"Down into the Valley of Death": The Portrayal of the Orient in the Interwar Fiction of Agatha Christie

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Pro Gradu Thesis
January 2013

Tampereen yliopisto
Englantilainen filologia
Kieli-, käännös- ja kirjallisuustieteiden yksikkö

TUOMINEN, TIINA: "Down into the Valley of Death": The Portrayal of the Orient in the Interwar Fiction of Agatha Christie

Pro gradu -tutkielma, 86 sivua + lähdeluettelo

Tämän pro gradu -tutkielman tavoitteena on tutkia, miten Lähi-Itää kuvataan Agatha Christien teoksissa, jotka ovat julkaistu kahden maailmansodan välisenä aikana. Olen valinnut tutkimusaineistokseni neljä novellia kokoelmasta *Parker Pyne Investigates* (1934) sekä kolme romaania: *Murder in Mesopotamia* (1936), *Death on the Nile* (1937) ja *Appointment with Death* (1938). Kaikkia teoksia yhdistävät dekkarigenren konventiot sekä tarinoiden sijoittuminen brittiläisen imperiumin vaikutusalueelle, Lähi-Itään.

Tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys koostuu kahdesta osiosta: jälkikolonialistinen teoria ja dekkaritutkimus. Jälkikolonialistisen tutkimusnäkökulman valinta perustuu sekä tutkimuskysymyksiini ja -aineistooni: jälkikolonialistisen teorian tavoitena on tutkia kolonialismia ja kolonisoitujen ihmisten identiteettia suhteessa imperialismiin ja siirtomaa-aikaan. Tärkeässä osassa jälkikolonialistisessa tutkimuksessa ovat myös kysymykset representaatiosta sekä kolonisoitujen rodullistamisesta, joiden seurauksena syntyy kolonialistista diskurssia. Merkittävä yksittäinen tutkimus työssäni on Edward Saidin *Orientalism* (1978), jossa Said tarkastelee sitä, kuinka Orientti (Itä) ja Oksidentti (Länsi) ovat kuvitteellisia rakenteita. Dekkaritutkimus on oleellisessa osassa tutkimuksessani, sillä tavoitteenani on tutkia Lähi-Idän kuvausta Christien dekkareissa. Tarkastelen dekkaria osana populaarikulttuuria: miten brittiläinen klassinen dekkarigenre on perinteisesti suhtautunut toiseuteen, kolonialismiin sekä eksoottisiin tapahtumapaikkoihin.

Analyysini koostuu kolmesta eri näkökulmasta: Lähi-Itä paikkana ja kulttuurina, paikallinen väestö sekä brittiläinen imperialistinen koneisto. Tutkimukseni osoittaa, että Christien paikan kuvaus jakautuu kahteen luokkaan: eksoottinen ja romanttinen Lähi-Itä, sekä villi ja epäsivistynyt Lähi-Itä. Myös itämaisia ihmisiä kuvataan Christien teoksissa kahdella tavalla: osana luontoa ja eläinmaailmaa tai ikuisina lapsina. Tarkastelen imperialistista läsnäoloa Lähi-Idässä kahdesta näkökulmasta: kuinka Christie kuvaa länsimaalaisten ihmisten elämää, ja kuinka orientalistinen diskurssi on sulautunut osaksi dekkarin konventioita.

Tutkielman tavoitteena on tarkastella Christieta ja klassista dekkariperinnettä orientalistisesta näkökulmasta, sillä perinteisesti sekä jälkikolonialistinen että dekkaritutkimus ovat sivuuttaneet aiheen omista tutkimuksistaan. Tutkimuksen tarve on kuitenkin kiistaton, sillä väitän, että Christien dekkarit eivät ainoastaan noudata kolonialistista diskurssia mutta osoittavat, miten Orientalista diskurssia voidaan käyttää myös dekkarin konventioissa.

Avainsanat: jälkikolonialismi, orientalismi, representaatio, brittiläinen imperiumi, dekkari, Christie

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how the "Orient" is portrayed in Agatha Christie's stories published between the two World Wars. Classic detective stories or whodunits are a subgenre of detective fiction and originally developed in the 19th century with the works by Edgar Allan Poe and Arthur Conan Doyle. According to the conventions, classic detective stories usually employ the clue-puzzle form, where a murder takes place in a secluded upper-middle class setting with a limited number of suspects (Knight 2004, 87). However, with the development of the genre in the early 20th century, many crime fiction authors, such as Christie, set their murder plots in foreign countries in order to provide more exotic flavor to the growing audiences (Simon 2010, 5). In fact, it is possible to argue that there was a heightened interest in the Orient as a narrative location for Christie especially during the interwar period (Pearson and Singer 2009, 4-5) – even though Christie relied on other "exotic" tourist locations in her fiction, such as the Caribbean (*A Caribbean Mystery* 1964).

The objective of this study is to analyze how Christie as a popular author of one of the most powerful imperial nations depicts one "exotic" location: the Middle East. Christie's portrayal of the Orient will be examined from three aspects: place and culture, characterization of Oriental people and the British imperialist project in the colonies. This study will concentrate on analyzing the general features of Christie's interwar fiction instead of providing a close reading of the wide material included in this thesis: four short stories and three novels published between 1934 and 1938. The short stories were published in a collection, *Parker Pyne Investigates* (1934), where the main character of the title is not presented as a typical detective but as "a heart specialist" concerned with solving the unhappiness of his clients. However, many of his adventures deal with various types of crimes rather than only "matters of the soul". Four of these short stories deal directly with British imperialism and are situated in the Middle East. The first novel of the analysis

is *Murder in Mesopotamia* (1936), where Christie's most celebrated detective character, Hercule Poirot, investigates the murder of an American woman in an archaeological excavation site in Iraq. The following novel, *Death on the Nile* (1937), is set in the British colony of Egypt, where Poirot solves the murder of a wealthy American heiress in a tourist setting of a Nile cruise. The final object of research, *Appointment with Death* (1938), is a novel situated mostly in Syria as well as elsewhere in the Middle East. The plot here is similar to the others: an autocratic American woman is murdered in an international tourist party and the investigation is carried out by Poirot.

The theory section of my thesis will rely on postcolonial criticism and detective fiction studies, since the purpose of my study is to illustrate how the Orient and its people as well as the imperialist project are represented in the stories. Postcolonial criticism arises from the fact that the majority of the population of the world today has experienced some form of colonization (Ashcroft et al. 1989, 1). After the liberation of colonies there was a need to establish a literary criticism for discussing the effects of colonization and decolonization as well as the universalism of Eurocentric norms, which first lead to Commonwealth literary studies in the British Empire and later to postcolonial studies in the late 1970s[1] (Bertens 2008, 159).

I will divide my theory section into two subchapters in order to introduce the relevant theoretical tools in my study. The first subchapter operates as a general theoretical framework in my thesis: it defines the central concepts in postcolonial criticism as well as describes the development of postcolonial studies. The discussion of the central terms in postcolonial criticism is integral in my study: they function as a background for subsequent theory, analysis and understanding of British imperialism – how colonialism and imperialism have affected the representation of subordinated people. The subchapter will end with a brief account of the history of British imperialism and colonialism particularly with regard to the Middle East. The second subchapter

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[1] Several critics trace the establishment of postcolonial studies to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) even though serious postcolonial criticism gained an independent status starting from the late 1980's with the works such as *In Other Worlds* (Gayatri Spivak, 1987), *The Empire Writes Back* (Bill Ashcroft, 1989) and *Nation and Narration* (Homi Bhabha, 1990) (Barry 2009, 185-186).

presents more specific theoretical issues needed in my study of Christie's depiction of the Orient. Here, I will introduce my main theoretical work, Edward Said's *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (1978), which explores power and representation in the creation of the constructions "the Occident" and "the Orient". For Said, Orientalism is a hegemonic practice and essentially a material discourse (2), where the West possesses complete domination over the East and is thus able to provide Western culture and literature with innumerable "truths" about Oriental space and character (4-5). The section will end with a discussion on how British popular culture and particularly detective fiction have traditionally covered the questions involved in colonialist discourse.

As was stated previously, the analysis of the primary material in this thesis will be divided into three sections: Oriental place and culture, the representation of Oriental people and the portrayal of the imperial presence in the Orient. In the examination of Oriental place and culture, I will compare and contrast Christie's depiction with the British Orientalist tradition. I will claim that Christie's detective fiction constructs the Orient as a polar image of the Occident according to two somewhat conflicting discourses: there is the historical Orient of exotic and romantic glamour and the wild and uncivilized Orient. However, Christie's Orient is not merely a static place of Orientalist exoticism and backwardness, but the texts depict a clash between traditional images of the Orient and the effects of a long history of colonization: the native culture is vanishing and the Orient is becoming too modern for Western expectations.

The second part of my analysis is devoted to the Oriental people and their representation. I will claim that the majority of the depictions portray the native people as a mass with the absence of female characters. I will argue that in the characterization of native people there is a strong tendency for othering: the ideological process of creating binary oppositions between the Self and the Other (Loomba 1998, 104). This process of creating and sustaining the myth of the Other commonly operates through racial tropes (Shohat and Stam 1994, 137). Shohat and Stam

(1994, 137-141) identify three common racial tropes that are all present in Christie's descriptions of Orientals. The first two tropes are combined in my analysis because of their similarity: naturalization and animalization. Naturalization occurs with "the reduction of the cultural to the biological" and thus being closer to nature. The dependent discourse of animalization refers to describing racial Others as wild animals. The third trope represents the colonized in an earlier phase of human evolution – they are subjected to infantilization. (137-139).

The third part of my analysis is directed to the portrayal of the colonial and imperial project in the stories by Christie. This section of the analysis consists of two perspectives operating on a different level compared to the two previous ones. It will firstly account for the British and Western governance in the region: the various groupings and their living conditions. Here, I will argue that in addition to Christie presenting a binary relationship between the colonizer, Christie's texts also construct Western identities according to national and racial stereotypes. The second perspective studies classic detective fiction in relation to Orientalism: the role of natives in the detective investigations and how the Orientalist representation affects the generic conventions as well as the Western mind.

This study is motivated by the lack of extensive academic study on Christie. Even though many critics have studied Christie from a conservative and class perspective[2] as well as from a feminist framework,[3] there exists a neglected field of study: colonialism and Orientalism in Christie's works. I will claim that Christie's Orientalist representation of the colonized regions and the racial Other not only govern and suppress the Orient but also construct English identity – even though there is also some ambiguity present in Christie's depictions.[4] The lack of postcolonial criticism concerning Christie does not apply to the studies on detective fiction in general. An overview of the type of postcolonial studies concerning the genre indicates a division with regard to

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[2] Knight 1980, Light 1991, Horsley 2005 and York 2007.
[3] Cranny-Francis 1990, Light 1991, Klein 1999, Rowland 2001, Plain 2001 and Mäkinen 2006.
[4] It is possible to detect a hint of parody in Christie's works, particularly in relation to some characters' behavior and beliefs (see Rowland 2001). This is particularly the case with the narrator in *Murder in Mesopotamia,* whose statements about the Orient can be regarded parodically because of their over-generalized nature.

the types of detective and crime fiction most studied. Where there exist postcolonial studies of past detective fiction, they seem to concentrate on early detective fiction: the masculine origins of classic detective fiction and the imperial feeling in the works by Poe and Conan Doyle, for example (see Longhurst 1989 and Thompson 1993). However, it is modern detective fiction originating from the formerly colonized regions, such as South America and Africa as well as the ethnic experience in the United States, which occupies most of the modern scholarly interest.[5] The purpose of this thesis is to analyze how the Orientalist discourse was employed in Christie's interwar fiction and moreover, to provide a postcolonial study of Christie who has previously been studied mainly from the perspective of constructing English identity (McCaw 2011, 41-49).

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[5] Christian 2001, Kim 2005, Maztke and Mühleisen 2006, and Pearson and Singer 2009.

2. Postcolonial Studies and Detective Fiction

This chapter will address the relevant questions in postcolonial studies as well as the history of British imperialism concerning this study. The theoretical background derives firstly from postcolonial studies and secondly from detective fiction studies; how postcolonial questions have been studied in relation to this particular genre.

I will divide the theory section into two subchapters. The first subchapter is concerned with the general theoretical framework of this study. It defines the key terms and themes in postcolonial studies and introduces the development of postcolonial studies. Since one of the aims of this thesis is to study how Christie portrays the Oriental Other, I will also discuss the theories related to representation particularly with regard to race and colonialism. The first subchapter will end with a brief account of the history of British imperialism with an emphasis on its influence in the Middle East – the "exotic" location in Christie's fiction.

The second subchapter will deal with the specific theoretical questions regarding Christie as a British classic detective writer portraying the Orient. It begins with the discussion on one of the most central theories in this thesis: *Orientalism* by Edward Said. Orientalism refers to the Western authority over the East, and how the Orient is ultimately regarded as a Western construction. Since I study the British representation of the Orient, I will concentrate on the history of British Orientalism as well as bringing the question of Orientalism into modern day by introducing the theoretical developments after the publication of Said's influential work. Finally, I will combine detective fiction studies and postcolonialism in order to study how British popular culture and particularly British detective fiction of the early 20th century conveyed British imperialism and locations such as the Middle East.

2.1 Postcolonial Studies and the History of British Imperialism

Postcolonial criticism forms the core of the theoretical background in my inspection of Christie's representation of the Orient and the imperialist machinery in the region. Postcolonial criticism acknowledges two primary forms of subjugation that should be defined prior to any further discussion: colonialism and imperialism. There exists some variation among the scholars regarding the definition of both terms, particularly with concern of the boundaries between colonialism and imperialism. Generally, when one encounters the term *colonialism,* it is employed to refer to European colonialism starting from the 16th century (Armitage 2000, 2), whereas *colonization* existed in practice far before with the Romans and the Greeks, for example (Shohat and Stam 1994, 15).

Shohat and Stam refer to colonialism as "the process by which European powers reached positions of economic, military, political, and cultural hegemony" in distant areas in forms of actual settlements (1994, 15). This definition is widely shared among the critics, whereas imperialism receives somewhat conflicting and wide definitions (Loomba, 1-7). An extensive notion on imperialism is adopted by one of the most notable critics in postcolonial criticism, Edward Said, since for him, imperialism is "an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally brought under control" (1993, 225). However, critics such as Shohat and Stam (1994, 15) have a more precise approach, since they regard imperialism as a certain period of European colonialism, from 1870 to 1914, where the European empires flourished in terms of organization and profit. This notion of imperialism coincides with the period of "high colonialism", which is considered to have begun with "the scramble for Africa" in 1878 (Said 1993, 7 and Mills 2005, 3).

Despite the varied use of these terms in postcolonial studies, I will, for practical purposes, apply Loomba's (6-7) classification of imperialism in this thesis: imperialism is a discourse originating from the metropolis and actualized in the colonization of foreign regions.

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There is another evident distinction between colonialism and imperialism: the latter can exist without formal colonies (Loomba, 7). This is why it is today possible to talk about neocolonialism, and which Spivak describes as happening after the dismantling of old colonial rule, where the old colonial regime remains in power with the help of industrial capitalism and Western cultural hegemony (1991, 1-2).

Imperialism and the conquering of foreign lands and colonies is anything but only a British phenomenon. Nevertheless, modern postcolonial criticism recognizes two colonial super powers, particularly during the period of "high colonialism": the French and the British, the latter of which is studied in this thesis particularly in relation to its authority in the Middle East. In order to function properly, the British Empire required genuine participation from its citizens and was thus supported by an ideology of "having an empire": the governance of the native people was not merely justified by means economic advantage but by the Western obligation to subjugate people of inferior nature (Said 1993, 10). As a result, the world was divided into sections and consequently governed from a Eurocentric perspective, which is the focus of criticism provided by postcolonial studies (Mignolo 2000, 17*)*.

Postcolonial studies is a complex field of study which is why the theorists and critics often employ the term according to different meanings. For example, *post-colonial* (or *postcolonial*) can refer to two ideas. The first concentrates on the history of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized beginning from the first encounter and continuing in the formerly colonized regions: the colonial period and post-colonial period (Ashcroft et al. 1989, 1). The second meaning, as Mullaney (2010, 5) states, is commonly employed today to refer to the various practices and theories employed to understand and study colonization and its legacy. This forms the critical field of "postcolonialism" which consists of studies of nationalism, Third World literature, the subaltern studies and finally the classics of postcolonial and anticolonial theory (Shohat and Stam 2003, 13).

These classics include the works by Franz Fanon, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak and particularly the ones by Said, such as *Orientalism.*

The influence of literary studies on postcolonial criticism is central to the entire development of postcolonial studies, since it strengthened the interdisciplinary nature of the field (Mullaney, 5). In the British context, postcolonial literary studies was originally developed as a reaction against the universalizing process of English as an academic discipline, where the study of English and the ideology of British Empire reinforced each other (Ashcroft et al. 1989, 3). The connection between imperialism and literary studies was manifested in the position of English as the global language as well as the first language of the colonized, and in the naturalization of English values (Ashcroft et al. 1989, 3). English literature and literary criticism consequently created the literary norm and the centre of academic literary studies, and thus positioned the native literatures of the colonies as peripheral and of little value (*ibid.*). As a reaction to this emerged firstly "Commonwealth literatures" in the 1950's and 60's and then postcolonial literatures in the late 1970's (Bertens 156-159). According to McLeod (2000, 33), there are three types of textual products most commonly examined in modern postcolonial literary studies: 1) texts produced in the formerly colonized regions, 2) diasporic texts written by writers who have moved away from colonized countries, and 3) texts produced during colonialism. This study originates from the third perspective, even though traditionally there has been a larger interest to study imperialist manifestations in the canonical works such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814) and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) (McLeod, 23-24).

In addition to studying the divided world caused by imperialism and colonialism, postcolonial criticism is interested in the construction of "race" and in racial representation. As one of the aims of this study is to investigate the racial representation of Middle Eastern characters in British detective fiction, I will next provide a brief account of the history of racial thinking in Western tradition as well as evaluating the racialized representation of natives in the colonialist

discourse. I will also discuss how questions of representation have generally been addressed in postcolonial criticism as well as in the related critical field, cultural studies.

Before discussing racial discourse and representation, it needs to be clarified how they are constructed. At the center of the discourse on race is the production of difference. As Stuart Hall (1997, 234-237) recognizes, there are four possible motivations why the notion of "difference" regulates representational practices in cultures. Firstly, meanings are produced based on the classification of difference. The differences constructed are often binary oppositions where there exists high exercise of power. Secondly, "difference" is essentially a dialogical device: "*we can only construct meaning through a dialogue with the 'Other'*" (emphasis original). The third explanation recognizes the anthropological nature of "difference", as it contains the idea that cultures could not operate without classification of differences. The fourth motivation behind the fascination with "difference" applies psychoanalytical terminology, since it claims that "*the 'Other' is fundamental to the constitution of the self*" (emphasis original). (Hall, 234-237). As we will later witness, this last feature is certainly present in the production of stereotypes.

