charged with murder. Dr. Peter Lord who has been looking after aunt Laura seeks Poirot's help to save Elinor.

Poirot's investigations expose Nurse Hopkins's villainy. She is the sister of Emily Riley who knows the fact that Mary Gerrard is aunt Laura's daughter. Mary Riley has earlier murdered an old lady who has left very little legacy and whose death is somewhat of a puzzle to the doctor attending on her. Mary Riley or Draper (as she is also known) husband insures his life in her favour for a considerable sum and his death is sudden and unaccountable. The police of New Zealand
are unable to get sufficient evidence for a conviction but they have been watching her. Mary, knowing the fact that Mary Gerrod is actually aunt Laura's daughter, has left New Zealand. She serves as Nurse Hopkins at aunt Laura's house. She knows Gerrard will get a large sum of money when aunt Laura dies. So she makes Mary write a will in favour of Mary Riley, sister of Eliza Riley. Since she is now Nurse Hopkins no one will suspect that the will is written in her favour. It is she who kills the old lady with an morphine injection and murders Mary with poison. Since Gerrard knows that she is Eliza's daughter she doesn't hesitate to leave her money to her mother's sister. Nurse Hopkins who also shared the tea with Gerrard injects herself against the poison and escapes death. Poirot's investigation which proves that Nurse Hopkins is actually Nurse Wraper saves innocent Elinor who is mistaken for a murderer.

The crime here is murder. The criminal is a very scheming person and also like other criminals of Agatha Christie, "a remorseless and unscrupulous woman ... she had already planned the method of the crime, with the use of the apomorphine to secure her own alibi". She has already committed murders and escapes at the right time and goes to another country so that the police are not able to get her. She mercilessly

kills an old lady who loves her and her husband and her niece. Poirot performs the archetypal function of the Priest identifying the 'pharmakos' and removing the menace from society.

*Cat Among the Pigeons* (1959) is set in a school where murders are committed. It starts with a revolution at Ramat from where Prince Ali Yusuf and his friend Bob Roburson plan to escape. Failure of their plans results in their death in an air crash. Some of the valuable diamonds are safely and secretly kept by Bob Robinson at the Prince's request in his sister and niece's luggage before their death. This act of packing done in his sister's room (since she and the niece were out) was seen by a lady occupying the next room unnoticed by Bob. The bundle so packed is small and handy to be carried upon a person. Prince Ali's first cousin has gone to Meadowbank school and Colonel Pickenway employed his secret agent to watch the school. Since she has been in Switzerland and is shifted recently to Meadowbank he feels there might be some developments. So the agent would observe and send a report of everything that happens in the school. The agent is appointed as a gardner in the school.

Mrs. Sutcliff, Bob's sister is interrogated about the package but she is unable to reveal anything. She warned to be careful. There is an attempt of theft on her house but nothing is stolen.
Jenifer, Bob's niece is admitted in Meadowbank school. Life at Meadowbank is normal and routine for sometime until the games mistress Miss Springer is murdered in the new games pavilion. Only two people have perfect alibi, Miss Johnson, the matron and Miss Chadwick staff of Meadowbank who are looking after one of the girls with an earache. Nothing is stolen from the sports pavilion. Miss Springer is shot from about four feet away, the bullet penetrating the heart. No weapon is found around except the torch used by the dead woman. There seems to be no motive in the murder. Theoretically everyone is in bed, asleep. The interview with the staff of Meadowbank does not produce any useful result except the remarks of Eiteen Rich who says though Miss Springer annoyed people, she wasn't killed for herself. She is there is something wrong then. 'It is as though there were someone among us who didn't belong ... cat among the pigeons, that's the sort of feeling. We're the pigeons, all of us, and the cat's among us. But we can't see the cat'.

When Princes Shaista is interviewed she says that people wanted to kidnap her for the family jewels since the kidnappers feel she knows the whereabouts of the jewels. She also states that they would make her a prisoner to tell them about the jewels.

Jewels worth between half a million and a million pounds that belonged to Prince Ali three months ago are now missing.

A Cabaret dancer who was present at Ramat during the revolution is now supposed to be working for a certain foreign Government. That woman is also missing and her whereabouts are not known. It is felt that she might be at Meadowbank since there are three new comers to the school - Ann Shapland, the secretary, Blanche, the French mistress and Miss Springer. Before the mystery of the first murder is solved there is a second murder at the sports Pavillion. Miss Vansillart as authoritative as Miss Bulstrode, the Head of Meadowbank is found murdered. The weapon used might have been a cosh or a sandbag. A golf club with a steel head is lying near the door. Added to this Shaista is kidnapped and her whereabouts are not known.

