FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA

TRABALLO DE FIN DE GRAO

Under Western Eyes: Representations of the Orient and the "Dark Continent" in Agatha Christie's Novels

---

Author: Aixa Montero Ferreiro

Supervised by Noemí Pereira Ares

2023-2024

FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA

TRABALLO DE FIN DE GRAO

Under Western Eyes: Representations of the Orient and the "Dark Continent" in Agatha Christie's Novels

---

Author: Aixa Montero Ferreiro

Supervised by Noemí Pereira Ares

2023-2024

CUBRIR ESTE FORMULARIO ELECTRONICAMENTE

Formulario de delimitación do título e resumo

Traballo de Fin de Grao curso 2023/2024

APELIDOS E NOME:	Montero Ferreiro Aixa
GRAO EN:	Lingua e literatura Inglesas
(NO CASO DE MODERNAS) MENCIÓN EN:	
TITOR/A:	Noemí Pereira Ares
LIÑA TEMÁTICA ASIGNADA:	Literatura e cultura en lingua inglesa

SOLICITO a aprobación do seguinte título e resumo:

Título: Under Western Eyes: Representations of the Orient and the Dark Continent in Agatha Christie's Novels.

Resumo [na lingua en que se vai redacta-lo TFG; entre 1000 e 2000 caracteres]:

Crime fiction has captivated readers for decades, from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories to Agatha Christie's intriguing mysteries or Patricia Cornwell's best-selling novels. The genre's blend of suspense, intrigue and human psychology has contributed to its enduring allure, and particularly since the second half of the twentieth century crime fiction has also been accorded increasing attention within literary criticism. Within a Western literary tradition, the origins of crime fiction can be traced back at least to the early nineteenth century: Edgar Allan Poe (1809 -1849) was one of the genre's pioneers and, later, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930) consolidated what has been termed "detective fiction", a subgenre of crime fiction also practised by Agatha Christie (1890-1976), the "queen of crime". As an easily recognisable genre, crime fiction was, therefore, cemented during a period that coincided with the heyday of European empires – including the British Empire – and, partly as a result, from the nineteenth century to the modern era, certain works within the crime fiction genre reflect the logics of colonial discourse, at times emphasised by the portrayal of detectives as colonial or imperial agents. Departing from these considerations, the present dissertation intends to provide a reading of Agatha Christie's novels under a postcolonial lens. To this end, the study will be divided into two main parts: the theoretical framework and the case studies, respectively. In the first part, I shall first provide an overview of crime fiction from its origins to the so-called "Golden Age" – the period to which Christie belongs – tracing the connection between empire and the discourse of criminality. This will be followed by a theoretical exploration of colonial discourse theories, bringing in the work of key thinkers such as Edward Said. Drawing on this theoretical framework, the second part of the study will provide a close reading of two novels by Agatha Christie – *Death on the Nile* (1937), which takes place in Egypt, and *The Man in the Brown Suit* (1924), which is set in

SRA. PRESIDENTA DA COMISIÓN DO TRABALLO DE FIN DE GRAO

Southern Africa – in an attempt to unveil how Christie's texts contributed to constructing the colonial "Other" by reproducing Orientalist figurations and stereotypical images of the "Dark Continent".

Santiago de Compostela, 02 de novembro de 2023.

Sinatura do/a interesado/a	Visto e prace (sinatura do/a titor/a)	Aprobado pola Comisión do Traballo de Fin de Grao coa data
	PEREIRA ARES NOEMI - 47370505G Digitally signed by PEREIRA ARES NOEMI - 47370505G DN: c=ES, serialNumber=IDCES-47370505G, givenName=NOEMI, sn=PEREIRA ARES, cn=PEREIRA ARES NOEMI - 47370505G Date: 2023.11.03 09:49:17 +01'00'	18 DEC. 2023 UNIVERSIDADE DE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA Selo da Facultade de Filoloxía

SRA. PRESIDENTA DA COMISIÓN DO TRABALLO DE FIN DE GRAO

Declaración de orixinalidade do traballo:

Eu, Aixa Montero Ferreiro, estudante no Grao en Lingua e Literatura Inglesas na Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, con DNI 53199266J, declaro que os contidos do presente traballo son orixinais, non plaxiados e que as ideas aquí expostas fan mención á súa orixe e autoría.

En Santiago de Compostela, a 28 de xuño de 2024

Aixa Montero Ferreiro

Agradecementos

A meus pais, por apoiarme e crer en min.

Aos que xa non están. Sei que vos alegraríades por min.

A Clover. Bótote de menos.

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Chapter 1. **Crime Fiction and the Empire** 5

Chapter 2. **Imperial Eyes and Colonial Discourse** 15

2.1 Representing the 'Orient' 16

2.2 Constructions of the 'Dark Continent' 19

Chapter 3. **Agatha Christie's Colonial Novels** 23

3.1 Agatha Christie's *Death on the Nile* (1937) 29

3.2 Agatha Christie's *The Man in the Brown Suit* (1924) 43

Conclusion 56

Bibliography 60

Introduction

Crime fiction is one of the most popular literary genres, captivating millions of readers by offering a thrilling escape into the darkest and most mysterious dimension of human nature. Although traditionally seen as a popular form of entertainment, crime fiction has garnered increasing attention within literary criticism since the second half of the twentieth century, with scholarly work focusing not only on the genre itself but also on the socio-historical context informing specific titles within the genre. Western crime fiction was consolidated during the prime of the British Empire, and many authors writing in this period placed their stories in colonial settings. Consequently, in recent decades, their works have started to be analysed in relation to imperialism and colonial discourse. Nicknamed as the "Queen of Crime", Agatha Christie (1890 – 1976) is a crime fiction author from the so-called Golden Age —the most prolific period for Western crime fiction and the subgenre of detective fiction. As recorded in her autobiography (1977), Christie travelled widely across the British Empire, and in her novels she recreated the colonial landscapes she had visited with gusto. Albeit being a key figure in the crime fiction genre due to the popularity of her novels, the number of studies focusing on her work is rather limited, particularly when compared to the amount of criticism devoted to other authors within the genre. This general disinterest in Christie's work is often attributed to the supposed "flatness" of her characters, and the repetitive design of her plots (Lassner, 2009, p. 31). This notwithstanding, Christie's "colonial novels" —*i.e.*, those set in former colonies— are extremely productive when analysed under a postcolonial lens, since in them "[a]broad was being reimagined as a place for consumption and leisure" (Ligh, as cited in Lassner, 2009, p. 32).

Departing from the above-mentioned premises, the present dissertation contends that in her "colonial novels" Agatha Christie reproduced —and, therefore, contributed to

reinforcing— those colonial discourses upon which the West founded its imperialist logics. The study thus seeks to explore how late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century crime fiction, a genre that was cemented during the heyday of European empires, exploited contemporary discourses on criminality in relation to imperialism and, moving from the general into the particular, it also purports to show how this manifests itself in Christie's novels by examining her colonial novels under a postcolonial lens. In order to do so, this study will provide a close reading of two of Christies' colonial novels, relying on crime fiction studies, postcolonial theory, and existing criticism on Agatha Christie's work. The first novel under scrutiny, *Death on the Nile* (1937), deals with the resolution of a set of murders —and, in particular, the assassination of a wealthy American heiress— by the famous Belgian detective Hercule Poirot. Those murders take place on board a Nile steamer, in one of Britain's former colonies, Egypt. The second novel, *The Man in the Brown Suit* (1924), is centred around Anne Beddingfeld, a young woman who gets involved in a murder investigation due to her desire for adventure. To solve the puzzle, she embarks on a journey to South Africa, where most of the action takes place.

In terms of structure, the dissertation is divided into two main parts: the theoretical framework, which lays bare the theoretical discussions informing the study, and the case study. The first part is, in turn, subdivided into two chapters, whilst the third chapter is entirely devoted to the analysis of the above-mentioned two novels. Thus, Chapter 1, titled "Crime Fiction and the Empire", traces the development of crime fiction within the British context, beginning with a historical overview of crime fiction from its origins to the so-called "Golden Age". In order to articulate this section, I will draw on seminal works by Richard Bradford (2015), Victoria Stewart (2017) and John Scaggs (2005), who refers to crime fiction as an "unclassifiable genre" (2005, p. 1) due to its constant development throughout history. This overview will be followed by an analysis of the

close relation between said genre and colonial discourse in the late nineteenth and early twenty centuries. Relying on studies on crime, empire and detective fiction such as Susan Rowland's *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell. British Women Writers in Detective and Crime Fiction* (2001), Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee's *Crime and Empire. The Colony in Nineteenth-Century Fictions of Crime* (2003) or Ronald R. Thomas's *The Fingerprint of the Foreigner: Colonizing the Criminal Body in 1890s Detective Fiction and Criminal Anthropology* (1994), this chapter seeks to demonstrate how crime fiction reiterated — and, in consequence, normalised— imperial ideology, mostly by making use of a rhetoric that identified the colonised as a criminal "other" in contraposition to the West (Rowland, 2001, p. 69). The dissertation then moves on to Chapter 2, titled "Imperial Eyes and Colonial Discourse". In it, I will engage with key concepts within postcolonial theory, drawing on works such as John McLeod's *Beginning Postcolonialism* (2002) and Ashcroft et al.'s *Post-colonial Studies. The Key Concepts* ([2000] 2007). The chapter will be divided into two main sections, with the first one addressing the representation of the Orient in colonial discourse. I will here draw closely on Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), which represents a pivotal work in colonial discourse theory. *Orientalism* examines the division between the West and the Orient and describes how the West re-imagined the Orient in accordance with imperialist ideology —a question that will turn central to the analysis of Christie's novel *Death on the Nile* (1937). For its part, the second section in Chapter 2 will be devoted to exploring the image of the "Dark Continent", drawing upon works such as Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986), Lucy Jarosz's "Constructing the Dark Continent: Metaphor as Geographic Representation of Africa" (1992), and Chinua Achebe's "An image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" (2016). Similarly to how Orientalism works, the "Dark Continent" is a metaphor created by the West to rationalise the domination of the African territory, which

is rendered as a homogenised entity in opposition to the West; and this will be later extrapolated to the analysis of Christie's *The Main in the Brown Suit* (1924) which, as mentioned above, is mostly set in South Africa.

Having laid bare the theoretical background informing this dissertation, the remainder of this study will be devoted to the case study —the analysis of two of Christie's novels, which are brought together in Chapter 3. As occurs in the case of Chapter 2, this chapter will be divided into two sections, each of them devoted to one novel. The first one will provide a close-reading and analysis of *Death on the Nile* (1937), in the light of Said's notion of "Orientalism", whilst simultaneously bringing in existing studies on Christie's work, such as Tiina Tuominen's "Down into the Valley of Death': The Portrayal of the Orient in the Interwar Fiction of Agatha Christie" (2013) and Merja Makinen's *Agatha Christie. Investigating Femininity* (2006). For its part, the second section in Chapter 3 will focus on *The Man in the Brown Suit* (1924), examining how Christie appropriates and reinforces here the image of the "Dark Continent". In addition to the works already mentioned when referring to Chapter 2, I will also bring in more specific criticism to address the particularities of this novel, as is the case of Shohat and Stam's *Unthinking Eurocentrism. Multiculturalism and the Media* ([1994] 2014). The main findings unveiled through the analysis of these two novels will be brought together in the conclusive section, where I also point at future lines of research related to the main concerns behind this study.

Chapter 1. Crime Fiction and the Empire

As adumbrated earlier in this work, the term “crime fiction”, as John Scaggs suggests in *Crime Fiction* (2005), is used to classify an “unclassifiable genre” (p. 1) whose premise revolves around crime. Its status as “unclassifiable” derives from the fact that, throughout its history, very different works have been subsumed under this label. The constant evolution of the genre has been heavily influenced by changes in the social and cultural environment, which have ineludibly led to the ramification of crime fiction into different subgenres, one of them being that of “detective fiction”, on which this dissertation focuses. Within a Western literary tradition, detective fiction, and therefore crime fiction as well, was cemented during the nineteenth century in Great Britain. During said century, Britain witnessed the heyday of the British Empire and its colonial expansion, which inevitably implied the need of means to consolidate “its authority at home and abroad” (Rakesh Jain and Akshita Sharma, 2022, p. 122). As one of the most popular genres at the time, crime fiction, and specifically detective fiction, emerged as the ideal tool for engrossing colonial ideas and normalising them.

This first chapter thus sets out to understand how crime fiction and the values transmitted through it are deeply interwoven with history. To this end, the chapter begins by providing a diachronic overview of crime fiction, from its origins to the so-called “Golden Age” —the period to which Agatha Christie belongs— and I here depart from Scaggs’s claim that “like any literary text, individual works of crime fiction are built from the devices, codes, and conventions established by previous works of crime fiction, and they are therefore crucial to our understanding of these texts in the present” (2005, p. 3). After this, the chapter moves on to explore the connection between the crime fiction of the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century and the logics of empire, delving into the fusion of colonial discourse and the discourse of criminality.