There exists some debate concerning the origins of human "race" even though the precise introduction of the term into language is of lesser significance compared to the consequences of racial thinking in world history. Conventionally, as Brian Niro quite extensively contemplates, "race" has been designated as an inherently European and Western construction which entered the Western lexicon in the 16th century (2003, 15). Traditionally, it has also been associated with the great changes in European history: the rise of nationalism, the Enlightenment, imperialism and industrialization (*ibid.*). But this perspective on race as Niro (14-15) and also Loomba (105) argue, is somewhat misconstrued, since racial categories of "barbarians" already existed in the Greek and Roman empires. It was the spread of Christianity, however, which ultimately accelerated racial hierarchical thinking, even though the Bible was founded on the notion of equality between people. Thus, rather than functioning as a uniting force, Christianity's

derogatory attitude to other religions (primarily Judaism, Islam and "heathen" religions) became to symbolize "an index of and metaphor for racial, cultural and ethnic differences". (Loomba, 106).

Despite the varied origins of "race", it is nowadays argued that it is not a biological category but a human construction: "racial categories are not natural…not absolute but relative, situational, even narrative categories, engendered by historical process of differentiation" (Shohat and Stam 1994, 19). The earlier racial categorization, as discussed above, combined with previous European experience of foreign cultures gained, nevertheless, an entirely different status with the birth of European imperialism and colonization of foreign lands. However, with regard to the relationship between colonialism and racial thinking, one needs to avoid oversimplification: the racialization of peoples was only one factor behind the justification of colonialism (Niro, 5). It would be far more constructive to view racial thinking as the condition that enabled colonialism as well as being a product of it (Pennycook 1998, 47). If viewed from this perspective, colonialism can be regarded as providing more contact with the "racial others" and thus it enabled Europeans to modify and verify the earlier racial stereotypes of "laziness, aggression, violence, greed, sexual promiscuity, bestiality, primitivism, innocence and irrationality" (Loomba 106-107). The representations often resulted in overgeneralization: the entire colonized world from Jews to Africans was depicted according to similar imaginary (*ibid.*). These similar representations of natives in colonial situation are related to Albert Memmi's "mark of the plural", where the colonizers are depicted as individuals in comparison to the colonized who are

> 'all the same', any negative behavior by any member of the oppressed community is instantly generalized as typical, as pointing to a perpetual backsliding toward some presumed negative essence. Representations thus become allegorical; within hegemonic discourse every subaltern performer/role is seen as synecdochically summing up a vast but putatively homogeneous community. (Shohat and Stam 1994, 183)

As European colonialism expanded, so did racial stereotyping, which is why modern postcolonial critics aim to distinguish and identify differences in racial representation of natives in colonial expansion. According to Loomba, the racialization of indigenous people was founded on

the differences in the colonial regime and the pre-colonial contact with the natives (107). The Native Americans, for example, were represented in terms of primitivism, as they were "birthed by the European encounter". The Orient, on the other hand, was not classified as lacking civilization: it was "barbaric or degenerate". Consequently, as a result of the European "feeling of inadequacy", the Eastern culture became to symbolize greediness as well as decadence. (Loomba, 108-110). I will return to the specific racial stereotypes associated with Orientals and the Orient in the next subchapter in connection with Said's *Orientalism.*

As a result of the spread of colonialism and the belief in science and knowledge attained by empirical study in the Enlightenment period, the 18th and 19th century European culture was characterized by the scientific belief in the existence of different human races (Pennycook, 51). This eventually resulted in the spread of racialized categorization of human species according to Darwinian evolutionary theory: people were classified as belonging to different races based on distinctions in skin color, brain size and other bodily features (Pennycook, 51 and Loomba, 115). These physical features were then attributed to characteristic behavior and mental capabilities – also known as racial stereotypes (Stella 2007, 15). These "biological" categories were not solely structured to maintain racial hierarchy but also functioned as prevention against "racial mixing" between "low" and "high" races (Loomba, 115). This was particularly the case with the British, since there was little social or sexual contact with the natives compared to their rivalries, the Spanish and the Portuguese, for instance (Loomba, 110-113). The racial hierarchy introduced in the pseudo-scientific representation of race was based on the notion of fixity: biological classification was employed to justify the imperialistic aim even though it clearly contradicted with the European mission of civilizing the natives (Loomba, 117) – an inconsistency inherent in colonialist discourse.

Before discussing the typical features found in the representation of natives in colonial situation, it should be clarified what is meant by "colonialist discourse" – a central object of examination in this thesis. According to Shohat and Stam, it is "the linguistic and ideological

apparatus that justifies, contemporaneously or even retroactively, colonial/imperial practices" (1994, 18). This colonialist discourse including the racial representation of natives is one form of domination where the Europeans negated the individuality of the represented by resorting to racial stereotyping, which "involves a reduction of images and ideas to a simple and manageable form; rather than simple ignorance or lack of 'real' knowledge, it is method of processing information" (Loomba, 58-59). Through this process of stereotyping Europeans were able to "prove" their superior knowledge of the colonized and disarm the natives of the control of their own representation (Stella, 19). This is particularly the case with colonialist literature, since there existed a gap between the audience of the textual products and the represented people in two ways: firstly, the intended Western audience normally had no contact with the colonial subjects and secondly, the represented had no access to the literary work; thus, "the value of colonialist statements is consequently all the more dependent on their place in colonialist discourse" (JanMohamed 1986, 82).

The racial stereotypes of oppressed communities operated according to the Manichean allegory, where the dichotomy between the native and the Westerner remains constant, "while the generic attributes themselves can be substituted infinitely (and even contradictorily) for another" (JanMohamed, 83). This fixity together with the flexibility of the stereotyping is what Homi Bhabha (1994, 66) designates as the inherent ambivalence in the representational practices of the colonizer: "it connotates rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition". This is why racial stereotypes changed throughout history and it explains, as Mills points out, the presence of contradictory stereotypes in colonialist representation: the natives of the same country can be described as both passive and violent (52). This feature is also clearly present in Christie's portrayal of Oriental characters, since the natives are presented as animals as well as infants.

Furthermore, stereotypes not only served to subjugate the natives but also defined the identity of the colonizer, as presented earlier by Hall with regard to the importance of difference, and as Bhabha (1994) defines further in Mills (50): "stereotypical thinking encapsulates both the contempt for the indigenous people and a desire to master them as well as a desire to emulate them in some way". Moreover, they are characterized by their duality, because they draw a line between the Self and the Other. This barrier functions as

> part of the maintenance of social and symbolic order. It sets up a symbolic frontier between the 'normal' and the 'deviant', the 'normal' and the 'pathological', the 'acceptable' and the 'unacceptable', what 'belongs' and what does not or is 'Other', between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', Us and Them. (Hall, 258)

This is why my forthcoming analysis of racial representation and stereotypes also necessarily includes a question of how the English identity is constructed: "*we* versus *them*" – a series of polar oppositions to the Oriental culture and behavior.

Ultimately these systems of representation create discourses, such as colonialist or Orientalist discourses, which "provide ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society" (Hall, 6). The hegemonic discourse employed for example in Christie's fiction, is visible in the racialized representation of the natives and in the exoticized depiction of Oriental culture. Needless to say, the knowledge produced in representation is connected with power, since it "regulates conduct, makes up or reconstructs identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are represented, thought about, practiced and studied" (Hall, 6). The type of representational practices that define colonialist discourse can also be identified as "collective representations" as Sandra Jovchelovitch (2007, 118) points out: the subjective is denied and the representations "are produced to maintain and coalesce, to encompass and to contain, to avoid the unfamiliar and to reassure the worldview of participants" – the preservation of the ideology of imperialism and colonialism.

Related to the fixity of colonialist discourse is the mode that facilitates or "naturalizes" the colonialist worldview of binaries: Eurocentrism. Although colonialist and

Eurocentric discourses are sibling concepts, they have a slightly different emphasis as illustrated by Shohat and Stam (1994, 2): colonialist discourse justifies colonialism likewise imperialism, whereas Eurocentrism "normalizes" the hierarchical and universal truths provided by colonialism and imperialism. As a result, the Eurocentric discourse functions as a base for colonialist knowledge which consists of five universal belief structures seeking to reinforce the myth of Western superiority: 1) the Eurocentric discourse views history as a linear sequence, where Europe acts as an agent for historical changes such as industrialization, 2) the development of democracy is inherent for the West, 3) the Eurocentric worldview ignores non-European forms of democracy, 4) the Western form of oppression is underestimated, and 5) non-Western achievements are ultimately regarded as the achievements of the West (Shohat and Stam 1994, 2-3). These constructions of reality form one of the key objects of criticism of modern neocolonialism, since they did not disappear with the process of decolonization – hence we still talk about the Third World.

In the following, I will provide a short introduction to British imperialism particularly in the Middle East,[6] since this study concentrates on the effects of British imperialism in the fiction situated in the region. It is possible to divide British imperial history into two time periods, where the purpose and status of the empire was of different nature, though the distinction according to Armitage (2) is somewhat artificial: the First and the Second British Empire. The First British Empire designates the "Old Colonial System" which took place in the 16th and 17th centuries and was characterized by maritime expeditions, where the empire built settlements in order to enhance trade (*ibid.*). One example of this was the English colonial venture to North America. The Second British Empire gained its reputation from the late 18th century onwards and was founded on "military conquest, racial subjection, economic exploitation and territorial expansion". Contrary to

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[6] *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the Middle East as "An extensive area of south-west Asia and northern Africa, (now *esp.*) the area extending from Egypt to Iran. Also (esp. in early use): India and adjacent countries; an area perceived as lying between the Near East and the Far East."

the First Empire, this empire was constructed of exploitation and was divested from the metropolitan values of liberty and humanity. (Armitage, 2). Thus, it is this period of British imperialism that was mainly responsible for the racialization of natives and characterized by the belief in the racial hierarchy of people. The Second Empire was also affected by the industrialization process in Europe forcing Britain to redefine its imperial system, which accordingly lead to the more organized form of imperial rule with distinguishing imperialist machinery such as military forces, settlers and missionaries (Johnson 2003, 4). It is this period of the empire and its effects which is visible in Christie's interwar narratives. It includes "the Scramble for Africa", and more importantly concerning this thesis, the British colonization and imperial presence in the Middle East as well as in India. On the other hand, it was also characterized by the process of decolonization which is considered to have reached its peak after the WWII – a process also marked in Christie's interwar fiction.

The British Empire and the areas under its influence are not very easily described, since the British rule in the controlled regions was of varying degrees of influence. What united all the areas according to Johnson (1), was the vast rule of the British Crown and a popular mantra that indicates the magnitude of the enterprise: "the sun never sets in the British Empire". As Ferguson (2004, IX) points out, this claim is not far from reality: at one point the British Empire had a quarter of the population of the globe under its regime. What is particularly interesting in the investigation of the British Empire and its sphere of domination is that the empire spread beyond the Formal Empire,[7] that is, its actual colonies of Egypt, India and South Africa, for example (Johnson, 6). There was also the Informal Empire which is of particular interest concerning the Orient and its relationship to Britain, since the majority of the nations in the Middle East were not actual British colonies but under the control of the Informal Empire. This empire was characterized by the "British access and interference, mainly economic in character, in territories not formally governed

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[7] Many critics (Webster 4, 2006) define the Formal Empire as a popular British imperial strategy particularly before the WWI which was characterized by direct British rule in the governed regions in the form of colonies and settlements.

16

by the British" (Johnson, 6). However, this covert British influence is relatively difficult to define especially since the birth of the Informal Empire coincides with the onset of globalization process and free trade commissioned by Western powers beginning from the late 1800's (*ibid.*).

The power and the economic wealth of the British Empire was invariably symbolized through the British rule in India and its East Indian Company, whereas the British Levant Company (1581-1825) represented the British imperial interest in the Middle East, and more importantly, in the Ottoman Empire (1299-1922), where it played a commercial as well as political role (Laidlaw 2010, 1-4). As noted, the British imperial history in the Middle East was mostly based on the concept of the Informal Empire with the exception of Egypt as one of its most powerful colonies resulting from the important strategic position of the Suez Canal. The interwar period portrayed in Christie's Middle East is a particularly interesting period of the British Empire since, as stated previously, in addition to coinciding with the twilight of the Empire, the WWI also presented one of the first challenges to the British domination.

Furthermore, historians acknowledge the Middle East as a significant participant or an area of dispute in the motivation behind the First World War: the Middle East as the "gateway" to India was a factor behind the War (Ferguson 2004, 250). This was manifested in the interest in the internal affairs of the region: the British and the Germans stirred a rebellion inside the Ottoman Empire in order to satisfy their own economic and political interests in the Orient. The British supported the Arabs, whereas the Turk rebellion was aided by the Germans. (Ferguson, 260).

In the peace treaty of WWI the areas in Palestine and Trans-Jordan became regions under the British mandate, whereas Iran was placed under British dominant influence, the Informal Empire (Johnson, 157). The interwar period, despite the growing British interest in the Middle East, was characterized by internal confusion in the area and the competition between European nations in the search for imperial power in the region. This confusion was manifested in the battle for Suez Canal (1915) in Egypt and the problematic question of the Arabs and Jews. (Johnson, 160-61). All

in all, the period was accentuated both by British success and loss, where traditional British colonialism was heavily superseded by the Informal Empire policy. [8] Interestingly, the interwar period in the Middle East initiated modern Western imperialism in the region: the growing Western influence in the internal affairs of the nations as well as in the quest for the oil resources. As a result, the legacy of the two world wars introduced a new super power in the area in the aftermath of decolonization: the United States. (Johnson, 160-61). This shift of power can be seen already in Christie's interwar fiction through the presence of wealthy American characters in the stories.

2.2 Orientalism and the Position of Exotic Locations in Detective Fiction

As was mentioned previously, this subchapter will discuss the more specific theoretical issues concerning this thesis. I will firstly introduce the central theoretical study of my analysis of Christie's fiction, *Orientalism* by Edward Said. The second half of this section will briefly examine British popular culture and detective fiction from a postcolonial perspective. I will explore how British popular culture has constructed images of the "exotic" and imperialism particularly in the first half of the 20th century. With regard to detective fiction, I will study how the genre has been employed to maintain the status quo and particularly the ideology of the British Empire.

One cannot exaggerate the vast influence of Said's *Orientalism* on the development of postcolonial criticism. The position of *Orientalism* as the key theoretical tool of this study is justified both by my study question as well as by the arguments that I will provide in the analytical section. However, the criticism of Said must also be kept in mind, since *Orientalism* provides only one point of view to the study of the representation of the Orient. In *Orientalism,* Said studies the artificial nature of representation and more precisely how "the Orient" and "the Occident" operate as human constructions (5). However, what is significant in these artificial constructions in Said's

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[8] The decline of the Ottoman Empire (1827-1908) resulted in a vacuum state in the Middle East with regard to power. This resulted both in the collaboration and competition between the two most powerful European nations, Britain and France. In the interwar period, the British rule in the region was manifested by the policy of securing control in India, Britain's "crown jewel", against other European powers: France and Russia. In order to attain this goal, Britain sought to reinforce its position in the "gateway" countries: Iran, Transjordan and Palestine. (Kamrava Mehran 2011, 38-39).

discussion is the unequal relationship between the two entities: the West dominated and created the Orient. This oppressive power structure and ultimately a discourse are known as Orientalism. By Orientalism, Said refers to the idea of the Orient, its representation, and not the actual geographical location (12). This representation is related to the Manichean allegory of binary thinking found in racial representations as discussed in the first chapter:

> the Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestants, and one of its deepest and recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. (1-2)

Said's discussion on Orientalism concentrates on the British and French discourses of the Orient because of their prevalent status in the tradition (1978, 1-2). According to Said, there are at least three perspectives into the definition of Orientalism, which are interrelated and explicate the powerful influence of the discourse (2). The first is designated as academic Orientalism in which case every scholar and researcher studying the Orient is essentially an Orientalist. However, Said criticizes this definition on account of its apparent vagueness as well as its attachment to "high colonialism" of the 19th century (*ibid.*). This academic Orientalism is also visible in Christie's Orient as the region is populated by Western academics who are supported by the institutional study of the Orient.

The second perspective of Orientalism is most relevant considering Christie's portrayal of the Orient, since here Orientalism is regarded ultimately as an ontological and epistemological discourse based on the division between the Orient and the Occident. This power discourse is supported by a large body of writers whose works are based on the inherent distinction between the Orient and Occident and who, moreover, sustained and created theories defining the Orient and Orientals. (Said 1978, 2). This perspective is central to my study question, since it entails the study of representation and discourse – and therefore accentuates the interdisciplinary nature of Said's work.

The third perspective of Orientalism describes it as a historical period starting from the 18th century and ending in the aftermath of WWII (Said 1978, 3-4). This "classical" period of Orientalism was characterized by the European control and creation of the Orient in terms of political, sociological, ideological, scientific and imaginary dominance (3). Here it should be observed that there exists an evident connection between Orientalism and colonialism, even though a causal relationship between the two still remains uncertain (Said 1978, 41): "Orientalism reinforced, and was reinforced by, the certain knowledge that Europe or the West literally commanded the vastly greater part of the Earth's surface". Thus, Orientalism facilitated the success of colonialism while simultaneously benefiting from its spread in the Middle East – the colonial contact provided Westerners with more knowledge of the "Oriental Other".

What can be concluded from these three perspectives on the definition of Orientalism as an academic, ontological and epistemological discourse, or a historical period, is that rather than regarding them as alternative interpretations, it would be far more fruitful to view them as different fields of the same general heading "Orientalism". In this thesis, I will therefore recognize Orientalism as an identifiable time period which was constructed by an Orientalist discourse and supported by academic Orientalism. Because of this, the discussion on Orientalism has not disappeared even from modern postcolonial criticism especially concerning American politics in the Middle East.

However, even though Orientalism is regarded as a Western construction, Said as well as my subsequent analysis, will not examine the verity of Orientalist depiction but rather how Orientalism functions as a consistent discourse (1978, 5), where the success of Orientalism is explained by its all-pervasive authority:

> It is formed, irradiated, disseminated; it is instrumental, it is pervasive; it has status, it establishes canons of taste and value; it is virtually indistinguishable from certain ideas it dignifies a true, and from traditions, perceptions, and judgments it forms, transmits, reproduces. (Said, 19-20)

This is where Said connects the Marxist critic Antonio Gramsci's hegemonic practices to the sustenance of the myth of European superiority over the Orient, since "in any society not totalitarian, then, certain cultural forms predominate over others, just as certain ideas are more influential than others" (1978, 17). Hence, as we will later see, it is the hegemony of interwar British culture that reproduced images of the Oriental Other and portrayed an image of the Orient as a Western touristic and imperial playground.

With regard to the development of Orientalist discourse, Said's focus lies on the Orientalism of the late 18th century which introduced the "virtual epidemic of Orientalia affecting every major poet, essayist, and philosopher" (1978, 51), and also on the classical Orientalism of the 19th century (51-52). Interestingly, it is the latter, the 19th century, which verified the position of Orientalist discourse and gave it more depth as a result of a change from the study of the historical Orient to the growing interest in the modern Orient (52). Consequently, during the 19th century, Western Orientalism rooted itself into culture and literature where the artists not only produced knowledge but also confirmed the belief system of earlier Orientalist discourse (*ibid.*). A classic example of cultural Orientalism in the British literary tradition is Edward William Lane's *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836), which also illustrates the formidable status of intertextuality in Orientalist discourse: the work influenced subsequent European Orientalists such as Gérard de Nerval, Gustave Flaubert and Sir Richard Burton.

