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# *Appendix*

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## Appendix

### Research Interview with Todd Strasser

An email interview with the author, Todd Strasser was conducted on February 2023. The questions focused on his views and experiences as a writer. Firstly, when questioned about the genesis of his writing career, Strasser replied: “I’ve never quite understood how or why I became a writer. I struggled with reading in school and have always had difficulty with spelling. But in my later teens I began to express my thoughts in words on paper and have never stopped. It helps keep me sane” (Strasser) and he had said he would spend a lot of time on research before writing a book. Secondly, when asked about Strasser’s opinion on the ‘biggest issue that could affect the teenagers of a country’, he responded, “Poverty, inadequate education, insufficient mental health services, a proliferation of guns (in my country)” (Strasser). Thirdly, when questioned if writing can be a coping mechanism for adolescents struggling with psychological problems, he answered as “I do think that writing can indeed be a coping mechanism” (Strasser).

In another interview with *Publishers Weekly*, Strasser had mentioned conducting seminars and workshops on the topic ‘Writing’ for school students at a free of cost to encourage them to begin cultivating the habit of writing, as he said, “I enjoy helping kids and teachers get excited about writing” (Norton). He added that the lack of education to children was one of the biggest concerns. According to Strasser, “I truly believe that a great deal of the issues that we are facing come from a lack of good education available to everyone ... it is even more important than ever. A lot of the problems that we are facing right now find their roots in inequities in education” (Norton). So he made it his motto to ‘inspire literacy’. Strasser’s passion for writing made him enrich young minds through his stories and had encouraged many students to taken up writing as a hobby.

*Publications*

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# Criminology in Literature: Exploring the Subtle Crimes in Shakespeare's Plays

S. Jenosha Prislin\*

Dr. J. Santhosh Priyaa\*

**Abstract :-** “E. Sagarin contends that the only difference between criminologist and literary writers is “method” (Time 5). To fill this difference, a model of comparison with the focus on the dramas of Shakespeare helps to examine the argument that criminology and literature are interconnected. Innumerable dramatists and writers have expressed some fictional and theoretical scenarios that have labeled many of the criminological thoughts today. The paper explores one of the most prominent classicists of all time known to be the Bard of Stratford and his well-known plays are a fine example of his contribution to crime in literature. Some of Shakespeare's memorable characters are not always noble kings and princes; rather he had a deep impact with his villains and their crimes.

**Key words:** Criminology, interconnected, fictional scenarios, crime in literature, villains

The biggest question that ponders over everyone's mind is how far crime is embedded in literature. Is it just a heedless description of uncanny incidents or more realistic embodiment of authenticity? To clarify this many writers of literature had come up with different techniques to expound crime. The deep rooted idea of literature in the field of criminology is undeniably extensive. Innumerable dramatists and writers have expressed the fictional and theoretical scenarios that have labeled many of the criminological thoughts today. Many centuries have passed since Shakespeare ruled the theaters yet the influence of his genius continues to impact the world. Some of Shakespeare's memorable characters are not always noble kings and princes; rather they were villains and their crimes.

“E. Sagarin contends that the only difference between criminologist and literary writers is “method” (Time 5). To fill this difference, a theoretical model of comparison with the focus on the dramas of Shakespeare helps to examine the argument that criminology and literature are interconnected. The paper explores one of the most prominent classicists of all time known to be the Bard of Stratford and his contribution to crime in literature. Also the connection between criminology and literature are highlighted through the dramas of Shakespeare.

“The first texts in English that focuses on crime and criminals appear in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.” (Danyte 6) Many critics believed that crime fiction began with the publication of Willie Collins *Moonstone* (1868) but even before that crime had been a prominent part in literature. Writers of Victorian and Renaissance played a huge role in promoting crime based works through literature, writers such as Thomas Dekker, Robert Green, Awdeley and dramatists such as Shakespeare, Marlowe, Ben Johnson all had their share of crime explicitly explored in their works as a subtle theme. It took years for the genre to outshine the other genres and get its own recognition.

Later through the years many works had crime as their main focus. Such as *Crime and Punishment* (1866) but not only that many other works such as Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841), Sherlock Holmes series (1887), Agatha Christie's *The Mysterious Affair of Styles* (1916) also has crime as their key element. Crime is addressed rather as a multifaceted social conduct which changes through time. Because through the ages crime had been a part of culture, a measure of honour,

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\* PhD Research Scholar (English), PSGR Krishnammal College for Women, Peelamedu, Coimbatore.