"Crime" has been a recurrent theme in literature throughout history, even though in the past crime fiction was not envisioned as a genre sensu stricto. For instance, both Richard Bradford (2015, p. 1) and John Scaggs (2005, p. 8, 9) trace literary crime to works such as *Oedipus Rex* (430 BC), *Rhampsinitus and the Masterchief* (5th century BC), and the story of Hercules and Cacus the thief (Virgil, 19 BC) —stories characterised by the attempt of bringing someone to justice. Moreover, and despite this being contested by other critics, Bradford and Scaggs also suggest that the Bible, and specially the Old Testament Book of Daniel, can be considered part of the history of literary crime, since "the emphasis on right conduct, reinforced by the harsh punishments meted out in the stories from the Book of Daniel, is characteristic of most narratives of crime up until the mid-nineteenth century, including the stories of Edgar Allan Poe" (Scaggs, 2005, p. 9). Likewise, both critics also mention the similarity between *Hamlet* and the "mystery-driven narrative of modern crime fiction" (Bradford, 2015, p. 1), as in Shakespeare's text Hamlet is also led into a progressive discovery of the factual events of his father's death.

This notwithstanding, when commenting on the examples mentioned above, Bradford (2015) argues that, strictly speaking, they cannot be considered actual forerunners of the modern crime genre nor the detective genre, since the crimes they tackle are subordinated to other central themes (p. 3). Pinpointing a clear origin for crime fiction is not always easy, as the emergence of crime fiction is often shadowed by the origins of detective fiction, which are usually attributed to Edgar Allan Poe during the first half of the nineteenth century. However, the "true origins" of crime fiction can be traced back at least to the eighteenth century. Bradford signals Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) and Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *Tom Jones* (1749) as some of the sources for the beginning of crime fiction. These three works deal with

criminal acts and the administration of justice, one of the most popular topics for entertainment in the period.

Public interest in these narratives and in the printed biographies of criminals — from which Defoe drew inspiration when writing *Moll Flanders*— led to the state's attempt of containing said interest with the publication of the *Accounts of the lives, crimes, confessions and executions of criminals…*, first published in 1728 (Bradford, 2015, p. 4). These were accounts from prisoners filtered through the prison chaplains, who seemed to add final notes of remorse to the stories. These texts were substituted in 1773 by the *Newgate Calendars* which, like the *Accounts*, also served to control the widespread interest in crime, acting as "cautionary tales" (Scaggs, 2005, p. 13) that emphasized the punishment of the criminal. Alongside these stories, the period also witnessed the emergence of Gothic fiction and, in fact, from here onwards there would be constant cross-pollination between Gothic fiction and crime fiction. The gothic novel also served to reinforce contemporary values through the horror associated with the disruption of social order.

During the late eighteen century and beginning of the nineteenth century, Britain —and the rest of Europe— suffered a widespread increase in crime, which led to the development of police forces. The Metropolitan Police Act was passed in 1829 and established the London Metropolitan Police Department. Police work followed the Enlightenment ideas of the period, entrusting the effectiveness of police forces to science and reason. Interestingly, it is during this period that the publication of what are considered the first detective stories took place. Edgar Allan Poe, as mentioned earlier, is generally considered the first writer of detective fiction, with his three short stories "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841), "The Mystery of Marie Roget" (1842-1843), and "The Purloined Letter" (1844), which Poe called "tales of ratiocination" (Bradford, 2015,

p. 7). The nexus between these stories is that, in all of them, Poe juxtaposes the inability of the local police to the skilfulness of the stories' protagonist, who uses his deductive skills to surpass them (Scaggs, 2005, p. 19). This protagonist, C. Auguste Dupin, is in essence the first fictional detective, and becomes the precursor of future "problem-solving detectives" (Bradford, 2015, p. 7), who will also follow the formula of putting the police forces to shame. Despite Poe's innovation, his work did not lead to immediate imitations, and in fact, the figure of the detective in literature was not well-perceived. Bradford (2015) highlights that "Dupin has been granted significance because we perceive him via the prism of Holmes and his numerous successors; at the time he left no discernible footprint on the literary landscape" (p. 11). Regardless, one cannot deny the similarities between later works and those of Poe. For instance, Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes will follow a similar logical procedure for resolving cases, and the same holds true for Agatha Christie's Poirot.

The above-mentioned increase in crime can be related, inter alia, to the social unrest caused by the expansion of the different European empires taking place at that moment, especially the British Empire. During the nineteenth century, crime would properly start its role as a masking topic to deal with the political and cultural concerns of the time (Rakesh Jain and Akshita Sharma, 2022, p. 122). In fact, at the end of the 1850s, a literary genre focusing on the social anxieties of the age started to develop, namely the so-called "sensation fiction". In 1859 Wilkie Collins published the first exemplary "Sensation" novel *The Woman in White* (1859), which was quickly followed by other works such as Mrs Henry Wood's *East Lynne* (1860-1), Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1861-2), or Charles Reade's *Hard Cash* (1863) (Bradford, 2015, p. 12). All these works share the same type of characters —decent and upper-class—, which allows for the treatment of issues such as conspiracy, inheritance

issues, illegitimacy, etc. (Bradford, 2015). Initially, this genre featured no detectives, but Collins himself introduced a new change within the genre which led to the first development of crime fiction since Poe. With the publication of *The Moonstone* (1868), Collins created what is thought to be the first actual detective novel written in English. The protagonist of this novel —Sergeant Cuff— is based on a real Metropolitan police inspector who is out-shined in his investigation by the young gentleman Franklin Blake, leading to the birth of the "gentleman amateur detective" archetype (Bradford, 2015), which would become recurrent during the Golden Age. From this point onwards, the detective novel started to develop into the modern form of the genre, upheld by authors such as Emile Gaboriau, whose novels put emphasis on police forces and procedures, as well as the restoration of their reputation in crime fiction and in the public imagination. Despite his description of Emile Gaboriau as "an important link between Poe and Doyle" (p. 22), Scaggs points out that Gaboriau's main contribution to the genre falls mainly on his later influence on Arthur Conan Doyle, rather than on the genre itself.

It was Arthur Conan Doyle who, in 1887, created the quintessential protagonist of detective fiction —Sherlock Holmes— and with him, the most relevant detective stories to date. Doyle first introduced his protagonist in *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), but his widespread success comes from the collection of stories *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1891-1894). As mentioned earlier, Sherlock Holmes' method of deduction can be compared to Poe's Dupin, since both employ different deductive steps so as to resolve enigmas that would usually go beyond the capacity of most people. Another key component of the Sherlock Holmes stories is the figure of the first-person narrator within the detective novel, which was initially introduced by Poe, and would later influence other authors such as Agatha Christie. These narrators would act as the window towards the uniqueness and superiority of the detective figure, and they would be perceived as

representatives of the social norms of the time. In the case of Conan Doyle, his Sherlock Holmes stories endorsed his interest on maintaining social order, following the conservative attitudes of the middle class (Scaggs, 2005), Doyle's main readership. Nonetheless, his stories allowed an incursion of said middle class into that world of crime that they profoundly rejected without going against their social values. This controlled and fictional approximation to criminality would support the instalment in the readers of a feeling of superiority over the criminals.

One of the most productive periods in crime fiction and detective fiction in Britain was the interwar period —between World War I and World War II— known as the Golden Age of crime fiction. The most representative author of this period is Agatha Christie, whose *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920) is usually considered to inaugurate this fruitful phase in crime fiction (Scaggs, 2005, p.26). Her influence on detective fiction has been such that Christie is often called the "Queen of crime". What characterises the most the detective fiction of this period is the primordiality of the "puzzle" or the enigma. In fact, as Bradford (2015) pointed out, the plot is so intertwined with the mystery at hand that the characters and protagonists oftentimes become flat (p. 20). Such importance was given to the resolution of and the enigma itself that Anthony Berkeley, author of *The Poisoned Chocolates Case* (1929), founded the Detection Club in 1928. The creation of this club was aimed towards establishing a set of rules for the creation of detective works, known as the rules of "Fair Play". These rules, followed by all the members of the Detection Club —and most British Golden Age authors— were established in 1929 and consisted in that, at least theoretically, the reader should be capable of solving the crime, and therefore they should have access to the same information as the fictional detective (Scaggs, 2005, p. 27).

Another characteristic of the detective stories of this period is the treatment of crime without any gruesome connotations. As Victoria Stewart mentions in "Crime Writing in Interwar Britain: Fact and Fiction in the Golden Age", "classic detective fiction represents crime, particularly murder, in an antiseptic and unsensational way" (2017, p. 1). An example of this is how Agatha Christie's Miss Marple deals with murder, as if it were a table game, and the other characters and the occurred events were pieces of said game. Altogether, Agatha Christie is, as mentioned earlier, the prime figure and footprint of the Golden Age. Her literary career rests on 66 novels, 15 short story collections, and 17 plays, among other works. Moreover, as the most translated author —whose works have been translated into over 100 languages— and having sold over 100 million copies, Christie has left a remarkable legacy within the literary world. Her popularity has reached our contemporary times, for example, her play *The Mousetrap* (1952) holds the record for the world's longest-running play, which was performed continuously until the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, and in 2013 she was voted as the "best crime writer" in a survey of 600 members of the Crime Writers' Association of professional novelists. Furthermore, her works have been and continue to be the source of inspiration for many media adaptations, such as *Murder on the Orient Express* (1974) directed by Sidney Lumet, or *Death on the Nile* (2022) and its sequel *A Haunting in Venice* (2023), both directed by Kenneth Branagh.

Having traced the origins and evolution of crime fiction, I will now return to a question already anticipated earlier in this chapter: the nexus between crime fiction and the consolidation of the British Empire and its colonial logic. Crime fiction was, as noted above, consolidated during the heyday of the British Empire, mainly in the second part of the nineteenth century. This was a period of social change, both internal, with the process of urbanization and the effects of war, and external, with the colonial expansion

of the Empire, a situation that required the redefinition of Britain's national identity. Against this backdrop, crime fiction served as an agent to regularise and normalise said identity (Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee, 2003, p. 6, 7), as well as the colonial discourse that justified the expansion of the Empire. The affordances and effectiveness of crime fiction for this purpose reside in the "highly moralising" nature of crime fiction, in which different perspectives are categorised into good or evil (Rakesh Jain and Akshita Sharma, 2022, p. 123), as well as in the figure of the detective, which became a model to follow and an enabler of colonial ideas.

The literary detective is always an outsider in relation to the circles in which crimes are committed. It is this detached nature what gives literary detectives a different perspective on their surroundings, and allows them to reach the truth (Bradford, 2015). This capacity grants them a superior status in contrast to the characters they are involved with, since their unique sensibility sets them above all of them. Moreover, the detective —a superior entity capable of discerning good and evil— is set as the epitome of moral integrity and, as a result, whoever stands in opposition to the figure of the literary detective is cast as a potential criminal. Most importantly for my purpose here, the literary detective featuring in most nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century literature was usually a person who followed the most stereotypical British behaviour, thereby becoming a symbol of British national identity, or what many critics refer to as "Englishness", a concept Susan Rowland explores in *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell. British Women Writers in Detective and Crime Fiction* (2001). Therefore, figures such as Miss Marple became representative of what was generally considered to be "English".

In her work, Rowland asserts that "Englishness requires a native other for representation" (p. 73) or, put differently, it necessitates a second term to define its meaning and boundaries. In a context of imperial expansion, the so-called "other" that

appears in opposition to the notion of "Britishness" was found in the colonized. Considering that what stands against imperial Englishness is the native other, the colonized was made to become the embodiment of criminality by the "practice of English subjects who thereby project their criminality as 'other' or foreign to their own psychic construction of Englishness" (Susan Rowland, 2001, p. 69). The native is vilified and identified as the most prone to crime, as Ronald R. Thomas contends in *The Fingerprint of the Foreigner: Colonizing the Criminal Body in 1890s Detective Fiction and Criminal Anthropology* (1994). Thomas concludes that, within the colonial context, "the criminal body is the non-European, non-white, often imperfectly male adult, and a figure for the object of British imperialism" (p. 665). This characterisation of the "other" as inherently criminal and as a threat to the social order functions as a validation of the expansion of the British Empire and the endorsement of colonial policies. These ideas are apparent in many crime-fiction works of the period: criminals are often described as foreign (p. 661) or endowed with features that otherize them and which reflect Western racial and ethnic biases (Rakesh Jain and Akshita Sharma, 2022). The investigation of the literary detective —who behaves as a "designated figure of social authority" (Ronald R. Thomas, 1994, p. 656)— allows for the reestablishment of the social order previously corrupted by the "other".

Following from this, Ronald R. Thomas goes on to posit that the popularity and collective sanctioning of colonial policies stemmed from what he refers to as "the successful colonization of the minds of English citizens" (p. 659) through different discourses, including the traces of colonial discourse that permeate much crime fiction produced in the period. The assimilation of those ideas was heavily supported by the English citizens' identification with the detective. Apart from the fact that the figure of the detective was viewed as a national symbol and as an allegedly accurate representation

of Englishness, the readers were encouraged to identify themselves with the figure of the detective; they saw themselves as belonging to the same superior and privileged circle as the detective, since they shared the same objective, received the same information and were similarly tricked by the criminals within the stories (Bradford. 2015, p. 2). Overall, as some of the critics mentioned above contend, crime fiction played a prominent, if not crucial, role in justifying and also glorifying the colonial project, by fuelling colonial discourse and disseminating a false idea of the West's moral superiority over other cultures.