The Orientalist discourse presented by the above mentioned writers was founded upon the vast "knowledge" of the Orient which helped to produce stereotypical representations of Orientals. The "superior" Western knowledge during classical Orientalism was commonly provided by colonial experts such as James Balfour (1848-1930) and Lord Cromer (1841-1917), whose writings form an important position in the tradition of British Orientalism in Said's examination (1978, 32-39). In Said's study of the two writers, Balfour's statements tend to be more universalistic and are based on the category of "subject races" (36), where colonization of the

natives is justified by the superior knowledge of the Westerners with regard to the history of the Orient (32). As a consequence, the Orient is transformed into a historical entity – as it is visible in Said's interpretation of Balfour:

> Their great moments were in the past; they are useful in the modern world only because the powerful and up-to-date empires have effectively brought them out of the wretchedness of their decline and turned them into rehabilitated residents of productive colonies. (1978, 35)

However, it is Lord Cromer's statements from personal experience as a colonial officer that prove to be most applicable in providing the most popular Oriental images. These characterizations follow the process of racial stereotyping introduced in the previous section and depict the Orientals as a homogenous mass – polarized by their oppositeness to Westerners as seen in these classifications by Cromer from 1908:

> "Accuracy is abhorrent to the Oriental mind […] Want of accuracy, which easily degenerates into untruthfulness, is in fact the main characteristic of Oriental mind. The European is a close reasoned […] he is a natural logician […] The mind of the Oriental, on the other hand, like his picturesque streets, is eminently wanting in symmetry. His reasoning is of the most slipshod description. Although the ancient Arabs acquired in a somewhat higher degree the science of dialectics, their descendants are singularly deficient in the logical faculty. They are often incapable of drawing the most obvious conclusions." (qted in Said 1978, 38)

What follows from these stereotypes is the justification of Western supremacy as also remarked by Said (36). They lead to the "Orientalization" of people and their land (5), which according to Said operates in three modes: 1) judgment of natives, 2) the depiction and study of Orientals, and 3) the illustration and categorization similar to zoology (40).

The "Orientalization" of the Orient is where Said applies the notion of "imaginative geography" where it and "history help the mind to intensify its own sense of self by dramatizing the distance between what is close to it and what is far away" (1978, 55). Thus, space loses its objective meaning and consequently becomes a political site for Orientalist purposes. There are several characteristic features describing the Oriental space which I will present in detail in the forthcoming analysis. All the representations of the Oriental landscape, infrastructure and culture are, however,

based on the "natural" difference between the Occident and the Orient, where the former is granted the position of agency and surveillance over the latter:

> Europe is powerful and articulate; Asia is defeated and distant. […] It is Europe that articulates the Orient; this articulation is the prerogative, not of a puppet master, but of a genuine creator whose life-giving power represents, animates, constitutes the otherwise silent and dangerous space beyond familiar boundaries. (Said, 57)

A point of criticism concerning Said's quite extensive discussion of Orientalist discourse, representation and systems of knowledge must be acknowledged. This concerns Said's treatment of gender as he excludes this question in most of his theorizing. Where Said does mention gender, he accuses Orientalism of having been an essentially sexist discourse where "women are usually the creatures of a male power-fantasy. They express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all they are willing" (1978, 207). I find this claim of male-dominated Orientalism interesting in relation to Christie, since I will argue that instead of Christie representing the Oriental woman as sensual or stupid, she ignores their presence in her fiction almost completely, which is in opposition to the powerful position of Christie's white female characters.

In addition to the critical discussion on Said's treatment of gender in Orientalism, one of the key objects of criticism lies in his treatment of Orientalism as a single homogenous entity. Modern postcolonial critics regard Orientalism as consisting of many "orientalisms" which were complex and even contradictory to each other (Lowe 1991, 5). In addition, even though Said discusses the internal evolution of Orientalism, there is a clear lack of historicizing and contextualizing of Orientalism in relation to British political history (Burke III and Prochaska 2008, 2). One of these lacks is concerned with Said's emphasis on the Middle East in the field of Orientalism. Subsequent studies on British Orientalism have suggested that British Orientalists were in fact more concerned with the British rule in India rather than the Middle East (Burke III and Prochaska, 22). Therefore, as a reaction against the Saidian notion of uniform British Orientalism, critics such as Burke III and Prochaska, Lisa Lowe, Douglas Kerr (2008), Reina Lewis (2004) claim that British Orientalism consisted of phases with distinctive features according to time and Oriental

geography. These "regional" Orientalist discourses, however, supported each other: British experience in India was reproduced in the imperial management of Egypt, for example (Kerr, 230-231).

In the attempt to discuss the distinctive features of British Orientalism, many scholars have placed their attention on the national events generating Orientalist discourse as well as drawing comparisons with other European Orientalists – mainly the French (Lowe, 7). This provides more depth to understanding British Orientalism and how the Orientalist tradition is more concerned with the British identity than the Other. Orientalism may therefore be seen to represent:

> at one time the race for colonies, at others class conflicts and workers' revolts, changes in sexual roles during a time of rapid urbanization and industrialization, or postcolonial crises of national identity. Orientalism facilitates the inscription of many different kinds of differences as oriental otherness, and the use of oriental figures at one moment may be distinct from their use in another historical period, in another set of texts, or even at another moment in the same body of work. (Lowe, 8)

British national issues determining the Orientalist tradition were most commonly defined through "religious dissent, growing parliamentary control, budding industry, and a growing working class" (Lowe, 31). The French, on the other hand, were portrayed as having less problematic relationship with religion as well as with race compared to the English, who had pre-existing racialist discourse in relation to the Irish (Burke III and Prochaska, 22). There was another distinction as claimed by Lowe: British Orientalism was more marked with actual imperial experience in the Turkish and Levantine Orient compared to the French Orientalism's more literary and imaginary experience of Montesquieu, Voltaire and Diderot (52). With respect to the British literary tradition producing Orientalist imagery, the most common authors one encounters are William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Richard Francis Burton, Walter Scott, Thomas Moore, E.M Forster and Rudyard Kipling (Al-Dabbagh 2009) – a testimony that British Orientalist tradition extended from poetry to fiction and from high to popular culture.

As was mentioned at the beginning of my discussion, Said's *Orientalism* provided a basis for the establishment of postcolonial criticism, which was developed further by critics attempting to deepen and provide a more heterogeneous perspective on postcolonial questions. Consequently, my analysis of Oriental characters in Christie's fiction relies not only on Said's study of Orientalist stereotypes but as significantly on the process of Othering – a common subject matter in the study of the representation of the colonized in postcolonial studies. The term *Othering* was first introduced by Spivak in order to describe the production of the identity of the Other in colonialist discourse (Ashcroft et al. 1998, 171). According to Jacques Lacan, this process of Othering entails the concept of the "other" or "Other", where the Other is contrasted with the empire in two ways: "firstly, it provides the terms in which the colonized subject gains a sense of his or her identity as somehow 'other', dependent; secondly, it becomes the 'absolute pole of address', the ideological framework in which the colonized subject may come to understand the world" (Ashcroft et al. 1998, 170-171).

In colonialist discourse, this process of Othering commonly included a vast array of metaphors and tropes seeking to portray European supremacy over the natives (Shohat and Stam 1994, 137). These tropes concerned foremost the colonized people and through similar Manichean binary thinking also the colonized regions. My analysis of Christie's fiction relies on three most common tropological vehicles: naturalization, animalization and infantilization. Naturalization constitutes a wide discursive strategy where the natives under colonial regime are associated with biology rather than culture: "Colonized people are projected as body rather than mind, much as the colonized world was seen as raw material than as mental activity and manufacture" (Shohat and Stam 1994, 138). Animalization is regarded as a part of the process of naturalization and includes the racialist tradition of rendering the colonized as wild animals with animalistic sexual behavior, dress and habitation (*ibid.*). It is also connected to the association of viewing the colonized regions as an empty space, "terra nullius", and thus rationalizes the "discovery" and conquest of both the

land and its people (Pennycook, 55). The third trope, infantilization, portrays the colonized people in an earlier phase of development – as children (Shohat and Stam, 139). It also illustrates the colonialist discourse's inherent contradiction as seen in the relationship between the parent (colonizer) and the child (colonized) (Ashcroft 2001, 36):

> As a child, the colonial subject is both inherently evil and potentially good, thus submerging the moral conflict of colonial occupation and locating in the child of empire a naturalization of the 'parent's' own contradictory impulses for exploitation and nurture. The child, at once both other and same, holds in balance the contradictory tendencies of imperial rhetoric: authority is held in balance with nurture; domination with enlightenment; debasement with idealization; negation with affirmation; exploitation with education; filiation with affiliation. This ability to absorb contradiction gives the binary parent/child an inordinately hegemonic potency. (36-37)

The tropological devices described briefly above are not, however, stagnant stereotypical practices but dependent on regionality, historical period and current ideological climate (Shohat and Stam 1994, 139). As Shohat and Stam (*ibid.*) point out, this explanation accounts for the ambivalent nature of European representation: "It can condemn the Arab world for overdressing (the veil) and the indigenous world for underdressing (nudity)". As my analysis will demonstrate and as Shohat and Stam (1994, 140) confirm, the colonialist tropes introduced here commonly coincide and operate in collaboration with other binary systems: order/chaos, activity/passivity and stasis/movement, and includes "symbolic hierarchies" consisting of class, aesthetics, the body, zoology, and the mind. The binary thinking typical of colonial and colonialist discourse also commonly situates the West in the Center and the colonized in the Periphery. (*ibid.*).

The discussion of British imperialism and colonialist discourse include the cultural site as a prominent vehicle for the promotion of imperial ideology, even though for a long period of time there remained a scholarly as well as a popular mantra that the British public lacked a genuine interest in imperial affairs: imperial agenda was classified as an elitist phenomenon of the upper classes (MacKenzie 1984, 1). According to MacKenzie, historians were consequently more concerned with the official empire: the political and the economical sites (1986, 1), whereas popular imperialism was investigated through cultural studies (1984, 2). As Said demonstrates in

Orientalism and more particularly in *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), this deficiency towards connecting the British Empire with national culture is highly misconstrued: it is precisely cultural imperialism that functioned as a facilitator of imperial agenda and provided a suitable arena for glorifying the British race in the public opinion (Johnson, 204).

Popular manifestation of British imperialism is considered to have reached its peak during the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Johnson 204-205 and MacKenzie 1984, 1986). This is especially the case with the interwar period as it witnessed the establishment of several propagandist agencies supporting the imperial ideology: the Royal Empire Society, the British Empire Union, the British Empire League and the Empire Marketing Board (Johnson, 205). The period consisted of three characteristics emphasizing the dominant ideology of imperialism: firstly, imperial agenda was supported by the government politically and economically; secondly, imperial ideology was heavily distributed to lower classes; and thirdly, imperialism affected the attitudes and consumption of the working classes (Johnson, 204-205). The textual sphere of imperialism – "writing the empire" – lies in the 19th -century promotion of the printing press in the capitalist endeavor to support the imperialist ideology (MacKenzie 1984, 18). However, rather than addressing the empire's interests directly, numerous of these textual products supporting the imperial agenda entailed the notion of the "exotic", where exoticism operates as a form of representation and containment:

> exoticism describes, rather, a particular mode of aesthetic *perception* – one which renders people, objects and places strange even as it domesticates them, and which effectively manufactures otherness even as it claims to surrender to its immanent mystery. (emphasis original) (Huggan 2001, 13)

The familiarity associated with exoticism is an integral question related to Christie as a popular writer, since the "exotic" as "a mode of mass consumption" operated as a capitalist marketing strategy during popular imperialism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Luwick, 77): by situating the detective narrative in an Oriental setting and further exoticizing the Other, Christie was able to gain new audiences. As a result, Christie's readership was provided with the domesticated

version of the "mysterious" East that they could recognize from the "classic" Orientalist works of the past (Jacobs 2010, 17; Lockman and Rogan 2004, 63-64). An example of classic Orientalist fiction defining Oriental exoticism is *A Thousand and One Nights* or *Arabian Nights,* a collection of stories introduced into British imagination first after its publication in French in 1704 and finally in the translation into English by Edward William Lane in 1838 (Schacker-Mill, 2000, 164).

However, it would be a misconception to associate the exotic marketing of the Orient only with the textual products: modern postcolonial critics recognize the wide impact of imperialism on popular imagination ranging from art, film industry to youth movements, education and advertising (MacKenzie, 1984) – even though Said disregarded this popular field of Orientalism in his study almost completely. The impact of growing film industry in the early 20th century is of particular interest when considering popular authors such as Christie and their influence: with the help of the new medium, the filmmakers were able to combine the established visual sphere of Orientalism with the form of storytelling – and thus strengthened the popularity of Orientalist imaginary in the public opinion (Bernstein 1997, 3). In fact, the cinematic representation of the "exotic" East was especially popular in the Hollywood films of the early 1900's (*ibid.*). In many cases, these films verified the stereotypes that were already established by the Orientalist discourse. This is the case, for example, with Rudolph Valentino's 1920's *Sheik*-films, which strengthened the eroticized image of an Arab man dwelling in desert surroundings (Shohat 1997, 54). The same applies also to phenomenon of "Egypgtomania"[9] in Western imagination, as seen in the films by Ernst Lubitsch: *Eyes of the Mummy* (1916) and *Loves of the Pharaoh* (1922) (Bernstein, 4).

Detective fiction is by modern standards one of the most popular literary genres in terms of mass production and global reading audience (Maztke and Müehleisen 2006,1). However, despite its widespread popularity and the constitution of numerous subgenres, or perhaps because of

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[9] "The term 'Egyptomania' usually refers to this keen, widespread, and recurring popular interest in Egypt—for instance, it arose again after the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922—but already in antiquity Greeks and Romans were fascinated by the art and culture of pharaonic Egypt, and Romans used older Egyptian styles and motifs in both private and public contexts" (*Oxford Reeference).*

its "lowbrow" status, detective fiction or crime fiction in general have achieved relatively little scholarly interest until recent decades. The first detective fiction studies of the 1960s and 1970s concentrated on describing the genre's history and typological features (*ibid.*). This view is nowadays rejected by modern scholars as too rigid and simplified to answer the challenges of modern (and also earlier) detective fiction. The modern study of detective fiction thus emphasizes the genre's heterogeneous nature and detective fiction's ability to address issues beyond the theme of crime solving – such as social and ideological constructions of gender and race (Maztke and Mühleisen, 1-2). As a consequence, the changes in detective fiction studies have affected the value placed on the whole genre (Horsley 2005, 9) and may ultimately play a vital role whether detective fiction is able to disengage from the constraints of "formulaic" fiction. This is especially the case with Christie as well as her contemporaries, since their novels are not considered as "serious" fiction and have consequently gathered little scholarly interest.

The precise origins of detective fiction are not easily traced, because the fascination with crime and criminality is considered by several scholars to be as old as English fiction (Thompson 1993, 2). Illustrations of this are Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) and William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794). The first is regarded as the introductory work to the depiction of criminality (Knight 1980, 9), while the second is considered to have introduced the detective persona and some of the detective conventions (Thompson, 2). However, the founding of detective fiction also relied on representations of true crimes, as in the case of *The Newgate Calendar* (1773), which was a collection of stories aimed to arouse a larger public interest than the above mentioned novels (Knight, 9-10).

However, most critics trace the establishment of the generic conventions of detective fiction to Edgar Allan Poe and his detective figure, Dupin, who according to Cranny-Francis (1990, 20) was able to combine the elements of sensational crime stories and Gothic fiction in order to contain the monstrous. The glorification of the detective character as the hero, however, was

introduced by Arthur Conan Doyle's character Sherlock Holmes (Knight 1980, 67). These two authors created the beginning of the subgenre that I will be concentrating on: classic detective fiction. Fundamental in classic detective fiction is the centrality and objective status of the detective character, who "enters an enclosed environment that has been invaded by the "cancer" of crime. With surgical precision the detective identifies the criminal and exonerates the community from any imputation of responsibility or guilt" (Plain 2001, 4). The characterization of classic detective fiction as a formulaic genre is visible in its basic structure: "death-detection-explanation", which is why the subgenre is also titled as the "whodunit" and "the clue-puzzle story" (Horsley, 12). These characteristics were continued and reinforced by the followers of Poe and Conan Doyle during its "Golden Age", the interwar period between 1920s and 1940s, and included the works by Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, Margery Allingham and Ngaio Marsh (Plain, 4).

The early examples of the subgenre are often studied from the perspective of conservatism, partly because of their reliance to formulaic plots and intertextuality. However, it is the association with dominant ideology and the confirmation of the status quo, where the conservative strain of the genre mainly originates from, as stated by Cawelti in his influential study of popular fiction: "By confirming existing definitions of the world, literary formulas help to maintain a culture's ongoing consensus about the nature of reality and morality" (1976, 35). In classic detective fiction, this conservatism is commonly portrayed through the upper- and middle class ideology and the bourgeois value system. With regard to Conan Doyle's texts this was maintained through the protection of private property and "the gentleman detective hero" who fought against the disruptive power of social and cultural deviants (Longhurst 1989, 53-63). Even though Christie rejected the masculine detective figure by introducing female detectives as well as the feminized male detective and a cultural Other, Hercule Poirot (Knight 1980, 108), the ideological and structural framework remained untouched: she retained the property-owning class in the centre of her fiction and situated her murder plots in the closed setting of manor houses (128).

In addition, Christie does not depict criminality as a threat against English social hierarchy. Instead, she attaches criminality to individualism, which means that the collective value system is conserved. (*ibid.*).

The maintenance of the status quo is where the genre is connected to postcolonial questions: since its establishment by Poe and Conan Doyle, the fiction has been regarded as enforcing the values of colonialism and empire (Pearson and Singer, 3 and Siddiqi 2008, 18-19). Early examples of detective fiction supporting the empire and including colonial adventure in their settings include Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841) and Conan Doyle's "A Study in Scarlet" (1887), where the plots included both popular Orientalist discourse and racialization: "the anxiety over contamination, irrationality, and the threat posed to imperial modernity by unassimilated racial and cultural difference" (Pearson and Singer, 4). The imperial point of view in Conan Doyle – even though not always directly associated with Britain's colonies – has lead to postcolonial studies concentrating on detective fiction published prior to Christie's "Golden Age" authors. However, this scholarly emphasis is somewhat misconstrued, since although many of Christie's contemporaries refrained from setting their murder plots directly in the British colonies, it is possible to argue that there was, nevertheless, a widened visibility of questions associated with "colonial England" in "Golden Age" detective fiction, as seen in the novels by Margery Allingham, Ngaio Marsh and Dorothy L. Sayers (Rowland, 171-172). Christie's fiction presents therefore an exception: during the interval of four years, between 1934 and 1938, Christie published one short story collection and three novels that were situated in the colonies of the British Empire – and thus dealt directly with British colonial anxieties of the early 20th century.

However, it is possible to examine the presence of imperial worldview in early detective fiction from another perspective: there is an inherent fascination with the Other in detective fiction (Kim 2005, 1). As a consequence, the attraction with the racial Other can be considered as a result of what was already established: detective fiction "is, of necessity, about the

Other: A typical mystery comprised no fewer than three others: victim, detective, and culprit" (Kim, 1).

As a consequence, there exist various explanations to classic detective fiction's association with imperial ideology: the genre's internal conservatism, the fascination with the Other as well as societal issues beyond the constraints of the genre – popular cultural imperialism of the interwar period. The position of detective fiction as a manifestation of popular culture cannot be ignored from the general understanding of detective fiction and imperialism: detective stories are essentially a mass produced work, where the readers command what kind of fiction is produced for the public (Simon, 4). Therefore, in order to retain British public interest in detective stories, multiple "Golden Age" writers situated their murder plots in foreign settings, particularly in the "exotic" East (Simon, 5). In fact, there is some evidence that exoticism became to be condemned as a cliché during the period. This is manifested in Ronald Knox's "Ten Commandments for Detective Novelists" (1929) and the prohibition: "No Chinaman must figure in the story" (Kim, 2). The "exotic" East as a setting, however, provided little "new" for the British readership: the authors retained the closed setting common in the stories set in Britain and positioned the native characters as well as their culture as exotic props (Simon, 5) – as I will discuss in the following analytical chapters.

