HOW FAIR A PLAY IS THIS?
A Formalist Analysis on the Clues of Agatha Christie

Bachelor's thesis

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Tämä tutkimus analysoi vihjeiksi määriteltyjen tekstisisältöjen suhteellista huomattavuutta Agatha Christien *Appointmen with Death* -teoksessa. Tämä tapahtuu painottamalla formalistista lähestymistapaa kirjallisuuden analyysiin, joka sivuuttaa kirjailijan kontekstin ja ennemmin ylentää tekstin, sen muodon, ja sisällön merkitystä lukukokemukselle. Näin tekstiä arvioidaan välineenä, joka välittää lukijalle tarinan lopulliselle ratkaisulle olennaista informaatiota. Agatha Christien huomattava suosio ja vaikutus etsiväkirjallisuuden konventioille motivoi tutkimaan hänen tekstiään kriittisesti. Christie ymmärretään mestarilliseksi genrekirjailijaksi, mutta tätä vasten hänen juontensa suhteellista reiluutta genreen sopivana pelinomaisena tekstinä ei olla tutkittu. Tämä tutkimus yrittää tavoitteena täyttää tämän konseptuaalisen aukon.

Tutkimusdatana käytettiin Christien *Appointment with Death* -teoksen vihjeitä, jotka kerättiin kriittisen subjektiivisen lukemisen kautta *close reading* -metodin avulla. Löydetyt yksittäiset vihjeet jaettiin niiden sisällön mukaan aiheittain seitsemään kategoriaan, joista käsin niiden tekstillistä muotoa tarkasteltiin numeerisesti ja laadullisesti. Tämän lisäksi vihjeiden välittäneiden metodien ja hahmojen laatua tutkittiin samoilla menetelmillä.

Tutkimuksen tulosten mukaan Christie käytti erilaisia tekstillisiä keinoja sekä painottaa että piilottaa vihjeidensä merkitystä. Vihjeitä löytyi aiheittain huomattavan vaihtelevia määriä, ja niiden sisällön katsottiin paikoitellen jopa vaikeuttavan lukijan lukuprosesseja ratkaista kirjan mysteeri. Vihjeet eivät yksinään viitanneet todelliseen ratkaisuun, vaan niitä tuli arvioida yhtäaikaisesti ja yhdistellä näennäisesti irrallista informaatiota. Vihjeitä välittäneet hahmot myös sisälsivät ristiriitaista kuvailua, minkä nähtiin hankaloittavan lukijan analyysia. Tutkimus osoitti tämän kirjan vaativan lukijalta erityisen kriittistä lukutaitoa, vaikka vihjeitä olikin saatavilla läpi tarinan.

Tulevissa tutkimuksissa muiden Christien tarinoiden tai etsiväkirjallisuuden ylipäänsä tarkastelu samoilla metodeilla voisi havainnollistaa genren monipuolista ja monimutkaista laatua entisestään.

Asiasanat – Keywords Agatha Christie, classic detective fiction, genre convention, clues, close reading

Säilytyspaikka – Depository JYX

Muita tietoja – Additional information

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1 INTRODUCTION

The study portrayed in this paper concerns the literary genre of classic detective fiction and its textual nuances with a focus on elements present in the fiction of Agatha Christie. Detective fiction itself includes numerous subgenres with their own structural and thematic focuses to their writing styles and intended reading experiences, but my focus is on only one. The variety deemed *classic*, to which Agatha Christie's stories is seen to belong, has its own pervading conventions as genre literature. Following concise tropes, classic detective fiction is intentionally built with certain dimensions of readership cognition in mind, and I wish to analyze the basis for this activity by surveying the form of the text.

As observed by many in the field, classic detective fiction is built for the reader to think about the events therein in an analytical fashion (Huhn 1987: 459; Dove 1997: 19–22, 42; Gutkowski 2011: 51). Through this practice the crux of the story, a concealed or confused crime, can be mused on, perhaps even solved by the reader before the story's eventual disclosing. To uphold this possibility for *fair play*, certain story elements like character actions or whole narrative episodes are meant to be distinguishable from the text to the reader to make logical conjectures. In a traditionalist view on the genre, only through this alignment – the inclusion of relevant text to solve a mystery – can a story fundamentally *be* classic detective fiction. This text related to the solution has been coined *clues*, and their importance for the genre as convention is indisputable.

Considering this importance, this study attempts to find, collect, and analyze the clues found in *Appointment with Death*, a classic detective fiction story by Agatha Christie. This is done to appraise their prominence in aesthetical and contextual terms, identifying *how* Christie has utilized clues. This explicit focus on Christie is appropriate, considering the influence her large library of detective stories has had in popularizing many of the genre's conventions. Adding, Christie's extensive popularity encourages to consider her practical prowess critically, so this analysis will function as a critical reading of Christie's work. This type of read has so far been neglected, as her literature has largely not been analyzed for its formalistic content. I attempt to fill this research gap by finding how an Agatha Christie novel portrays clues and therefore, the major genre conventions.

This study is staged as follows: For theoretical background in Chapter 2, I shall review literature on processes of finding and attributing meaning in text, as this study finds applicability from the field of *formalism*. This is followed by an extensive appraisal of the notion of *genres* and *Genre theory*, which with the history of the *detective fiction* genre form a basis for my interpretation on the conventions in

Christie's literature. The ways Christie's work has been analyzed shall be gone over briefly, which emphasizes the lack of the kind of focus my study aims to undertake. Chapter 3 showcases the research questions while the data used to inform these questions is reviewed in Chapter 4. The classic detective fiction book *Appointment with Death* has been chosen for analysis, and the data thereof consists of the clues highlighted in the plot to be the relevant factors. The data is collected into 7 tables by individual factors and their respective examples of clues in-text (see Appendix). *Close reading* was employed as a collection method by repeated critical readings of the book. The data is analyzed in length in Chapter 5, which sees to critical analysis on the form, relative prominence, and surrounding context of specific clues. This is done to survey the kinds of deductive activities the book demands from the reader; therefore, critically evaluate the genre conventionalization present in Christie's text. The study ends on the conclusions thereof in Chapter 6.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The conversation about the influences and intricacies of Agatha Christie's canon traditionally falls into the paradigms of literary analysis and its many subsidiaries, including stylistic reviews. I shall list some of the common discourse and analytical literary fields that are applicable to the focus of this study. Relevant concepts to be stipulated on in this study includes *formalism* and the practices of reading interpretation therein. *Genre theory* concerning *conventions* found specifically in the *classic detective fiction genre* are likewise critical and will be gone over in length.

2.1 Finding meaning in a *formalist* inspection

My study concerns clues as textual elements in a narrative that are meant to evoke deeper consideration from the reader by authorial intention. On the topic of authorial intention, there is long-lasting discourse on how much of the writer's surrounding context should be considered when contemplating meaning within a text. For the goals of this study, however, the author's intention is seen as central to the creative process behind a text, but it is not imperative to consider in the analysis of the reading experience. Hobbs (1990: 19) and Lyas (1992: 142, 144) express this inclination well by stating that the author of a text does not control how it is received; their role is causal to the inception of text, but whatever meaning they intended to be read in a work does not necessarily translate to the reader. Reader reception is defined through the reading, so the text and its formal elements like lexicon and pragmatic dimensions in word choices must be possible to be considered in isolation. In such a view, collecting these elements quantitatively and stipulating on their in-text surroundings is worth a thorough survey.

Important to the focus of my study, then, is the analytic field of *formalism* in text and literature. Formalism is part of a foundationalist philosophy on the interpretation of text, where the reader's constructive reading activity has a definite basis in the text. The text exists as aesthetic form, and it informs the reader's understanding of narrative and whatnot (Oesch & Rantala 1999: 33). Foundationalist and formalistic leanings have been notably criticized for this line of thinking. The scholars of reception study, for one, prefer to underline the contextual cognitive processes rather than have interpretation be constricted by the textual form (Mailloux 2001: 41; de Man, 2001: 327). By this skewed understanding, formalism forces the reader to focus on the text as isolated form and ignore the influence of the context on the processes of both the writer and reader.

The prospect of formalism, though, is the emphasis on text as a craft of content, where the content is what allows for all subsequent constructive activities. One cannot stipulate on something that does not exist. Text has and *is* perceivable form, making case for formalistic approaches of analysis. The specifics in the form of content informs the interpretative processes of the reader because, as Hawthorn (1985: 31) puts it, "everything we read in a novel comes to us via some sort of 'telling'". A formalistic survey inevitably offers distinct and necessary knowledge on the nature of the text for its intentional and interpretative dimensions; therefore, it should not be ignored.

From a formalist point of view concentrating on the form of text is apt because only through focusing on text as crafted content may we start to analyze and stipulate on parts and dimensions of said text. Hawthorn (1985: 75) finds that the writing techniques, i.e. perceivable textual elements which guide the reading experience, can only be discovered through such a preliminary look. Text must then be considered visible and quantifiable form, and only then the textual dimensions and affected experience springing from them can be described systematically (Moore 1970: 25).

This study is meant to find the formal textual elements of a narrative, i.e. what can be found in the text *as* text. Adding, a focus on this specific kind of text hinges on their special nature as *clues*. This notion contains that clues have been coded with authorial intention for meaning, which is then made transparent with an explicit clarification of such in-narrative by the characters. In this view, text-as-form carries undeniable categorical meaning, so my focus involves a formalist approach.

2.2 On *genre* literature

To consider Christie's work, which has been deemed to exemplify the genre of *classic detective fiction* to an exceedingly influential degree, we must note the genre in question and the whole notion of genres. Genre and its encompassing conventions in the matters of content and form shall be regarded as the theoretical baseline for the aims of this study.