Chapter 2. Imperial Eyes and Colonial Discourse

According to Mary Louise Pratt in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* ([1992] 2008), literature can affect people's understanding of the world around them, since "important historical transitions alter the way people write, because they alter people's experiences and the way people imagine, feel and think about the world they live in" (p. 4). While she mainly focuses on travel writing, she points out that these alterations occur within more genres (p. 4) —and such is the case of crime fiction, as already mentioned in Chapter 1. Within the context of colonial expansion, crime fiction enabled the spreading of imperial ideas or, better to say, "colonial discourse", a concept introduced earlier in this dissertation. Colonial discourse is "the system by which dominant groups in society constitute the field of truth by imposing specific knowledges, disciplines and values upon dominated groups" (Ashcroft et al., [2000] 2007, p. 37). The constant reiteration of these beliefs —also encoded within literature as a cultural product— shaped the Europeans' construction of the colonised, who were construed as the "other" (Pratt, 2008). Therefore, the European subject became a lens —a perspective that Pratt denominates "imperial eyes" (p. 9), a term that gives title to this chapter— through which the colonised was depicted following the constructions created by the Empire. These constructions "gave European reading publics a sense of ownership, entitlement and familiarity with respect to the distant parts of the world that were being explored, invaded, invested in, and colonized" (p. 3), leading the Western citizen into a feeling of belonging within the imperial expansion, and creating the "domestic subject" of the empire (p. 3).

Colonial discourse has been discussed in numerous works within postcolonial studies, but there are three salient figures that have played a key role in its theorisation, namely Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Said took part in the beginning of what would later be known as colonial discourse theory —with colonial

discourse as its field of study— with his seminal work *Orientalism* (1978). The generalisability of much published research on colonial discourse has its foundations rest on Said's theory. In addition to Said, Bhabha and G. Spivak are also known as some of the most relevant colonial discourse theorists. Bhabha unveiled some of the weaknesses within colonial discourse, by pointing out contradictions in its dynamics through notions such as those of "hybridity", "ambivalence" and "mimicry" (Ashcroft et al., 2007, p. 37), and G. Spivak is the author of the essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), another seminal work in postcolonialism and one in which Spivak tackles the complexities inherent to the fine line that distinguishes "speaking with" and "speaking for" the "other".

The purpose of the present chapter is to briefly present the framework on which colonial discourse studies establish its roots, as well as the reality colonial discourse created. For this reason, this chapter is divided into two sections: the first one will be devoted to the concept and implications of "Orientalism" as developed by E. Said, whose work will inform my subsequent reading and analysis of Agatha Christie's *Death on the Nile* (1937); and the following one will be centred on the construction and representation of the so-called "Dark Continent" during the colonial period, as this is of paramount importance when examining the second text under scrutiny in this dissertation: namely Christie's *The Man in the Brown Suit* (1924).

2.1. Representing the "Orient"

In his seminal work *Orientalism* ([1978] 2000), Edward Said used the term "Orientalism" —which gives name to his work— to refer to the "Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said, [1978] 2000, p. 69, 70); or to put it in a more straightforward manner by using John McLeod's words (2000), Said's

notion of “Orientalism” offered a lens through which to examine “how the Western colonial powers of Britain and France represented North African and Middle Eastern lands in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (p. 39). Building on these ideas, Said (2000) argues that Orientalism is based on binarisms and creates a society which is divided into “two unequal halves, Orient and Occident” (Said, 2000, p. 78, 79). The Orient exists in opposition to the Occident —identified with the West— as inferior, weak, and strange. These stereotypes often enter the realm of objective knowledge since they are believed to be actual facts. In fact, Orientalism provides generalised negative archetypes of Oriental people, based on their racial features and ignoring their individuality. In other words, people were determined by their own race —which became a symbol of said archetypes and, more importantly, of the likelihood of following those archetypes (McLeod, 2000). This is the reason why Said refers to Orientalism as a “corporate institution for dealing with the Orient” (Said, 2000, p. 69, 70), since it was deeply ingrained in society, from daily life to different institutions. Moreover, Orientalism greatly influenced literary and non-literary writings, which absorbed the colonial ideas and helped to justify and legitimise the imperial expansion (McLeod, 2000, p. 43).

Going back to the concept of “otherness”, already discussed in the previous chapter, within the workings of Orientalism, the “other” is represented by the Orient, and the West defines itself through its contrast against said “other”. In consequence, Orientalism reveals more about “those who describe the Orient” rather than about the Orient itself. These descriptions are not factual, but a “fabricated construct” created by the Occident which was based on the West’s fantasies, desires, and assumption —the “Western fantasy” (McLeod, 2000, p. 41). For example, the Orient is depicted as the submissive and sexually tempting feminine subject of male (the West’s) desire, by making use of very sexual vocabulary: the Orient is “penetrated”, “possessed”, and “ravished” by

the Western (male) coloniser, revealing his perverse desire of domination. Thus, the fantasies normally repressed within Western society are projected onto the Orient (p. 45, 46).

Expanding on Said's ideas, Bhabha (1994) explored how the above-mentioned fantasies are often presented through horror in a mixture of "phobia and fetish". In fact, texts encoded with the ideology of colonial discourse often depict the colonised and colonised lands through negative stereotypes related to "savagery, cannibalism, lust or anarchy" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 72), which is, in turn, linked to the portrayal of the Orient as degenerate, prone to dubious morality, primal and undeveloped (McLeod, 2000, p. 44, 46). The vision of the Orient as both degenerate and as something desirable to possess ties in with what Bhabha called "ambivalence". The Orient, as the "other", is considered an outsider of (Western) society, a representative of everything the West is not and rejects —which justifies its colonisation. Yet, the attempt at domesticating the "other" and bringing them inside of Western civilisation inherently implies the erasure of its "otherness" and the reduction of the distance between the "colonising" and the "colonised". This reality completely goes against the previous principle, since "the colonisers must never admit that other peoples are not really very different from themselves, as this would undercut the legitimacy of colonialism" (McLeod, 2000, p. 52, 53). As a result, colonial stereotypes must be constantly repeated to attempt the re-establishment of the nature of the "other" and to hinder said ambivalence.

Relatedly, Bhabha also introduced the concept of "mimicry", which becomes a direct threat to the West's authority (Bhabha, as cited in McLeod, 2000, p. 54). Mimicry is the result of the encouragement of the colonised subject to "'mimic' the colonizer", and adopt their "cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values" (Ashcroft et al., 2007, p. 125). Previous studies found mimicry to be the result of successful advances of the

Empire and the "other's" powerlessness. In contrast to this idea, Bhabha envisions mimicry as a threat to colonial discourse, because the colonised subjects' ability to reproduce Western traits exposes its inner ambivalence and forces the colonisers to face the "threat of resemblance" (McLeod, 2000, p. 54, 55). This resemblance risks the crack of Orientalism's structure, since the definition of the West through the Orient would not be possible, nor the identification of the Orient as "other" applicable. Mimicry is a key term to understand another of Bhabha's main contributions to colonial discourse theory, "hybridity". Hybridity inherently implies the convergence of the coloniser/colonised cultures and relations, or as expressed in *Post-colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* ([2002] 2007), the "cultural meanings and identities always contain the traces of other meanings and identities" (Ashcroft et al., 2007, p. 54). Considering that hybridity further erases the distance between the Orient and the West (or any other entities seen as opposites), theorisations on hybridity further illuminate the disruptive and transgressive quality of "ambivalence" as conceptualised by Bhabha.

2.2. Constructions of the "Dark Continent"

As already explained earlier in this dissertation, "[c]olonialism […] is an operation of discourse, and as an operation of discourse it interpellates colonial subjects by incorporating them in a system of representation" (Tiffin and Lawson, 2002, p. 3). In "Constructing the dark continent: Metaphor as geographic representation of Africa" (1992), Lucy Jarosz explains how, during the colonial period, the language used in Western mass media allowed for the dissemination of colonial discourse, at times conveyed through the use of specific linguistic devices such as symbols and metaphors. The identification of one entity through another via the use of metaphors conditions the perception of both terms, and this also holds true for the identification of Africa with the

metaphorical construction of the “Dark Continent” —the associations linked to this last term are immediately projected on the whole territory indiscriminately, even to the point of erasing differences across the vast regions of Africa.

The metaphor of the “Dark Continent” is key to understanding Western representations of Africa in colonial discourse from the late nineteenth century onwards. This metaphor —in which the entire African continent is identified only with Sub-Saharan Africa— homogenises and flattens individuals, whilst establishing Africa as an “other” in a web of contrasts set in opposition to the West: “dark/light”, “civilised/savage”, “tame/wild”, amongst others. Through the persistence of this metaphor across different discourses and even artistic manifestations, the conceptual existence of the Dark Continent reaffirms the West’s dominance and oppressiveness over Africa (Jarosz, 1992, p. 105, 106). As Jarosz points out (1992), the origins of the metaphor of the Dark Continent can be traced back to British colonial incursions in East Africa (p. 105). Africa was related to danger, hostility, disease, and death —but despite being portrayed as inhospitable, the Dark Continent became the feminine object of mysterious erotic desire upon which to project Europe’s *darkest* impulses, in a similar way as how the Orient is depicted in Orientalist discourses. Moreover, and relying on the dark vs. light opposition, the Dark Continent was also construed as that territory of darkness that needed to be cleansed by the (Christian) light during the process of Christianisation (p. 107), thus becoming not only the deposit of Western fantasies, but also of sin. Therefore, the Dark Continent is, essentially, a “negative reflection of the West” (p. 105), and “something to be avoided” (Achebe, 2016, p. 25). Yet, the colonisation of Africa by Western countries did not simply rely on moral grounds but was also related to economic and technological development. The discourse on modernity and development legitimised the Western control over Africa —identified with primitivism as the Dark Continent— as part of a

civilising project, based on unequal power relations between the "developed" and "underdeveloped" world (Jarosz, 1992). As Frantz Fanon (1986) states, "the white man is the symbol of capital as the Negro is that of labor" (p. 113).

Another social factor that perpetuated the image of Africa as the Dark Continent was, later on, the spread of the AIDS epidemic, as Jarosz (1992) reports. Mass media in the West situated Africa as the origin of the epidemic, an assumption that led to general racism and xenophobia, specially towards Africans living abroad. Despite not having conclusive evidence, Africa remains as the "site of AIDS", with literature in general supporting the tension between Africa and the West. Ignoring other aspects of the epidemic, African sexuality and sexual practices were brought into the spotlight and considered the cause of the rapid heterosexual transmission of the HIV virus. Africans were soon identified as "primitives", "oversexed" and unable to modify their behaviours (p. 112) —retrieving a common concept within the construction of the Dark Continent: the "dehumanization of Africa and Africans" (Chinua Achebe, 2016, p. 21). The description of Africans as "primitive" and "barbarous" situated them as inferior to the Western mind and recalled their "need" of domestication. Like this, once again, Africa was reaffirmed as the "other", as the Dark Continent —the gateway to define the West as superior and a deposit for all Western wrong-doings and guilt.

Overall, Africa is characterised as ""the other world," the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality" (Achebe, 2016, p. 15). Through colonial discourse, the West created a new image —grounded on imperial ideas— of Africa and Africans who were coerced into playing the roles that they were assigned by the Empire. In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986), Frantz Fanon explores the way the black subject reacted to that imposed "reality". He describes this imposition as a rapid process to which

the black man had no opportunity of opposition: "Overnight […] his [the Black Man] customs and the sources on which they were based, were wiped out because they were in conflict with a civilization that he did not know and that imposed itself on him" (p. 110). Throughout his work, Fanon (1986) exposes black people's struggle for self-definition within the social metaphor of the Dark Continent, since black people were no longer thought as individuals in their own right but as adjacent of the white man, "for not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man" (p. 110).

Fanon's (1986) portrayal of how the colonised subject is perceived —and in the process constructed— through Western eyes recalls the very notion of "imperial eyes" (Pratt, 2008, p. 9) discussed earlier in this chapter. When it comes to the black man, the Western mind already has a predetermined idea of what he is supposed to be, regardless of the reality: "I am given no chance. I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the "idea" that others have of me but of my own appearance. […] And already I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am *fixed*" (Fanon, 1986, p. 116). Against this backdrop, black people's identity is erased under the hegemonic acceptance of the pressure exerted on them, and they even end up internalising their construed inferiority —"I remain silent, I strive for anonymity, for invisibility"— and under the interiorization of the negative stereotypes assigned to them —"Shame. Shame and self-contempt. Nausea. […] I am locked into the infernal circle" (p. 116). With Africa being construed as the "Dark Continent" —and with all the implications which that construction entails—, black people were seen through a set of systemic beliefs that conditioned their own subjectivity. Their body was no longer theirs, and it became instead the projection of the Empire — "I sit down at the fire and I become aware of my uniform" (Fanon, 1986, p. 114).

