

# THE MURDER OF ROGER ACKROYD

Agatha Christie



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# LE MEURTRE DE ROGER ACKROYD

A CHRISTIE  
NOUVELLE  
EDITION



## AGATHA CHRISTIE, *THE MURDER OF ROGER ACKROYD*

JAMIE BERNTHAL

**Week  
4**

**Bodies  
in the  
Library,  
part 1**



# AGATHA CHRISTIE (1890-1976) & 'CHRISTIE'ANITY



‘During her long life, she killed hundreds of people, endearing herself to an international audience and earning the title “the Queen of Crime.”’ (Pate, 1990)

‘I may lay claim [...] to being an industrious craftsman. [...] An American paper has dubbed me the Duchess of Death.’ (Christie, 1946/2008, p. 5)

First novel published, 1920



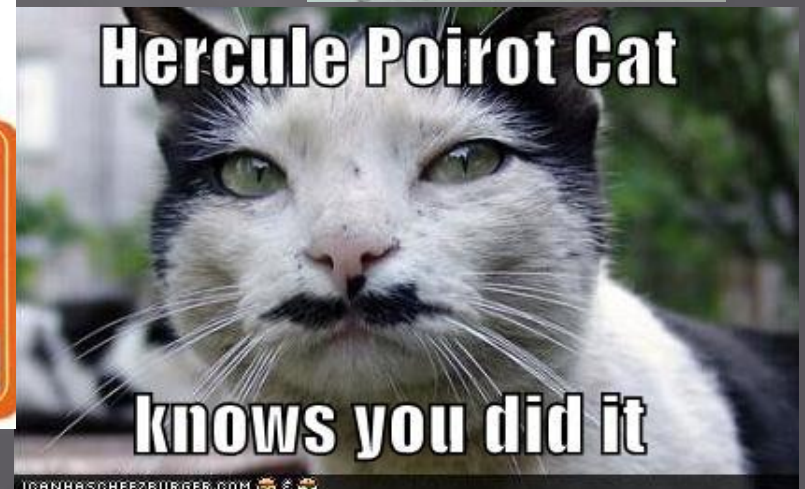
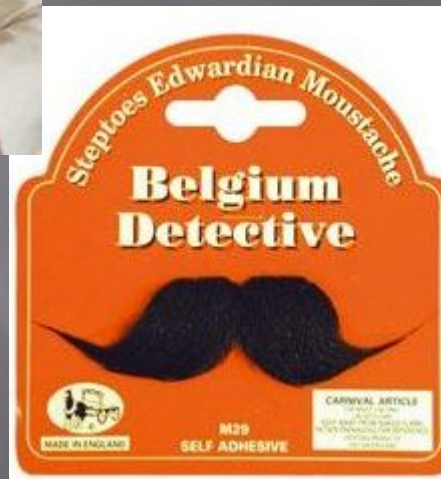
# THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF HERCULE POIROT



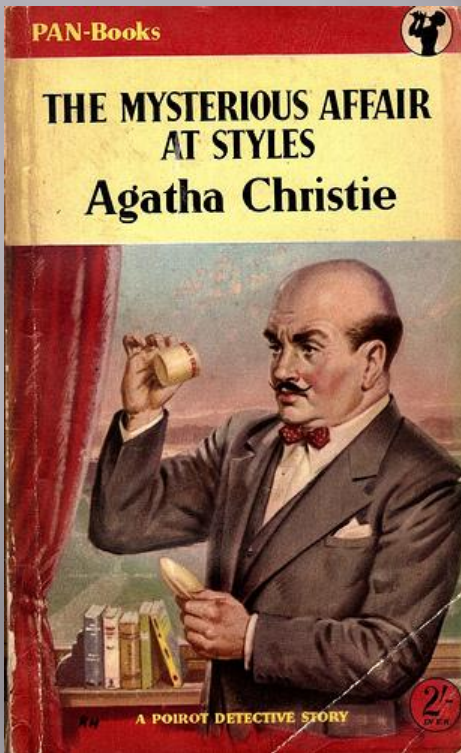
“why did I ever invent this detestable, bombastic, tiresome little creature?” (Christie, 1938/1990, p. 32)



The little grey cells of the brain. We all use them ... to a greater or lesser degree!