2.2.1 *Genre Theory* and form

Genre is a sense of type that is formed through collections of works that encompass certain *conventions* in their form and expectations for a supposed audience; continuing itself in perpetuity through conventionalized creative practices (Bennett 2001: 67–68). Literature, both as matter and practice, has been coded and categorized into specified genres which predominantly guide their audience in selection, reading experience, and the analysis thereof. On genres in literature, Bennett (ibid.) says that reading practices depend on genre expectation, which constructs a context for reading and typified form. Therefore, genre is imperative to consider in literary practices.

G*enre theory*, then, provides a backdrop for stipulating on content and form in literature as according to Moore (1970: 23, 24). Genre theory sees that literature is not created in isolation but crafted in constant intertextual arrangement with the larger historical literary canon that guide audiences and creative practices. Formalism, which sees text as craft and focuses on its perceivable form, is compatible with genre theory; for both, textual form is essential, and can be identified to contain certain meanings or intentions. Genre codifies form, so the presupposed conventions give certain textual units specific nature as *clues* in classic detective fiction. My study will attempt to outline these codified forms.

2.2.2 On *Classic Detective Fiction*: Convention and Gamification

Detective fiction has been reported on in length due to its unique narrative properties and undeniable popularity starting from the genre's inception in the 19th century. Edgar Allan Poe is noted as the genre's progenitor, and the likes of Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie as its popular model writers. The latter two, however, are seen as writers of *classic detective fiction*, which specifically adheres to notable conventions, distinguishing itself from the larger category of detective fiction.

Huhn (1987), Dove (1997), and Messent (2013) write on the genre, finding that classic detective fiction at large follows certain narrative structures and styles and character archetypes to a codifying degree. Huhn (1987: 452, 455) settles that the traditional classic detective fiction story starts off in relative peace, which is then broken by the discovery of a crime, which in turn is followed by an investigative plot segment as the story's middle portion. The story shall include a detective character of whose machinations the reader is left unaware, whose assigned or self-proclaimed duty is to go through this investigation, gathering or remarking on clues, and explain away the crime in the end

portion (Gutkowski 2011: 52; Messent 2013: 30, 32–33; Pyrhönen 1989 as cited by Salo 2008: 56). By Dove's (1997: 9) remark classic detective fiction "is a retelling of Poe's 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue,'" following narrative structures and elements, making the genre extremely conventionalized. These conventions serve to make its textual elements and reading experience distinct from literature overall.

The intention of classic detective fiction is to involve the reader in a puzzle offered by the narrative, where the characters encounter a crime and infer the obfuscated events from clues invoked by the narration. The specifics of this interplay have been in discourse from the genre's early days, so much so that influential people within the genre took to forming rules by which a story must unfold, notably those of Ronald Knox or S. S. Van Dine (Messent 2013: 30; Huhn 1987: 453; Woeller & Cassiday 1988 as cited by Salo 2008: 26). The underlying motive of this practice was to make certain that the story and puzzle remain fair for the reader (Kinugawa 2018: 164). It is this intention of *fair play* that lays the foundation for the genre. Huhn (1987: 451–455) notes that the existence of the obfuscated events in the narrative make for a highly invested reading. The reader may follow this intention to solve a story, in Gutkowski's (2011: 51) words through an evaluating read in which the reader must consider text as clues, hinting towards solutions; a practice of involved code reading (Huhn 1987: 454–455, 460).

Fair to note is the fact that the genre has been deftly criticized for its seemingly utter adherence to convention, making classic detective fiction more into games than narrative creations. But just as there has been conventionalization through rules, there has also been criticism thereof. Traditional readers would admonish stories if they did not follow the strict guidelines set out, but other readers and writers dismissed their intentions to constrict the possibilities for differing story content (Raymond 1950: 12). The genre has not, therefore, been uniform in specifics, leading to further germination of sub-genres within the larger genre scope, but classic detective fiction was and still is examined through the categorical concept of *fair play* and supposed solvability.

Clues, then, are an indisputably defining element for the genre, and their nature as function and genre characteristic has been reported on. A clue is an element in the narrative of a detective story which suggests the true events of the narrative. These might be objects such as weapons, tools, or personal items, whole narrative episodes, or character attributes like motives or a personality fitting to crime (Huhn 1987: 454; Maida & Spornick 1982 as cited by Salo 2008: 60). Clues work to direct attention towards one or more characters to function as a basis for an interpretation to the solution of the puzzle provided by the story. This framework on clues is lacking, however, as their emerging forms and surrounding context in-story have not so far been surveyed to any large degree.

2.3 On Agatha Christie: Acclaim, Criticism, Clues

The breadth and reach of Agatha Christie's literary work have been duly acknowledged in popular culture at large. Her notably extensive library of detective novels has been considered and analyzed to an extent due to their massive popularity and defining contributions to the genre in the creation and use of popularized archetypal characters and settings. In academic circles, however, Christie's work has been in times branded low brow for their definition as popular fiction, and for this reason the study of her text and style in detail has been neglected (Hardesty 1983: 37; Ewers 2016: 97). It is character, setting, and theme that mostly seem to define the scope under which Christie is surveyed, not the formalistic content.

For one, much has been made of Christie's focus on the English countryside and upper-middle class life as setting for her stories of crime, which functioned as a contrastive background to the heinous acts, or as a surface under which darker human nature lay waiting (Kelleghan 2001: 155; Salo 2008: 70–71). The repeated use of this type of setting functions as a convention specifically for Christie's literature.

Christie tends to be mentioned more in relation to the other defining writers of the genre in overviews of its history and conventions – in comparison rather than outright focus. Huhn (1987), Dove (1997), and Messent (2013) bring up her works in relation to other literature in discussing the overall narrative structure and the intended reader experience conventionalized in classic detective fiction. Salo (2008) follows this trend, using Christie as a proprietor of the Golden Age of Detective Fiction alongside the likes of Dorothy L. Sayers in comparison to the more modern crime novel. Kelleghan (2001) and Kinugawa (2018) review the complexities found in some of Christie's plot structures, emphasizing that they often go unexamined by the reading or analyzing populace. This point, in part, functions as my motivation to investigate her writing from a formal viewpoint.

Gutkowski (2011) and Ewers (2016) respectively go over the structure and themes of a specific novel from her production, but this story focus is rare in the field. All mention the sort of investment and thinking activity the genre and Christie's works offer to the reader as an experience. Likewise, they all consider clues as a major element and convention in that very experience. However, few so far have ever ventured into analyzing the clues themselves in detail as specific elements in-text. Looking at Christie's novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, Salo (2008) lists some clues with their apparent examples in-text but does not go on to stipulate on their nature outside their number. Kinugawa's (2018: 175–176) stand that character natures and their actions themselves function as clues to the

puzzle in Christie's fiction is relevant to my focus. Whatever element in the plot might be marked as a salient clue, it is relevant textual form to consider in the reading activity, and Christie's work deserves an analysis thereof.

Through these overall analyses, we find that Agatha Christie's detective stories are still generally reviewed on the quality of logic and solvability – the sense of *fair play* – in and outside the academic focus (Acocella 2010). This, however, is done without a clarification on how the figurative play is made fair in the text. Clear as well is the lack of focus on the formalistic and contextual emergence of clues, the very element that makes this acclaimed quality of fairness possible in the reading of classic detective fiction.

3 RESEARCH AIMS AND QUESTIONS

This study aims to partake in on the discourse surrounding the classic detective fiction genre and Agatha Christie's literary prowess through analyzing the latter's text. This is done partly to rectify the apparent lack of focus on the dimension of fair play through the portrayal of clues, which has been noted to be paramount as a genre convention in Chapter 2.2. With this focus, the study will further illuminate the nuance and value found in Agatha Christie's literary canon and writing practices as pertaining to the classic detective fiction genre.

The specific aim of this study is to discover the clues in-text of a Christie detective story and evaluate the textual strategies she has employed to uphold the communication necessary to stay within the estimates of fair play. The form and relative emphasis of the clues in-narrative prior to their clarification as relevant units will be considered to analyze their prominence and visibility for the reader in formalistic terms, including the in-story context. The practice will inadvertently showcase some of the intricacies found in writing for the classic detective fiction genre, whereby the study expands the understanding thereof as a literary field, adding also to the tools of analysis.

I seek to discover the clues, their form, and context in text through the following research questions:

1) What clues can be found in the classic detective fiction story?
2) Where in the text are these clues portrayed?

Answering these questions demands a clear collection of textual units from the story for subsequent analysis. This shall happen through qualitative means, as I must identify the clues and their nature through subjective reading. To muse further on the nature and contextual prominence of these clues, I add two more analytically inclined sub-questions to expand the topic:

3) How many times is a single clue mentioned in-narrative?
4) By whom is the clue mentioned in-narrative?

By my understanding, these expanding questions contribute greatly to how a clue in-narrative is considered by the reader. This is especially the case with the latter, as the primary reader of classic detective fiction is intended to be upheld on the grounds of fair play noted in Chapter 2. As the reader is meant to make logical conjecture and analyze the story events themselves, the believability of characters is a major factor to consider. If an outwardly deceitful or evasive character brings up something concerning the crime or events of the story, can the reader trust their accounts to build on their theory? Likewise, if the primary narrator is an opinionated character in-story themselves, are

their views on certain clues considered fair for the reader? Through these questions, I will find how much is expected of the reader to note and consider critically in their reading.

4 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Data: *Appointment with Death* and its clues

The data used in this study is comprised of text lifted from the novel *Appointment with Death* by Agatha Christie, published first in 1938. The specific copy surveyed was a reprint by William Collins Sons & Co Ltd from 1981. The book belongs to the *Hercule Poirot* canon of Agatha Christie and features the eponymous detective character solving a murder case in one lengthy narrative.