Chapter 3. Agatha Christie's Colonial Novels

Agatha Christie, known as one of the best-selling novelists of all time, was an English author who acquired worldwide fame for her detective novels and who remains as the most translated author. Having become one of the prime figures in English literature, specially within the genre of crime fiction, Christie's extensive writing career still influences modern authors and readers. As already anticipated in Chapter 2, this section moves on to focus on Agatha Christie's works, specifically her novels *Death on the Nile* (1937) and *The Man in the Brown Suit* (1924). For the adequate analysis of these works, it is necessary to contextualise them both within Christie's life and within the genre of crime fiction.

Agatha Christie —with her birth-name being Agatha Mary Clarissa Miller— was born into an upper-middle-class family on September 15, 1890, in Torquay, England. She was the daughter of Frederick Miller and Clara Miller, and the youngest of three children. Despite being homeschooled, Christie's contact with travel and other countries started early in her life. As Merja Makinen (2006) mentions in *Agatha Christie. Investigating Femininity*, it was a common practice for upper-middle class families to live abroad (where living conditions were cheaper) while renting their family home to handle economic difficulties, and such was the case for the Millers (p. 160). It was due to this that the Millers lived some time in France. There, as Christie renders in her *An Autobiography* (1977), the Millers hired a young woman called Marie to become Christie's companion and follow the family to England, forcing Christie to learn French since the young woman did not speak English (p. 65). Significantly, in her autobiography, Christie dwells on Marie's experience once she arrived in England: "It was satisfactory to come home and find everything was just as usual. […] I had never actually *thought* about Marie—she was just Marie, part of my life. […] What I wonder now, is what it

meant to *her*?" (p. 82). Marie, with her different customs and upbringing, was casted out from the other servants, whose "point of view" was, according to Christie, "so different from Marie's that it must have made her feel a complete alien" (p. 83). The issue was resolved after Christie's mother confronted said servants: "[s]he was far away from home, and they must think what it would be like if *they* were in a foreign country" (p. 84). This pondering over Marie's situation as a foreigner in England is worth mentioning since it stands in contrast to how Christie would deal, in her future novels, with English people as foreigners in other countries, as we will see further into this chapter. Despite Marie's suffering, at no point does Christie openly condemn the attitude of those who alienated her, although she does empathise with Marie (Makinen, 2006, p. 161).

Christie's mother fell ill upon Christie's return to England after she had finished her education in France. This would prompt Agatha Christie's first approach to the Middle East (Makinen, 2006, p. 161), since due to her mother's health, they decided to set out to Cairo, in Egypt (a common destination for British people at that time), to spend the winter (Christie, 1977, p. 155). Christie's travels would continue throughout her life. She accompanied her first husband, Colonel Archibald Christie, in the British Empire Exhibition Tour (which was meant to promote the British Empire Exhibition, a colonial exhibition in London) and thus visited many different places around the world, including South Africa and Asia (Christie, 1977). It is during these journeys that Christie finds her love for travelling, as she mentions in her autobiography, where she comments on how travelling alters oneself and daily life.

> Ever since that I have felt the same about travel. You step from one life into another. You are yourself, but a **different self**. […] Your travel life has the **essence of a dream**. **It is something outside the normal, yet you are in it**. (Christie, 1977, p. 294; emphasis mine)

As the quote above reveals, Christie refers to travelling as a dream, as some form of escapism from reality, which Makinen interprets as "the love of escaping into a different culture" (2006, p. 161). Moreover, Christie situates travelling as a concept outside of the realm of normality, a relevant appreciation regarding how Christie depicts her foreign settings in her novels. Christie would often take her experiences from these travels and pour them into her writing, including the settings.

After the death of her mother in 1926 and the end of her first marriage, Christie disappeared without notice, ensuing a national search until she was found eleven days later. After being found, she apparently had no recollection of what had happened during those days. In fact, she never spoke about her mysterious disappearance with anyone. Later, in 1928, she moved with her daughter to the Canary Islands where Christie began writing as a form of making a living, rather than just for pleasure. That same year, Christie eventually embarked again on a journey as a solo traveller, this time to Baghdad (Makinen, 2006, p. 161), and travelled across the desert. When she returned to Iraq the next season, Christie met her second husband, the archaeologist Max Mallowan. With him, she travelled through Syria and Iraq, participated in different expeditions, and owned a place in Baghdad. Christie's interest in the Middle East permeates both her autobiography and her works (p. 162), and as mentioned above, she took inspiration from her travels to create the settings of her novels. Coming as no surprise, many of them are situated in the Middle East: *Death on the Nile* (1937), *Appointment with Death* (1938) and *Death Comes at the End* (1945), set in Egypt, Amman and Petra, respectively, are cases in point. Another example would be *Murder in Mesopotamia* (1936), which was set in Iraq, known as Mesopotamia during Christie's time (p. 166).

Agatha Christie's travels came to a halt with the outbreak of World War II (1939 – 1945), yet she continued to write during the war period, while simultaneously

volunteering at the University College Hospital. After the end of WWII, Christie published *Come, Tell Me How You Live* (1946), where she recounted the events of her expeditions (alongside Mallowan) and her travels through the Middle East. In the later decades of her career, Christie was mainly focused on her playwrighting, which had acquired great popularity, and only published a novel per year. In 1956 she was made Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE). At her old age, she was last seen publicly at the premiere of Sidney Lumet's *Murder on the Orient Express*, in 1974, where she was greeted by Queen Elizabeth II. Agatha Christie died on January 12, 1976, in Oxfordshire (AgathaChristieLtd., 2024, n.p.).

Having traced certain key aspects of Christie's life, it is now necessary to put the focus on her literary career. Agatha Christie's relevance falls mainly on her contribution to the genre of crime fiction and the subgenre of detective fiction. As adumbrated in Chapter 1 when tracing the history of crime fiction, Christie represents the most emblematic writer from the most fruitful period for said genre in Britain: The Golden Age. This term refers to the interwar period between World War I (1914 – 1918) and World War II (1939 – 1945), which coincides with Christie's most prolific phase as a crime-fiction writer. In effect, she is considered to have initiated the Golden Age of crime fiction with *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920) (Scaggs, 2005, p.26). It is with this novel that Christie introduces her most famous detective: the Belgian Hercule Poirot, whose figure was inspired by the thousands of Belgian refugees that fled to England due to WWI, and who would become an essential in the repertoire of influential detective figures of crime fiction.

As noted earlier in this chapter, the two works on which this dissertation is focused are *Death on the Nile* (1937) and *The Man in the Brown Suit* (1924). Both novels were written during the interwar period and include most of the characteristics that define

Golden Age crime fiction, while showcasing the influence that Christie's travels exerted upon her work. Both novels are inspired in two locations Christie visited during her journeys abroad: Egypt and Cape Town. In the author's foreword to *Death on the Nile* ([1937] 2005), Christie states that "*Death on the Nile* was written after coming back from a winter in Egypt. When I [Christie] read it now I feel myself back again on the steamer from Assuan to Wadi Halfa", and in her autobiography Christie mentions how *The Man in The Brown Suit* (1924) —initially titled *The Mystery of The Mill House* (Christie, 1977, p. 305)— was inspired by Cape Town, South Africa, after a conversation with Major Belcher — who had offered Archibald Christie his position as an advisor during the British Empire Exhibition Tour (p. 271):

> Belcher had urged me, when we dined with him at his house, the Mill House at Dorney, before our trip, to write a detective story about it. "The Mystery of the Mill House," he said. "Jolly good title—don't you think?" I said yes, I thought *Mystery in the Mill House* or *Murder in the Mill House* would be very good, and I would consider the matter. (p. 297)

Later, Christie mentions how she annotated different facts while she was travelling in South Africa with the intention to recreate the South African scenery she came across in the above-mentioned novel:

> I had sketched out the plot of this book when I was in South Africa. It was to be again, I decided, more in the nature of a thriller than a detective story, comprising a good deal of the South African scene. There was some kind of revolutionary crisis on while we were there, and I noted down a few useful facts. (p. 297, 298)

Continuing with the characteristics shared by *Death on the Nile* and *The Man in the Brown Suit*, both texts show how in Golden Age crime fiction "the plot is elevated

above all other considerations" (Scaggs, 2005, p.35), since the resolution of the murders is the main focus of both works. Despite this, as Victoria Stewart states in "Crime Writing in Interwar Britain: Fact and Fiction in the Golden Age", in crime fiction from the interwar period "[c]rime is not just of interest as a topic in itself but as a means of exposing, and, potentially, critiquing both historical and contemporary sociocultural attitudes" (2017, p. 3), and as such, both novels —and Golden Age crime fiction as a whole— portray the social anxieties of the time, the ones linked to the British Empire being the most influential. In her so-called "colonial novels" —those which take place in colonial settings— Christie inevitably reproduced the colonial discourse that justified the expansion and redefinition of the Empire and conditioned the Western constructions of the colonised (Pratt, 2008), since "discourse is generated by other discourses residing in a network of discourses" (Foucault, as cited in Zengin, 2016, p. 843). These fabricated constructions, as explored in Chapter 2, facilitated the representation of the colonised as an outsider of proper society, as well as an "other" which defines the West by becoming its opposite (McLeod, 2000). Consequently, Christie reinforced imperial stereotypes so as to represent foreign cultures under the West's understanding of them (Makinen, 2006, p. 160). That is the case of both *Death on the Nile* (1937) and *The Man in the Brown Suit* (1924), two colonial novels that portray the imperial division of society in a binary system, composed by the (superior) Occident and the (inferior) Orient (Said, [1978] 2000, p. 78, 79).

In what follows, these two novels will be analysed individually and into two separate sections, with the first one being devoted to *Death on the Nile* (1937), which will be mainly read in relation to Said's theorisations on Orientalism, and the following one centring on The *Man in the Brown Suit* (1924) and the construction and representation of the so-called "Dark Continent".

3.1. Agatha Christie's *Death on the Nile* (1937)

Death on the Nile ([1937] 2005) deals with the resolution of a series of murders that take place in the *Karnak*, a steamer that travels as a tourist cruise through the Nile. Yet the story begins in England, where two of the main characters are introduced: Linnet Ridgeway, a wealthy heiress, and Jacqueline de Bellefort —also referred to as "Jackie", an old friend of Linnet's. After several years, de Bellefort meets Linnet Ridgeway to implore her to hire her fiancé Simon Doyle, who has no money of his own. Linnet not only agrees to hire Simon Doyle, but also falls in love with him and pursues him, leading to their eventual marriage and the dissolution of Jacqueline and Simon's engagement. From this point onwards, Jacqueline starts to stalk the newly-wed couple —as a way of tormenting them in revenge for their betrayal— and she does so even in their honeymoon in Egypt, where they meet Hercule Poirot. Other characters within the story are Linnet's maid Louise Bourget, Tim Allerton and his mother Mrs. Allerton, Miss Van Schuyler and her cousin Cornelia Robson, Mrs. Otterbourne and her daughter Rosalie, Mr Ferguson, the archaeologist Guido Richetti, Dr Bessner and Colonel Race —a character that had been previously introduced in Christie's *The Man in The Brown Suit* (1924). During the trip, Linnet is found dead in her cabin in the *Karnak*. During the investigation of her murder, carried out by Hercule Poirot, two more people are assassinated on board the steamer: Louise and Mrs Otterbourne. At the end, Poirot reveals the circumstances of the three murders: the marriage between Simon Doyle and Linnet Ridgeway was just a cover for Simon and Jacqueline's plot to acquire Linnet's inheritance. Simon had become fixated with Linnet's wealth, and de Bellefort —who was deeply in love with him— decided to orchestrate a proper plan to fulfil his wishes. The novel ends with Jacqueline shooting and murdering Simon, and promptly shooting herself and dying as well, so as to have an "easier death" (2005, p. 415) for them both after having been discovered.

Death on the Nile was written and published in England during the interwar period —that is, during the Golden Age of crime fiction. Due to this, and like many other texts from the same period, the novel is underpinned by colonial discourse, lending itself to being analysed under a postcolonial lens, and most particularly under Said's notion of *Orientalism*. As Rowland (2001) states, "[a] major characteristic of the golden age writers […] is their self-conscious deployment of Orientalism in the construction of psychic Englishness" (p. 67). In Christie's colonial novels, including *Death on the Nile*, it is the presence of the Western visitors or tourists what defines the narrative. Regardless of how the Middle East is portrayed, it is the intrusion of the West what makes the Orient relevant (Lassner, 2009, p. 35). In *Death on the Nile*, the West is represented by the European tourists (and mainly the British ones), while Egypt and the natives represent the Orient and the "other", a distinction accomplished by employing different orientalist methods for the othering of the Orient.