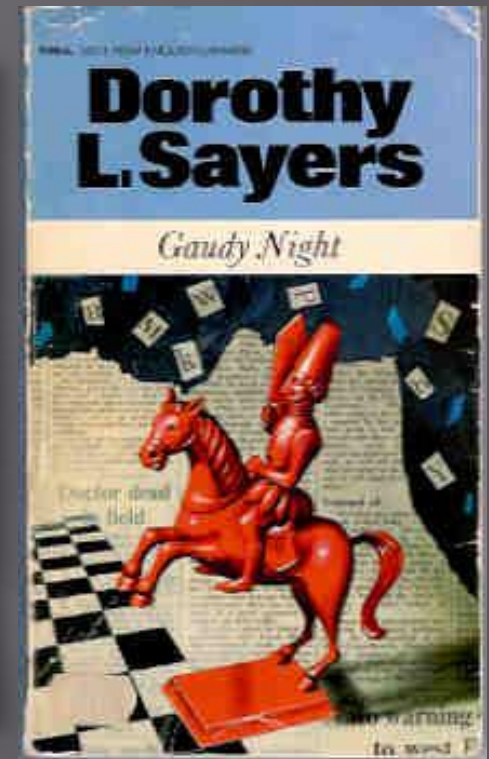


# THE GOLDEN AGE



“It is impossible to keep track of all the detective stories produced to-day. Book upon book, magazine upon magazine pour out from the Press [...] until it seems that half the world must be engaged in setting riddles for the other half to solve.”

(Sayers, 1928/1981, p. 71)



‘If I walked into the detective-story house, I believe I should be able to find my way about it perfectly; it is always more or less the same design’ (Ronald Knox, quoted by Horsley, 2005, p. 37)

# BREAKING THE RULES!

“[This novel was] a departure from conventions that aroused considerable controversy” (Grella, 1981, p. 100).

“The civilised outrage that followed the publication of *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* in 1926 showed what a serious breach of the rules its solution was considered. [...] Agatha Christie [...] constantly challenged those ‘rules’.”  
(Curran, 2011, p. 34)

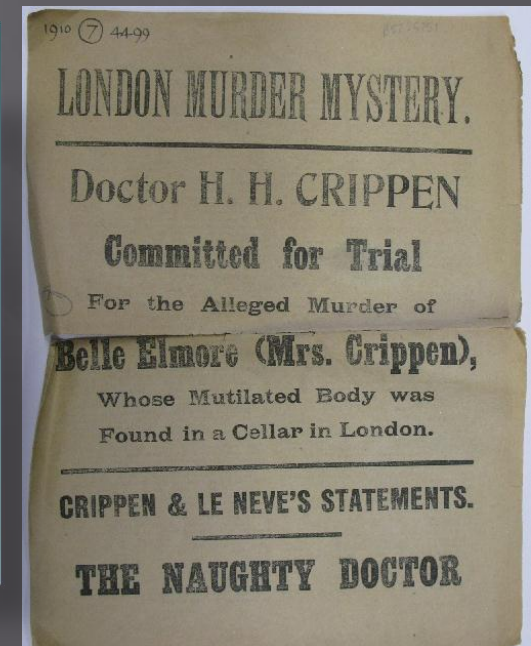
“The author does not devote her talents to the creation of thrills and shocks, but to the orderly solution of a single murder, conventional at that, instead. Miss Christie is not only an expert technician and a remarkably good story-teller, but she knows [the] number of hints to offer” (*New York Times* review, 18 July 1926).

# WATSON, HASTINGS, SHEPPARD

“I was [...] tied to two people: Hercule Poirot and his Watson, Captain Hastings[, ...] a stereotyped creation, but [...] I was still writing in the Sherlock Holmes tradition [...] *Murder on the Links* was slightly less in the Sherlock Holmes tradition” (Christie, 1977/2011, p. 282).

“My mind boggled at the idea of Hastings murdering anybody”  
(Christie, 1977/2011, p. 342)

“*The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* neatly summarises the central fear articulated in Golden Age fiction: that the threat of social disruption comes from within.” (Scaggs, 2005/2010, p. 46).



# POIROT & HOLMES



“Poirot focuses on why a chair has been moved, and he knows that a scrap of starched cambric must come not from a handkerchief but a maidservant’s apron. Before Miss Marple is invented Poirot already represents a heightened version of domestic knowledge as a weapon against fictional disorder.” (Knight, 2005, p. 91)

**‘ “It is completely unimportant,” said Poirot. “That is why it is so interesting,” he added softly.’ (Roger Ackroyd, ch. 8)**

# ALL CHANGE



David Suchet as  
Sigmund Freud

“Let us take a man - a very ordinary man. A man with no idea of murder in his heart. There is in him somewhere a strain of weakness - deep down. It has so far never been called into play. [...] His moral fibre is blunted. He is desperate. He is fighting a losing battle, and he is prepared to take any means that come to his hand, for exposure means ruin to him. And so - the dagger strikes!” (Christie, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, ch. 17)



# GOSSIP

**‘Our hobbies and recreations can be summed up in the one word, “gossip”.’ (Christie, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, chapter 2)**

**‘“I am a gossip,” said Poirot. “I like to know all about people.”’ (Christie, *Dead Man’s Folly*, chapter 13)**



# THE WHOLE TRUTH

- ❖ Christie domesticates Doyle's model
- ❖ Golden Age detective novels are primarily puzzles
- ❖ They are also documents of social change
- ❖ But don't take the rules too seriously, *mon ami*.

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