3. The Orientalization of the Orient

The objective of this chapter is to depict and discuss the representation of the Orient as a place and culture in Christie's novels and short stories published between 1934 and 1938. On account of the extensive nature of the analyzed fiction, I will refer to the studied novels according to these abbreviations: *Murder in Mesopotamia* (1936) as MM, *Death on the Nile* (1937) as DN and the last novel, *Appointment with Death* (1938) as AD. The four short stories "The Gate of Baghdad", "The House at Shiraz", "The Pearl of Price" and "Death on the Nile" published in the collection, *Parker Pyne Investigates* (1934), will be referred to as PP1-4.

As discussed in the theoretical chapter, the portrayal of the Orient as an example of imaginative geography draws from the tradition of colonialist discourse and Orientalist tradition, where Orientalism operates as a form of cultural imperialism as Said (1978, 40) demonstrates: the West invented the Orient in order to represent, study and contain the cultural and racial Other – the Orient was thus Orientalized. In Christie's fiction, there exist several tropes of Orientalization, which occasionally operate in unison with the racialized portrayal of the native population. On the whole, I argue here that Christie has constructed an Orient comprising of two major – and conventionally – conflicting patterns: the historical Orient filled with exotic and romantic splendor and the Orient trapped in a state of perpetual wildness and barbarity.

3.1 A Place of Ruins: the Exotic and Romantic Orient

The majority of the exotic and romantic appeal that was associated with Oriental landscapes and culture is related to the Orient's peculiar relationship with the concept of time in Western imagination. This particularity commonly manifested itself through the Western preoccupation and obsession with portraying the Orient as a historical entity – essentially a place of ruins. (McLeod, 44). As was discussed in relation to Said and other postcolonial critics previously, this idea of the Orient trapped in history is situated in the colonialist tendency of binary thinking, and as Said

developed in *Orientalism*, was actually more concerned with Western self-evaluation than with the Orient itself. In other words, by concentrating on the Orient of the past, the West was able to establish and accentuate its own sense of civilization, modernity and progress in comparison with the Orient of rigidity and underdevelopment (Said 1978, 35).

In the fiction published by Christie during the interwar period, the inclination towards presenting the modern Middle East as belonging to the ancient world is visible in two significant and highly visible ways in all of the material examined. The first, archaeology, entails Said's discussion of academic Orientalism which included all of the various experts and scholars studying the Orient (1978, 2). The second manner, the reduction of Oriental history to popular tourist sites, is dependent on the archaeological knowledge as it includes the large masses of Western tourists traveling to the Middle East in pursuit of the traditional Orient of ancient ruins. The emphasis on the archaeological point of view and the large-scale treatment of the Orient as a tourist attraction, however, rest on the notion of exoticism: the process of assigning "exotic otherness" to the colonized (Célestin 1996). However, this fixation on the Orient of the past not only historicizes the region but places it in a vacuum where time and development stand still: as a subject for Europeans to observe and study in museum-like conditions. In fact, this timelessness operates as a significant factor behind the "exotic" lure of the East, as the following extract from *Appointment with Death* demonstrates:

> Sarah King stood in the precincts of the Temple – the Haramesh-Sherif. Her back was to the Dome of the Rock. The splashing of fountains sounded in her ears. Little groups of tourists passed by without disturbing the peace of the oriental atmosphere. Strange, thought Sarah, that once a Jebusite should have made this rocky summit into a threshing floor and that David should have purchased it for six hundred shekels of gold and made it a Holy Place. (AD, 443)

This scene illustrates a typical feature in Christie: with the help of archaeological knowledge, the Westerners are able to "recreate" the Orient of the past.

The importance of archaeology is clearly marked in the first novel set in the East, *Murder in Mesopotamia,* where the murder investigation is juxtaposed with archaeology – even the

title's ancient name for Iraq evokes archaeological imagery.[10] Similar to all of the analyzed fiction, the novel concentrates on the depiction of a closed Western community which has been exoticized by the Oriental surroundings. The plot includes a detailed description of an American expedition working to excavate an ancient Assyrian city of Niveneh. What characterizes Christie's depiction of the archaeologists' position in Iraq is isolation and almost complete disregard of the current affairs in Iraq, as described by the wife of the leading archaeologist: "'Archaeologists only look at what lies beneath their feet. The sky and the heavens don't exist for them'" (MM, 30). This compulsion is, however, represented as justifiable because of the archaeologists' superior mission: "Dr Leidner and Mr. Mercado cleaned some pottery, pouring a solution of hydrochloric acid over it. One pot went a lovely plum colour and a pattern of bulls' horns came out on another one. It was really quite magical" (MM, 40). The work carried out by the archaeologists is thus referred to as admirable, since on account of their expertise the glory of the East is resurrected – even though the present Orient is in need of rescue after centuries of decay and poverty.

Even though the other stories by Christie refrain from making direct allusions to the actual work carried out by archaeologists, the portrayal of Oriental culture is implicitly marked by archaeological discourse. In fact, archaeology as well as anthropology are recognized by modern postcolonial critics as vehicles for the promotion of imperialist ideology (Diaz-Andreu 2007, 210). These Western sciences "rationalized" the Other in colonialist discourse and justified colonialism, and extended their findings outside of academic Orientalism:

> the creation of a Western-shaped knowledge of the past of the subjugated populations assisted administrators in making them comprehensible, and therefore susceptible to regulation and assimilation into the colonial ethos. However, ancient monuments also helped to elevate the state as the keeper of local tradition. Archaeology thus acted as an instrument of power, legitimizing the hegemony of the imperial centres over subaltern countries. (Diaz-Andreu, 210)

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[10] "An ancient region of south-west Asia in present-day Iraq, lying between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. Its alluvial plains were the site of the ancient civilizations of Akkad, Sumer, Babylonia, and Assyria, now lying within Iraq" (*Oxford Reference*).

This resulted in the convention of associating Oriental societies in terms of underdevelopment: the Orientals were juxtaposed with the resurrected relics in contrast to Western civilization's role as an agent for progress (312-313). Furthermore, this justified the Western control of the Orient's future through colonialism and included the convention of viewing Oriental history as another target of domination and ownership, which in the following extract in Christie is manifested in the natives' disregard for their own cultural history:

> 'You have to pay the workmen who find it the weight of the object in gold.' 'Good gracious!' I exclaimed. 'But why?' 'Oh, it's a custom. For one thing it prevents them from stealing. You see, if they did steal, it wouldn't be for the archaeological value but for the intrinsic value. They could melt it down. So we make it easy for them to be honest.' (MM, 39)

However, the process of historicizing Oriental culture is by no means ambiguous with regard to types of imagery depicted. In Christie's fiction there is a tendency to attach images of glamour and extravagance to the representation of the historic Orient. In *Death on the Nile,* this is demonstrated in the repeated visibility of "Egyptomania": the hegemonic construction of Egypt via imagery of pharaohs, sphinxes and pyramids (MacDonald and Rice 2003). In addition to Christie depicting Egypt as a large archaeological site – and thus a historical vacuum – the novel also seems to emphasize the Western perspective in relation to Egyptian history. The following example demonstrates this common quality by placing importance on the personal emotions attached to the statues rather than the structures' actual role in Egyptian history:

> The steamer was moored to the bank and a few hundred yards away, the morning sun just striking it, was a great temple carved out of the face of the rock. Four colossal figures, hewn out of the cliff, look out eternally over the Nile and face the rising sun. […] '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?' (DN, 269)

This concentration on the Orient's former glory as exercised by the Egyptologists is so prevalent in Christie's texts that it occasionally adopts themes found in religious mythology as seen in this extract which describes in detail an excavation of a single artifact:

> 'It's a cylinder seal of black hematic and it's got a presentation scene engraved on it – a god introducing a suppliant to a more important enthroned god. The suppliant is

carrying a kid by way of an offering, and the august god on the throne has the flies kept off him by a flunky who wields a palm-branch fly whisk. That neat inscription mentions the man as a servant of Hammurabi,[11] so that it must have been made just four thousand years ago'. (PP3, 220)

Pure archaeological knowledge, however, is insufficient in supplying emotional responses in popular fiction. As a result, Christie's knowledge of history and archaeology are occasionally strengthened by applying the readers' presupposition of the Oriental past filled with histories of wars and sacrificial rituals. To create a premonition of danger, Christie resorts to popular Orientalist discourse – in this case through a poem by Flecker:

> 'Four great gates has the city of Damascus….'
> 'Postern of Fate, the Desert Gate, Disaster's
> Cavern, Fort of Fear,
> The Portal of Baghdad am I, the Doorway of
> Diabekir.' (PP1, 165)[12]

As I will later argue in subchapter 5.2, this premonition of danger associated with Oriental landscapes does not merely guide the reader into making certain associations with regard to the Orient, but operates as a vehicle in the detective narrative: the Orient strengthens the conventions in detective fiction and operates as a factor behind the eventual murders.

However, the widespread status of archaeological imagery in Christie may be due to other factors in addition to the colonialist application of archaeological knowledge. The tendency to accentuate the archaeological point of view in the Orientalist texts of the 20th century and interwar period may be explained by the crisis caused by the modernization of the Orient as explained by Said: "Faced with the obvious decrepitude and political impotence of the modern Oriental, the European Orientalist found it his duty to rescue some portion of a lost, past classical Oriental grandeur" (1978, 79). This feeling of crisis and the pursuit of sustaining the historical atmosphere of the "original" Orient is regularly visible in Christie's characters' disappointment with discovering the Orient as too civilized: "Mr. Parker Pyne was disappointed in Teheran. He found it distressingly

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[11] Hammurabi is known as the "King of Babylon about 1728–1686 bce. He laid out the capital city which included a ziggurat which might have inspired the writer of the story of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11: 4–9)" (*Oxford Reference*).
[12] "Gates of Damascus" (1913) by James Elroy Flecker (1884-1915), a poet and playwright influenced by Georgian Poetry, an aesthetic movement of romantic verse (*Oxford Reference*).

modern" (PP2, 193). This concern associated with the Orient becoming "too" modern for Western expectations also continues in the disappointment witnessed in relation to the natives' form of dress, as I will later present in chapter four.

As was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, it was the treatment of the Orient as an archaeological site that enabled the large-scale popularization of the region as a historic tourist attraction for Westerners. In the following, I will restrict my analysis of tourism solely to the representation of the place as a historical and romantic destination and leave further analysis of the tourist party to the fifth chapter concentrating on the imperial presence in the Middle East. In the analyzed material, a significant part of the Western tourist industry depicted, regardless of nationality, is dedicated to visiting all of the mandatory historical sites of a given city or an area. In fact, the tourist parties represented in all of Christie's stories are not confined to one country, but travel itineraries consist of whole tours of the Middle East, where one moves from one tourist attraction to another allowing little time to acquaint oneself with the local way of life:

> 'I hope to have done Jerusalem thoroughly in a couple more days, and I'm letting them get me out an itinerary at Cook's so as to do the Holy Land thoroughly – Bethlehem, Nazareth, Tiberias, the Sea of Galilee. It's going to be mighty interesting. Then there's Jerash, there are some very interesting ruins there – Roman, you know. And I'd very much like to have a look at the Rose Red City of Petra, a most remarkable natural phenomenon, I believe that is – and right off the beaten track – but it takes the best part of a week to get there and back, and do it properly.' (AD, 436)

The example illustrates the characteristic portrayal of the Oriental lands in Christie's texts: the concentration on depicting the various Middle Eastern countries as a homogenous entity full of tourist destinations and the Orient's instrumental position in relation to Western existence. This unequal relationship between Christie's travelers' white gaze and the colonized under their surveillance demonstrate the role of tourism and travel narratives as promoters for imperialist endeavors – similar to archaeology's position:

> In this kind of writing, the 'face of the country' is presented chiefly in sweeping prospects that open before or, more often, beneath the traveler's eye.[…] The eye 'commands' what falls within its gaze; the mountains 'show themselves' or 'present themselves'; the country 'opens up' before the European newcomer, as does the

unclothed indigenous bodyscape. At the same time, this eye seems powerless to act or interact with this landscape. Unheroic, unparticularized, without ego, interest, or desire of its own, it seems able to do nothing but gaze from a periphery of its own creation, like the self-effaced, noninterventionist eye that scans the Other's body. (Pratt 1986, 143)

In addition to the Western touristic gaze concentrating on the imagery of the historical Orient of past grandeur, a great portion of the tourists' interest in the region is governed by the Orient's troubled relationship with religion, in particular with concern to Christie's depiction of the Holy Land in *Appointment with Death.* The problems surrounding religion are derived from Islam's relationship with Christianity in Western imagination, as discussed in the theory section: the Orient is the source of European civilization as well as its cultural contestant and the Other (Loomba, 106). Christie represents the role of religion in the same exterior manner as the other tourist attractions. The following extract also seems to suggest that religious propaganda and history of violence have been detached from the history of Christianity:

> 'You like Jerusalem, yes?' asked Dr Gerard after they exchanged greetings. 'It's rather terrible in some ways,' said Sarah, and added: 'Religion is very odd!' The Frenchman looked amused. 'I know what you mean.' His English was very nearly perfect. 'Every imaginable sect squabbling and fighting!' 'And the awful things they've built, too!' said Sarah. […] 'They turned me out of one place today because I had on a sleeveless dress,' she said ruefully. (AD, 425)

Since *Appointment in Death* includes tours to various holy places in Israel, it is possible to argue that the troubled representation of religion in the previous passage also consists of a value judgment made on Judaism. In fact, this feature has already been discussed by various scholars: there exist several studies which analyze Christie's writing from an anti-Semitist perspective (see, for example, Zemboy 2008).

With regard to Western control over Oriental past, the tourist industry thus carries an important position in claiming an ownership of Oriental history and culture. In Christie, this is achieved in two main ways. Firstly, there seems to exist a constant theme of disregarding the local guide as a reliable source of information while touring the attractions. This leads to the second method: the reliance on Western-produced and published guidebooks instead of experiencing the

actual Orient – the West thus literally writes Oriental history. This is clearly illustrated in the scenes, where the tourists prefer the Western published "Baedeker" instead of relying on the information provided by the dragoman:

> 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. (emphasis mine) (DN, 261)

The choice of verb *intone* here is significant as it draws attention to the guide's position as a biased source of information; his style of speaking carries a religious as well as a tiring undertone which is illustrated in the entry for *intone* in *Oxford English Dictionary:* "To utter in musical tones; to sing, chant; *spec.* To recite in a singing voice (esp. a psalm, prayer, etc. in a liturgy); usually to recite in monotone".

The Western ownership of the Oriental history is related to what was discussed in chapter 2.2: the production of the "exotic" is a capitalist agenda seeking to contain and eventually market the racial and cultural Other to Western audiences. In Christie's texts, the exoticized Oriental space is delivered by several methods which combine archaeology, tourism and the previous Orientalist literary works such as *Arabian Nights*. One source of mystification comes from the anticipatory feelings established by the Orientalist tradition. These sensations dictate the very experience of the Orient – in so much that the mere stating of Oriental place names is sufficient in providing the feeling of enchantment, as witnessed in the case of Parker Pyne when he travels to his destination by airplane:

> 'I am going to Teheran and Ispahan and Shiraz.' And the sheer music of the names enchanted him so much as he said them that he repeated them. Teheran. Ispahan. Shiraz. Mr. Parker Pyne looked out at the country below. It was flat desert. He felt the mystery of these vast, unpopulated regions. (PP2, 192)

In fact, this depiction of Oriental enchantment on the Western spectator in Christie's texts is described as so prevailing that it becomes impossible to struggle against. This is even the case with one of the most critical characters in Christie, Nurse Leatheran in *Murder in Mesopotamia*, who first regards Iraq only as a place of wildness and uncivilization:

I don't think that up till that moment I'd ever felt any of the so-called 'glamour of the East'. Frankly, what had struck me was the *mess* everywhere. But suddenly, with M. Poirot's words, a queer sort of vision seemed to grow up before my eyes. I thought of words like Samarkand and Ispahan – and of merchants with long beards – and kneeling camels – and staggering porters carrying great bales on their backs held by a rope around their forehead – and women with henna-stained hair and tattooed faces kneeling by the Tigris and washing clothes, and I heard their queer wailing chants and the far-off groaning of the water-wheel. They were mostly things I'd seen and heard and thought nothing much of. But now, somehow they seemed *different* – like a piece of fusty old stuff you take into the light and suddenly see the rich colours of an old embroidery. (emphasis original) (MM, 161)

As this excerpt portrays, Christie's mode of exoticization of the Orient employs not only mystify the Oriental land and nature but also includes the historicization of Oriental customs and culture and the objectification of the natives according to the processes of racialization – a topic that I will deal with in the forthcoming chapters.

Christie's representation of the Orient and its culture, though consisting of the traditional imagery of *Arabian Nights*, refrains from one typical trait common in the popularized depiction of the Orient: eroticization. In *Arabian Nights,* this became visible in the portrayal of harems and sensual belly dancers (Lockman and Rogan, 70). The early 20th century continued with the process of eroticization in popular consciousness through Rudolph Valentino's 1920s Sheik films, which "created an enduring fantasy of irresistible desert dwelling Arabian sheikh decked out in transgendered apparel, holding captive an attractive, partially clothed dancing girl with a transparent veil" (Jacobs, 17). In contrast, Christie's Orient is characterized by the lack of female presence, which may also account for the absence of evident eroticization of the land. There is, however, an underlying current of sexuality associated with the Orient, as seen in this tourist's perception, who is also described as wearing turbans:

'I don't mind telling you, Monsieur Poirot, 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.'" (DN, 223)

Despite the lack of sexualized imagery in Christie's novels situated in the East, there is one allusion to the Western male fascination with harems and belly dancers, even though Christie's treatment seems to disengage from overt eroticization and thus provides a different approach to the traditional

depiction of harems: "he was directed to a 'Nightly Palace of Gaieties'. It appeared to be neither a palace nor gay. Various ladies danced with a distinct lack of *verve*. The applause was languid" (emphasis original) (PP1, 170).

As a conclusion, it is possible to argue that the exoticized treatment of Oriental landscapes and culture in Christie's texts continue from the exotic imagery of earlier Orientalist discourse into a more modern direction, where the institutions of archaeology and tourism also function as methods for verifying Oriental backwardness and lack of agency. As this intertwined relationship between science, tourism and the imperialist project demonstrates, there is a definite need for more studies centering on the relationship between British popular fiction and the more indirect imperialism of the early 20th century.

3.2 "The Bowels of the Earth" – the Wild and Uncivilized Orient

The second mode of Orientalization of the Middle-Eastern land and culture in Christie's fiction derives from what was discussed in subchapter 2.1: colonialist discourse represented the colonized regions and populations in an earlier phase of human evolution – empty in terms of civilization and culture. This Oriental space is essentially a terra nullius, "an empty land" because of its uncivilized culture and people. It validated the Western civilizing mission and "supported and permitted an ideology that justified the cultural subordination of the foreign and colonial cultures from which profits were being extracted in the form of materials and goods, labor, and consumer markets" (Lowe, 37).