This degree of conscious choice of a book from Christie's considerable library of work was intentional, because these narrative elements and structural features are deemed qualifiers of the classic type of detective fiction, on which my study focuses. Two more attributes guided my choice: Firstly, I picked a story I had not read before so that my past reading experiences with it would not steer my examination to any pre-established designation. The in-context events of the book, therefore, were unknown to me, but there was one aspect outside the book's nature as classic detective fiction I sought out in my selection process.

The second attribute which led me to *Appointment with Death* specifically was its setting; as mentioned in Chapter 2.3, Christie tended to reuse and replicate the same type of setting for her detective novels in the English countryside, but *Appointment with Death* takes place entirely in Jordan, which is a clear breakthrough from her established convention. I had a personal disinterest in giving that familiar type of setting repeated readings in my study due to my status as an avid reader of Christie's work overall. Therefore, my criteria for the novel led me to *Appointment with Death*, as it is a classic detective fiction story featuring a prominent detective character, which I had not read before and which uses as its setting something outside the English countryside.

From the book I gathered relevant clues-in-text into separate tables formulated in Microsoft Excel which shall serve as my primary data of analysis. Using these tables of clues, I can move onto comparing their forms and analyzing their relevance in relation to the themes opened by my research questions. This analysis includes critical thinking to infer the relative prominence of the forms of the clues in the dimensions of context and aesthetic. My analysis is based on the interpretative practices and processes which stem purely from the form and content of the text.

4.2 Methods of collection and analysis: Detective work and *Close Reading*

To discover the clues in a text, I employed reading strategies and methods of collection to elevate and compare these findings. It is through the text itself that I found the basis to guide what text to elevate for analysis; namely, the significant units of clues in-text.

As was mentioned in Chapter 2, classic detective fiction stories include within them a portion where the central detective character summarizes the events of the narrative in a logical fashion, drawing conclusions to clues which direct the blame of the obfuscated crime towards a certain party. As mentioned by Ewers (2016: 117), in this segment the detective character puts a final note on what is the truth of the narrative, leaving for the readers to assess their own conjectures on the clues. From this in-narrative segment, then, one can find the author's explicitly intended logical through-line for the story, and what clues mattered for the correct solution. In *Appointment with Death*, this clarification segment lasts from chapter 15 to 18, and chapter 18 is wholly dedicated to the description of the true events leading to the murder, the relevant clues and factors to pinpoint the one culprit, and their motive. I let this portion of the book function as the basis for my data collection. From there, I found and listed the factors by which clues can be distinguished from the narrative as elements or events mentioned prior.

Important to note, however, is the fact that the actual textual form in which the detective frames a clue is expectedly not in the same textual form in its portrayal in-narrative prior. The differences in syntax and specific lexicon between these different mentions are wholly anticipated. Therefore, I, as the primary data collector, employed critical reading strategies to find these mentions through considering the semantics and pragmatics in-text. I must locate the same element – the clue – which has been mentioned in different forms in different stages of the narrative. For this end, I employed the method of *close reading*, which is outlined by Lemov (2016: 60) to function as follows:

> "To Close Read is to study both the parts that fascinate readers right away and those that may escape initial notice; it is to work diligently to make sense of the parts that resist meaning-making even after several passes. … Close Reading includes the study of language— the denotation and connotation of words, the meaning of phrases both formal and idiomatic, the subtleties of subordination in sentences".

In essence, close reading is critical conscious reading, and through it, I have found the relevant units to elevate for my comparative analysis. The narrative, by Allen's (2001: 181) understanding, will

include enough significance to relevant details. Through a critical lens and with aid of the list of clues to search for these units are bound to be visible if the book upholds fair play sufficiently.

My collection process included multiple readings of the book in question. On the first read, I read through the narrative in ease to come across the detective's explanation segment naturally. Adding, the first read also helped to familiarize myself on the narrative structure, which in Hawthorn's (1985: 69) words allows for a more careful subsequent reading, allowing for me to note the relevant text easier. Huhn (1987: 459) also considers rereading as a sound practice especially when dealing with classic detective fiction, to see the logical connectors between the clues. At the point of the detective's explanation segment, I wrote down the relevant clues in a legible list. Through a second chronological read with close reading, I sought the clues in-narrative and wrote their specific form down in connection with the detective's future elucidation on said clues.

Much like Salo's (2008: 60–65) method of listing, I have marked down the relevant factors of the crime story as noted by the detective character and attached examples of the clues linked to the factor as portrayed in the narrative prior. I also mention the form of narrator or characters partaking in the dialog of the scene to answer the fourth research question. Outside this, I will also refer to the text outside these specific clues to evaluate the characters' nature as reliable or sufficiently aesthetic for the reading experience.

5 ANALYSIS

The analysis of the clues and their surrounding context of *Appointment with Death* shall be divided into three major categories: I shall first analyze the whole and comparable number of the clues in Chapter 5.2, followed by the contextual and formalistic analysis of their content in Chapter 5.3 which goes in depth into the clues by factor. The analysis will end on stipulation on the textual methods of narration and characters that convey these clues in Chapter 5.4. The relative prominence of the clues and their conveyance in the text of the book will be illustrated through these focuses.

5.1 Summary of *Appointment with Death* and the clues

To better support understanding of the plot of *Appointment with Death* and the context of its clues, I have taken to summarize the prime premise of the story as follows:

Sarah King and Dr. Gerard are two unaffiliated medical experts who meet on an excursion in Jordan, and they encounter the American Boynton family who, likewise, are on holiday. The elderly matriarch of the family, Mrs. Boynton, is noted and shown to keep her accompanying adult children under close surveillance, and they are victims of constant stress from her psychological and monetary control. The cast comes together again in their camp destination in Petra, joined by three other characters: Mr. Cope, a family friend of the Boyntons, Lady Westholme, an English noblewoman and politician, and Miss Pierce, a "vague little middle-aged lady" (Christie 1981: 50). In Petra, Mrs. Boynton instructs her family to go on a walk with most of the party, staying behind in the camp herself. During dinner that night, Mrs. Boynton is discovered to be dead where she sat for the afternoon and evening. Hercule Poirot, a renowned traveling detective, is called in to investigate the circumstances of this death, and he conducts cross-examination of the party. From his findings Poirot deducts the true events which took place on the journey, and that the murderer of Mrs. Boynton is Lady Westholme, who promptly commits suicide.

From Hercule Poirot's explanation in chapter 18 of the book, I have gathered the relevant factors A–G (see Appendix) by which the reader is supposed to realize the clues which direct towards the true events and real Culprit of the case. The appropriate clues of the story can be categorized under these seven factors. I have taken to summarize the detective's thinking and the factors as follows:

The Victim's sadistic personality (Factor A) led her to threaten and confront the Culprit, resulting in her death. The Victim's wish to be left alone by her family, peculiar to her controlling nature (Factor B), is meant to clue in on the fact that she wished to meet someone outside her immediate family – namely the Culprit. The Victim had made an indirect threat towards the Culprit beforehand (Factor C), which can point towards the Culprit's identity. The Witness's testimony of the Victim being alive at a certain time is untrue, and this is due to her overall unreliable and unobservant nature (Factor D). Following this, the reader is meant to realize that the Culprit's testimony of seeing someone attend to the Victim is likewise false, now due to the logical impossibility of perceiving so much detail across such a long distance (Factor E). The Victim and Culprit have a prior connection by a shared history; the Victim knew the Culprit was a former prison convict through her career as a prison wardress (Factor F). The Culprit had made a life for herself afterwards by marrying an English noble by chance (Factor G), and logically wanted to evade the scandal of having her past come to light, leading to murdering the Victim after being threatened.

With these factors gathered, I can stipulate on the contextual and formalistic content of the clues-in-text to see just how the reader is expected to fill in the blanks and connect different clues together.

5.2 Analysis on the numerical amount of clues

Through close reading according to the detective character's end statement, I have found 37 relevant units of text that function as visible clues clearly linked to one or more of the given core factors. As was mentioned in Chapter 4.2, this collection was based on noticing multiple disconnected units of text through a critical read of the whole story.

As there has been no prior research on specific clues or their number within classic detective fiction stories, it is difficult to surmise what the number found in this study means in relation to the genre. Within the scope of this one book, though, it is possible to compare the number of clues by their relative factor to discern some of their relative prominence. The repetition of a story notion can make it more observable to the reader's eye. By this comparison some of the clues can be deemed thereby more or less noticeable than others, making the amount and thereby form of the text relevant for the intended reading practice.

In *Appointment with Death*, there are clear differences in the number of the clues (See Figure 1). The variety in Factors B through F is close in numbers, fluctuating between 3 and 5 in an outwardly even manner. Against this seeming balance of clues is Factor A with 16 clues connected to it in a huge

comparative jump in mentions. This extensive difference is emphasized further by Factor G, with only one clue connected to it. From this comparison, Factor A: *The Victim's sadistic nature* comes off evidently more conspicuous by its clues than any other factor in the narrative of the book. Logically, the other factors are less prominent to the reader by numerical clout. The amount of textual units may then contribute to the demand of reader skill to make out relevant information, as some of it is more pronounced than the rest. The reader may not trust the story to repeat certain information in balanced amounts and must, therefore, consciously focus on the content of any one instance of text to discover the relevant clues.