To begin with, Christie's portrayal of Egypt recreates the Orient as timelessness, which represents a recurrent orientalist vision. According to Orientalism, "[a] Westerner travelling to Oriental lands was not just moving in *space* from one location to the other; potentially they were travelling back in *time* to an earlier world" (McLeod, 2000, p. 44). Christie herself seems to have internalised that concept, since in her autobiography she mentions how "[t]here was a subtle difference on passing from Europe into Asia. It was as though time had less meaning" (1977, p. 354). In colonial discourse, the retention of the Orient in the past, separated from modernity, allowed the establishment and enhancement of Western civilisation (Said, as cited in Tuominen, 2013, p. 34). Tiina Tuominen (2013) identifies in her thesis *"Down into the Valley of Death": The Portrayal of the Orient in the Interwar Fiction of Agatha Christie* two facets of the timeless Orient: the exotic and romantic Orient, and the wild and uncivilised Orient (p. 33). The exotic

and romantic Orient refers mainly to the idealisation of the Middle East's past and the reconstruction of the modern Orient as a subject for the Western eyes to study and observe that past. This vision of the Orient permeates *Death on the Nile*, where not only are Egypt and its history reduced to popular tourist sites, but the Western characters cast an exoticising perspective on them (p. 34, 36): when Mr. Ferguson tries to advocate for the human suffering that the construction of Egyptian monuments must have caused, he is met with the disagreement of Mrs. Allerton, Poirot and Richetti, who place a higher value on the West's possibility of viewing the ruins:

> 'There are very wonderful things to be seen in Egypt, are there not?'
>
> […] 'They make me sick.' […] 'Take the Pyramids. […] Think of the sweated masses who toiled to build them and died doing it. It makes me sick to think of the suffering and torture they represent.'
>
> Mrs Allerton said cheerfully: 'You'd rather have no Pyramids, no Parthenon, no beautiful tombs or temples – just the solid satisfaction of knowing that people got three meals a day and died in their beds.'
>
> […] 'I think human beings matter more than stones.'
>
> 'But they do not endure as well,' remarked Hercule Poirot.
>
> 'I'd rather see a well fed worker than any so-called work of art. What matters is the future– not the past.' This was too much for Signor Richetti, who burst into a torrent of impassioned speech not too easy to follow. (2005, p. 113, 114)

The importance of the West's perception over the Orient is also emphasized by how these monuments become meaningful because of the European tourists' projection of their own

feelings onto them, rather than their relevance in Egyptian history (Tuominen, 2013, p. 36):

> Four colossal figures, hewn out of the cliff, look out eternally over the Nile and face the rising sun. Cornelia Robson said incoherently: ‘Oh, Monsieur Poirot, isn’t it wonderful? I mean they’re so big and peaceful – and looking at them makes one feel that one’s so small – and rather like an insect – and that nothing matters very much really, does it?’ (2005, p. 145)

In the fragment above, Cornelia Robson only alludes to these figures in relation to what they make her feel, disregarding their historical importance. As a result, tourism becomes an othering mode for the representation of the Orient as well as a form of imperial presence. The Western tourists enter the Orient and define it according to their own constructions of it and their expectations. In fact, as seen in the excerpt below, the tourists in *Death on the Nile* prefer following a Western guidebook than the native guide that accompanies them:

> She prattled on until the dragoman in charge called a halt and began to intone: ‘This temple was dedicated to Egyptian God Amun and the Sun God Re-Harakhte – whose symbol was hawk’s head . . .’ It droned on. Dr Bessner, Baedeker in hand, mumbled to himself in German. He preferred the written word. (2005, p. 133)

The West did not simply create a version of the Orient, but it also expected the Orient to meet the stereotypical image created of it; and this intricate web of assumptions does not simply appear in Christie’s fiction, but also in her autobiography when she comments on her visit to Hawaii: “[t]he Hawaiians themselves were also slightly disappointing. I had imagined them as exquisite creatures of beauty” (1977, p. 288) —proving how Orientalist stereotypes were treated as factual data.

Apart from tourism, the imperial presence is incorporated into Christie's novels through different professionals —mainly represented by archaeologists— and British governmental forces —mainly the British police force (Makinen, 2006, p. 65-68). The archaeologists' role in Orientalising the Middle East stands in relation with the "historical Orient" (Tuominen, 2013, p. 33), since their presence points out to the idealisation of the Orient's past, as Christie highlights in *Murder in Mesopotamia*: "[a]rchaeologists only look at what lies beneath their feet. The sky and the heavens don't exist for them" ([1936] 2001, p. 57). In this novel, the action takes place in an ancient site in the Iraqi desert, and the "archaeological plot" is intertwined with the murder investigation (Lassner, 2009, p. 36, 37). While not so present in *Death on the Nile*, this attitude could be represented by the Italian archaeologist Richetti, who becomes infuriated upon Ferguson's dismissal of Egyptian ruins (2005, p. 114). Meanwhile, the presence of the police force appears when imperial authority is invoked, and order is needed. Thus, in *Death on the Nile*, Colonel Race investigates, alongside Poirot, the murders that took place in the *Karnak*, reinforcing the idea of imperial authority as a synonym for social order:

> [T]hey found the manager of the Karnak waiting uneasily in the doorway of the smoking-room. The poor man was terribly upset and worried over the whole business, and was eager to leave everything in Colonel Race's hands. 'I feel I can't do better than leave it to you, sir, seeing your official position. I'd had orders to put myself at your disposal in the – er – other matter. If you will take charge, I'll see that everything is done as you wish.' (2005, p. 193)

As one intimates from the quotation above, the manager of the *Karnak* willingly leaves the solution of the murders in the Colonel's hands, since he is considered to be more reliable.

The representation of the Orient as wild and uncivilised relies on the conceptualisation of the modern Orient as "primitive" and "backwards" (McLeod, 2000, p. 44) both in terms of civilisation and of culture (Tuominen, 2013, p. 42). The underdeveloped Orient appears in contrast to the idealised historical constructions of the Orient, and justifies the West's colonisation of the territory. Orientalism pictures the Orient as a heap of fixed negative qualities such as laziness, untrustworthiness, lust, violence, etc. (McLeod, 2000, p. 46), and Christie renders these stereotypes in her novels through different means. For example, in *Death on the Nile,* she points out the inefficiency of native professionals, as seen in the previously mentioned excerpt, where a British figure is deemed more trustworthy to solve the conflicts taking place on board of the ship (2005, p. 193). Another example of this native untrustworthiness is found in the tardiness of the native trains and the unprofessionalism of the native porters (p. 115). These stereotypes that conform the conceptualisation of the Orient as wild and uncivilised are extrapolated onto the landscape itself: "There was a savage aspect about the sheet of water in front of them" (p. 117). For example, Christie also portrays the Orient as lustful through the character of Mrs. Otterbourne, a writer of romantic (and likely erotic) novels who is travelling around Egypt to gain inspiration for one of her novels:

> **I am partly here for local colour**. Snow on the Desert's Face – that is the title of my new book. Powerful – **suggestive**. Snow – on the desert – melted in the first flaming breath of passion.' […] 'Strong meat – that is what my books are – all important. Libraries banned – no matter! **I speak the truth. Sex – ah!** Monsieur Poirot – why is everyone so afraid of sex? **The pivot of the universe!** (2005, p. 65; emphasis mine)

The modern Orient is, therefore, construed as exotic in its primitivism, contrasting with the historically idealised Orient: "It feels, somehow, so much less touristy – as though we

were really going into the heart of Egypt.' His wife responded quickly: 'I know. It's so much – wilder, somehow'" (p. 119).

Another significant aspect in the construction of the Orient is the representation of the natives. It was common for characters to become flat in Golden Age detective fiction (Bradford, 2015, p. 20), but Christie's depiction of the natives goes beyond that: they are a "faceless mass". Most of them are not given a name, are reduced to stereotypical traits, and are made stand for everything the West rejects (Tuominen, 2013, p. 49). As a matter of fact, many natives are mentioned in relation to their occupation, and usually when they provide a service for the Western tourist: "Five watchful bead-sellers, two vendors of postcards, three sellers of plaster scarabs, a couple of donkey boys" (*Death on the Nile*, 2005, p. 54). They are also referred to on the basis of their ethnicity, at times as if they were just an addition to the surrounding scenery: "the Nubian boatman" (p. 106), "a dozen Nubian boys" (p. 151), etc. In consequence, the representation of the natives' lives is extremely limited —mostly in juxtaposition to the Westerner's— if not non-existent. In *Unthinking Eurocentrism. Multiculturalism and the Media* ([1994) 2014), Ella Shohat and Robert Stam identify, within colonial discourse, different tropes that compose the constructions created by the Empire (p. 137) and which different critics have used to address Christie's representation of the Orient in her works. Thus, Christie's description of the natives can usually be ascribed to the following three tropes: naturalisation, animalisation and infantilisation (Tuominen, 2013, p. 49). Naturalisation behaves as an umbrella term that implies the representation of the native "other" in relation to nature and therefore, includes the trope of animalisation, which alludes to the association of natives with animals. Thereby, for the sake of simplicity, in this dissertation both tropes will be analysed together. One of the ways in which the natives are naturalised is by

having them appear homogenised as an undistinguishable mass, erasing their individuality (p. 50):

> 'I suppose it would be quite impossible to get rid of some of these **awful children**.' A group of small black figures surrounded her, all grinning and posturing and holding out imploring hands as they lisped 'Bakshish' at intervals, hopefully. 'I thought they'd get tired of me,' said Mrs Allerton sadly. 'They've been watching me for over two hours now – and **they close in on me little by little**; and then I yell "Imshi" and brandish my sunshade at them and **they scatter** for a minute or two. And then they come back and stare and stare, and their eyes are **simply disgusting**, and so are their noses, and I don't believe I really like children – **not unless they're more or less washed and have the rudiments of manners**.' She laughed ruefully. Poirot gallantly attempted to disperse the **mob** for her, but without avail. **They scattered and then reappeared, closing in once more**. (2005, p. 107; emphasis mine)

In the fragment above, Mrs. Allerton describes the group of native children that surround her to Poirot. All the children move together as if they were one entity (as a "mob") and are referred to with negative attributes ("awful", "disgusting"). These children "lisp" (meaning that they speak with some form of speech impediment), a lexical choice that adds to the negative description of the children. Moreover, they are depicted in animalistic terms, since they are shown as "closing in" on Mrs. Allerton, as if they were preying on her. In addition, it seems that the children are not just portrayed as animals, but as insects. By having them scatter after being scared away with a sunshade, they seem to imitate how insects behave, taking the dehumanisation of the native even further. Furthermore, in the above-quoted excerpt, one can see another form of naturalising the natives: accentuating their bodies as being in a state of decay, both unhealthy and unhygienic

(Tuominen, 2013, p. 51). Another example of these tropes is the following extract, in which Poirot and Rosalie are surrounded by native vendors:

> Hercule Poirot made vague gestures to rid himself of this **human cluster of flies**. Rosalie stalked through them like a sleep-walker. 'It's best to pretend to be deaf and blind,' she remarked. The **infantile** riff-raff ran alongside murmuring plaintively: 'Bakshish? Bakshish? Hip hip hurrah – very good, very nice . . .' Their gaily coloured rags trailed picturesquely, and **the flies lay in clusters on their eyelids**. They were the most persistent. The others fell back and **launched a fresh attack** on the next corner. (2005, p. 55; emphasis mine)

Once again, the natives appear as a group rather than individuals ("cluster"), and are described negatively, by being referred to as a "riff-raff" —used to refer to people of low social class or people with a questionable reputation— and by emphasizing their unhygienic state. Also, this time, they are directly referred to as insects ("human cluster of flies") preying on people, thereby furthering their dehumanisation. At the same time, this excerpt also exemplifies the infantilisation of the natives mentioned earlier. In *Death on the Nile*, one could assume that these vendors that surround Poirot and Rosalie were adults, yet they are shown to have a childish attitude ("[t]he infantile riff-raff"). Throughout her novels, Christie usually alludes to adult natives as "boys" who are associated with child-like reactions and with being simple-minded (Tuominen, 2013, p. 58, 60). Christie's infantilisation of the natives in her work, one could argue, acts as a synecdoche for the infantilisation of colonised people more generally, one that colonial discourse used in a self-serving way to justify and sanction the colonisation of the Orient —an immature entity in need of a controlling (parental) figure:

> Fanthorp nodded in quick comprehension. He wheeled round to the door where a startled **Nubian face** showed. He said: 'All right – all right! Just fun!' **The black**

> **face** looked doubtful, puzzled, then reassured. The teeth showed in a wide grin. The **boy** nodded and went off. (2005, p. 179, 180; emphasis mine)

In the fragment above, Fanthorp lies to the native servant about the shot Doyle received, by pretending that it was just part of some sort of playful activity. The native's acceptance of Fanthorp's lie without any questioning points at his immaturity and dependence on the Western figure for knowledge. The native is also called a "boy" —despite likely being an adult— and he is referred to by his nationality ("Nubian"), rather than by his name, which erases his identity. In addition, in the quote above, the native is conspicuously objectified, with his body and skin colour being made to stand for his identity ("a startled Nubian face", "[t]he black face"). Alongside the simple-mindedness with which they are represented, the natives become the receiving end of the Western characters' mockery, another form of emphasizing their inferiority: "She [Jacqueline] laughed and mimicked the parrot cry of the donkey boys: 'That very bad star, sir! That star fall down . . .'" (2005, p. 130); "Simon produced some small change. 'Very good, very nice, very expensive,' he mimicked" (p. 151).