In Christie, the "wild" Orient is delivered by two main methods: the modern Orient and the Oriental nature. This emphasis on the modern Orient in a state of decay is thus a competing discourse in relation to what was discussed in the previous section: the historic and romantic Orient. Even though there exists evidence of such a division in Christie's texts, it should be clarified that there is also correspondence between the two constructions. This is manifested in the scenes, where

the Oriental past is represented through images of barbarity rather than glamour – especially when it comes to the concept of sacrifice:

> All round and below stretched the blood-red rocks – a strange and unbelievable country unparalleled anywhere. Here in the exquisite pure morning they stood like gods, surveying a baser world – a world of flaring violence. Here was, as the guide told them, the 'Place of Sacrifice' – the 'High Place'. He showed them the trough cut in the flat rock at their feet. (AD, 477)

As the previous excerpt portrays, the emphasis on sacrifice represents not only the violent condition of Middle Eastern religions but the Western need to justify the imperial rule: the despotic Oriental leaders have not gained sufficient political maturity to rule their own people and therefore "need" Western form of government. In addition to the sacrificial rituals symbolizing the Western feeling of superiority over the violent Oriental customs, Christie's references to the theme raise another, a more significant issue – titillation:

> It was a curious, bare place. The view was marvelous, embracing the valley on every side. They stood on a plain rectangular floor, with rock basins cut in the side and a kind of sacrificial altar. 'A *heavenly* place for sacrifices,' said Carol with *enthusiasm*. 'But my, they must have had a time getting the victims up here!' (emphasis mine) (PP3, 222)

The apparent sense of satisfaction and excitement experienced by the Western tourists visiting the violent sites becomes evident in the choice of vocabulary as well as in the various situations, where Christies describes the sacrificial places. This Western obsession with Oriental violence is also evident in scenes, where there is no correspondence with violent past:

> 'What is it?' asked Netta curiously. He held it out to her. 'A prehistoric flint, Miss Pryce – a borer.' 'Did they – kill each other with them?' 'No – it had a more peaceful use. But I expect they could have killed with it if they'd wanted to.' (PP1, 173-174)

As was mentioned, the two main ways in which Christie's texts create the wild and uncivilized Orient are derived from evaluations of the modern Orient as well as nature. The first, the depiction of the modern Orient as uncivilized, is achieved through three interrelated thematizations: the Orient in a state of chaos and unhygienic conditions, the dangerous Orient and the underdeveloped Orient. The first category of the chaotic and dirty Orient is related to what Said contemplated as one of the typical features defining Oriental personality in Western imagination:

Orientals' lack of order and accuracy (Said 1978, 38). Furthermore, it also became to pose a threat against the Western health if traveling or living in the Orient: "it was the Europeans that suffered from any of the diseases more than the native peoples, who were often fairly immune" (Pennycook, 65). In Christie, this feature of disorganization combined with uncleanliness is so prevalent that it occasionally even exceeds the exotic appeal of the East. This becomes evident as early as in the opening lines of the first chapter in *Murder in Mesopotamia:*

> 'I must say it's been nice to see a bit of the world – though England for me every time, thank you. The *dirt* and *mess* in Baghdad you wouldn't believe – and not romantic at all like you'd think from the *Arabian Nights!* Of course, it's pretty just on the river, but the town itself is just awful – and no proper shops at all. Major Kelsey took me through the bazaars, and of course there's no denying they're *quaint* – but just a lot of rubbish and hammering away at copper pans till they make your head ache – and not what I'd like to use myself unless I was sure about the cleaning. You've got to be so careful of verdigris with copper pans.' (emphasis original) (7)

Thus, whereas the ancient Orient is mostly depicted as glorious, the present Orient is described in terms of chaos and disorder. However, these chaotic conditions are not only associated with the modern Orient and illustrates, as I discussed previously, the correspondence with Christie's modern and romantic Orient:

> Nearly three thousand years old that palace was, it appeared. I wondered what sort of palaces they had in those days, and if it would be like the pictures I'd seen of Tutankhamen's tomb furniture. But would you believe it, there was nothing to see but *mud*! Dirty mud walls about two feet high – and that's all there was to it […] The whole excavation looked like nothing but mud to me – no marble or gold or anything handsome – my aunt's house in Cricklewood would have made a much more imposing ruin! And those old Assyrians, or whatever they were, called themselves *kings*. (emphasis original) (MM, 36)

This inherent lack of order seen in the living conditions of the Orientals of the past is also present in Christie's dismissal of overtly romanticizing the ancient Orientals:

> 'if racketeers are romantic, then I suppose Nabateans are, too. They were a pack of wealthy blackguards I should say, who compelled travelers to use their own caravan routes, and saw to it that all other routes were unsafe. Petra was the storehouse of their racketeering profits.' 'You think they were just robbers?' asked Carol. 'Just common thieves?' 'Thieves is a less romantic word, Miss Blundell. A thief suggests a petty pilferer. A robber suggests a larger canvas'. (PP3, 214)

However, the Oriental state of wildness and uncivilization does not merely pose a threat against Westerners' immune system and sense of order. In the second characterization, the Orient also represents a physical danger to Westerners: the tourists must be guarded against the natives and their violent tendencies. This becomes evident in several ways and will be discussed further in chapter five concerning the imperial machinery's living conditions: the Westerners reside in barricaded houses, travel separately from the natives and are often assisted by guards. The terror evoked, however, provides the tourists with excitement and an experience of "authenticity":

> 'There are still thrills to be got out of the journey,' he said. 'Even nowadays the convoy is occasionally shot up by bandits. Then there's losing yourself – that happens sometimes. And we are sent out to find you. One fellow was lost for five days in the desert. Luckily he had plenty of water with him. Then there are the bumps. Some bumps! One man was killed. It's the truth I'm telling you! He was asleep and his head struck the top of the car and it killed him.' (PP1, 166-167)

The third common characterization conveys the Oriental space and infrastructure as underdeveloped as opposed to Western modernization and capitalism. It is related to the two previous, as they, according to the conventions of colonialist discourse, regard the colonial culture as primitive and consequently justify the imperial presence in the region. Here is the Oriental infrastructure contrasted with the European one, normalizing the colonizer's standard of living:

> There was what I heard called later a station wagon waiting outside. It was a little like a wagonette, a little like a lorry and a little like a car. Mr. Coleman helped me in, explaining that I had better sit next to the driver so as to get less jolting. Jolting! I wonder the whole contraption didn't fall into pieces! And nothing like a road – just a sort of track all ruts and holes. Glorious East indeed! When I thought of our splendid arterial roads in England it made me quite homesick. (MM, 16-17)

The apparent underdevelopment associated with Oriental infrastructure as well as transportation is not entirely removed from Western living conditions in the area, even though Christie's white characters still reside in modern houses compared to the natives:

> After that came two so-called bathrooms. (When I once used that last term in the hearing of Dr Reilly he laughed at me and said a bathroom was either a bathroom or not a bathroom! All the same, when you've got used to taps and proper plumbing, it seems strange to call a couple of mud-rooms with a tin hip-bath in each of them, and muddy water brought in kerosene tins, *bathrooms*!) (emphasis original) (MM, 27)

In fact, the unmodern state of Oriental society is continued in the unruly behavior of native professionals as well as in the unreliability of the services provided – again illustrating the need for Western interference, as seen this scene from *Death on the Nile* which combines the political immaturity of Egyptians with their chaotic nature: "The train from Cairo and Luxor was about twenty minutes late. However, it arrived at last, and the usual scenes of wild activity occurred. Native porters taking out of the train collided with other porters putting them in" (251).

However, it is the Oriental nature and its association with savageness and emptiness which mostly occupies the Western imagination of the "wild Orient" in Christie's writing. As such, it emphasizes the fundamental division between the West and the East: the previous is characterized by its endeavors in civilization and culture, whereas the latter symbolizes the irrational, nature and the suppressed. The savageness associated with Oriental landscapes and culture accounts for its Western fascination, as it provides "the civilized" mind a safe environment to vent its buried unconscious desires. This idea that Westerners have abandoned their primitive nature becomes evident in a discussion between two European psychologists in *Appointment in Death*: "'There are such strange things buried down in the unconscious. A lust for power – a lust for cruelty – a savage desire to tear and rend – all the inheritance of our past racial memories…They are all there'" (AD, 445). As the novel proceeds, it becomes clear that the "savage desires" do not, in fact, remain suppressed in the unconscious; this is demonstrated by the eventual murder.

In Christie's texts, the attraction with the Oriental landscapes is achieved by combining two traditions which reinforce each other: the Oriental nature is represented both as wild and romantic. This contrast between the two discourses is clearly visible in the following illustrative extracts from *Appointment with Death*:

> There were no mountains, no hills anywhere. Were they, then, still many miles from the journey's end […] Sarah was very *tired* with the long, *hot* journey in the car. Her senses felt *dazed*. The ride was like a *dream*. It seemed afterwards that it was like the *pit of Hell* opening at one's feet. The way wound down – down into the *ground*. The shapes of rock rose up round them – down, down into the *bowels* of the earth, through a *labyrinth* of red cliffs. They were *towered* now on either side. Sarah felt *stifled* –

menaced by the ever-narrowing gorge. She thought to herself: 'Down into the valley of *death* – down into the valley of death…' On and on. It grew *dark* – the vivid red of the walls faded – and sill on, winding in and out, *imprisoned*, lost in the bowels of the earth. She thought: 'It's fantastic and unbelievable…a *dead city*.' (emphasis mine) (472)

'What do you think of it?' He made a gesture indicating the *fantastic* red rocks that stretched in every direction. 'I think it's rather *wonderful* and just a little *horrible*', said Sarah. 'I always thought of it as *romantic* and *dream-like* – the '*rose red city*'. But it's much more real than that – it's as real as – as *raw beef*.'(emphasis mine) (476)

As the examples above demonstrate, Christie's has been able to combine very intricately the idea of "the exotic" and "wild" in her choice of vocabulary. This exoticization of the Oriental lands was particularly common with deserts: they became popularized in colonialist literature already at the end of 19th century (Jacobs, 52). Thus, during Christie's period of Orient-situated fiction, "the desert began to attain a grandeur and importance with its 'weird solitude, the great silence, the grim desolation'" and, most importantly, a belief that it was a "'manifestation of the sublime'" (Dyer 2001 qtd in Jacobs, 52). The special fascination with the desert's emptiness and seclusion is also present in Christie's texts:

> 'One can't help wishing that there were a little shade,' she murmured. 'But I do think that all this emptiness is so wonderful, don't you?' […] Yes, she thought, the emptiness was marvelous…Healing…Peaceful…No human beings to agitate one with their tiresome inter-relationships […] She felt soothed and at peace. Here was loneliness, emptiness, spaciousness…In fact, peace. (AD, 271)

The emptiness and the consequent sensation of peace demonstrate the Western perception of the Orient as terra nullius, and even more significantly, provide an indication of the motivations behind traveling to the East, as I will discuss further in 5.1.

However, as seen it is not only deserts which are objected to the Orientalist mystification in Christie's texts. In the following passage, it affects the perception of the river Nile, where the wildness is connected to primitivism and savageness; nature becomes symbolic of the Oriental culture itself:

> There was a savage aspect about the sheet of water in front of them, the masses of rock without vegetation that came down to the water's edge […] 'There's something about this country that makes me feel – wicked. It brings to the surface all the things that are boiling inside one. Everything's so unfair – so unjust'. (DN, 252-253)

47

This juxtaposition between the Oriental wildness and the primitive emotions triggered by it in the Western mind illustrate the importance of Orientalist study of detective fiction: how the Orient changes Westerners and can therefore be regarded as one factor behind the murders. This theme of portraying the Orient as a place of wildness and uncivilization is continued in the process of Othering and the objectification of the Oriental people, which is the focus of my inspection in the following chapter. The representation of native people is, however, of slightly smaller visibility because of Christie's disregard of the natives' individuality and living conditions outside of Western influence.

4. The Racial Stereotyping of the Oriental People

Christie's depiction of the natives is founded on the colonialist tradition of racialization, where the colonized were essentially reduced to racialist stereotypes as a result of the colonialist tendency for Othering: the Oriental was constructed as the opposite of Western humanity (Stella, 19-20). As discussed in the theoretical chapter, this process of Othering lead to the colonized people becoming objects of naming – not as a means of description but as a form of domination or reversely: their presence was obliterated into invisibility (Boehmer, 76).

In the following, I will discuss three tropes of Othering (or "tropes of empire") present in Christie's portrayal of native characters: naturalization, animalization and infantilization. With regard to the construction of this chapter, I will combine the first two tropes because of their intimacy and apparent thematic affinity. However, what can be defined as a uniting representational practice in Christie is the depiction of natives according to essentialist standards: as a faceless mass – the majority of the characters are given no names. Furthermore, sometimes the natives become invisible: Christie directs very humble amount of visibility towards Orientals themselves which illustrates the colonial relationship in the British Empire in terms of agency and passivity.

The reduction of the colonized people into typical characterizations – whether as feminine, savage, despotic, animalistic or childlike – in Christie, as in most colonialist literature, entails the notion of homogeneity as well as ambivalence. It leads to the colonized people represented as a facelessness crowd and is related to, as discussed, Albert Memmi's theory ,"mark of the plural" where the natives are not referred to in individualistic terms, but as masses of people all exemplifying their inherent racial characteristics: "'They are this.' 'They are all the same'" – whereas Western people have individuality and agency (Memmi 2003, 129).

4.1 The Naturalization and Animalization of Natives

As stated, the process of representing the colonized people according to the traits incorporated from the natural world and animal species is common in Christie's texts. In this section, it is my intention to examine the naturalistic and animalistic characterizations as separately as possible, though occasionally the two tropes overlap.

The process of naturalization is in principle an umbrella term for the various traditional descriptions and metaphors in which the colonized are represented as belonging to nature. As such, it also encompasses the discourse of animalization: it provides imagery and metaphoric associations for the depiction of native people as animals. I will argue that there are three main methods, though diffuse in character, in which the colonized are subjected to naturalization in Christie's fiction: firstly, the body is emphasized over mind; secondly, the colonized people represent only raw material for the colonizer; and thirdly, the native is mainly instinctive rather than learned (Shohat and Stam 1994, 138). In Christie's portrayal of the natives, these methods often operate simultaneously. Furthermore, the representational practices rely on the special position of natives in the imperial machinery: their presence is acknowledged only when deemed necessary from the Western perspective.

As mentioned, the first method of enforcing the construction of the colonial Other as naturalized is demonstrated in the widespread tendency to describe and refer to the native population according to their bodily functions and outward appearance. In most cases, this perspective is achieved by depicting the natives in large masses, which is an effective discursive method of homogenizing the natives. In the following, it operates simultaneously with racialization as well as animalization: "Mr. Coleman pointed to a big mound by the river bank ahead of us and said: 'Tell Yarimjah'. I could see little black figures moving about it like ants" (MM, 21).

The most common method in which Christie accentuates the body of the Oriental Other is via decrepitude and the evident shortage of health and suitable hygiene which ultimately signifies a threat against the Westerner:

> I noticed that most of their eyes were terrible – all covered with discharge, and one or two looked half blind. I was just thinking what a miserable lot they were when Dr Leidner said, 'Rather a fine-looking lot of men, aren't they?' (MM, 38)

The depiction of Oriental bodies in a state of decay is not confined to adult representation, since the tourists in Christie also display their aversion to the children of the colonized:

> '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, I don't believe I really like children – not unless they're more or less washed and have the rudiments of manners.' (DN, 247)

This racialization of the native children in the passage does not merely naturalize them, but implies that the children of the racial Other are not valued according to the same standards as children of Westerners, or even more: they are stripped out of the notion of childhood altogether. The stigmatized bodies of the children therefore symbolize the biologically determined inferiority of the Oriental people, where the decrepitude of the Oriental mind is not a case of cultural influence – and thus not to be altered by education, for example. This explains Christie's generalized treatment of native servants as "boys" and the evident use of child labor: there is not a profound difference between an adult and a child in colonialist representation.

The second manner in which the trope of naturalization is accentuated in Christie is connected to the Western domination in the region: the natives function as workforce for the colonizer. This is presented in the lack of native professionals, with only very few exceptions and, moreover, in the position of the natives in subordinate roles as servants, guards, fieldworkers and workmen. The contrast between the colonizer and the colonized – the ruler and the subject – is presented most blatantly in the field of archaeology and most visibly in *Murder in Mesopotamia.* In

the novel, the occupier not only deprives the natives of their own cultural history, but places the natives under a second form of subjugation: as manual labor for the colonizer. The native population thus has only instrumental value. This is illustrated in the scenes where they are absorbed in physical labor as well as in the attention placed on the natives' movements and usefulness in the expedition, as for example, "basket-boys": "It was a little difficult to get down to them as there was only a narrow path of stair and basket-boys were going up and down it constantly, and they always seemed to be as blind as bats and never to think of getting out of the way" (MM, 123).

The position of the natives' existence governed by the obligation to fulfill the needs of Westerners and the consequent result of self-objectifying is a constant feature in the stories whether it includes the household servants or tourist guides:"'I get you carriage. I get you chair, and sailors carry you'" (PP4, 242). There is also evidence of the native symbolizing property for the Westerners, at least metaphorically, when statements of ownership are made in passing as a way of normalizing the colonialist relationship and infantilizing the native, as will be discussed later: "Mr. Carey's boy" (MM, 126).

The third method of naturalization consists of disregarding the natives as cultural and learned people and is consequently related to Christie's appliance of racial infantilization as I will present later. One of the most efficient ways of representing the natives as instinctive is the reduction of the natives' behavior to a series of natural responses, as illustrated in the scene where the behavior of the servant is instinctive – and animal-like – to the treatment he receives:

> 'One of the Bedouin servants attached to the camp. He went up to her – I think she must have sent him to fetch something and I suppose he brought her the wrong thing – I don't really know what it was – but she was very angry about it. The poor man slunk away as fast as he could, and she shook her stick at him and called out.' (AD, 510)

As the excerpt illustrates, this typical description of communication between a Westerner and servant in Christie also includes a question of class, where the racial hierarchy between the Westerner and the native heightens class distinctions and justifies the inhuman treatment of the

Other – even though the behavior of the upper classes was conventionally characterized by superior manners and dignity.

The representational practice of depicting the native population as instinctive and in a harmonious relationship with the natural world as well as its laws is a method characterized by the notion of "positive stereotypes", where the apparent lack of negativity in popular discourse succeeds in hiding its reductionist and generalized function (Schneider 1996, 429-430). Thus, by presenting overt admiration for the Bedouins' superior skills in moving around the desert, the Bedouins are in fact reduced to a subsidiary position in relation to the colonizer: "The party began to climb. Two Bedouin guided accompanied them. Tall men, with an easy carriage they swung upwards unconcernedly in their hobnailed boots completely footsure on the slippery slope" (AD, 476). This connectedness of the Bedouins to their natural environment occasionally reaches supernatural levels in Christie, as seen in Colonel Carbury's tendency towards exoticizing and mystifying the natives:

> 'It's just one of those things I don't understand – like one of my Bedouin fellow who can get out of a car in the middle of a flat desert, feel the ground with his hand and tell you within a mile or two where you are. It isn't magic, but it looks like it.' (AD, 488)

As it becomes evident in these two examples of associating Oriental people with nature, it is particularly Bedouins who were regarded as having a symbiotic relationship with their environment. According to Jacobs, this is related to the tourists' fascination with the emptiness of the desert and the Bedouin's position of symbolizing that metaphysical quality (51). [13]

Related to the native population's intimate connection with nature, Christie represents the Oriental culture as being more governed by laws of nature. This is particularly the case with the circulation of life and the natives' treatment of death, which is best described in terms of triviality and practicality:

> 'I'll never forget this trip as long as I live. Three deaths…It's just like living in a nightmare.' […] 'That's because you're over-civilized. You should look on death as

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[13] The interest in the "noble Bedouin" lies in the 19th century shift towards presenting the Orient more romantic compared to the earlier focus on the Harems and their corrupt nature in British popular imagination (Teo 2012, 21).

the Oriental does. It's a mere incident – hardly noticeable.' 'That's all very well,' Cornelia said. 'They're not educated, poor creatures.' (DN, 375)

This obsession of representing death and consequently murder as casual in Oriental society has a more profound function besides indicating the natives' lack of culture and civilization: it operates as method for juxtaposing death with the Orient and thus explain the setting of the murder plots in the Middle East – a topic that I will discuss at length in the final chapter of the analysis.