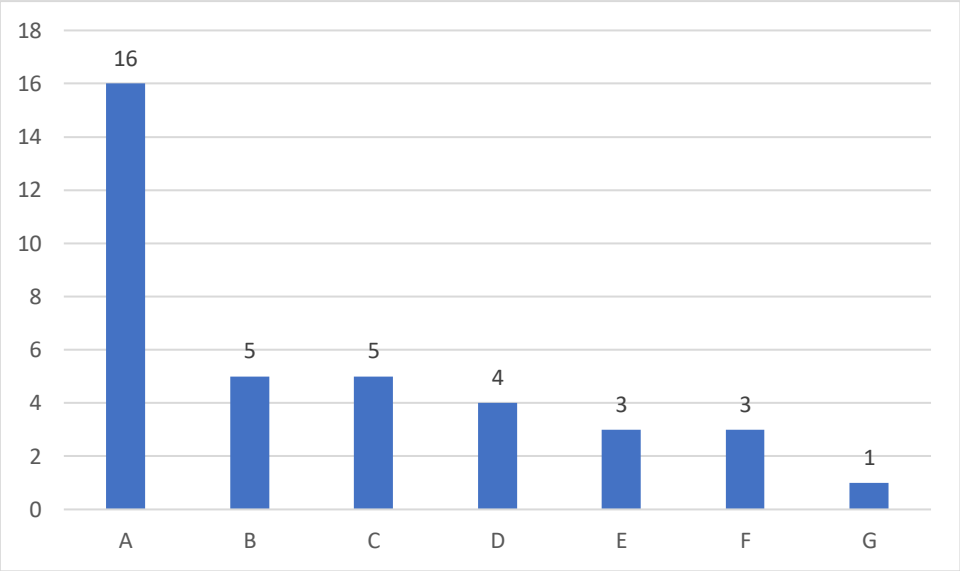

Figure 2. Number of clues by factor

The clues of *Appointment with Death* can be classified to fit different categories of textual content. Character actions, attributes, and whole narrative episodes are reported, assessed, or commented on waywardly in the book. This is in line with the notions on clues as stipulated on in Chapters 2.2 and 2.3, as "characters and their actions serve as clues," making them worth consideration when reading classic detective fiction (Kinugawa 2018: 176). Factor A, for one, contains many outside assessments of the Victim, Mrs. Boynton's mentality, but also a report of her actions in a past event (See Appendix: Table 1: 1.11). Factor C relates one event, and its clues mostly refer to it (See Appendix: Table 3). Factor D is likewise to Factor A mostly about a character attribute, and it is conveyed through outside assessment as well as two events portraying that characterization (See Appendix: Table 4). The clues, therefore, are evidently portrayed in different places and by different methods, making their forms varied in the narrative.

On the matter of the number of clues, possible uncertainty in the division of text must be noted. The selection and lifting process included cutting a textual unit from the larger narrative, and with this

came one notable difficulty: how long a text can be classified as a single clue? For example, in this study, two clues deemed distinct from each other may be part of a longer whole. Clues 1.6 and 1.7 (See Appendix: Table 1) are uninterrupted in the narrative, yet they are classified as separate units here. The choice to divide them was according to subtle nuance in their content; clue 1.6 can be seen to focus on how the occupation of wardress is connected to the sadistic mindset, whereas clue 1.7 more explicitly refers to the full extent of sadism present. These two units of text are judged as distinct from each other content-wise while retaining the connection to the one factor. This division, however, still retains the same possible faults that come with subjective determination practices, but the margin of error is not high. Factor A would still retain its relative prominence in comparison to the other factors whether clues 1.6 and 1.7 were counted as separate or not.

5.3 Contextual and formalistic analysis of clues

5.3.1 *Factor A*: The difficulties that come with a sadistic personality

The Victim of the murder case in *Appointment with Death*, Mrs. Boynton, is characterized with one extremely salient character trait: sadism in the form of control and threats towards her immediate family and even those outside it. According to the detective explanation, noticing this personality trait is important to solving the case, as the Victim seeking to extend her sadistic control over the Culprit is what causes murderous retaliation. The clues relating to this factor are events that demonstrate this sadistic personality and assessing character statements thereof.

The Victim's sadism itself is easily distinguishable to the reader, as multiple different characters use charged descriptions of her throughout the whole story. For one, the word "tyrant" and derivations thereof are used to describe her actions numerable times (See Appendix: Table 1: 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.10, 1.12). "Malignancy," "cruelty," and "evil" are likewise charged attributes connected to her actions (See Appendix: Table 1: 1.4, 1.8, 1.10). Her being "mad" is vocalized twice by two separate family members who are framed to be her primary victims, making their statements trustworthy by proximity (See Appendix: Table 1: 1.1, 1.9). From these sorts of repeated descriptions and evaluations the reader may easily accept the Victim's sinister nature towards her family. It is another matter to consider whom else this sadism could target, which is the logical endpoint this factor is intended to imply.

Characters muse that sadism and seeking control must be the foundation for the Victim's whole personality and *modus operandi*. Dr. Gerard calls it an "underlying compulsion," noting that it must have directed her occupational choices to where she could have had "power over other human beings" as a prison wardress (See Appendix 1: 1.6). The notion of it being a "compulsion" could indicate that the Victim might target anyone in a fitting situation, but this is in no way explicitly stated in the clues. For all its mentions, the clues connected to this factor do not generally mention the Victim having any specific targets outside her immediate family.

The only concrete clue to such behavior is in a narrative event relayed by Mr. Cope, in which he tells the incident of a maid mistreated by the Victim (See Appendix: Table 1:11). The Victim is mentioned to have been "quite kind to the girl," which blatantly contradicts the characterization set up in the narrative prior. The strong contradiction works to make the event notable to the reader. This note is followed by the Victim casting the maid out, making the portrayal consistent again. Dr. Gerard comments on the event, theorizing that the Victim was pleased by her own actions. This reading of the event comes off consistent to the Victim's personality, and the cruel actions depicted may make it memorable to the reader.

The last clue to this factor before the explanation segment comes in a theory by Dr. Gerard. He analyzes that the Victim must have come on this holiday to Jordan to seek "opportunities for inflicting fresh pain" in the place of her family, who have so far grown predictable (See Appendix: Table 1: 1.16). The concept of a "new thrill" outside what she is used to does not explicitly refer to finding new prey, as is the eventual case with the Culprit. Dr. Gerard's theory contains the notion of her family "rebelling" and inviting punishment; again, focusing the attention on the Victim's family. The detective Poirot states the accuracy of this theory with charged appraisal: "It is perfect," he claims. Complicating the matter, the reader has no way to know for sure that Poirot is considering an outside target where Dr. Gerard is not. This final clue is especially prominent to the reader due to the appraisal since the detective's thoughts are to be considered vital in reading classic detective fiction (Hardesty 1983: 39; Gutkowski 2011: 52). The clue, however, does not convey the relevant implication of the factor – simply that sadism was both the means and the goal for the Victim.

Factor A is made prominent to the reader by the number of clues connected to it as well as the charged language therein. Against this prominence is that the clues do not outright convey the logical conjecture the reader is meant to undertake. The Victim is saliently sadistic towards people, but this does not in itself suggest someone unaffiliated to her family. The possibility of an outside target is not conveyed in the clues bar one.

5.3.2 *Factor B*: Oddness emphasized

The Victim, Mrs. Boynton, instructs her family to suddenly go on an outing without her. This is in clear contradiction to her overbearing and controlling nature which has been noted by narrative events and character testimonies prior and afterwards. It is this contradiction that functions as basis for this relevant factor, as the reader is meant to question *why* she did this. The clues linked to this factor (See Appendix: Table 2) are likewise questioning the Victim's motive, or at least emphasize the event's oddness by comparison to her personality.

The word choices highlight how this action is out of character for the Victim from the very start, as she gave this encouragement "with unexpected amiability" (see Appendix 2: 2.1.). This amiability is likewise framed as "sudden", "unusual" and "definitely sinister" both by other characters and the third person narration (See Appendix: Table 2: 2.2, 2.4). These strong and opinionated attributes work to charge the nature of the event as suspicious. With this methodical explicitness the emphasized oddness plants the question *why* the Victim acted this way in the reader's mind, making it a salient factor in the case. Raising reader questions is the primary practice in reading classic detective fiction as noted by Dove (1997: 19, 22), so the explicit form of the text supports conjecture.

The detective Poirot lists his notes on relevant facts and follows the point about the Victim's overbearing control over her family right away with the point on this whole action, effectively juxtaposing the two contradicting facts (See Appendix: Table 2: 2.5). Even without any opinion or guesswork therein, this listing order highlights the oddness of the event. The question *why* goes unanswered in the narrative for long but the characters muse on the Victim's motive. Dr. Gerard calls it a "devilment" (See Appendix: Table 2: 2.3), theorizing that the Victim likely intended to get something out of this practice. What that elusive something might be is not considered further in the narrative, so it is left purely to the reader to realize that the Victim sent her family off so she could meet someone else – the Culprit.

This motive might have been intended to grasp by considering Factors A and B side by side in the following equation: Factor A says that the Victim was a sadist by nature, and Factor B says she oddly sent her primary victims, her family, away. Therefore, she must have intended to be sadistic towards someone outside her family. This is how the detective Poirot concludes the events to have been in chapter 18 of the book. As Factor A is mentioned to have been very pronounced, it also subsequently emphasizes Factor B by the virtue of contradiction. The reader is then meant to connect separate clues to theorize correctly. The clues of this factor are charged and emphasized in the narrative, making

them detectable to the reader; it is finding the reason for the Victim's action which demands logical conjecture from the reader.

5.3.3 *Factor C*: The misdirection of a threatening episode

Confronted by the focal character Sarah on her cruel demeanor, the Victim makes a statement with a threatening, accusatory tone: that she "never forgets", and she's "never forgotten anything, not an action, not a name, not a face" (See Appendix: Table 3: 3.1). The statement is left hanging in the air, open, so the reader is bound to wonder about its meaning and true target in the narrative. Characters referring to this narrative episode likewise are impressed and troubled by it. In truth it was certainly directed towards the Culprit who was in attendance in the moment, so this factor is relevant as a clue to their connection and the threat being a preliminary motive for murder.