Returning to the relation between criminality and "Otherness" in the colonial era —a question developed in Chapter 1 — the murders in Golden Age criminal fiction tended to become essentially oriental, since the foreign "other" constitutes the systemic archetype of the criminal. This identification leads to one of the most significant strategies for othering the Orient: associating it with murder, or in other words, "orientalising" murder (Tuominen, 2013). Thus, the Orient is portrayed as having a negative effect on Westerners (p. 78). In *Death of the Nile*, the setting affects the Western tourists and brings to the surface their inner turmoil: "'There's something about this country that makes me [Rosalie] feel – wicked. It brings to the surface all the things that are boiling inside one" (2005, p. 117, 118); 'Monsieur Poirot, I'm [Linnet] afraid – I'm afraid of everything. I've

never felt like this before. All these wild rocks and the awful grimness and starkness. Where are we going? What's going to happen? I'm afraid, I tell you." (p. 120). Notably, Linnet's projection of her feelings onto her surroundings anticipates her future assassination. But the most effective way in which the oriental environment is correlated with murder in *Death on the Nile* is by associating the setting with the prime murderer, Jacqueline de Bellefort.

Jacqueline de Bellefort, as noted earlier, participates alongside Simon Doyle in the murders taking place in the story, and throughout the entirety of the novel the plot circles around her potential as a murderer: "And the dangerous girl – Jacqueline de Bellefort – could *she* do a murder?' Poirot hesitated for a minute or two, then he said doubtfully, 'Yes, I think she could.' 'But you're not sure?' 'No. She puzzles me, that little one'" (2005, p. 111); "'You think that this girl, Jacqueline de Bellefort, is incapable of a premeditated cold-blooded murder?' Poirot said slowly: 'I am not sure, you see'" (p. 196). Jacqueline's connection with the Orient is shown by repeatedly juxtaposing her image to that of the River Nile, which she often found overlooks: "Her eyes, **dark with a kind of smouldering fire**, had a **queer** kind of suffering **dark** triumph in them. She was looking out across the **Nile**" (p. 61; emphasis mine). This fragment also shows how Jacqueline is often described in relation to intense, negative emotions, thereby portraying her as an "other" vis-à-vis Linnet. Further references that continue the identification of Jacqueline and the Nile and, therefore, reinforce their shared "Otherness" can be found on pages 60, 70 and 85. Furthermore, Jacqueline's relation to the Nile seems to foreshadow the murders of the story, which take place during the last trip through the river. Poirot identifies the journey through the Nile with Jacqueline's fall into criminality, as shown in the extract below:

> "You [Jacqueline] have chosen, Mademoiselle, the dangerous course . . . As we here in this boat have embarked on a journey, so you too have embarked on your own private journey – a journey on a swift moving river, between dangerous rocks, and heading for who knows what currents of disaster . . .' […] You have cut the bonds that moored you to safety. I doubt now if you could turn back if you would.' (2005, p. 129, 130)

As brough forward above, Jacqueline, as a potential murderer (who ends up being an actual one), is constantly othered throughout the novel. This is mainly accomplished by constantly making reference to her origins. At the beginning of the story, when talking about Jacqueline's situation, Linnet feels the need to mention that her father, who left Jacqueline's mother (an American), was a French Count (2005, p. 15). This dual nationality becomes the tool for the other Western characters to distance themselves from her and to attribute her negative qualities, as well as to explain her actions. For example, they always associate her temper and her intensity to her Latin origins, as seen in the following passages: "'She [Jacqueline] threatened to – well – kill us [Linnet and Simon] both. Jackie can be rather – Latin sometimes'" (p. 83); "that dark girl – her name is de Bellefort […] 'You know, it may sound foolish, but she almost frightened me. She looked so – intense'" (p. 110); or "That girl, Jacqueline, half Latin, hot-blooded, obeying the deepest instincts of her being, stealing forth, revolver in hand" (p. 245). Besides, her origins serve as a justification of her behaviour, since, as an "other", her attitudes would come naturally to her, as it is her nature to be vindictive: "'Teach her [Jacqueline] not to go round loosing off toy firearms,' said Tim […]. 'I expect she was badly brought up'" (p. 276). In fact, Jacqueline herself is aware of her detached position from the English tourists, and even attacks that Englishness: "you're so English – so reticent! You want me

to behave "decently", don't you? But I don't care whether I behave decently or not!" (p. 177, 178).

Another way in which Jacqueline is othered is by being referred to as a child. While it is true that Jacqueline is a young woman, her infantilisation —that is barely directed to other characters— can be connected to how the natives are portrayed as being child-like. By situating Jacqueline on a closer level to the natives, Christie enhances her status as an "other": "Jacqueline de Bellefort was just coming ashore. Dressed in blue gingham, she looked childish" (p. 153); "That wretched kid – she [Jacqueline] is only a kid after all" (p. 266). Even Poirot refers to her as "little one" several times, although in a sympathetic manner: "I [Poirot] have for that little one [Jacqueline] much sympathy'" (p. 196), since —despite being othered— Jacqueline manages to evoke the sympathies of the other tourists, specially of Poirot. Poirot, in Christie's colonial novels, is inherently a double other, since not only is he a Belgian among the English, but a Belgian among the English *in the Orient*. As such, he can deconstruct "the foundational tale that underlies and forms the status of an Other" (Lassner, 2009, p. 35), and his othered status gives him the capacity to see through Jacqueline and deduce the inner turmoil she is going through in the story. Poirot, on several occasions, tries to stop her from becoming a criminal —and consequently, becoming completely othered from Western society:

> 'Mademoiselle, I beseech you [Jacqueline], do not do what you are doing.' […] 'Do not open your heart to evil.' Her lips fell apart; a look of bewilderment came into her eyes. Poirot went on gravely: 'Because – if you do – evil will come . . . Yes, very surely evil will come . . . It will enter in and make its home within you, and after a little while it will no longer be possible to drive it out.' (2005, p. 90, 91)

In the extract above, Poirot attempts to convince Jacqueline to give up her revenge so as to not succumb to evilness and criminality. Yet, despite his efforts, Jacqueline (alongside Simon) follows through with her murderous plan, and fully succumbs to the Orient and its/her otherness. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that, although she does commit a crime and is constantly othered throughout the entire novel, Jacqueline is not treated as a mere criminal. At the end of the novel, instead of being sentenced to hanging —the common punishment for murder at that time— Poirot grants her the opportunity of simply shooting herself (and Simon), by remaining silent about Jacqueline's second pistol: "Poirot felt a hand on his arm. Mrs Allerton said softly, 'You – knew?' He nodded." […] Mrs Allerton said: 'You wanted her to take that way out?' 'Yes […]' (2005, p. 415). His decision is not questioned since, as the detective in Golden Age crime fiction, he is the representative of English righteousness. This lenient attitude towards Jacqueline may come from the fact that she is not essentially evil. Her othering process and her descent into savagery is spurred by her love for Simon and is not inherent to her personality. This can be apprehended by how she is almost convinced by Poirot to give up her plan —"'I could have stopped, then, you know. I nearly did . . . I could have told Simon that I wouldn't go on with it . . ." (p. 403) — and her realisation of how murder has changed her:

> 'No, it's no use being sentimental. I might do it again . . . I'm not a safe person any longer. I can feel that myself . . .' She went on broodingly: 'It's so dreadfully easy – killing people. And you begin to feel that it doesn't matter . . . that it's only you that matters! It's dangerous – that.' (2005, p. 402, 403)

It is also worth highlighting that, despite committing murder, Jacqueline maintains some sort of humanity and justice, since she herself would not have been able to kill Linnet Ridgeway in her sleep:

> "'The only thing I was glad about was that I hadn't got to do *it*. I simply couldn't have! Not go along in cold blood and kill her when she was asleep! You see, I hadn't forgiven her – I think I could have killed her face to face, but not the other way . . ." (2005, p. 407)

Overall, Jacqueline represents an interesting criminal "other", who is aware of the "orientalising" process affecting her. Moreover, she is not convicted as the usual criminal "other" and receives the compassion of the West. Despite being portrayed as criminal, savage, naturalised and infantilised —following the orientalising tropes— she is also depicted as not so distinct from the colonising West.

3.2. Agatha Christie's *The Man in the Brown Suit* (1924)

The Man in the Brown Suit ([1924] 1982) focuses on Anne Beddingfeld, a young woman who had "always longed for adventures" (p. 10) and finally gets involved in one: a murder investigation. The prologue to the novel introduces the catalyst of all the events that take place within the story. Nadina, a famous dancer in Paris, discloses to her companion the Count Sergius Paulovitch her plan to blackmail "The Colonel", an agent provocateur for whom both of them work as spies, because he is intending to retire —leaving his organisation and his workers abandoned. The novel's action is told in retrospect by the protagonist Anne, including certain fragments —to complete the narration of the events— from the diary of Sir Eustace Pedler, one of the most relevant characters in the plot. Other significant characters in the story are Colonel Race —who would appear in other future novels by Christie, such as *Cards on the Table* (1936) or *Death on the Nile* (1937), analysed in the previous section—, Mrs Suzanne Blair, Guy Pagett and Harry Lucas — who would later be known under other different names. Anne's adventure begins after the

death of her father, when she travels to London to live with her father's solicitor. After an unsuccessful job interview, she witnesses the death of a man who falls on to the live rail at Hyde Park Corner tube station. There, she picks up a note, dropped by the suspicious doctor that examined the dead man's body, which would become the first clue for her future adventure. After another murder taking place in England, this time of a woman, Anne relates both murders and follows the note's track. Hence, she embarks on a journey to Africa —which was suffering a revolution agitated by The Colonel's company's support— where most of the story takes place. At the end, Anne uncovers the truth behind the murders: the victims were Nadina —whose real name was Anita Grünberg— and her husband. While her husband's death was an accident, Nadina was murdered by the Colonel, whose real identity was Sir Eustace Pedler, after she had attempted to blackmail him. The story ends in the present, with Anne living in a fictional African island in the Zambezi alongside Harry Lucas, who was actually called John Eardsley, with whom she had a son.

As adumbrated earlier, *The Man in the Brown Suit* was published during the Golden Age of crime fiction and belongs to Christie's colonial novels. Similarly to *Death on the Nile*, it showcases the imperial ideas that permeated the literature of the time. Actually, this novel is similar to the "empire romances" that proliferated during the 1920s, which dealt with stories focused on a bold white woman who "found love and adventure abroad" (Prevost, 2022, p. 178). As advanced in the summary of the novel, Christie set *The Man in the Brown Suit* mainly in Africa, inspired by her travels there. As a matter of fact, most of the places in the novel are the same ones she visited during the British Empire Exhibition Tour, and certain scenes of Anne's adventures recall some of Christie's experiences during the tour. For example, Anne's seasickness and her idea of being a parlourmaid (1982, p. 48, 49), as well as her wonder upon the Victoria Falls (p. 149) are

parallel to how Christie felt on board the *Kildonan Castle* (Christie, 1977, p. 278) and how she herself felt upon seeing the Victoria Falls (p. 280). This parallelism makes it seem that Christie, to some extent, projected herself onto her protagonist. This is relevant due to the nature of the British Empire Exhibition Tour, whose goal was to encourage the interest in the British Empire and justify its superiority. As such, Christie herself behaved as an agent of the empire: "Belcher, naturally, had arranged to do everything in first-class style. Nothing but the best was good enough for the British Empire Exhibition Mission. We were what would be termed nowadays V.I.P.s, one and all" (p. 277). While in a privileged position, her group toured the different countries the tour went through and behaved similarly to her privileged Western characters in her novels. But the most important aspect Christie took from her travels into *The Man in the Brown Suit* is the conflict that was taking place in South Africa at the time: the Rand Revolt. This was a violent "militant labor strike aimed at restoring white mineworkers' jobs and protecting the industrial color bar" which led to a "standstill" period in South Africa (Prevost, 2022, p. 166). Despite the severity of the conflict, Chistie's published correspondence and her autobiography showed a lack of awareness about it (p. 169), as she seems to downplay it by simply worrying about the possibility of missing the Victoria Falls because of it (p. 172). In the novel, Christie employs the conflict as background for the story's main action, and re-envisions it as the result of the Colonel's instigations: "The job I [Pedler] took on was to supply certain explosives and arms —heavily paid for—to foment feeling generally, and to incriminate certain people up to the hilt" (1982, p. 200). By doing so, Christie erases the "class-based grievances and racialized actions" (Prevost, 2022, p. 171) that characterised that revolution and reproduces her own attitude towards it. This carelessness over the conflict is further shown in the novel through how different characters refer to it. For example, Pedler refers to it as a "miniature revolution" (1982,

p. 182) and disregards it —"I do not believe in this revolution. I give it a couple of days longer and it will fizzle out ignominiously" (p. 200)— as merely his "last contract" (p. 201). Another example is how most of the characters do not seem to have any type of political opinion over it:

> "Smuts will be in Johannesburg tomorrow. I give this outbreak three days more before it collapses utterly. In the meantime the fighting goes on."
>
> "I wish," I [Anne] said, "that one could be sure that the right people were the ones to get killed. I mean the ones who wanted to fight —not just all the poor people who happen to live in the parts where the fighting is going on."
>
> He [Colonel Race] nodded.
>
> "I know what you mean, Anne. That's the unfairness of war [...]" (1982, p. 214)