The process of animalization has a more distinct and focal position in the tropological discourse of imperialist fiction compared to the more general form of Othering through naturalization. It derives from the racialist background where "all animal-like characteristics of the self were to be suppressed" from white civilization as opposed to the colonized who were essentially "wild beasts" (Shohat and Stam 1994, 137). This convention of representing the colonized subjects within the discourse of bestiality, as discussed, originates from the tradition of scientific racism (Boehmer, 80). Two significant discourses moulding the rationalization of racial categorizing are the idea of "The Great Chain of Being" and social Darwinism. The former has its roots in the renaissance-based notion of higher and lower beings; the latter reached popular attraction in the Victorian period with the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), where the great gap between lower and higher races was explained by biology and this legitimized the treatment of the colonized according to binary opposition. (*ibid.*).

In Christie's texts, the bestiality of the colonized is manifested through quite precise thematization and imagery, three of which follow Shohat and Stam's theory of animalization: "unrestrained libidinousness, their lack of proper dress, their mud huts resembling nests and lairs" (Shohat and Stam 1994, 137). My analysis, however, consists of an additional method through which I claim Christie's texts have animalized the Oriental people: the native people are represented as herds or packs of predators.

The characterization of the colonized people as animals is commonly achieved by emphasizing their unrestrained sexuality – illustrated in the popularized image of the Sheik in

Rudolph Valentino's films in the 1920s. There exists, however, an evident contradiction in the convention: the colonized people and their lands were essentially feminized – thus lacking at least overt masculine sexuality (Johnson, 93). Christie's treatment of Orientals as sexual beings is more related to the latter tradition of feminization: the native men are emasculated by the process of infantilization and the women are mostly invisible. There are, however, some examples of suppressed sexuality in Christie's stories. One is related to the representation of Arab men as posing a danger for civilized white women, possibly due to Christie's conservative ideology:

> 'He's not been very explicit about it, but it seems she has these fits of recurring nervous terrors.' 'Is she left alone all day amongst the natives?' I asked.
> 'Oh, no, there's quite a crowd – seven or eight. I don't fancy she's ever been alone in the house.' (MM, 10)

Another method in which Christie succeeds in describing the natives' sexuality in a conservative manner is achieved by a means of distancing and hinting. Through archaeology Christie is able to represent the Orientals as sexually promiscuous without compromising her conservative reading public: "she showed me some queer little terracotta figurines – but most of them were just rude. Nasty minds those old people had, I say" (MM, 40). As it becomes evident in the excerpt, the strategy of distancing the overt sexuality of the natives through archaeology is not sufficient; Christie also refrains from any elaborate description of the figurines.

The second method of animalization places importance in the natives' form of dress. In Christie, it is a constant source of evaluation and another example of the tradition of representing the colonized people solely according to their outward appearance, as I discussed earlier in relation to the process of naturalization. The natives in Christie are invariably presented through the touristic gaze, where the natives' dress operates as a form of disdained humor for Westerners and as a confirmation of the inherent superiority of Western civilization. Indeed, the native way of life is criticized according to Western standards, as illustrated in this description where the point of view is that of the surveyor: "It was the workmen that made me laugh. You never saw such a lot of scarecrows – all in long petticoats and rags, and their heads tied up as though they had a toothache"

(MM, 10). In addition to providing the Western spectator with "harmless ridicule", the lack of proper dress also functions as an indication of the native population's moral degeneracy and the definitive need for Western authority in the region:

> 'He was a man of more than average height,' said Lady Westholme, 'and wore the usual native dress. He has a pair of very torn and patched breeches – really disgraceful they were – and his puttees were wound most untidily – all anyhow! These men need *discipline*!' […] 'Because these Arabs they do not remove dust from one's belongings –' 'Never! Of course one has to dust one's things three or four times a day –.' (emphasis original) (AD, 510)

In the previous chapter, I noted that the Orient is becoming too modern for Westerners and the same idea also applies to the natives' form of dress: Orientalist ideas are so prevalent that anything distorting the "exotic" image of the natives in turbans and robes is not only disturbing but inherently "wrong". This indicates the West's internal conflict between the claim of civilizing the Orientals and the deep-rooted desire to regard the Orient and its people as stagnant and undeveloped:

> Finally she followed one of the native servants. He wore khaki breeches, much patched, and untidy puttees and a ragged coat very much worse for wear. On his head the native headdress, the *cheffiyah,* its long folds protecting the neck and secured in place with a black silk twist fitting tightly to the crown of his head. Sarah admired the easy swing with which he walked – the careless proud carriage of his head. Only the European part of his costume seemed tawdry and wrong. She thought: 'Civilization is all wrong – *all* wrong!' (emphasis original) (AD, 473)

Since Christie shows very little interest in representing natives' way of life outside of Western influence or the life of native women especially, there is a lack of descriptions with regard to the living conditions of the natives – the third method of animalization. Indicative of imperial society's class and race structure, the natives live almost completely separated from the Westerners. The workforce, where Christie's main focus lies with concern of representation, is depicted either as coming from a nearby town or having separate accommodations, as in the case of *Murder in Mesopotamia,* where the natives are juxtaposed with animals: "Outside were sleeping quarters for the native servants, the guard-house for the soldiers, and stables, etc., for the water horses" (28).

A final method emphasizing the animalistic characteristics of natives in Christie's texts is conducted by presenting the masses of natives as aggressive beasts seeking to prey on tourists in order to rob them of their money:

> Hercule Poirot made vague gestures to *rid himself* of this human *cluster of flies*. Rosalie stalked through them like a sleepwalker. 'It's best to pretend to be deaf and blind,' she remarked. The infantile riff-raff rang 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. (emphasis mine) (DN, 218)

Another marker signifying the bestiality of the natives – and a successful method of combining the theme of murder and Oriental barbarity – is through the discourse of cannibalism, "the central concept of colonial abjection" popularized by Daniel Defoe (Ashcroft, 45). In Christie, this tradition not only operates as a form of ultimately granting a savage status to the native people, but it also functions as a vehicle for addressing and venting the savage desires within Westerners. Nevertheless, it emphasizes the distance between the colonized reality and that of Western fantasy: "'But for civilization there wouldn't be a Mrs Boynton! In savage tribes they'd probably have killed and eaten her years ago!'" (AD, 473). As the inspection of Mrs. Boynton's fate as the murder victim illustrates and similar violent expressions by Westerners confirm, the emotions borne out of Orientalist imagery in Christie do not remain internal fantasies but are eventually actualized.

4.2 The Infantilization of Orientals: "The Little Black Wretches"

The trope of representing Orientals as children has its origin in justifying the colonization of lands. It also explains imperialism's inherent contradictory nature: Europe as a parent had the moral responsibility to dominate as well as educate the child, the Orient. (Ashcroft 2001, 36-37). The motivation behind the association of childhood with the racialized discourse of primitivism was a direct consequence of the change in European notion of childhood in the 17th century: children were regarded as inferior versions of adults (Pennycook, 60). Since the colonized people were lacking

civilization and education, it was the colonizer's duty to treat them as children: "childlike innocence could be reformed into maturity through education and introduction to Western civilization; childish rebellion required strict control and authoritarian rule" (*ibid.*). What follows from the infantilization of the Oriental culture and its people in general, is the classification of the colonized as politically immature (Shohat and Stam 1994, 140), which is then transformed and actualized in colonialist literature according to several conventions. The most visible and reoccurring method in which Christie conveys infantilization is achieved by the power of naming: the native adult population and particularly men are literally referred to as children – as "boys".

In the depiction of the native people as undeveloped, Christie combines infantilization with the tradition also common in the trope of naturalization as confirmed by Shohat and Stam: "The Third World toddler, even when the product of a thousand years of civilization, is not yet in control of its body/psyche, and therefore needs the guiding hand of the more 'adult' and 'advanced' societies" (1994, 140). This discourse of the natives lacking mastery of their psyche and body is also applicable to studying the depiction of individual natives in Christie's fiction and not only Oriental culture in general. The first example of the lack of control in the behavior of natives derives from what Lord Cromer described as lack of accuracy, as I discussed earlier in relation to Said's *Orientalism.* This unruly behavior intrinsic to the natives is described in Christie's fiction not only as irritating, but as a motivation for Western agency even over simple tasks:

> 'Of course,' went on Lady Westholme, 'to have servants about who cannot understand a word of English is very trying, but what I say is that when one is travelling one must make allowances.' […] 'They are very trying to the patience sometimes,' said Lady Westholme. 'One of them took my shoes away, though I had expressly told him – by pantomime too – that I preferred to clean my shoes myself.' (AD, 509-510)

This lack of precision as well as professionalism is not restricted to the depiction of individual servants. On the rare occasions where Christie's writing depicts local native authorities, this flaw of character transcends the individual and demonstrates the general political immaturity of the Orientals. An example of this is Christie's depiction of customs officers whose "professionalism" is

characterized by chaotic behavior and low work morality (PP2, 192-193). By no means, however, does Christie treat the chaotic mind of the native as insignificant, because it also presents a possible threat for Western sense of security – and a convenient dramatic device in detective fiction: "The big doors had been closed and barred at nine o'clock as usual. Nobody, however, remembered unbarring them in the morning. The two house-boys each thought the other must have done the unfastening" (MM, 150).

The main convention in which Christie portrays the Oriental lack of self-control is directly linked to the French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau's theory of childhood as "the stage of life when man most closely approximates the 'state of nature'" (Ashcroft, 40): in the trope of infantilization, this lead to the representation of the native as a child surrendering to his or her every need – something that is not regarded as admirable in Western societies. One example of this is the question of morality with regard to Orientals: there are no moral principles. Instead, every decision is formed on the basis of personal gain or need, as witnessed in the preparedness to lie and receive bribes:

> 'Facts? Facts? Lies told by an Indian cook and a couple of Arab house-boys. You know these fellows as well as I do, Reilly, so do you, Maitland. Truth as truth means nothing to them. They say what you want them to say as a mere matter of politeness.' (MM, 64).

This idea of self-interest depicted in Christie's texts continues in the idea of greediness, as clearly witnessed in the behaviour of street vendors who do not seem to value the Western sense of propriety:

> Five watchful bead-sellers, two vendors of postcards, three sellers of plaster scarabs, a couple of donkey boys and some detached but hopeful infantile riff-raff closed upon them. 'You want beads, sir? Very good, sir. Very cheap…' 'Lady, you want scarab? Look – great queen – very lucky…' 'You look, sir – real lapis. Very good, very cheap…' 'You want ride donkey, sir? This very good donkey […] Other donkey very bad, sir, that donkey fall down…' (DN, 218)

The greediness of the vendors is portrayed as so extensive that the natives are not uninhibited by any sense of self-worth. In the attempt to please the Western spectator and receive their money, the natives demonstrate self-objectification:

At their feet in a row, presenting a momentarily gruesome appearance as though sawn from their bodies, were the heads of half a dozen Nubian boys. The eyes rolled, the heads moved rhythmically from side to side, the lips chanted a new invocation: 'Hip, hip hurray! Hip, hip hurray! Very good, very nice. Thank you very much.' 'How absurd! How do they do it? Are they really buried very deep?' Simon produced some small change. (DN, 272)

It is possible to argue here that the concentration on the native children's bodies and bodily functions in the performance confirm the stigmatized nature of the colonized: the body of the racial Other is emphasized and identified as "different". The obsession with the black body, in particular, derives from the "micro level" of imperial domination: blackness was more associated with the body and skin color as well as the natural world, in contrast to the white population who have experienced "the flight from the body" – their identity is based on the mind and spirit (Puwar 2004, 1998).

The representation of the native population as lacking control and thus requiring Western presence and authority is also present in the problematization of the native body in relation to its "natural" environment: "tropical climate on the one hand produced abundant and easy living conditions so that native people were not induced to work hard and on the other hand the heat and humidity led to idleness and lethargy" (Pennycook, 58-59). Most critics trace this phenomenon to the colonialist discourse surrounding Africa, but I argue that the same idea is also in effect in Christie's texts. In Christie, this is demonstrated in the Westerners' need to control the native workers, because of the natives' constant propensity to laze and converse with other servants:

'Besides, I know the habits of your household fairly well. Just outside the gate is a kind of social club. Whenever I've been over here in the afternoon I've always found most of your staff here. It's the natural place for them to be.' (MM, 64)

'Well, during that ten minutes, the boy, seizing his chance to be idle, strolled out and joined the others outside the gate for a chat. When Emmot came down he found the boy absent and called him angrily, asking him what he meant leaving his work.' (MM, 65)

Perhaps the most traditional convention presenting the colonial Other as childlike consists of an evaluation of intelligence and complexity of personality – or rather, simplicity. One example of the native people's simple-mindedness includes the notion of childlike innocence and

naivety – common in racist caricatures – to which some of Christie's Western characters respond in a paternalistic manner: "My wife likes Arabs very much – she appreciates their simplicity and their sense of humour" (MM, 12). In fact, the condescending attitude toward natives' childlike innocence is a useful method adopted by the colonizer and accounts for the colonizing of foreign regions. In Christie, this is demonstrated in the willingness to deceive the natives, as witnessed in this scene of gunshots being fired: "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 a wide grin. The boy nodded and went off" (DN, 288).

Another illustration of the simple-mindedness of the natives from the Western perspective relates to the Orientals' English skills. In Christie, the lack of command of English not only results in paternalistic ridicule, but operates as a mode of bonding with fellow tourists:

> They had had such a friendly talk together in the swaying corridor of the wagons-lit. They had compared notes on Egypt, had laughed at the ridiculous language of the donkey-boys and street touts. Sarah had described how a camel man when he had started hopefully and impudently, 'You English lady or American?' had received the answer: 'No, Chinese.' And her pleasure in seeing the man's complete bewilderment as he stared at her. (AD, 429)

What follows from this intellectual differentiation and a language barrier between the colonizer and the colonized is that the Westerners need to use "simple" English with the natives, and to which Christie fairly often draws attention to. Additionally, in order convey a message, one is instructed to raise one's voice above the "proper" limit: "'And be sure and shout it. Arabs don't understand anything said in ordinary 'English' voice'" (MM, 28); and if necessary, by resorting to gestures: "'go outside and clap your hands, and when the boy comes say, *jib mai'har*'" (*ibid.*).

As the above examples from Christie's fiction demonstrate, the colonialist tradition is heavily based on the dichotomy between the colonizer and the colonized, and the ideology of the white man possessing the superior position in "The Great Chain of Being". This leads to the naturalization of colonial hierarchy, where the natives are expected to "know their place". In one of the few situations where Christie depicts native women, there is evidence of a conflict – the simple

native does not recognize her position as a property of Westerners: "'Disgraceful, the way these girls treat you,' said Captain Smethurst gloomily. 'Bought her two drinks – three drinks – lots of drinks. Then she goes off laughing with some dago.[14] Call it a disgrace'" (PP1, 170).

In imperialist propaganda, the principal method of "releasing" the colonized people of their underdeveloped state was education, where "literacy and education reinforce the existence of the very gap they are designed to close, the gap between colonizer and colonizer, civilized and primitive" (Ashcroft 2001, 39). As a consequence, civilization became to symbolize the only vehicle for the natives to attain some subjectivity and maturity. The following example from Christie illustrates the Oriental immaturity from the point of view of knowing one's own cultural history, as seen in this evaluation of the local tour guide: "'That man is grossly inaccurate. I have checked his statements from my Baedeker. Several times his information was definitely misleading'" (AD, 508). In terms of degree of civilization, it was literature which became to be associated as an ultimate bearer of European values – and a central obstacle in the natives' pursuit of "cultural adulthood" (Ashcroft 2001, 39), as depicted in this native servant's attempt to denigrate his fellow natives and emphasize his own learnedness without success:

> 'No, my good gentlemen, that would be impossible. None of the boys admit it for a moment. Old lady angry, you say? Then naturally boys would not tell. Abdul say it Mohammed, and Mohammed say it Aziz and Aziz say it Aissa, and so on. They are very stupid Bedouin – understand nothing […] Now I, I have advantage of Mission education. I recite to you Keats – Shelley – Iadadoveandasweedovedied –.' Poirot flinched. Though English was not his native language, he knew it well enough to suffer from the strange enunciation of Mahmoud. 'Superb!' he said hastily. 'Superb! Definitely I recommend you to all my friends.' (AD, 532-533)

What I find significant in Christie's representation of the natives' civilization and education is the dubious attitude her writing presents towards the prospect of educating the natives. As such it therefore deviates from the empire's official policy of "the civilizing mission". This is mainly illustrated in Christie's omission of referring to educating the natives, but also in the rare occasions

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[14] "a person of Hispanic origin (Spanish or Latin American). This derogatory meaning is probably the original sense of the word in that it derives from the Hispanic proper name 'Diego' (James). The word usually has this sense when used by British speakers" (Thorne 2007, 116).

where she describes the phenomenon more precisely, as this conversation between men of different

Western origin demonstrates:

> 'What is honesty?' demanded the Frenchman. 'It is a *nuance*, a convention. In different countries it means different things. An Arab is not ashamed of stealing. He is not ashamed of lying. With him it is from *whom* he steals or to *whom* he lies that matters.' 'That is the point of view – yes,' agreed Carver. 'Which shows the superiority of the West over the East,' said Blundell. 'When these poor creatures get education –' Sir Donald entered languidly into the conversation. 'Education is rather rot, you know. Teaches fellows a lot of useless things. And what I mean is, nothing alters what you are.' 'You mean?' 'Well, what I mean to say is, for instance, once a thief always a thief.' (emphasis original) (PP3, 215)

In Christie's perspective, thus, it is not merely a question of the natural superiority of the Western people, but there is the persistent attitude of preserving this hierarchical relationship of the colonizer as a figure of authority over the colonized. The preservation of this power-relationship was a particular concern of the British Empire during the interwar period: the empire not only experienced competition from the rival powers but was forced to face the inevitable forces of decolonization.

As the analysis of Christie's tropes of racial Othering illustrates, the racialization of the natives consisted of several interrelated methods seeking to maintain Orientals in a permanent state of subordination – whether as part of nature, animals or eternal children. The reduction of the Oriental people into the above mentioned stereotypes as well as the ideological significance of making the native population invisible in their own land inevitably demonstrates Christie's position in the colonialist and Orientalist discourses. The myriad methods in which the natives are described in terms of deficiency not only define Oriental personality in an essential manner, but include the idea of the Westerner as a supreme example of human development: the faceless Orientals demonstrate only their "inherent" biological characteristics, whereas Christie's Western characters are more "rounded" and described in terms of individuality.