The text of this episode already explicitly notes the apparent ambiguity of the target of the threat, with the narration stating that the Victim, Mrs. Boynton, "seemed to address, not Sarah, but some familiar spirit", "not even looking at [Sarah]" (See Appendix: Table 3: 3.1, 3.5). This threat, however, carries an accusatory tone, with the use of the imperative "remember that", so it veritably conveys the meaning of having a supposed target – even if it is not Sarah per se.

Of people noted to have been around and aware of the conversation aside Sarah there is only one: The Culprit, Lady Westholme. Sarah "fancied that Lady Westholme had been quite close by" (See Appendix: Table 3: 3.2). The form "quite close by" places Lady Westholme as adjacent to the event and a stand-by in the episode. This is followed by Lady Westholme herself stating that she "saw [Sarah] talking to [Mrs. Boynton] at the hotel" (See Appendix: Table 3: 3.3), which is then resuscitated by Sarah to Poirot later (See Appendix: Table 3: 3.5). With these textual forms, Lady Westholme becomes the one other character who has a noted presence in the event aside from Sarah, which would logically make her the prime candidate for being the target of the threat.

Sarah recalls the event a few times in the narrative with heightened emotions. These repeated mentions of the episode may work to clue the reader in on its importance, but the focus in these clues-as-text is skewed away from the threat itself. Sarah is embarrassed of her own conduct in the event, and notes on it far more frequently than the Victim's threat when referring to it. Twice she mentions to have "made a fool" of herself, and once that she "felt like the most complete ass" (See Appendix: Table 3: 3.2, 3.4, 3.5). On all occasions of recollection, she is mentioned to blush as well, making this a highly repeated form of text. Through this personal emphasis, the focus of the event is skewed from

the Victim's statement to whatever Sarah had said in the moment and her feelings thereof. The true relevance of the event, then, is clouded in the narrative by irrelevant information, which itself is typical to the genre (Kelleghan 2001; Messent 2013: 32). The reader must look past Sarah's personal priorities to see which part of the exchange had clout. The event is conveyed through misdirected focus, so it demands substantial critical attention.

To ease the deductive process, the Victim's threatening statement is repeated word by word by Sarah to Poirot, making its specific form and thereby content more prominent (See Appendix: Table 3: 3.5) Interestingly, this explicit repetition comes only a few lines after Sarah again notes how Lady Westholme was aware of the conversation that took place, and it is followed by Sarah's impression that the Victim did not direct the accusation at Sarah. This one whole unit of text includes all the relevant information needed to make a basis for the eventual solution: The Victim made a threat directed at Lady Westholme who was in attendance, setting up their conflict.

The Victim's accusatory statement is also written in italics in both of its emergences in the narrative (See Appendix: Table 3: 3.1, 3.5). This type of emphasized form makes the dialog stand out from the surrounding text, it being the longest string of text in italics in the whole book. The dialog itself is thereby made relatively distinct and noteworthy to the reader.

This one factor exhibits explicit formalistic clarity and textual prominence in its respective clues, with repeated nods to characters relevant to the meaning of the narrative episode. It does include misdirection to its contextual focus skewed by the focal character Sarah's priorities, but the repetition of its intact form emphasizes the importance of the Victim's statement. The Culprit whom the statement is actually directed towards is not mentioned explicitly to have been the target; the reader is intended to process who was present for the event and make logical conjecture from there.

5.3.4 *Factor D*: Connect the blanks of un-observation

The Witness, Miss Pierce, tells in her cross-examination that she alongside the Culprit witnessed the Victim being alive at a certain time. This observation is incorrect, and the Witness simply went along with what the Culprit said in the moment. The Witness's action is not out of malice or any illicit motive, but simply due to her own unobservant nature. She did not notice the Victim being alive, but being impressionable, she took the Culprit's prompt as truth. She docilely conveys this false information to the detective voluntarily without realizing it to be a lie. Her unobservant and

impressionable character traits are what allows this fabrication to stand, so recognizing them in the text is imperative to theorizing the real events of the murder.

The Witness is portrayed to miss out on things happening around her, once by not noticing "the acerbity" in Sarah's snide comments (See Appendix: Table 4: 4.2). Considering that this happened in the context of a light conversation, failing to detect a negative tone is not in itself a sign of exceptional cluelessness. Adding, the event is not lingered on in the narrative to any degree. The trait is arguably present, but it is not conveyed as particularly prominent by its context and word choices.

During her cross-examination, the Witness recalls a personal story which presents her as absentminded. She tells that she tore up a pound note by accident while being lost in debating herself (See Appendix: Table 4: 4.3). This is the only instance of background information for the Witness in the whole narrative; as being text which is solely hers, it may become understandably memorable to the reader. For its specific content, the portrayal of shredding money is likewise a dramatic image, pronounced by the repetition of "a pound note – a pound note!" in the text (ibid.). Although the form and content of this episode are prominent, it does not convey that the Witness unconsciously defers to the opinions of others, which is the crux of her testimony being false. The two traits must be subsequently linked by the reader's thinking process.

The full extent of the Witness's impressionability is exhibited to the reader once in an interesting fashion. The detective Poirot asks her if she noticed him sneezing moments before; she agrees. Poirot follows this afterwards with the explicit clarification of "I did not sneeze" twice for prominent effect (See Appendix: Table 4: 4.4). This episode showcases the mechanism by which the Witness was turned to resuscitate the Culprit's version of events: Someone comments on an event that supposedly took place in her presence, and she agrees it to be the whole truth. Due to the detective's status as the arbiter of truth, the reader has no compelling reason to doubt Poirot's claim against sneezing. Adding to its reliability is the context of the scene, as he makes this statement only after being left alone. In this moment, he has no character to deceive with a false claim, making this event extremely trustworthy and salient to the reader.

The Witness is hereby shown to be a somewhat unobservant character, and one episode has her agree with the lies of others. Against the sense of fair play, though, is the fact that in her cross-examination she repeats the Culprit-given false information on her own without being prompted. At this time, the reader does not have concrete evidence that she could be wrong. The fact that her understanding of events *can* be imprinted upon in one scene is the only basis to doubt her prior behavior. Therefore, critical consideration is demanded from the reader to extend unreliability to scenes where the Witness

is adamantly sure of events. As the primary content of her testimony includes being with the Culprit, Lady Westholme, the latter is logically also intended to be doubted.

5.3.5 *Factor E*: Distance left to the logic of the reader

The Culprit gives a false testimony to the detective, and this is meant to be deduced from logical contradiction. The Culprit supposedly saw a servant attending to the Victim from where she was situated in the camp, giving herself an alibi. The Culprit describes the servant's clothing to minute detail, but if she truly was as far away from the Victim as she testifies, she realistically could not have made out the detail. In truth, she herself went to meet the Victim in disguise and promptly murdered her. Noticing the logical discrepancy here is important for solving the mystery, because this factor prompts the question *why* the Culprit lied in this instance.

The Culprit, Lady Westholme, is not outwardly portrayed as unreliable or dishonest in the narrative before the explanation segment, so the deception in her testimony must be inferred from its content and surrounding context alone. She gives a lengthy, opinionated description of the supposed servant's clothing, but glosses over his face as being "too far away" (See Appendix: Table 5: 5.2). The same excuse is brought up as well by the Witness, Miss Pierce, for not seeing the man. Missing out on a person's face due to distance is credible enough a concept, but both testimonies also include the openly racist notion that "Arabs all look alike". This would make facial features logically harder yet to recognize for the characters. Focusing on the servant's habitus instead would not seem out of place for the Culprit, who has been framed as an observant individual. The reader, however, must look past this charged language shared by two different characters, and focus on the matter of distance.

The specific distance from the place both the Culprit and the Witness supposedly resided at to where the Victim was sitting is twice noted to be around "two hundred yards" (See Appendix: Table 5: 5.1, 5.3). Both statements come notably from the detective, Poirot, and the latter one is presented in his list of "significant points" of the case. This note from the detective – the primary authority on what is relevant – makes the fact salient and easily prominent to the reader. What the reader is intended to make with this information on the distance is not as clear. The lack of conjecture in the narrative does not support the critical processes to notice the logical contradiction in the Culprit's witness testimony.

It is left purely to the reader to connect the information presented in the clues of this factor, which demands critical and logical consideration. The reader must realize from the number alone that two hundred yards is realistically too great a distance to make out facial features, but it is just as well too

far to distinguish details in clothing. Therefore, the Culprit must be lying, and falsifying information is to be expected in detective fiction (Huhn 1987: 454). Although the necessary information on the distance is stated, it is left hanging without any transparent clarification to its meaning.

5.3.6 *Factor F*: The occupation that hides culprits

The Victim is told to have been a hardened prison wardress in America before marrying into the Boynton family. The past occupation is meant to conceptually link her to the Culprit, who unbeknownst to the reader had been a convict herself. However, the notably few narrative mentions related to this occupation connect it rather more prominently to the Victim's overall personality and subsequent unsavory treatment of her family. The possibility of the Victim recognizing somebody through her previous job is not stated as such.