According to Elizabeth Prevost (2022), the strike acquired a white supremacist tone and turned into a militant insurrection which sabotaged industrial and governmental sites as well as attacked black workers (p. 170). As seen in the fragment above, while Anne and Colonel Race do sympathise with the victims that do not actively partake in the conflict, both fail to acknowledge the reasons for said conflict and avoid situating themselves on either side. All the previous details hint at the colonial discourse of Christie's time, which permeated contemporary literature. Following Colonel Race's words, "[t]here is such a thing as unconscious self-revelation, though" (1982, p. 74), Christie disseminates colonial discourse by reconstructing South Africa's history in *The Man with the Brown Suit* so that it suits the interests and (imperial) ideas of her Western readers. Similarly to the Orient in Orientalism, Africa is re-imagined within colonial discourse in order to justify and legitimise colonisation. Shohat and Stam ([1994] 2014) contend that "[w]ithin colonialist discourse, metaphors, tropes, and allegorical motifs played a constitutive role in 'figuring'

European superiority" (p. 137). Following the theoretical background advanced in Chapter 2, Africa was constructed under the systematic use of the metaphor of the "Dark Continent". This metaphor implied reducing all the territories of Africa to a homogenous land characterised and stigmatised by the same stereotypes. The "Dark Continent" is thus defined as an "other", and as the repository of the West's darkest desires and fantasies (Jarosz, 1992). The construction of the "Dark Continent" follows a similar pattern to the creation of the Orientalist Orient, and so the linguistic devices used for the establishment of both metaphors are very similar. Likewise, Africa —stuck in time— becomes the object of the West's observation and re-interpretation, and so it is rendered as both exotic and historical, as well as undeveloped and uncivilised. The exoticisation and romanticisation of Africa is shown in *The Man in the Brown Suit* mainly through Anne's idealisation of the landscape and her eagerness for adventures:

> We were just steaming into Table Bay. There were fleecy white clouds hovering above Table Mountain, and nestling on the slopes below, right down to the sea, was **the sleeping town, gilded and bewitched** by the morning sunlight. It made me catch my breath and have that curious hungry pain inside that seizes one sometimes when one comes across **something that's extra beautiful**. I'm not very good at expressing these things, but I knew well enough that **I had found**, if only for a fleeting moment, **the thing that I had been looking for ever** since I left Little Hampsly. **Something new, something hitherto undreamed of, something that satisfied my aching hunger for romance**. (1982, p. 104; emphasis mine)

Anne describes the African landscape as if it were the setting from a fairytale ("sleeping town, gilded and bewitched") and she also endows it with an oneiric quality as if belonging to the scenery of one of her dreams:

> I was still wrapped in that strange dream feeling of exaltation that had succeeded my troubled night. Very strongly implanted in me was the feeling that I had come home. Home! And yet I had never been here before—or had I in dreams? (1982, p. 148)

The protagonist's descriptions of Africa as dream-like or as if it belonged to a fantasy tale are constant through the story: "A strange eerie place, far from the haunts of men, that sings a ceaseless paean of rugged beauty" (p. 144); or:

> It was a marvelous sight, the great chasm and the rushing waters below, and the veil of mist and spray in front of us that parted every now and then for one brief minute to show the cataract of water and then closed up again in its impenetrable mystery. (p. 149)

Anne Beddingfeld's romanticisation of Africa does not only reach the scenery, but also her expectations of the natives. In fact, one of the first points that interested her in Africa was her fantasy of meeting the "[s]tern, silent men" (p. 13) of Rhodesia: "I enjoyed perils and love-making at second hand, and went to sleep dreaming of stem, silent Rhodesians, and of strong men who always "felled their opponents with a single blow." (p. 12). Yet, her ideal of Rhodesian men is not met by an actual Rhodesian —not even by a native, but by Colonel Race: "Colonel Race was really just my ideal of a stern silent Rhodesian" (p. 67). This introduces the erasure of the natives within the novel, which will be studied later on in this section. Returning to the conceptualisation of the Dark Continent stuck in time, Africa is depicted as the core of the world: "[t]his is South Africa, I kept saying to myself industriously. South Africa, South Africa. You are seeing the world. This is the world. You are seeing it. Think of it, Anne Beddingfeld, you pudding-head. You're seeing the world" (p. 105). This identification follows the idea that humanity originated in Africa —"[t]he cradle of the race [the Neanderthals] was in Africa" (p. 13)— and situates Africa in an

earlier historical period: "[g]reat boulders appeared, piled up into fantastic shapes. I felt suddenly that I had got into a **primitive era**. Just for a moment Neanderthal men seemed quite as real to me as they had to Papa" (p. 143; emphasis mine). Hence, the romanisation of Africa as historical naturally leads to its representation as undeveloped and uncivilised —"Simple, primitive, big —that is Africa" (p. 143)— as opposed to the developed West, another factor that characterised the construction of the Dark Continent (Jarosz, 1992). The Dark Continent's primitivism is seen in correlation to primal instincts —"savagery, cannibalism, lust or anarchy" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 72)— as seen in the following fragment, where Anne ignorantly talks about cannibalism as if it were a mere part of the adventures people live in Africa:

> "Is this your first visit to Africa?" I inquired conversationally.
>
> "To South Africa, yes. But I have worked for the last two years among the cannibal tribes in the interior of East Africa."
>
> "How thrilling! Have you had many narrow escapes?"
>
> "Escapes?"
>
> "From being eaten, I mean?"
>
> "You should not treat sacred subjects with levity. Miss Beddingfeld."
>
> "I didn't know that cannibalism was a sacred subject," I retorted, stung. (Christie, 1982, p. 64)

By embodying those negative stereotypes and representing the negative qualities of the West (Achebe, 2016, p. 25), the Dark Continent ends up depicted as the degenerate opposite of the West, thereby prompting the establishment of the colonial trope of light/darkness. As Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (2014) state, "the trope of light/darkness,

implicit in the Enlightenment ideal of rational clarity, envisions non-European worlds as less luminous, whence the notion of Africa as the "dark continent" […] Sight and vision are attributed to Europe, while the "other" is seen as living in "obscurity," blind to moral knowledge" (p. 140). As such, the Dark Continent is chaotic, unreliable and evil. For example, in *The Man in the Brown Suit* Christie highlights the chaotic management of South African trains, similarly to how she criticises the impunctuality of Egyptian trains in *Death on the Nile*: "Suzanne and I were nearly left behind at each station—if you could call them stations. It seemed to me that the train just stopped whenever it felt like it" (p. 137); "South African trains don't hoot or get excited when they are going to start off again. They just glide quietly away, and you look up from your bargaining and run for your life" (p. 138). Darkness is also situated in correlation to danger and evil, both in relation to the landscape —"[a]head of us lay Africa; we were rushing toward it through the dark water. […] And suddenly I had a curious intimate premonition of danger" (p. 95) — and in connection with the natives —"[n]ightmare visions floated before me. A dark face [Batani] grinned into mine —a devil'sface" (p. 152). Following the correlation of evil and Africa, in the novel Colonel Race argues that spending too long in Africa affects oneself negatively: ""Yes. But to live in it long —well, it makes one what you would call cruel. One comes to hold life and death very lightly" (p. 143). Moreover, Anita Grünberg —the "Russian" dancer Nadina that opens the story and becomes the second murder— is shown to have South African ancestry: "Anita Griinberg —that was her name. She was an actress. Quite young and very beautiful. She was South African born, but her mother was a Hungarian, I believe. There was some sort of mystery about her" (p. 162). Anita/Nadina, despite being portrayed as exotic and of being one of the victims, is presented as vile and cruel for taking advantage of others, which the novel aligns with her ethnic roots:

> As for Nadina, she was the kind of woman who deserved to die. Men do all sorts of questionable things in order to get rich, but women shouldn't pretend to be in love, for ulterior motives, when they aren't. I can forgive Sir Eustace easily enough, but I shall never forgive Nadina. Never, never, never! (1982, p. 222)

Chrisie's depiction of the dangerous Dark Continent is not limited to *The Man in the Brown Suit*, as it can be appreciated too in *A Caribbean Mystery* ([1964], 2002), when Miss Marple asks Evelyn about her own stereotypes about Africa:

> 'I suppose you must have had some rather exciting adventures sometimes?"
>
> 'I don't think so,' said Evelyn. Her voice was unaccentuated, slightly bored. […].' She yawned.
>
> 'No dangerous encounters with snakes or with wild animals or with natives gone' berserk?' ('What a fool I sound,' thought Miss Marple.)
>
> 'Nothing worse than insect bites,' Evelyn assured her. (Christie, 2002, p. 70)

The constructions of the Dark Continent also depend on the portrayal of the natives. Similarly to the oriental natives, most of the African natives receive no name (except for Batani, who helps Harry Lucas in taking care of Anne), thereby erasing their identity. As in *Death on the Nile*, instead of being mentioned by their names, they are oftentimes referenced to by their job or simply as serving the Westerners: "[a]fter tea we strolled out, got on the trolley, and were pushed by smiling natives" (p. 149); or "[t]he native trackers" (p. 178). Moreover, they are repeatedly referred to as *Kafir*, a term normally used to refer to non-Muslims: "a smiling Kafir boy" (p. 110), "an old Kafir woman" (p. 136) or "little Kafir children" (p. 137). As per usual in Christie's colonial novels, the representation of the natives is very limited, since the focus is on the Westerners and their experiences. As a matter of fact, Anne herself dismisses the portrayal

of Africa, and to some extent, seems to mock its culture, by making random associations with the different elements she mentions:

> By the way, I should like to make it clear here and now that this story will not be a story of South Africa. I guarantee no genuine local color —you know the sort of thing— half a dozen words in italics on every page. I admire it very much, but I can't do it. In South Sea islands, of course, you make an immediate reference to *bêche-de-mer*, I don't know what *bêche-de-mer* is, I never have known, I probably never shall know. I've guessed once or twice and guessed wrong. In South Africa I know you at once begin to talk about a *stoep* —I do know what a *stoep* is —it's the thing round a house and you sit on it. In various other parts of the world you call it a veranda, a piazza, and a ha-ha. Then again, there are pawpaws. I had often read of pawpaws. I discovered at once what they were, because I had one plumped down in front of me for breakfast. I thought at first that it was a melon gone bad. The Dutch waitress enlightened me, and persuaded me to use lemon juice and sugar and try again. I was very pleased to meet a pawpaw. I had always vaguely associated it with a hulahula, which, I believe, though I may be wrong, is a kind of straw skirt that Hawaiian girls dance in. No, I think I am wrong: —that is a lava-lava. (1982, p. 107)

As in *Death on the Nile*, the natives in *The Man in the Brown Suit* are also described according to the tropes introduced in the previous section: naturalisation/animalisation and infantilisation. The most common form of naturalisation is once again the portrayal of the natives as a homogenised group, another way of erasing their identities: "**a horde of natives** materialized out of the empty landscape, holding up mealie bowls and sugar canes and fur karosses and adorable carved wooden animals" (p.137; emphasis mine). Moreover, the natives are sometimes animalised by insinuating a resemblance between

them and dogs: "[o]ld Batani hovered about, counting no more than a dog might have done" (p. 158); or "[t]he native trackers have run about on all fours" (p. 178). Regarding infantilisation, here Christie also belittles the natives by referring to them as "boys", rather than "men", as a way of portraying them as inferior to the Westerners: "a smiling Kafir boy" (p. 110), "[a] Kafir boy was sitting by the hall door" (p. 114), "[t]he door was opened by a Kafir boy" (p. 197) or "a Kafir boy brought up my small suitcase" (p. 206), etc. This infantilisation can also be seen in the protagonist herself, Anne Beddingfeld, who is very often referred to as a "child", or "schoolgirl", amongst others: "My [Colonel Race] dear child, don't be absurd" (p. 146); ""There speaks a foolish schoolgirl." "I'm not a foolish schoolgirl," I [Anne] cried indignantly. "I'm a woman" (p. 157); "I [Pedler] apologize, my dear child, I really do. I always liked you —but you were so confoundedly interfering. I couldn't have all my plans brought to naught by a chit of a girl" (p. 200); "For an otherwise intelligent young woman, that's a singularly unintelligent remark. No, my [Pedler] dear child" (p. 200). Anne's infantilisation points out how, despite not being the common detective figure within crime fiction, she is also constantly othered through the entirety of the novel by being portrayed as being closer to the natives. Similarly to Poirot in *Death on the Nile*, Anne's status of an "other" allows her to resolve the mysteries of the story.

Anne's depiction as an "other" is accomplished through several devices, such as being differentiated from the other Westerners, and her closeness to nature and the Dark Continent. Throughout the story, Anne is portrayed as a wild girl and not entirely English. In fact, Mrs. Blair gives her the nickname of "gypsy girl" after noticing some sort of difference between her and the other Westerners on board of the ship towards Africa:

> "Good morning, gypsy girl, sit down here by me. You look as though you hadn't slept well.