5. The Imperial Presence in the Orient

In contrast to the previous chapters studying Christie's representation of the Orient as well as its inhabitants, this section is intended for the examination of imperial presence in the Middle East. Even though there is an apparent shift of perspective towards the colonizer, I claim that the imperial point of view applies also to the portrayal of the Orient and its people: Christie does not provide her readership with an "objective" image of the region but rather a depiction affected by colonialist and Orientalist tradition as witnessed previously.

This chapter consists of two sections with different concentrations, but which both nevertheless operate as undercurrent backgrounds in Christie. In the first section, I will study and discuss the representation of Western imperial machinery and the hierarchical structures within the colonial reality. I will claim that Christie presents the various forms of Western presence in the Middle East as the norm and that the Westerners constitute a separate community in terms of living conditions, housing and means of transportation. However, what I find most significant in Christie's representation of the imperial machinery is how the process of classification continues in the evaluation of various Western nationalities: the British identity is not solely contrasted with the Oriental Other, but also in relation to other Western nationalities. The second section will take account of Christie's position as a classic detective fiction writer and the effects caused by situating a detective narrative in the Orient. In addition to arguing that Christie allows little visibility to the native characters in the detective stories, I will claim that the Orientalist discourse, in fact, operates as a precondition and instigator for Christie's colonial murders – a topic much ignored in the previous postcolonial studies of detective fiction.

5.1 The Status and Hierarchy of Imperialistic Machinery

As discussed in the first theoretical section, the interwar period was affected by the ideology of the Second Empire during which British imperialism consisted of a more organized rule in the

colonized regions (Johnson, 4). The peace negotiations after the WWI, however, resulted in a change of imperial policy: the Middle East became under the influence of the Informal Empire strategy in which the British control of the area included the strengthening of military power, the shift towards economical interference and political rivalry between different Western nations (Johnson, 160-161). By studying Christie's portrayal of the imperial machinery closely, I argue that it is possible to detect the above mentioned changes associated with the interwar period.

The imperial presence in Christie's fiction can be categorized roughly according to four main groupings: the military, the government, the professionals, and the tourists – all indicative of the widespread influence of British domination with varying degree of visibility. The general feature of Western presence in the area is that it is presented "normal": Christie depicts the imperial setting as a "natural" background of the stories in so much that the significance of Western presence exceeds the description of the local way of life – the natives are left in a secondary position. This dismissal of the natives in their own cultural environment exhibits an important phenomenon in Christie's Orientalist fiction: what is left *unsaid* is as significant as what is actually depicted. The omission of the native population in much of Christie's representation of the Orient is an ideological construction designed to justify colonial expansion: the colonized regions were considered as "terra nullius", where the emptiness of the lands expanded itself to the native people (Pennycook, 55-56).

The capitalist ideology of colonialism and imperialism regularly relied on military forces in order to safeguard the empire's interests (Johnson, 23). In the interwar period, as also depicted in Christie, the military influence included mainly the air force and the various airfields particularly in Iraq, Palestine and Transjordan. These airbases were designed to protect the colonial domination in India and also to maintain British mastery of the region against the rival forces of other European powers. (Khadduri and Silverfarb 1986, 3-4). In British popular culture the colonial armies usually represented the public's yearning for masculine hero worship and illustrated the

superiority of the British rule over the subject races (Springhall 1986, 49-50). Christie's treatment of the military power can be seen to consist of both conventional and critical responses to the existing popular discourse. The conventional strain relates to Christie's representation of the British military forces as superior to the competing European ones – in fact, their visibility is nonexistent. When it comes to the depiction of individual British officers, Christie confirms the public's opinion of British military personnel by portraying the soldiers as "men of action", as seen for example in the traditional depiction of Colonel Carbury, who has extended his military expertise into another field of work – as the head of the local police force:

> He did not look in the least like a soldier. He did not look even particularly alert. He was not in the least one's idea of a disciplinarian. Yet in Transjordania he was a power […] 'Yes. I'm a tidy man,' said Carbury. He waved a vague hand. 'Don't like a mess. When I come across a mess I want to clear it up. See?' (AD, 486-487)

The emphasis of order and neatness, however, does not only define the ideal military personality, but justifies British control in the Orient as I have repeatedly suggested in the analysis: the Orient needs the West as a provider of peace and order.

Christie's critical depiction of the military forces is visible in her dismissal of the masculine hero worship towards a more trivialized direction especially in the context of colonial reality. Thus, rather than only representing the military personnel as ultimate bearers of British cultural and racial superiority, Christie presents the army as a suitable career option for adventure-seeking young British men. Their duties in the colonies, especially with concern of the air bases, rarely consist of glorious battles – which conventionally characterized the treatment of military power in the British media during the late 19th and early 20th centuries: in contrast, the young pilots in Christie's texts are mainly portrayed as a source of entertainment for young British women, where their presence ensures that British ladies direct their sexual interests to "proper" targets – in other words, white men.

Another source of realism affecting Christie's depiction of military presence in the Orient derives from the many challenges faced by the interwar period. One of the main threats to

the continuity of the British Empire emerged from the decolonizing forces that were actualized in various mutinies in the empire, as for example in India. In Christie's writing, this forms a significant theme in *Death on the Nile,* where the steamship occupied by Western tourists is suspected to hide an agitator for various deadly mutinies in one of Britain's most formidable colonies, Egypt. What I find of particular significance here is Christie's choice of nationality for the agitator: the culprit is not a native but a man of Western origin. The natives are thus represented as lacking sufficient organization and planning skills inherent in the Western mind:

> Race was a man of unadvertised goings and comings. He was usually to be found in one of the outposts of Empire where trouble was brewing [...] 'There's no need to be mysterious to you. We've had a good deal of trouble out here – one way or another. It isn't the people who ostensibly lead the rioters that we're after. It's the men who very cleverly put the match to the gunpowder. There were three of them. One's dead. One's in prison. I want the third man – a man with five or six cold-blooded murders to his credit. He's one of the cleverest paid agitators that ever existed...He's on this boat. I know that from a passage in a letter that passed through our hands. Decoded it said: 'X will be on the Karnak trip seventh to thirteenth.' It didn't say under what name X would be passing.' 'Have you any description of him?' 'No. American, Irish, and French descent. Bit of a mongrel.' (DN, 278-279)

The description of the agitator as "a mongrel" may be considered to have a deliberate motivation in Christie, where the notion of "impurity'" enforces the threat introduced by the mutiny. Thus, even though he is white, it possible to regard his multinational identity as a threat – he does not have any national allegiance. There is a further significance in the paid agitator: as a mutineer against the British Empire he is the "natural" culprit in the murder investigation and another example of a "red herring" in Christie's texts.

The visibility of the British rule in the Middle Eastern infrastructure or rule of government is of lesser significance than that of the military: the "official" face of the imperial government manifested little appeal for the British public (Springhall, 49-50) and explains Christie's lack of interest in it. In Christie's fiction, the British administration in the Middle East is mainly signified by the police force, where the superior officers are of British military origin. Furthermore, the investigation of the crimes is based on the severity and complexity of the cases and consequently divided according to the inherent differences in the intellectual capacities of the

British and the Orientals: "'My fellows are good scouts at scouring the countryside and investigating Arab blood feuds, but frankly, Leidner, this business of your wife's seems to me rather out of my class'" (MM, 66). The military also holds a position in the public sector as illustrated by the "captain" working for "the public works department of Baghdad" (PP1, 168). The experience in the military is thus presented as a sufficient background for various imperial professionals and explains the authoritative and hierarchical rule of British government in the colonies.

The third quite a common group of Western people in the Orient originates from the challenges introduced by the interwar period: trade and business as a form on indirect imperialism. This group includes the various professionals working in the private or public sectors, who are all highly educated and hold a dominant position in comparison to the natives who are mainly placed as manual workers. In Christie, these professionals mainly consist of the archaeological specialists travelling to the region, as discussed previously. These specialists, however, do not only include archaeologists but various other professionals, as the outline of the archaeological expedition in *Murder in Mesopotamia* illustrates: photographers, architects, assistants and even monks. The same novel also includes a depiction of other imperial professionals: the medical experts as well as the industrial sphere in the form of French engineers planning a pipe line.

The inclusion of tourism and the high visibility of tourists in Christie's Orientalist writing are by no means coincidental because of the intertwined relationship between colonialist expansion and the ideological construction of tourist industry:

> tourism 'has all the elements of domination, exploitation and manipulation characteristic of colonialism'. With their links to what is often termed the largest global industry, 'vacationscapes' tend to dominate other more local geographical imaginations and, indeed, often only manage to maintain their hegemony (and income-generating properties) by denying localised geographical imaginations. (Momsen 1994 qtd in Jacobs, 1)

As a result of the fast development of the capitalist tourist industry since the late 19th century, it is possible to divide the colonial tourists into two groups, on the basis of "authenticity" of the travel experience (Jacobs, 2). The first, "the lone travelers", were mainly men and represented the most

"authentic" way of touring the Orient. It is clearly contrasted with the second group of "tourists". This "tourist" is "a feminized figure who travels in large groups and consumes parodic reconstructions of authentic cultural products" (Jacobs, 2) – and mainly occupies the depiction of tourism in Christie's texts. These multinational tourist groups have not, however, completely abandoned the upper-class ideology of colonial travel: "'Quite a lot of notabilities here now, aren't there? I expect we shall see a paragraph about it in the papers soon. Society beauties, famous novelists" (DN, 223). There is, nevertheless, a visible change from the Orient as an upper-class destination to that of the (upper) middle class ideals of fulfillment and escapism. This, as mentioned, is related to the popularization of tourism, particularly in Egypt, where the first package tours were organized in 1869 (Jacobs, 2):

> 'How true is the saying that man was forced to invent work in order to escape the strain of having to think.' […] 'But there is so much! There is travel!' 'Yes, there is travel. Already I have not done so badly. This winter I shall visit Egypt, I think. The climate, they say, is superb! One will escape from the fogs, the greyness, the monotony of the constantly falling rain.' (DN, 200)

As discussed in the first chapter, the organized form of tourism rests on the notion of immobility and object-status of the natives: the tourists survey the natives (Jacobs, 2). In Christie, the tourists' distance from the everyday life of the natives is seen through accommodation and means of transport. As a consequence, the tourists are represented as living in luxurious hotels, which are "tastefully decorated" and provide Western refreshments and cuisine (AD). The Orientalization of the habitation is commonly ensured by the names chosen for the hotels, "the Oriental hotel" (PP1, 165), as well as by their placement. In *Death on the Nile,* the latter is achieved by situating the hotel to overlook the Nile as well as another popular tourist destination, the island of Elephantile (245.)

When it comes to transportation, Christie depicts two main vehicles of carriage with different objectives: modern and traditional transportation. One of the most common vehicles of modern transportation available to tourists especially in Egypt included the multitude of different

Nile cruises, which is the central form of transportation in *Death on the Nile.* [15] This mode of transportation emphasizes the object status of the natives and the distance between the surveyor and that of the native population. For Westerners, the distance was also a question of security, since it provided the tourists with "a suitable distance which to observe Egypt at large […] and gave the travelers a sense of security and the confidence to interpret what they saw from a sovereign perspective" (Jacobs, 6). In contrast to this, the traditional vehicles of transportation portray the immense yearning for "authentic" experiences: "Mahmoud shrugged his thick shoulders: 'They like to come. They have paid money to see these things. They wish to see them. The Bedouin guides are very clever – very sure-footed – always they manage'" (AD, 477).

Interestingly, the motivations behind the personal decisions to travel to the East vary relatively little among the Western characters – regardless of their status as either imperial workers or tourists. One of the most important aspects surrounding the Western fascination with the Orient is the convention of regarding the Orient as a source of adventure: "'So, if I've got to do something, I don't much care what it is so long as it isn't mugging in an office all day long. I was quite agreeable to seeing a bit of the world. Here goes, I said, and along I came'" (MM, 21). This idea of escaping the office work and similar motivations – beginning a new life or leaving troubles back home – are all ultimately escapist strategies commonly associated with the East in Western discourse: "it is Europe's collective day-dream, symptomatic of a certain weariness that from time to time besets European culture" (Clarke 1997, 19). Such escapism is becomes combined with the Oriental exoticism in Christie: the fascination with the domesticated strangeness of the Orient.

Western living conditions in the Orient derive from the hierarchical relationship between the colonizer and the colonized in the region. What is characteristic in the colonizer's habitation is the separation from the native servants and the superior living conditions. This is again most visible in *Murder in Mesopotamia,* where the archaeological party resides in fort-like

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[15] There is a clear connection between Orientalist fiction and modern tourism in the Middle East as illustrated in the significance of Christie's *Death on the Nile* for the promotion of Nile cruises even in modern travel brochures (Jacobs, 9-10).

conditions: the windows are barred and the gate is locked and guarded. While the Western occupants may regard Oriental culture as enchanting and exoticized, there needs to be a clear distinction between "us" and "them": a certain standard of living must be observed. This is represented in the creation of "The Little Britain" and can be seen in the housing, the Western form of dress as well as in the English cuisine. What follows from the "physical" separation between the colonizer and the colonized is that the segregation is also visible in the social sphere. Christie's Anglicized Orient, therefore, consists of various English clubs and society parties held for the English gentlemen and women (MM). This homogenous mentality also affects the tourists, despite the willingness to capture the "authentic" Orient of *Arabian Nights:* "Mr. Parker Pyne bought a local paper printed in French. He did not find it very interesting. The local news meant nothing to him and nothing of importance seemed to be going on elsewhere. He found a few paragraphs headed *Londres*" (PP1, 168).

What I find particularly significant in Christie's portrayal of the imperial machinery is how the racialized representation of the colonized Other is continued in the depiction and hierarchization of various Western nationalities occupying the Middle East, which may be explained by the interwar period's internal rivalry between different Western powers. This tendency is manifested firstly in Christie's method of referring to her non-British characters not according to their names but nationality: *the American*, *the French* or *the Italian*. The second and more extensive method consists of defining the characters according to their nationality and drawing conclusions based on the classifications. What lies behind the often stereotypical portrayal of the characters is the ideology of treating the British personality as the norm.

The growing presence of American influence in the region and the consequent rivalry is visible in the abundance of wealthy American characters and in the wide array of their representations. Underlying all the characterizations of Americans is the British sensation of inferiority that is illustrated firstly in the patronizing attitude of the British: "Americans are

71

disposed to be a friendly race. They have not the uneasy suspicion of the travelling Briton" (AD, 438) – and secondly, in its polar opposite: "'I've always found Americans unusually self-possessed. An American boy of twenty, say, has infinitely more knowledge of the world and far more savoir-faire than an English boy of the same age'" (AD, 428). There is, however, no escape from the sense of crisis that the American wealth represents for the British domination in the Middle East in Christie's texts. The danger does not only lie in the possession of wealth: "'They have too much money, these Americans'" (PP3, 219), but foremost in the American attitude of arrogance which the self-reserved Brits inherently lack: "'A man who makes money benefits mankind'" (PP3, 215). One can only question whether this undercurrent rivalry is one motivation behind Christie's choice of the "main" murder victims in the studied novels: they are all wealthy American women.

In addition to the rivalry between similar cultures, the British and the American, there is also evidence of significantly "lower" races within the occupiers. Here, again, it is skin color which is associated with criminal behavior as seen in the description of the Mercados: "Heaven knows what nationality they are – Dagos of some kind! She's quite young – a snaky-looking creature" (MM, 13) with "a touch of the tar-brush" (25). There are also examples of animalization and bestiality present in Christie's characterization, as illustrated in this typical racist remark made in passing: "'And that Armenian rat?' 'He couldn't be a pal,' said O'Rourke with decision. 'And no Armenian would have the nerve to kill anyone'" (PP1, 180). Here the trope of infantilization operates as a liberating discourse as it frees the Armenian character from the suspicion of murder inquiry.

What can be concluded from the study of the imperial presence in Christie's texts is how the Orient functions as an extension of Britain. This is clearly presented by an American tourist in reference to her first visit to Egypt in *Death on the Nile:* "'I've always dreamed of a trip to Europe'" (210-211). This imperialist construction of reality becomes also visible in the Western

interpretation of Oriental history, as seen in the characterization of Mr. Ferguson, who expresses communist feelings with regard to the injustices experienced by ancient Egyptians:

> 'Take the pyramids. Great blocks of useless masonry, put up to minister to the egoism of a despotic bloated king. Think of the sweated massed who toiled to build them and died doing it. It makes be sick to think of the suffering and torture they represent.'[…]
> 'What matters is the future – not the past.'(DN, 250-251)

Thus, even though the character here breaks away from the conventional way of viewing Oriental history as exotic, the statement nevertheless entails a Eurocentric perspective and includes a clear case of hypocrisy: not once does Ferguson criticize the current situation of inequality in Egypt as a result of British imperial rule. This forms a general theme in Christie's texts: despite Christie depicting the British Empire in a state of change during the interwar period, the powerful position of the empire remains untouched and operates as a source for the British sense of identity as superior to other cultures.

5.2 The Orientalization of Murder

The colonial setting of the classic detective fiction narrative, as discussed previously, is related to the genre's internal conservatism, the attraction with the Other as well as the popular imperialism of the interwar period: the exotic locations and particularly the East provided a means of escape from the English drawing rooms and gardens (Simon, 5). As noted earlier, the purpose of this study is to provide an Orientalist reading of Christie's detective fiction and discuss how classic detective fiction applied the British Orientalist tradition during the interwar period. The following discussion on detective fiction's relationship with Orientalism will consist of two perspectives: the role of the native characters in the murder investigation and the influence of the Oriental setting on generic conventions.

The natives' position in the murder investigation follows the conventions established by colonialist discourse. Christie's representation of natives as characters in her detective stories can be discussed in terms of invisibility and disacknowledgement besides the tropes of Othering,

naturalization, animalization and infantilization. What must be stated, however, is the connection between the natives' lack of presence in the detective investigation and the above mentioned tropes of Othering: the representation of natives as part of nature or as child-like creatures ensures their insignificance in the detection. This feature of invisibility is most blatant in the lack of agency of the native police officers solving the crimes: not once does Christie include a native police officer participating in the many criminal investigations depicted in the studied material. This is, of course, partly due to Christie's abandonment of professional law officials in favor of the amateur – Hercule Poirot and Parker Pyne. In Christie, the native police force, as studied in the previous subchapter, is represented as being suitable to investigate only "local crimes", though even here Western participation is occasionally deemed necessary, as depicted in Poirot's series of colonial investigations in *Murder in Mesopotamia:* "'he has been disentangling some military scandal in Syria'" (66).

Therefore, when it comes to the investigation of more "serious" crimes and specifically murder inquiries including notable Westerners, authority is associated with the imperial forces. This tendency includes the division between "trivial colonial crimes" and the more intellectual ones – "Oh, yes, there are brains here. There is thought – care – genius'" (AD, 493) – whereby an outsider is required to solve the possible threats posed to the imperial status quo in the region:

> 'You satisfy me of what really happened. Then it's up to me to decide whether action is possible or not – having regard to the international aspects. Anyway, it will be cleared up – no mess. Don't like mess.' (AD, 499)

This concern expressed by the British commander of the local Syrian police force with regard to restoring the natural state of hierarchy and peace in the Orient is also visible in how the locals depend on the Western police force. This can be witnessed in the anxiety demonstrated by the manager of the cruise ship in *Death on the Nile:*

> They went down to the deck below, where they 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. […] If you will take charge, I'll see that everything is done as you wish.' (295)

The worry expressed by the manager in the passage is understandable when one takes into consideration the delicate balance that the tourist industry had to maintain, as discussed in chapter three: the exotic and romantic Orient versus the wild and uncivilized Orient. The fact that Westerners are being murdered in a Nile cruise is a clear threat against this balance and explains the manager's willingness to rely on English private detectives in order to apprehend the criminal safely and discreetly: the Orient must not become "too" dangerous and wild in the Western imagination, since it would deter the tourists from traveling to the East.