The Victim's choice of occupation is theorized to correlate with her sadistic disposition. As this personality trait has been noted to be extremely visible (See Chapter 5.2.1), grounding it further in the Victim's backstory might logically serve to make the job similarly prominent to the reader. This sadism is strong enough to guide life decisions, and being a wardress is thereby a charged image. The language characters use to describe notions around this career is likewise strong and opinionated. The Victim's stepdaughter, Carol, states: "She's gone on being a wardress – to us. That's why our life is just being in prison!" (See Appendix: Table 6: 6.1). Carol's use of "that's why" explains the Victim's *modus operandi* with the occupation. The following extreme qualifier "just" and the personal content of the text marks this as a memorable emotional outburst to the reader. Dr. Gerard, likewise, states that the choice of occupation is "significant," and describes the Victim's psychology accordingly (See Appendix: Table 6: 6.2; Table 1: 1.6, 1.7). Being a wardress, then, is saliently connected to themes around the Victim and made a remarkable point by strong comments with merely two mentions to it.

As with factors A and B, the occupation here is not explicitly linked to indicate people outside the Victim's family, which arguably makes discovering the real Culprit a contemplative task. Dr. Gerard speculates that the Victim most likely saw the use of sexual allure throughout her job to explain away an unrelated matter (See Appendix: Table 6: 6.3). This is essentially only a footnote – inside literal parentheses at that – but it is the one unit of text that insinuates the kinds of people the Victim met in her years as a wardress. With this weak emphasis, the connection to a hypothetical character becomes far less notable in comparison to how strongly the occupation is tied to the treatment of her family.

The reader must theorize on the possibility that someone from the Victim's past caught up on her purely on their own, without any explicit guidance from the text.

5.3.7 *Factor G*: The one-time marvel

Having served her prison sentence for an unspecified crime, the Culprit, Lady Westholme, married an English nobleman after meeting him on a cruise ship from America to England. This history is her primary motive to commit murder; to secure her position by killing the one woman who attempted to use her unsavory past as leverage against her. It is, therefore, an utmost important factor to discover the correct Culprit and explain away the crime. Considering this relative relevance, then, it is intriguing that this backstory is mentioned in the text only once – making it in practice immensely easy to overlook for the intended critical evaluation.

The Culprit's backstory is left quite vague in the narrative before the detective makes his deductive revelations. For one, her reason for being on an American cruise is not stipulated on; She is merely reported by the third person narration to have been among "fellow passengers" without any further excuses or explanations (See Appendix: Table 7: 7.1). Her status as a former prisoner in America becomes even less of a reasonable option because her nationality is never stated in the story. This ambiguity muddles the reader's logical thinking process, as the information could just as reasonably to mean that the Culprit was, like her husband, having an excursion from England and merely returning. The reason for her stay is not supported to have been due to a prison sentence.

The reader's understanding that the Culprit's history may have blanks is actively dismissed by the implications of the text. The background segment starts with the introductory sentence "Lady Westholme was a very well-known figure in the English political world" (See Appendix: Table 7: 7.1). In a contradictory sense, the attribute "very well-known figure" here does not include her past in America as a convict; if it did, the Victim could not use it as leverage against her. From the inclusion of this one phrase the reader has no reason to doubt that the Culprit's past life could contain something for the Victim to threaten her over. After all, she is a "very well-known figure" – in the English political and aristocratic spheres at that. The reader has no support from the text to speculate that these extremely gatekept levels of society would fail to research the Culprit's past to this extend, which is the crux of her motive to murder the Victim. What is included in the form of the text, then, counteracts the deductive processes the reader is intended to undertake.

5.4 Analysis of the characters conveying clues

As clarified for the research questions in Chapter 3, the method of narration by which textual content is conveyed matters to the reader's deductive practices in reading classic detective fiction literature. This chapter goes on to stipulate on the relative natures of these methods as presented in *Appointment with Death*: The characters who relay clues and their subjective reliability is appraised through a critical look at their characterization and expository roles in-narrative.

The 37 relevant clues in Appointment with Death can be divided by the characters who convey them to the reader. Notes on who partakes in the exchange of critical information is included in the tables of clues (See Appendix), but this method of division comes with expected, yet considerable overlap in the participating characters. This is because many of the clues come in the form of clarifying dialog between different characters, so much of what has been considered critically content-wise in the preceding Chapter 5.2 comes simultaneously from the minds of multiple characters. However, this degree of ambiguity in division does not erase the fact that some characters are present in relevant exchanges more than others. Some characters, therefore, have more narrative clout to the correct solution to the murder presented than others, so their textual portrayal deserves theoretical consideration.

Much like the division of clues by factor (See Figure 1), the division by conveyance is also lopsided. The relevant information in *Appointment with Death* is presented predominately through the third person narration and the characters Sarah, Dr. Gerard, and the detective, Poirot, with nine to ten clues for each (See Figure 2). These amounts are logical from the framing of the story: From chapter two onwards, Sarah and Dr. Gerard act as the analogues by which most of the machinations of the other characters are delved into, as the two subsequently make their judgements on events. Poirot, on the other hand, has special authority in the story as its central detective character, as he has the genre-set privilege and responsibility to inspect and deduce narrative events and convey them to the reader. The prominence of the three characters as conveyors, therefore, is not unwarranted. How they individually are framed in the text is analyzed.

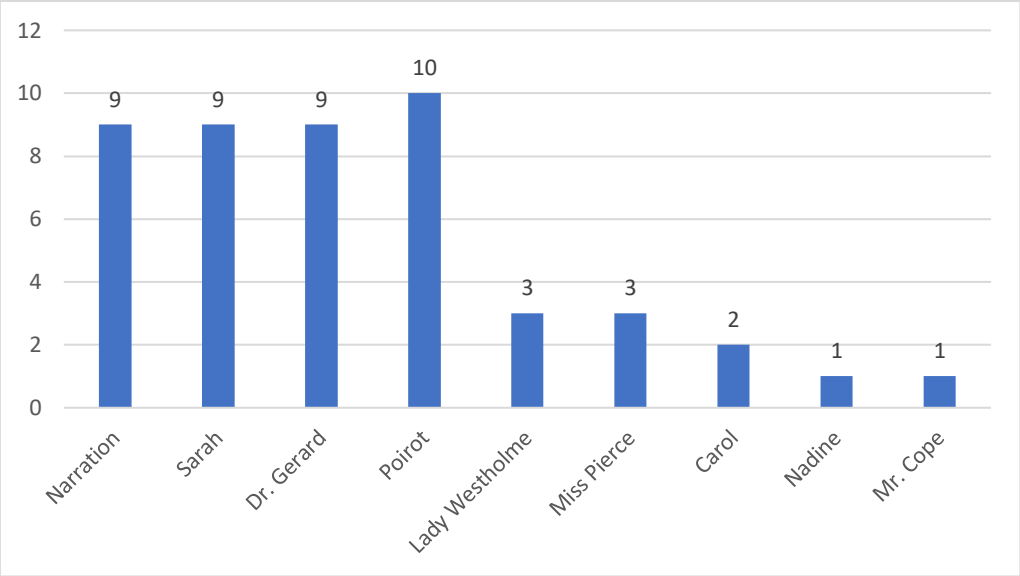

Figure 3. Number of clues by the character who conveys them

Appointment with Death has an omniscient narrator who is not an in-universe character, and this text includes expectedly opinionated and illustrative narration. This type of narrator is traditionally considered reliable in its depiction of the story, so what is not portrayed from the perspective of a distinct character can generally be trusted to be accurate text for the reader to build upon. For instance, clue 2.1 (See Appendix: Table 2. Italics added) contains the text "[Mrs. Boynton] said with unexpected amiability". Here, "unexpected amiability" is not a subjectively judged quality focalized to any single character, so it can be presumed to include no falsehoods. The reader can, therefore, safely consider this action by the Victim to be relatively odd in their critical conjecture. This narration does include moments of misdirection, as in the case of clue 7.1 (See Appendix: Table 7) as explained in length in Chapter 5.2.7. The narration generally conveys important information, but individual moments and character focalization affect clarity. They may skew the content away from what is explicitly connected to the true solution to the murder mystery.

Of the three central conveyor characters (See Figure 2), Poirot comes with the most definite analytical support for the logical conjecture of the reader. He is framed as an insightful and trustworthy individual, expectedly from the genre convention of the detective role as stipulated on in Chapter 2.2. As the dedicated detective character of the story, Poirot would automatically have clout to a genre-aware reader (Gutkowski 2011: 52; Messent 2013: 30, 32–33; Pyrhönen 1989 as cited by Salo 2008: 56). Without that genre knowledge, however, he is still framed as a relevant conveyor of clues from how he is treated and spoken of in the narrative.

Poirot is first described as noteworthy in the narrative on a list of powerful individuals, which ends on the following sentence: "And there's that famous Belgian detective, Hercule Poirot" (Christie

1981: 22). Of the lot, his presence is the only one that awes the listening Dr. Gerard, and this additional attention separates him from the rest. Later he is again deemed a "world-famous person" (Christie 1981: 69), and much is made of his particular area of expertise. Without constraints, he is brought onto discuss the murder case of the story, with repeated remarks on his "expert" opinion thereof being suitably "professional" to the situation (Christie 1981: 72, 76, 79). These word choices emphatically frame Poirot's insight in the field of crime as relevant to finding out more about the mystery. His extensive deductive skills are mentioned by the way of attributes, as Dr. Gerard concedes that Poirot "has great powers" which will resolve the case (Christie 1981: 79). Poirot calls himself "gifted," and implies that his confidence in solving the case is earned since he "know[s his] own ability" (Christie 1981: 79, 83). With these descriptions, Poirot may become almost superhuman in the mind of the reader. Poirot's spearheading role in resolving the murder mystery is also emphasized by the following exchange between the head of the investigation and Poirot:

> "And after that–after you've sifted the evidence and done some reasoning and paddled in psychology–hey presto!–you think you can produce the rabbit out of the hat?"
> "I would be extremely surprised if I could not do so," said Poirot calmly. (Christie 1981: 79)

This analogy for discovering the truth as a magic trick presents the reader with a narrative expectation: Poirot will find what he needs to produce a fitting solution to the mystery through his deductive reasoning. The text around Poirot before he joins the prime investigation supports the reader's trust in him as a conveyor of relevant information. He himself openly frames certain clues and factors as imperative, notably in the case of what is named his list of "Significant points" (Christie 1981: 116, 136). It is presented after Poirot finishes his preliminary cross-examinations of the characters, so it contains information supposedly gathered from those preceding conversations. The reader may, then, logically presume that the cross-examinations contained text that is critical to the solution, and that these individual points should direct deductive processes to some degree.