> “Why do you call me that?” I asked, as I sat down obediently.
>
> “Do you mind? It suits you somehow. I’ve called you that in my own mind from the beginning. It’s the gypsy element in you that makes you so different from anyone else.” (1982, p. 61, 62)

Anne herself plays into that portrayal of hers, by dressing herself as a gypsy during the fancy dress dance on board: “Anne Beddingfeld had concocted a gypsy costume for herself” (p. 73). Later on, Mrs. Blairs directly picks out why Anne is different from the other Westerners:

> “You’re very un-English, gypsy girl,” she said at last. “There’s not a scrap of the sentimental about you. I’ve never met anyone who was at once so practical and so passionate. I shall never care for anyone like that—mercifully for me—and yet—and yet I envy you, gypsy girl. (1982, p. 90)

As the quote above reveals, Anne is different due to the strength of her passion and feelings, something she has in common with Jacqueline from *Death on the Nile*, although in her case it does not come from her ethnic roots but her gradual approach to the “Other”. As an “other”, Anne is also constantly exoticised, with the text portraying her as extraordinary, as well as attractive and desirable: “Anne Beddingfeld is an extremely nice girl —with particularly good legs. I should say she had far and away the best legs on board” (p. 71); ““Are you a girl or a witch?” he [Harr Lucas] breathed” (p. 97); ““Anne,” he [Colonel Race] said gently, “I want you. Will you marry me?” (p. 147); or “And you’re tempting me, Anne. You, with your witch’s hair, and your eyes that are golden and brown and green” (p. 159). As seen in these quotations, Harry Lucas —Anne’s love interest— refers to Anne as a witch several times throughout the novel, first as a negative remark and later with romantic undertones. Anne’s romance with Harry Lucas signifies her full

immersion into Africa. He is “[a] criminal twice over. A man hunted down” (p. 159), who lives in Rhodesia (and as such he is one of the Rhodesian idealised men Anne fantasized over) in extreme proximity to nature, and he brings Anne with himself to such proximity: “He [Harry] caught me in his arms. “Anne, come away with me—now —tonight. Back to Rhodesia —back to the island”” (p. 219). Thus, Anne ends up as a complete “other” isolated from the Western world —since according to Harry’s words, “Not a soul comes to this island” (p. 155), living in an island in Zambezi River alongside Harry and their son, who seems to be brought up as a native:

> My son is lying in the sun, kicking his legs. There’s a “man in a brown suit” if you like. He’s wearing as little as possible, which is the best costume for Africa, and is as brown as a berry. He’s always burrowing in the earth. I think he takes after Papa. He’ll have that same mania for Pleiocene clay.” (1982, p. 223)

Overall, Anne —despite not being a detective— represents the role of the othered figure of the detective. The main distinction between her and the traditional detective figure is that she does not return to Western society, but remains in South Africa. While Anne is represented by the same tropes as the native “other” and somewhat adopts their lifestyle, she is never really concerned about them nor sees them as equal: the distance she puts between herself and the natives accounts for the fact that she did not end up truly “going native” (Shohat and Stam, 2014, p. 43).

Conclusion

Crime fiction has enjoyed outstanding popularity since its consolidation as a genre back in the nineteenth century. The influence of crime fiction has not been limited to the literary sphere, but has also permeated other media such as the film industry, either through the creation of specifically designed content or through the adaptation of famous literary works. Agatha Christie's novels, for example, have been adapted to the big and small screen on various occasions —suffice it to mention here films such as *Murder on the Orient Express* (1974) directed by Sidney Lumet; *Death on the Nile* (2022) and its sequel *A Haunting in Venice* (2023), both directed by Kenneth Branagh, or *Agatha Christie's Poirot* (1989), an ITV British programme. Such is the popularity of these adaptations that some of the actors starring in these productions are better known in relation to their roles in these adaptations, as occurs in the case of David Suchet, mostly known for his role as Hercule Poirot in *Agatha Christie's Poirot* (1989), for which he received a BAFTA nomination in 1991.

Moved by the enduring allure of crime fiction, in this dissertation, I attempted to trace the origins of crime fiction back to the nineteenth century, a period which coincided with the heyday of European empires —including the British Empire. Bearing this mind and considering the relationship between discourses on criminality and Otherness, the main objective of this study was to examine Agatha Christie's work under a postcolonial lens. To this end, the dissertation featured two chapters devoted to laying bare the theoretical framework informing the subsequent analysis. As concluded in Chapter 1, the connection between the genre of crime fiction in its origins and the British Empire is based on the socio-historical context in which the genre was born. Crime fiction appeared, in effect, in a period marked by social unrest and an increase in criminality, and this was also a period that witnessed Britain's territorial expansion through the consolidation of

the Empire. Like other artistic manifestations produced in this period, early crime fiction reflected the division between the West and its colonial Others, contributing to disseminating colonial discourse. This division was not merely territorial but also ideological for it was grounded on several stereotypes which rendered the foreign "other" as the moral opposite of the West —the colonised was construed as being opposed to the idea of "civilisation" and, therefore, as being more prone to criminality, all of them questions that contributed to sanctioning the logics of Empire. Since the "other" was established as the embodiment of criminality and dubious morality, crime fiction exploited these stereotypes to reinforce its moralising nature, and engendered the figure of the detective, who was both a link towards the criminal "other" and a model to follow according to imperial ideals.

The above-mentioned stereotypes were part of a systematised set of beliefs which reimagined and construed the colonised in a self-serving way. This explains, for instance, the construction of the Middle East and South Africa as the "Orient" and the "Dark Continent", respectively. As discussed in Chapter 2, the way in which these territories were reinterpreted at the time of colonialism has been extensively studied within postcolonial theory, with Said's *Orientalism* (1978) figuring as a key text that spurred further research on the workings of colonial discourse. In his work, Said unveiled how "Orientalism" divides society in a binary relation: the Occident and the Orient, with the Orient being then reduced to the negative counterpart of the West as an "other". The representation of the "Dark Continent" follows a similar path, being used by the West as a metaphor charged with negative implications to refer to Africa as a homogenised whole (Jarosz, 1992) whose "primitivism" and "barbarism" run counter to Western civilisation. Both the Orient and the "Dark Continent" were thus made to represent savagery,

amorality, underdevelopment and uncivilization, figuring as the repository of the West's worst qualities and desires.

The use of the above-mentioned stereotypes can be seen in my analysis of Christie's novels, where the author deploys these constructions to re-create the settings on which her stories are placed. In *Death on the Nile* (1937), for example, Christie portrays Egypt as a land fraught with Orientalist characteristics, which can be seen in how she depicts the country as being stuck in time, both in terms of history and social development. Egypt is, therefore, reduced to a tourist site —where the Western tourist's perception is the most relevant aspect of the scenery— as well as to an uncivilised and primitive society. The native Egyptians are not simply described as unreliable and infantile, but they are also animalised and naturalised as if they were just an appendage of the natural landscape. All in all, the natives' own identity is erased under these stereotypes, and they become a mass of nameless people. Furthermore, the murderer —despite being of Western origins— is constantly "otherised", with the novel portraying her (Jacqueline) as being closer to the native "other". By doing so, Christie seems to imply that her murderous acts stand in relation to the Orient, evoking the general association of the "other" with criminality.

This vision of the foreign as an "other" also surfaces in *The Man in the Brown Suit* (1924), where Christie relies on the construction of Africa as the "Dark Continent". Similarly to what occurs in the previous novel, the "other" is here portrayed as savage and in earlier phases of civilisation. The landscape is praised in relation to its primitiveness and atemporal qualities, but it is also made to correlate with danger and evil. For their part, the natives —when represented— lack individual identity. They are also constantly animalised and infantilised, being recurrently referred to as "boys" —regardless their age. Going a step further, in my analysis, I argued that this equation of

Africa and “Otherness” is also projected onto Anne, the protagonist of the novel, probably as a way to indicate her status as an “othered” detective —since, despite not being a detective, she behaves as one— whose closeness to the “other” allows her to solve the murders’ mysteries. Overall, the analysis carried out in Chapter 3 confirms the study’s thesis statement, namely that Christie’s colonial novels reproduce the colonial discourse so prevalent at the time she was writing.

The results of this study support the claim that Agatha Christie’s works are extremely productive when examined under a postcolonial lens. The representation of colonial settings in her work is heavily influenced by her travels around the world, where she acted as an agent of the Empire alongside her two husbands when visiting sites that, in her time, were under the rule of the British Empire, and as such, her works reflect the period’s hegemonic discourses. Due to Christie’s importance as a crime fiction writer and her attempt at reproducing the colonial landscapes, the lack of studies on Christie under a postcolonial perspective signifies an important gap in the study of crime fiction. In fact, a greater focus on Christie’s novels could produce interesting findings in relation to how early crime fiction became a vehicle for the dissemination of colonial discourse. For example, further research might explore the intersection between gender and colonial discourse, or analyse how Christie depicted colonised women and the way in which her novels articulate the so-called “double colonisation” of women. This could be applied not only to Christie’s novels, but also to other crime fiction works from the Golden Age period. Moreover, it would also be worth exploring, from a comparative perspective, how the question of the “other” has been approached by both male and female writers working within the crime fiction genre.

Bibliography

Achebe, C. (2016). "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*." *The Massachusetts Review 57*(1), 14-27. DOI: 10.1353/mar.2016.0003.

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2007). *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Bhabha, H. (1984). "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." *Discipleship: A Special Issue on Psychoanalysis 28*, 125-133. https://www.jstor.org/stable/778467

________. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. Routledge.

Bradford, R. (2015). *Crime Fiction: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford.

Christie, A. (1977). *An Autobiography*. Dodd, Mead & Company.

________. (2002). *A Caribbean Mystery*. HarperCollins.

________. (1956). *Come, Tell Me How You Live*. Dodd, Mead & Company.

________. (2005). *Death on the Nile*. Perfectbound.

________. (1982). *The Man in the Brown Suit*. Dell publishing Co.

________. (2001). *Murder in Mesopotamia*. HarperCollins.

Demir, Y. S. "A Comparative Narratological Analysis of the Oriental Focalized in Christie's *Appointment with Death* and *A Caribbean Mystery*." *Dil ve Edebiyat Araştırmaları*, (29), 238-251. DOI:10.30767/diledeara.1414596.

Fanon, F. (1986). *Black Skin, White Masks*. Pluto Press.

Jarosz, L. (1992). “Constructing the Dark Continent: Metaphor as Geographic Representation of Africa.” *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography 74*(2), 105-115. http://www.jstor.org/stable/490566

Lassner, P. (2009). “The Mysterious New Empire: Agatha Christie’s Colonial Murders.” In Hackett, R, Hauser, F & Wachman, G. (Eds.), *At Home and Abroad in the Empire British Women Write the 1930s*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 31-41.

Linares, T. (2018). *Dis-Orienting Interactions: Agatha Christie, Imperial Tourists, and the Other* (Master’s thesis, Bowling Green State University).

Makinen, M. (2006). *Agatha Christie. Investigating Femininity.* Palgrave.

McLeod, J. (2000). *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester University Press.

Mukherjee, U. (2003). *Crime and Empire. The Colony in Nineteenth-Century Fictions of Crime*. Oxford.

Pratt, M.L. (2007). *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Prevost, E. (2022). “Agatha Christie in Southern Africa”. In Nym Mayhall, L & Prevost, E. (Eds.), *British Murder Mysteries, 1880-1965. Facts and Fictions.* Palgrave, 165-185.

Rowland, S. (2001). *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell. British Women Writers in Detective and Crime Fiction*. Palgrave. DOI:10.1057/9780230598782

Said, E. (2000). Orientalism. In M. Bayoumi (Ed.) & A. Rubin (Ed.). *The Edward Said Reader*. London: Granta.

Scaggs, J. (2005). *Crime Fiction*. Routledge.

Shohat, E. & Stam, R. (2014). *Unthinking Eurocentrism. Multiculturalism and the Media*. Routledge.

Stewart, V. (2017). *Crime Writing in Interwar Britain: Fact and Fiction in the Golden Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI:10.1017/9781108186124

Thomas, R.R. (1994). "The Fingerprint of the Foreigner: Colonizing the Criminal Body in 1890s Detective Fiction and Criminal Anthropology." *ELH 61*(3), 655-683. DOI:10.1353/elh.1994.0028.

Thompson, J. (1993). "The Adventurous Detective: Conan Doyle and Imperialism." In *Fiction, Crime and Empire: Clues to Modernity and Postmodernism*. University of Illinois Press.

Tiffin, C. & Lawson, A. (2002). "Introduction." In Tiffin, C. & Lawson, A. (Eds.), *De-Scribing Empire: Post-colonialism and textuality*. Routledge, 1-11.

Tuominen, T. (2013). *"Down into the Valley of Death": The Portrayal of the Orient in the Interwar Fiction of Agatha Christie* (Master's thesis, University of Tampere).

Jain, R. & Sharma, A. (2022). "Colonial and Post-Colonial Reflections in Crime Fiction." *International Journal of Multidisciplinary and Current Educational Research* (IJMCER) *5(1)*, 122-125.

Weiss, R. (2017). *Tied-Up Heads versus Marble Skin: Agatha Christie's Portrayal of Middle Eastern and African Colonised* (Bachelor's thesis, Halmstad University).

Yiannitsaros, C. (2017). "'Tea and scandal at four-thirty': Fantasies of Englishness and Agatha Christie's Fiction of the 1930s and 1940s." *Clues: A Journal of Detection 35*(2), 78–88.

Zengin, M. (2016). "Western Image of the Orient and Oriental in Agatha Christie's Death on the Nile: A Postcolonial Reading." *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences*, *15*(3), 837-866.