As is to be expected from the insignificant position of natives in the police force, the subjugation of the racial Other continues in the detective procedure and therefore characterizes Christie's detective fiction. This also applies to the detecting methods of Christie's perhaps most well known detective character, Poirot. Even though Poirot's image as a detective is based on the methodological approach where suspicion is placed on everyone, there seems to be a clear exception to this when it comes to colonial murders. An initial examination of Poirot's methods, however, seems to guide the readers into the familiar direction, as becomes evident in the first meeting with the suspects in the isolated setting of *Murder in Mesopotamia*: "'*You are all under suspicion here in this house.* The cook, the house-boy, the scullion, the pot-boy – yes, and all the members of the expedition too'" (emphasis original) (68). However, as the narrative proceeds from the initial situation in all of the novels, it becomes evident that Poirot's detection actually centers on the Western characters. The most blatant way in which Poirot's detective methods place the natives in a secondary position is witnessed in his questioning tactics: he either avoids interviewing the natives completely or that his questioning is best characterized by vagueness and avoidance of direct connection with the murder in question. These detective conventions "made Other" may be due to what was examined earlier: Orientals lack logic and structure and, moreover, they are inveterate liars whose statements are dependent on pleasing the interviewer's expectations. This

75

omission of the natives in the detective procedure can be seen in another conventional method: in *Appointment with Death,* Poirot's plan of the campground does not include the accommodation of the servants, only the tourists' (508). As my analysis of the native characters' position in Christie's detective stories demonstrates, it is possible to argue that detective fiction can be regarded as another vehicle for Orientalizing the natives.

The position of native characters can be studied, however, from another perspective: Christie's detective stories seem to attach a specific form of criminality to the Oriental personality. What most accurately describes Christie's characterization of Orientals and their role in her detective stories, besides invisibility, is the concept of "natural" blame. In Christie's texts, this is most commonly manifested in the less serious crimes: Orientals are "easy scapegoats" for trivial crimes, such as thefts (AD, 523) or accidents (DN, 275). This may be connected to the Orientalist tradition of associating Oriental people with lack of order and the colonialist tradition of viewing the colonized as children. This is well illustrated in *Death on the Nile* and in the Westerners' attitude to a nearly fatal accident possibly committed by native children*:* "'It must have been a very near escape. Do you think some of these little black wretches rolled it over for fun?'" (DN, 275). However, even though the natives in Christie's texts are condemned as being too stupid to commit the intricate crimes solved by Poirot, the "natural" blame is easily directed to the native servants also in murder investigations – especially when the police procedure threatens the honor of Westerners. This inclination can be witnessed most clearly in the example of classic "locked-room mystery" in *Murder in Mesopotamia,* where the members of the archaeological expedition repeatedly refuse to acknowledge the possibility of an inside murderer, as seen in their reaction to Poirot's announcement to question everyone as possible murderer suspects:

> 'How dare you? How dare you say such a thing? This is odious – unbearable! Dr. Leidner – you can't sit here and let this man – let this man –.' […] 'I do not insult you. I merely ask you all to face the facts. *In a house where murder has been committed, every inmate comes in for a certain share of suspicion.* I ask you what evidence is there that the murderer came from outside at all?' Mrs Mercado cried: 'But of course

he did! It stands to reason! Why –.' She stopped and said more slowly, 'Anything else would be incredible!' (emphasis original) (69)

As the investigation proceeds, some people in the expedition continue even further by prompting that the entire native staff acted as murder allies, even though there is no evidence to support this presupposition (71).

In most of Christie's texts then, the natives are ready culprits for trivial, simple crimes – or, at the most, as paid spies for the murderer: '"Probably paid to act as a spy,' I suggested. 'To find out when the coast was clear"' (MM, 61). The complex murders investigated by Poirot, on the other hand, are depicted as an impossible task for "a simple Arab". This perspective is so prevalent in Christie that it is possible that her readership would have condemned it as disappointing if the murderer was discovered to be an Arab, even though it is presented here ironically in relation to Colonel Carbury's attitude:

> 'And what about that servant motif that keeps cropping up – a servant being sent to tell her dinner was ready – and that story of her shaking her stick at a servant earlier in the afternoon? You're not going to tell me one of my poor desert mutts bumped her off after all? Because,' added Colonel Carbury sternly, 'if so, that would be cheating.' Poirot smiled, but did not answer. As he left the office he murmured to himself: 'Incredible! The English never grow up!' (AD, 535)

However, what I find most significant in the Orientalist application of Christie's detective fiction is how Christie has "Orientalized" her detective conventions; how the Oriental setting plays a significant role in Christie's detective stories – and not only as another exotic location. I argue that the Orientalization of Christie's detective stories can be analyzed from two perspectives: how the Orient enhances the detective conventions through foreshadowing and added suspense, and how the Orient operates as a catalyst for murder. As mentioned, the first method of Orientalization originates from the infiltration of Orientalist imagery into the detective conventions: the Orient as a "suitable" place for murder. In Christie, the Orient is not only a "convenient" setting for murder plots because of its isolation from Western civilization, but how the Western perception of the Orient as wild and exotic strengthens the mystery surrounding murder. The exotic and wild Orient incorporates Christie's detective conventions mainly via foreshadowing, as can be witnessed

in the opening scene from *Appointment with Death* which clearly sets a tone for the forthcoming events:

> *'You do see, don't you, that she's got to be killed?'* The question floated out into the still night air, seemed to hang there a moment and then drift away down in to the darkness toward the Dead Sea. […] Curious words for one Hercule Poirot, detective, to overhear on his first night in Jerusalem. (emphasis original) (421)

The passage is a typical illustration of how Christie combines the idea of Oriental wildness and exoticism through simple choice of vocabulary – thus enhancing the connotation between the Orient and violence. Occasionally, however, Christie adopts the method of foreshadowing in a more direct manner, as seen in the poem by Flecker ("Gates of Damascus", 1913):

> 'Pass not beneath, O Caravan, or pass not
> singing. Have you heard
> That silence where the birds are dead yet
> something pipeth like a bird?'
> 'Pass out beneath, O Caravan, Doom's
> Caravan, Death's Caravan!' (PP1, 165-166)

However, the most common method in which Christie underlines the sensation of suspense vital in detective stories originates from the myriad of descriptions which convey the image of the Orient as wild and dangerous – particularly in relation to the savage aspects of its nature:

> *Silence* fell on the three of them. They looked down to the shining *black rocks* in the Nile. There was something *fantastic* about them in the moonlight. They were like *vast prehistoric monsters* lying half out of the water. A little breeze came up suddenly and as *suddenly died away*. There was a feeling in the air of *hush* – of expectancy. (emphasis mine) (DN, 225)

The passage from *Death on the Nile* illustrates how Christie's choice of vocabulary connects the idea of uncontrolled Oriental wilderness with the "historic Orient" in order to create the feeling of expectancy. Alternatively, it can also be analyzed as "breeding" murder, which is the second method that Orientalizes Christie's detective fiction.

As mentioned, the Oriental setting does not only emphasize the tensions inherent in detective fiction: in Christie's fiction, the Orient is described as having a considerable effect on Westerners. There are three levels in which it is possible to observe the impact of the Orient on the Western characters: firstly, the Orient represents terror for Westerners; secondly, the Orient

operates as a catalyst for murderous feelings; and thirdly, the Orientalist tradition enables Western criminals to pass as Orientals. The first effect of the Oriental setting is related to what was discussed in subchapter 3.2: the wild and uncivilized Orient poses a threat against Westerners. Most commonly the wild Orient of Christie's texts manifests itself as a feeling of terror and uncertainty in the Western mind. This is especially the case in the following passage from *Death on the Nile*, since the Nile cruise is on its way to an even "threatening" territory – Nubia, the "dark Africa":

> The *Karnak* was going through a narrow gorge. The rocks came down with a kind of sheer ferocity to the river flowing deep and swift between them. They were in Nubia now. […] 'Monsieur Poirot, I'm 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.' (254)

The unprecedented sensation of terror expressed by the character and the juxtaposition with wild Oriental nature is of particular significance once it is discovered that the speaker has a justification for the feelings: she will be the first murder victim in *Death on the Nile*. However, the barbarous Orient can also be regarded as aggravating existing mental problems in Western tourists. This is the case with an American girl in *Appointment with Death* who suffers under the power of her tyrannical mother:

> 'Where were you on the afternoon of her death?' 'I was in the tent…It was hot in there, but I didn't dare to come out…They might have got me…' She gave a little quiver. 'One of them – looked into my tent. He was disguised but I knew him. I pretended to be asleep. The Sheikh had sent him. The Sheikh wanted to kidnap me, of course.' (AD, 540-541)

Here, the allusion to the mysterious character of Sheik is significant, since it provides an indication of Christie's cultural influences: the popular Orientalism of the early 20th century and the image of the Sheik as posing a sexual threat against innocent white women.

The second way, the Orient as a catalyst for murder, is perhaps most significant in Christie's stories, since here there exists a clear connection with the Oriental setting and murder, even though Christie describes the murders themselves as Western: in addition to the Westerners committing them, the motivation behind the murders is depicted as originating from the upper-middle class setting of Britain or United States. This is most clearly seen in *Death on the Nile*,

where the murderers participate in a time-consuming and elaborate plot to ensure that the murder of a wealthy American heiress will take place in the remote setting of Egypt – far from "civilization". However, the association of murder with solely Western culture would be misconstrued and superficial: in many cases the Oriental setting and atmosphere function as final catalysts for murder. In Christie's stories, the connection with homicidal feelings and the Orient is achieved by two methods: the juxtaposition between murder and Oriental nature, and the rationalization of murder on the basis of violent Oriental history. Examples of the first are most common in *Death on the Nile*, as can clearly be seen in the description of the murderer's mental state: "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 where the white-sailed boats glided up and down the river" (221). The second method, the fascination with the Oriental history of barbarity and the consequent justification of murder, is most widespread in *Appointment with Death*. This rationalization of murder in the novel is explained when one takes into consideration the object of such thinking – a generally despised woman: "'It's a wonderful idea – to have a place of sacrifice up here. I think sometimes, don't you, that a sacrifice is necessary…I mean, one can have too much regard for life. Death isn't really so important as we make out'" (477-478).

The third method places the Oriental setting in a more concrete role rather than only acting as a catalyst for murder: in order escape from criminal investigations, white characters deliberately pass as Orientals. Thus, unlike in traditional passing narratives of marginal races passing as dominant ones (Belluscio 2006, 1), Christie employs passing as a method for placing guilt on the inferior races. This application occupies a significant position in *Appointment in Death,* where a British woman politician passes for an Arab man in an attempt to hide her identity, but also as a means of placing the blame on the "natural" scapegoats, the servants:

> 'Lady Westholme returned to her tent, put on her riding breeches, boots and khaki-coloured coat, made herself an Arab head-dress with her checked duster and a skein of knitting-wool and that, thus attired she went boldly up to Dr Gerard's tent, looked in

his medicine chest, selected a suitable drug, took the hypodermic, filled it and went boldly up to her victim.' (574)

Here the employment of an Arab identity acquits her from the guilt temporarily and illustrates how the treatment of Orientals as a faceless mass operates as a successful method of concealment in Christie's detective fiction.

At this point it is vital to introduce another significant factor which can be argued as emphasizing the effects of the Oriental setting in Christie's stories: besides the racial representation of natives, there is another form of Othering in Christie – Hercule Poirot. The qualities that confirm Poirot's otherness, his feminized action and "foreigness" as Belgian (Munt 1994, 8), become emphasized in Christie's Orient-situated narratives: Englishness is not only threatened by the murders, but also by the criminal investigation carried out by the cultural and social Other. The position of Poirot as the Other is most visible in the scenes where he is introduced to his English clients:

> I don't know what I'd imagined – something like Sherlock Holmes – long and lean with a keen, clever face. Of course, I knew he was a foreigner, but I hadn't expected him to be *quite* as foreign he was, if you know what I mean. When you saw him you just wanted to laugh! […] He looked like a hairdresser in a comic play! And this was the man who was going to find out who killed Mrs. Leidner! (emphasis original) (MM, 67)

In addition to the distrust connected to Poirot's "foreign" appearance and behavior, Christie extends Poirot's Otherness occasionally towards an Orientalist direction – or to be more precise, towards the detective conventions adopted by Poirot, as seen in the ceremonious revelation of the murderer's identity:

> I don't know what I expected him to say – something dramatic certainly. He was that kind of person. But I certainly didn't expect him to start off with a phrase in Arabic. Yet that is what happened. He said the words slowly and solemnly – and really quite religiously, if you know what I mean. '*Bismillahi ar rahman ar rahim.*' And then he gave the translation in English. 'In the name of Allah, the merciful, the compassionate.' (emphasis original) (MM, 160)

However, despite Poirot's position as the Other in Christie's texts, it becomes clear how Poirot's detection is ultimately governed by the motivation to safeguard the status quo of the British

imperial society. One illustration of this motivation is seen in the revelation of the murderer's identity in *Appointment with Death.* Unlike most Christie's narratives, the scene does not end with the arrest of the culprit, who is a member of the Parliament, but with her suicide. What is significant about this solution is not the suicide, but Poirot's decision not to damage the reputation of a prominent member of society in the British press even after the murderer's death (576).

The aim of this subchapter was to present and discuss Christie's interwar fiction from two significant perspectives in relation to postcolonial questions and the study of Orientalism: firstly, how Christie's detective stories strengthen the subordination of natives, and secondly, how the Oriental setting can be seen as strengthening the suspense found in detective stories – and as significantly, how the Orient affects the Western mind and criminality.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to provide a postcolonial reading of Agatha Christie's representational practices in her interwar fiction: how her stories support the traditions established by colonialist and Orientalist discourses. Throughout this thesis, I have argued that Christie's texts emphasize Oriental inferiority and, indirectly, the superiority of the English, in three interrelated fields, which I have attempted to examine as separately as possible: the Orient as a geographic and cultural location, the Oriental people, and the imperial presence in the Orient. Similar to Said's theoretical aim in *Orientalism*, the focus of this study has not been to discuss the verity of Oriental representation in Christie – whether the depictions of archaeological sites or nature hold any realistic value, for example – but, how Orientalist discourse often operates systematically in order to regulate and contain the Other, the Orient, in Christie's narratives.

As my analysis of Christie's representation of Oriental space demonstrates, it is possible to argue that Christie's Orientalization of the Middle East operates according to several facets, which seems to contradict the claim that Christie directs very little interest to the geographical setting in her detective fiction in general (Bargainnier 1980, 37). What I find particularly significant in the division between portraying the Orient as exotic and romantic and the method of depicting the Orient in a wild state, is their connection to the concept of time. Christie's treatment of the Orient as a historic entity full of archaeological and tourist sites is a direct consequence of the imperialist agenda, the objective to control and essentialize the Orient. It explains the representation of the Orient as exotic and historic in Christie's texts and, foremost, its increased visibility compared to the modern Orient which is depicted in a state of decay. The latter representational practice is not, however, trivial in Christie's texts: in addition to confirming the Western sense of superiority, it embodies the Western fear of losing control of the "wild" Oriental regions and poses a threat against the civilized Western mind – as witnessed in the effect that the Orient has on Western people. There is another competing discourse in Christie which draws

attention to the colonialist motivation to maintain the Orient in a state of stagnancy: finding the Orient distressingly modern for Western expectations. I argue that this not only exemplifies the Western anxiety over change, but demonstrates the West's fear that the Orient, "the little brother", will eventually evolve "too much".

The process of Othering demonstrates the flexibility of racial categorization, since similar imagery may be found in the representation of various colonized peoples throughout the world. This process inevitably entails a statement of what it means to be English, European or Westerner: Western identity is formed through polar opposition with the Other, through the Other's deficiencies as well as the notion of "excess". Even though I have argued that Christie's texts support a colonialist ideology which objectifies, fetishizes and homogenizes the native identity, I claim that there is a wider phenomenon at work: Christie's writing constructs an "empty" Orient – without a native population. This emptiness justifies British imperial invasion and is illustrated in Christie's method of treating the Orientals as a faceless mass and, moreover, in the large-scale omission of native characters in the stories examined. Thus, considering that all of the texts are situated in the Orient, it is striking how little attention Christie directs to the natives' existence and living conditions. As a consequence, the Orient becomes Westernized: the natives attain visibility only when deemed necessary from a Western point of view – or to be precise, when they carry sufficient instrumental value. The latter becomes evident – or the lack of it – in Christie's representation of native women: since women do not hold any servant positions in the Western households, their existence is obliterated from the stories almost completely. I find this particularly significant concerning Christie, since various scholars have begun to study Christie's detective stories from a feminist perspective.

It is the visibility of the imperial presence in the Orient which most accurately characterizes Christie's Oriental fiction during the interwar period: in other words, even though the Orientalization of the Middle East and the process of Othering guarantee the subordinate status of

the Orient in Western imagination, they would be less effective if Christie did not portray the imperial presence as normal in the colonized region. In fact, Eurocentric ideology and the consequential normalization of Western machinery ultimately govern Christie's Oriental representation. My detailed study of the imperial hierarchy in Christie's Anglicized Orient presents, however, another interesting phenomenon: the division of Western presence according to national as well as racialist stereotypes. This system of hierarchy and the competition between the British and Americans suggests significant motivation for further research with regard to Christie: whether Christie includes the hierarchization of nationalities in her other stories.

In addition to providing a postcolonial study of Christie's fiction, it has been the aim of this thesis to discuss whether the Oriental setting and Orientalist discourse affects Christie's detective stories. My inspection of these questions illustrates a definite need for such examination. I argue that by ignoring the native presence from the detective work carried by Mr. Parker or Poirot and assigning certain form of criminality to the Orientals, Christie's detective stories not only verify earlier Orientalist stereotypes – they develop and deepen the hegemonic Orientalist representation in popular discourse. There are three features that I find most significant in the Orientalization of Christie's detective story. The first is more related to the structure of Christie's detective narratives, the generic conventions: the Orientalist representation of the Orient as exotic and wild emphasizes the sensation of suspense found in detective stories. In Christie, this is mostly achieved through the method of foreshadowing, where the descriptions of Oriental nature evoke a premonition of danger – that something evil will eventually take place. The second method of Orientalization originates from the corruptive influence of the Orient on the Western mind. Consequently, the Orient does not only inflict fear in Westerners; it can be regarded as having a more criminal effect: the wild Orient functions as a catalyst for Western murderous feelings, and the Oriental history of barbarity justifies these sensations. The third feature is related to the instrumental value carried by the Orient in Christie's murder plots: white characters pass as Orientals in order to avoid criminal suspicion as

well as placing guilt on the faceless Other. As the findings of this study demonstrate, there is a definite need for further research when it comes to Christie's other "exotic" locations and, most importantly, with regard to Christie's contemporaries writing during the interwar period.

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