Jenifer and Julia the two pupils of Meadowbank exchange their racquet since Jenifer feels hers to be heavy and difficult to play with. Jennifer gets a new racquet from a lady who while giving her the racquet says that she is sent by her aunt and exchanges her old one and goes away. Later Jeniffer realises that her aunt has not sent any racquet.
The murders at the school campus frighten many parents who begin to take their children home. Jennifer is taken away by her mother while Julia stays at Meadowbank waiting for her mother since her mother has gone on a tour by bus. Julia feels that there is something about the racquet since Jennifer receives a racquet not sent by her aunt but has been told it is her aunt who has sent her. The person has taken back her old racquet. On examining Jennifer's racquet Julia finds the jewels inside. She takes the jewels and hands them over to Poirot. Poirot's investigation reveal certain facts. Julia's mother Mrs. Upjohn is surprised to see someone at Meadowbank on the reopening day. Mrs. Upjohn is brought to Meadowbank to identify that person. As usual in a Christie novel everyone is asked to assemble in a class room. Poirot explains the matter in detail. He tells them that the girl who lives there as Princess Shaista is not at all the Princess. The Princess had been kidnapped earlier and another girl was sent to Meadowbank in her name. This was done to get the valuable diamonds of Ali Yusuf. After Ali Yusuf's death, everyone expects that the diamonds would be sent to his cousin Princess Shaista. But when the news of her uncle's arrival reaches the kidnappers they enact a scene of kidnapping the supposed princess Shaista with an amaeurish ransom note sent just to keep up the fiction.

The person staying next to Mrs. Sulcliff's room at Ramat has seen Bob packing the precious stones in the racquet, she
comes to Moutbank and works there as Miss Bulstrode's secretary. Mrs. Upjohn has identified her as a killer and a dangerous person. She is known as Angelica. The jewels, of course, go to Alice Cadler whom Ali Yusuf has married as a student.

The crime here is multiple murders. Ann murders the games mistress when she catches her meddling in the Sports Pavillion. She also murders the French teacher who knows the secret and tries to blackmail her. The second murder is committed by Miss Chadwick out of jealousy.

The criminal, to quote Hercule Poirot is dangerous. She has "always led a dangerous life". She works as an agent for many different matters. She has been hired and paid highly for her services. Certain jobs are done under different identities. During such periods she has absented herself from her work spot under the pretext of going to be with her mother who in fact is not her mother at all. She goes to Žamat as Angelica de Torrdo a Spanish cabaret dancer. She knows where Bob Robinson has hidden the valuable stones; finds out where the luggage is gone, pays the former secretary of Miss Bulstrode of Meadowbank a substantial sum to vacate her post under the plea of a breakdown and gets herself appointed as a new secretary to Mrs. Bulstrode. She is seen by Miss Springer examining the racquet. On that particular day she happens to
be awake and follows her and shoots her. When Miss Blanche who knows the identity of the murderer blackmails her, she is murdered. Ann Shapland is a killer who kills people without any compunction for her advantage and would be employed for criminal work. Hercule Poirot saves Mountbank's reputation and the life of students and staff by his timely intervention. The poor widow of Yusuf Ali and her son are taken care of. The money for her son's education is provided with the sale of these jewels.

The 'Pharmakos' is in this case a very dangerous woman with a frightening propensity for assuming different identities and ruthlessly eliminating people for pecuniary gain. Poirot, the Priest-detective is endowed with the faculty of identifying her for what she is and expelling her from society lest she continue to endanger others.

'Cat Among the Pigeons' is one of the best of the later novels' says Osborne in his book *Life and Crimes of Agatha Christie* "... it is quite strongly plotted and its characters, even its minor characters, are more than usually vivid. The skill with which the summer term at Meadowbank is combined with a revolution in Ramat, a small but rich Arab state in the Middle East is masterly".43

Unlike the other novels discussed earlier, *Elephants can Remember* (1972) investigates a murder committed twenty years

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earlier with no proper information that will help the investigation. The clarification with regard to the fact whether Celia's "mother killed her father or was it that father who killed the mother"\footnote{Agatha Christie, Elephants Can Remember, (London: Collins, 1972), p.23.} is absolutely necessary for her marriage with Desmond Cox. Mrs. Burton Cox, the mother approaches Mrs. Oliver Celia's godmother for this clarification. Since it is a twenty years old matter Mrs. Oliver is not able to recollect anything about it. She tells Mrs. Cox that she can't help her since she hasn't heard anything of a "murder". Mrs. Oliver is told by Mrs. Cox, Celia knows about it and insists that Mrs. Oliver should get the information from Celia. Though Mrs. Oliver refuses to oblige Mrs. Cox she seeks Poirot's help.

Fifteen years earlier Celia's father, after his retirement from India had bought a house and settled in the country. One day he had gone out for a walk with his wife along the Cliffpath and both of them were found shot with a revolver lying close to them. The revolver was identified as belonging to Celia's father. It was thought to be a double suicide.

Celia was only twelve years old at the time of the tragedy. Celia's parents were a happy couple who loved each other immensely. They did not have any financial problem to
think of either murder or suicide. Hercule Poirot feels it would be impossible to get at the truth after twenty years. But Mrs. Oliver is determined to get the necessary details and succeeds in her attempt.