Poirot's judgement may also guide how the reader thinks of other focal characters. Sarah and Dr. Gerard, noted to be prominent conveyors of clues, are both described or addressed by Poirot to have some professional expertise in their analyses and proceedings. Dr. Gerard shares Poirot's status as being famous in his field, and multiple characters – including Poirot – call him "distinguished" and note his work in the line of psychology as remarkable (Christie 1981: 9, 21, 62, 71). As many of the factors of the case have to do with the personality and history of the Victim (See Appendix: Table 1, 2, 6), Dr. Gerard holds narrative authority in analyzing them due to how he is framed as a perceptive character in the text.

The reader may be guided to believe Dr. Gerard's innocence in the murder case by his own extensive admissions on moral matters; he might debate notions of necessary sacrifice, but he always comes out strongly asserting the sanctity of life. Discussing the medical profession with Sarah, Dr. Gerard states: "To us, Death must always be–the Enemy" (Christie 1981: 61). The use of capitalization in the noun "enemy" here increases its sense as something unacceptable to the character. After the murder takes place, Dr. Gerard declares that his mind will not accept the death of the Victim as a good thing under any circumstances, and says: "*It is not well, gentlemen, that a human being should die before her time has come*" (Christie 1981: 78, emphasis in original). The use of italics in the form emphasizes the sentence from the surrounding text, and its meaning is inevitably tied to Dr. Gerard's characterization. The reader finds this moral standing to be a prominent trait in Dr. Gerard; therefore, he must not have had an intentional hand in the murder. Lies and misdirection are to be expected in reading detective fiction, but this trustworthy portrayal is strongly repeated in the text. His professional status and ardent beliefs stated in the text render his thoughts outwardly trustworthy to the reader.

In comparison to Dr. Gerard, Sarah comes across more personally involved in the events of the narrative, and this may affect how the reader views her statements. Like Dr. Gerard, Sarah makes judgements from the psychological perspective as a medical graduate, and her remarks emphasize certain factors of the case (See Appendix: Table 1, 2, 3). Poirot even asks for her opinion since she is "up to date in [her] psychology" (Christie 1981: 119). Dr. Gerard describes her early on as possessing "cool wits and a resolute will", emphasizing the insights she may offer (Christie 1981: 15). Sarah, however, grapples with her feelings more prominently than Dr. Gerard; her instincts flare up from time to time, and whether she sticks to medical coolness depends on the individual scene. For one, on the topic concerning the medical profession illustrated in the previous paragraph, she starts off feeling the opposite of Dr. Gerard. "I think sometimes, don't you, that a sacrifice is *necessary*…" she says (Christie 1981: 61). Although she comes to side with Dr. Gerard, she still trails off on how death may solve problems, and her true stance thereby remains vague. From text like this, the reader has no clear reading on Sarah's morals, so she may seem less outwardly trustworthy.

Sarah is openly described to be biased on matters concerning the murder due to having a personal interest in one of the suspects: Raymond, a beleaguered stepson of the abusive Victim. She states out loud that she is "going to see" Raymond rescued from his unfortunate family situation (Christie 1981: 14). This event takes place early in the narrative, so it functions as a base characterization moment for Sarah. Still early on, she muses on meeting with Carol, Raymond's sister, and the narration includes the following: "(Be honest now, wasn't it Raymond really she had in mind all along?)"

(Christie 1981: 38, parentheses in original). The imperative form is clearly focalized to Sarah's current thoughts, further emphasizing how her motives gravitate around Raymond. The resident authority Poirot judges Sarah to be "an interested party" due to this affection and even states that he cannot trust her claims on the time of death of the Victim (Christie 1981: 80). However, many of the relevant clues of the case still come through her, so the stated unreliability is misdirection. The reader must believe Sarah despite how she is framed as untrustworthy in the text.

As contradictory as the portrayal of Sarah is, she and Dr. Gerard both come across similarly reliable to the reader because of how the text of the narrative is focalized around their perspectives. As noted before, they are the analogue characters for most of the story, and logically the clues and relevant information are conveyed through their understanding of events. When it comes to the internal monologue of the characters, the reader has no reason to distrust the information therein; logically, their own private thoughts cannot be intentional lies. The instance of focalization to Sarah exhibited in the previous paragraph shows that the narration will include the truth even when the character would not consciously choose to do so. However, the information in some of the clues have distorted focuses due to this focalization (See Chapter 5.2.3), so the reader cannot take them wholesale. Focalization in the text, then, may simultaneously ease deductive processes *and* conceal what is truly relevant to the eventual solution.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The book *Appointment with Death* was evaluated critically through an analysis on its formalistic content elevated with critical *close reading*. The tables of 37 clues (See Appendix) gathered with this method thereby function as data to answer all the research questions presented in Chapter 3. *What clues can be found from the classic detective fiction story* were collected and categorized into seven factors (ibid.). *Where in-text are these clues portrayed* is intact as the text was lifted from the book as is, allowing for the analysis on form and content.

On the further analytically inclined research questions, *how many times is a single clue mentioned in-narrative* is noted in the number of clues assigned to a single table. In *Appointment with Death*, at least, the number of specific clues is highly varied, as clues assigned to some factors of the case are presented considerably more frequently than others, such as clues of the Victim's sadistic inclinations. The comparable lack and excess of clues are found to possibly affect the reader's thinking processes, as some factors are pronounced very little, i.e. the impossibility of the Culprit's witness statement or the Culprit's personal history, which both go without deliberate contemplation. It is difficult to state what this means for the *classic detective fiction* genre, as there is insufficient research on clues and the portrayal thereof.

By whom is the clue mentioned in-narrative is likewise noted in the tables and opened further in critical analysis, and here Christie is found to have utilized three central focal characters to convey the relevant clues. Their contextual portrayal, however, is complex, as two are repeatedly and prominently established as trustworthy (Poirot and Dr. Gerard), but one is framed as suspect by the others (Sarah). This character still relays clues, so the reader must evidently trust even characters that have been framed as untrustworthy by the text. The narrative includes a detective, who, in line with genre convention, is conceptualized as a reliable character who makes notes of his own to guide the reader. His machinations, however, are mostly hidden from the reader who must thereby make logical conjecture from disconnected units of text, which is in line with literature on the genre.

The formalistic analysis finds that Christie's text outwardly adheres to genre convention, as it includes conventional general narrative structure, featuring a detective character, and clues which are explicitly explained to be relevant to solving the mystery. From the inclusion of these elements, the book arguably contains *fair play* which is notably attributed to Christie's literature. Christie sprinkled the relevant information around the narrative in different types of context and varying degrees of emphasis. However, the form-informed degree of prominence of the clues is found to be extremely

varied – at times even impeding the reader's logical conjecture. The eventual Culprit must be inferred from situational context and blanks born from logical discrepancies rather than stated outright. Different factors must be considered more in tandem than one by one, so the reader must theorize on their own to find the true solution, connecting separate units of text.

This analysis served to shed light on the textual processes and intricacies of Christie's detective fiction; a take which has been largely ignored despite her overwhelming popularity and degree of conventionalization. If she is claimed to uphold fair play, it should be distinguishable in her text. The authorities on literature should be able to demonstrate basis for their evaluations, and this happens through a look at the visible craft. Christie's influence and contributions should not go unexamined, as her text may offer nuance to the fields of literature for writing, reading, and genre conceptualization purposes.

The strategies employed by writers are detectable in their text, so formalistic analysis can further elucidate the specifics of the craft, allowing for scrutiny of writers and development of writing and reading skills. For detective fiction genre, finding and categorizing clues by this method can likewise serve to broaden understanding of intended reader activities and techniques to uphold fair play. This study yielded results by data gathering and analysis, so it would be interesting to see the same method implemented in other classic detective fiction books. Due to the extremely limited scope of only one book by only one writer, it is difficult to generalize the findings of this study, but this clearly calls for subsequent comparison.

Further issues in the study come from the method of data gathering chosen, as *close reading* is by nature a subjective practice. A degree of uncertainty in the findings must, therefore, be expected. Some text that may have been intended to refer to a factor might have been overlooked, whereas unaffiliated text could have been lifted into the analysis. Another reader might have different results through this same method, as it was based on inevitably subjective critical consideration. However, for the interest of this one study, the text selected was deemed relevant to the focus by its form and content. *Appointment with Death* itself can be considered critically by another reader to further evaluate the textual nuance in its form as well as the merits of *close reading*.

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APPENDIX: Tables of clues 1–7

Table 1: ***Factor A: The Victim's sadistic nature***

	Clue in-text	*Mentioned by*	*Page number*
1.1	Then she broke out suddenly: "She's mad . . . I'm quite sure she's mad . . . She-she couldn't torture us like she does if she were sane.["]	Carol	6
1.2	"She's a complete tyrant, I think," said Sarah.	Sarah	10
1.3	"She's got a- oh, a malevolent eye!"	Sarah	12
1.4	Dr. Gerard thought: "What an absurdity of an old tyrant!"	Dr. Gerard	18
1.5	[Dr. Gerard] realized that here was no spoilt tyrannical invalid indulging petty whims. This old woman was a definite force. In the malignancy of her glare he felt a resemblance to the effect produced by a cobra. Mrs. Boynton might be old, infirm, a prey to disease, but she was not powerless. She was a woman who knew the meaning of power, who recognized a lifetime of power and who had never once doubted her own force.	Narration	18
1.6	Gerard shook his head. "No, that is approaching it from the wrong angle. There is some deep underlying compulsion. She does not love tyranny because she has been a wardress. Let us rather say that she became a wardress because she loved tyranny. In my theory it was a secret desire for power over other human beings that led her to adopt that profession."	Dr. Gerard	29
1.7	Sarah said: "You think old Mrs. Boynton is a kind of Sadist?" "I am almost sure of it. I think she rejoices in the infliction of pain-mental pain, mind you, not physical. That is very much rarer and very much more difficult to deal with. She likes to have control of other human beings and she likes to make them suffer."	Sarah, Dr. Gerard	29-30
1.8	Gerard said slowly: "I do not believe that when once the mania for power (and the lust for cruelty) has taken possession of a human being that it can spare anybody-not even its nearest and dearest."	Dr. Gerard	31
1.9	"Your mother is mad! She's insane!"	Nadine	41
1.10	[Sarah] had felt that Mrs. Boynton was a sinister figure, an incarnation of evil malignancy. Now, suddenly, she saw the old woman as a pathetic ineffectual figure. To be born with such a lust for power, such a desire for dominion, and to achieve only a petty domestic tyranny!	Narration	46
1.11	"She was going to have a child. The old lady, it seemed, discovered this but was apparently quite kind to the girl. Then a few weeks before the child was born she turned her out of the house." Dr. Gerard's eyebrows went up. "Ah," he said reflectively. "My informant seemed very positive of her facts. I don't know whether you agree with me, but that seems to me a very cruel and heartless thing to do. I cannot understand-" Dr. Gerard interrupted him. "You should try to. That incident, I have no doubt, gave Mrs. Boynton a good deal of quiet enjoyment."	Mr. Cope, Dr. Gerard	61-62
1.12	"And *la maman*, she was unpleasant, tyrannical, disagreeable and decidedly better dead than alive? That also-*hein*?"	Poirot	85
1.13	"A cat enjoys letting a mouse away and then catching it again. Mrs. Boynton had that kind of mentality. I thought she was up to some new deviltry or other."	Sarah	86
1.14	"The mentality of Mrs. Boynton, it is very important in this case," [Poirot] said.	Poirot	89
1.15	SIGNIFICANT POINTS: […] 5. Mrs. Boynton was a mental sadist.	Poirot	116

1.16	["]And it is just the same with an old lady whose recreation (incredible as it may sound) is the dominating and tormenting of human creatures! […] From Mrs. Boynton's point of view it is all deadly dull. [...] And so she plans the voyage abroad. There will be the danger of her tamed beasts rebelling, there will be opportunities for inflicting fresh pain! It sounds absurd does it not, but it was so! She wanted a new thrill." Poirot took a deep breath. "It is perfect, that. Yes, I see exactly what you mean. It was so. It all fits in.["]	Dr. Gerard, Poirot	120

Table 2: ***Factor B: The Victim's odd wish to let her family go***

	Clue in-text	*Mentioned by*	*Page number*
2.1	"You'd better all go for a walk this afternoon," [Mrs. Boynton] said with unexpected amiability. […] "I don't need any of you. I like sitting alone with my book. Jinny had better not go. She'll lie down and have a sleep."	Narration	63-64
2.2	And Mrs. Boynton was the Dragon. A dragon whose sudden amiability was, to Sarah's suspicious mind, definitely sinister.	Narration	64
2.3	"For once," said Dr. Gerard, "the good Mamma permits them to enjoy themselves without her. A new devilment on her part, perhaps?"	Dr. Gerard	65
2.4	"She was not usually amiable, I understand." "Very far from it," said Sarah with a slight grimace. She then described how Mrs. Boynton had released her family from attendance on her. "That, too, was unusual?" "Yes. She usually kept them around her."	Poirot, Sarah	86
2.5	SIGNIFICANT POINTS […] 3. Mrs. Boynton took definite pleasure in keeping her family from enjoying themselves with other people. 4. Mrs. Boynton, on the afternoon in question, encouraged her family to go away and leave her.	Poirot	116

Table 3: ***Factor C: The Victim's threat***

	Clue in-text	*Mentioned by*	*Page number*
3.1	The words came at last-in a soft, husky, but penetrating voice. Mrs. Boynton's basilisk eyes looked, not at Sarah, but oddly over her shoulder. She seemed to address, not Sarah, but some familiar spirit. "*I never forget*," she said. "*Remember that. I've never forgotten anything, not an action, not a name, not a face. . . .*"	Narration	47
3.2	That scene the other day with the old woman-what could have possessed her to march up to the old lady and spurt out a lot of nonsense. Other people must have heard some of it. She fancied that Lady Westholme had been quite close by. Sarah tried to remember exactly what it was she had said.	Narration	51-52
3.3	["]I recognized the old mother as we arrived here. I think I saw you talking to her at the hotel, Miss King." Sarah blushed guiltily, hoping Lady Westholme had not overheard much of that conversation.	Lady Westholme, Narration	58
3.4	Sarah flushed uncomfortably. "Yes. I exchanged a few words with her the day she left Jerusalem." She paused and then blurted out: "As a matter of fact, I made a fool of myself." "Ah?" The interrogation was so patent that, stiffly and unwillingly, Sarah gave an account of the conversation. Poirot seemed interested and cross-examined her closely.	Sarah	89

3.5	Sarah, as always, when she remembered her conversation with Mrs. Boynton, was blushing acutely. "I felt all exalted as though I had a mission! And then later, when Lady W. fixed a fishy eye on me and said she had seen me talking to Mrs. Boynton, I thought she had probably overheard, and I felt the *most* complete ass." Poirot said: "What exactly was it that old Mrs. Boynton said to you? Can you remember the exact words?" "I think so. They made rather an impression on me. 'I never forget.' That's what she said. 'Remember that. I've never forgotten anything-not an action, not a name, not a face.'" Sarah shivered. "She said it so malevolently-not even looking at me. I feel-I feel as if, even now, I can hear her. . . ."	Sarah	124

Table 4: ***Factor D: The Witness's unreliability***

	Clue in-text	*Mentioned by*	*Page number*
4.1	"It's awful, isn't it, but I do hate women! When they're inefficient and idiotic like Miss Pierce, they infuriate me, and when they're efficient like Lady Westholme, they annoy me more still."	Sarah	53
4.2	[…] Miss Pierce did not notice the acerbity and twittered happily on[…]	Narration	54
4.3	"Once," went on Miss Pierce conversationally, "I remember tearing up a pound note that way-not thinking of what I was doing. 'Shall I catch the first train and go to her?' I thought (it was a great aunt of mine-taken suddenly ill), 'or shall I not?' And I couldn't make up my mind one way or the other and then I looked down, and instead of the telegram I was tearing up a pound note-a pound note!-into tiny pieces!"	Miss Pierce	97-98
4.4	"But you remember my sneezing?" "Oh, yes, I remember that!" […] He shut the door and came back into the room with his eyebrows raised. "But I did not sneeze," he murmured. "So much for that. No, I did not sneeze."	Miss Pierce, Poirot	99

Table 5: ***Factor E: The Culprit's witness statement is unbelievable***

	Clue in-text	*Mentioned by*	*Page number*
5.1	Lady Westholme elucidated the statement. "The caves opened onto a ledge. Below that ledge were some tents. Then there was a small stream and across that stream was the big marquee and some other tents. Miss Pierce and I had tents near the marquee. She was on the right side of the marquee and I was on the left. The openings of our tents faced the ledge, but of course it was some distance away." "Nearly two hundred yards, I understand."	Lady Westholme, Poirot	90-91
5.2	"What did he look like?" Miss Pierce, to whom the question was addressed, shook her head vaguely. "Really, I couldn't say. He was too far away. All these Arabs look alike to me." "He was a man of more than average height," said Lady Westholme, "and wore the usual native headdress. He had on 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!" "You could point the man out among the camp servants?" "I doubt it. We didn't see his face-it was too far away. And, as Miss Pierce says, really, these Arabs all look alike."	Miss Pierce, Lady Westholme, Poirot	93
5.3	SIGNIFICANT POINTS […] 6. The distance from the marquee to the place where Mrs. Boynton was sitting is (roughly) two hundred yards	Poirot	116

Table 6: ***Factor F: The Victim's work history***

	Clue in-text	*Mentioned by*	*Page number*
6.1	["]Before her marriage my mother-she's my stepmother really-was a wardress in a prison. My father was the Governor and he married her. Well, it's been like that ever since. She's gone on being a wardress-to us. That's why our life is just being in prison!"	Carol	28
6.2	Gerard pounced on one point. "Wardress in a prison, was she, that old hippopotamus? That is significant, perhaps." Sarah said: "You mean that that is the cause of her tyranny? It is the habit of her former profession?"	Dr. Gerard, Sarah	29
6.3	[“]But the old woman was quite aware of the power of sex. (She will have seen something of it in her career.)[“]	Dr. Gerard	45

Table 7: ***Factor G: The Culprit's history***

	Clue in-text	*Mentioned by*	*Page number*
7.1	Lady Westholme was a very well-known figure in the English political world. When Lord Westholme, a middle-aged, simple-minded peer whose only interests in life were hunting, shooting, and fishing, was returning from a trip to the United States, one of his fellow passengers was a Mrs. Vansittart. Shortly afterwards Mrs. Vansittart became Lady Westholme.	Narration	49