Celia’s mother Margaret Preston Grey was Mrs. Oliver’s friend. Molly (as she was known) and Dolly her sister were identical twins. Dolly was a mentally affected person. General Ravencroft fell in love with Dolly but something in her alarmed him; he felt repulsion of some kind towards Dolly, saw some sort of the beginning of insanity in her and the dangers connected with insanity. He shifted his affections to Molly and married her. The husband had a good record and the wife affectionate, pleasant. They had a happy life. They did not have any financial difficulties; neither did they have any anxiety about their children’s health. They were well balanced and placid.

Dolly married Mr. Jarrow. After sometime she was widowed. She was deeply shocked by her husband’s death and felt a great sense of loss and was almost in a mentally disturbed state. In her insanity she killed her son and was under treatment. After recovery she joined her sister Molly and was now living with her family. There was another incident of child murder. Dolly hated her sister since she married the man whom she loved.
She never forgave her. But Molly loved her sister deeply and against her husband's wish she made Dolly live with them. One day the sisters went out for a walk and Dolly killed Molly. 'The dormant obsession of hatred and resentment of the sister, who though so like herself, was too much for her. Hate, jealousy the desire to kill - all rose to the surface and dominated her'.\textsuperscript{45} She returned alone from the walk and her right hand was stained with blood. When asked about it she said she got scratched by a rose bush when there was no such bush at all. Ravenscroft searched for Molly and found her a little way down the cliff. She was dying. Her dying request was to save Dolly from punishment and trial. General Ravenscraft kept his promise. It was said that Dolly who was unwell for sometime in her somnambulism had fallen over the cliff and died. Dolly was taken to an empty cottage where Zelia stayed with her for some days. It was said that Molly had been taken to the hospital since she was suffering from the shock of the discovery of her sister's death. Ravenscraft brought Dolly back as Molly. Since they were alike and the voices were also alike everyone accepted her as Molly. Since Dolly was dangerous to society with her murderous instincts she had to be removed from society. So Ravenscroft planned to kill her and committed suicide. He has explained everything to Zalia.

The criminals here are Dolly and Ravenscroft. Dolly the criminal is dangerous to society as she murders without compunction her son, another child, and her sister. Her insanity and jealousy would lead her to murder any number of people. While she is dangerous to society Ravenscroft's murder of her is justified since he has saved society from further murders. He is a murderer but also an agent of justice. He in fact acted like an angry deity as the earlier crime was kept secret according to the request of the victim. It was not only Molly's murder but the murder of her (Dolly's) son and a neighbouring child when Dolly was living with the Ravenscroft's that prove that she is a menace to society. To prevent any more murders she had to be killed. So the archetypal pattern of expulsion of the pharmakos is followed by vigilant justice, Ravenscroft's suicide is a self-inflicted penalty for usurping the function of the law. Poirot's investigations serve to confirm the execution of "justice" that had taken place twenty years earlier.

The novels that have been analysed in this chapter have certain similarities and differences within the ambit of the archetypal pattern of crime-cleansing-punishment with the 'Pharmakos's role subserved by the criminal who appears in various guises. The husband murdering the wife is found in The Mysterious Affair at Styles and Murder in Mesopotamia but the motives are different. In th
it is money and in the second it is love. The murderer and
the accomplice plan and execute their plans very carefully in
The Mysterious Affair at Styles and in Evil under the Sun.
The criminals are very careful. In the former the criminal and
the accomplice are cousins while in the latter they are husband
and wife. If over caution exposes the criminals in The
Mysterious Affair at Styles it is the similarity in the method
that exposes them in Evil under the Sun.

If the husband murders her wife for love in Murder in
Mesopotamia the husband murders the sister-in-law in Elephants
Can Remember because of his love for his wife. Captain
Ravenscroft shoots his sister-in-law and he himself commits
suicide. The sister who is an identical twin of his wife has
murdered his wife and she is presented as his wife until she
is murdered. The mystery is difficult to solve as the murder
was committed twenty years earlier.

If the murderer is the husband in the above novels the
wife murders the husband in Thirteen at Dinner to get married
to a duke.

Death in the Clouds and Cards on the Table make a pair
in the sense that murder is committed in everyone's presence.
If a murderer is one among the eleven passengers in Death in
In *Curtain* the detective is the murderer - contrary to the rules of fairplay vis-à-vis the reader of detective fiction. Similarly in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* the faithful friend turning out to be the 'Pharmakos' is a rude shock to the readers. Further they are deceived because the murderer is the narrator and hence everything is filtered through his consciousness.

*Ten Little Niggers* and *Murder on the Orient Express* form a contrasting pair. In the former all the ten victims are dead and punished for their earlier crimes. In the latter all the twelve criminals escape because they have murdered the wicked person who has escaped judicial punishment. But in both punishment is administered for a past crime.

A doctor and a nurse are murderers in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd, Cards on the Table* and *Sad Cypress* respectively.
In the first two cases the cause is fear of exposure while in the last it is money. Christie's supreme achievement is in her avoiding the depiction of violence though the deadly menace presented by the various criminals in the novels discussed in this chapter and their punishment fits perfectly into the Priest versus Pharmakos pattern of the archetypal mould.