\* Assistant Professor, Department of English, PSGR Krishnammal College for Women, Peelamedu, Coimbatore

a means for survival, an act of self-defense, a symbol of poverty, a ladder for social power, or a means for fun.

In order to substantiate their dependency on each other there are numerous aspects of crime that are stated in the literary texts. For centuries many writers had come up with many different scenes and scenarios in their work which had indefinite amount of background works or foreground scenes about murder or transgression. But none had the artistry of Shakespeare to portray an act of crime through the eyes of a criminal. It is said that, "One of the earliest to conceptualize crime in fictional writing was William Shakespeare." (Time 3)

During the Elizabethan age Shakespeare's plays proclaimed crimes of the age. His works are a reflection of the ongoing themes present in the society during his time. Shakespeare also explains the reasons why his characters seek oasis in crime and deviance. Criminology also does the same by trying to understand the reasons for a certain deviance. The themes of crime in the classics have always been overshadowed for centuries. Timeless subjects that have prevailed in the society for centuries are family, love, politics, revenge, ambition, justice but Bard also inculcates retribution, transgression and punishment in his plays. Playwrights' idea of crime and punishment is not vivid but effective.

Some say that Shakespeare expresses human nature more legitly than any criminologist ever did. While looking into Shakespeare's crime, the age background also plays a vital role. Crime and justice was reflected in the words and deeds of his characters. Shakespeare has penned some of the most dangerous usurpers and betrayers in literary history. These villains are no different from anyone because they are the embodiment of human need and greed. They were motivated by their evil needs and this moves the plot forward. From Richard the third to Macbeth there were many disturbing villains. Some of Shakespeare's villains are as compelling as his heroes.

It was believed that Shakespeare drew his idea for crimes based on the true events such as histories -that has happened in and around England in 1551 in a play called 'Arden of Faversham' which was the first play based on true but later his works were filled with references to murder and treasons by compiling the concept through histories. The histories portray a series of events which has treasons, dethronement and executions in its every page. This gave Shakespeare the idea of building his own crime scene with the real incidents as the background. But building up a crime from true events was not an easy task for Shakespeare because he preferred historical crimes to domestic crimes. Ovid and Plutarch have been one of his biggest influences and Shakespeare always turned to their chronicles of England and Scotland for his sources. This does not deny that Shakespeare did include some domestic tragedies in his works such as *Othello* (1603), *Hamlet* (1603) and *Macbeth* (1606) had a domestic world which was familiar to the audience of his time.

During Shakespeare's time punishments were a form of entertainment to people, where people gathered around markets to look at a person being hanged. Crimes such as treason were punishable by hanging and dismemberment while petty crimes like pickpocketing resulted in the offender's fingers being cut. Unmarried and poor women living with a cat would be suspected of witchcraft and would be drowned as punishment.

Being one of the greatest dramatists of all ages, Shakespeare was one of the writers to introduce the subtle theme of crime in his plays. Shakespeare has also included many legal terms and the problems of law in his works. Shakespeare's plays encompass a wide array of 'genre mixture' from beginning till the end. During his time his plays were divided on the basis of tragedy and comedy. Even now this categorization is followed. But a closer look at his plays can prove that there are more genres that are hidden than what meets the eyes. His plays are truly an embodiment of 'mixed genre'. His work has at least three to four different genres incorporated in them. Such one concealed genre that is present in most of his plays is crime. Many of his plays are an evident representation of crime.



Transitioning from simplistic to skeptical criminology Shakespeare has explored it all. Crime plays are made famous by many writers and Shakespeare undoubtedly can join the list. The characters in his dramas are no saint but ordinary human beings with emotions like jealousy, vengeance, revenge and honour well displayed through their acts of plotting, lies, manipulations, and betrayal leading to poisoning, murdering and execution. The acts of indulging in illegal activities such as murder, theft or disguise are considered to be an act of crime. Based on this the quantity of crime present in his plays can be divided into three degrees of crime as expressed in Shakespeare's plays: violent, moderate and petty crime.

Firstly the 'violent crimes' are present in his most famous tragedies where there is no less for gruesome bloodshed. Many of his plays reflect a strong crime theme; they are *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Titus Andronicus* (1594) and *Richard III* (1597). These works are considered to be 'Violent crimes' because there are many 'hate crimes' which are dreadfully violent in nature. These violent crimes bring harm to the physic, emotion and psychology of the victim.

Shakespeare's criminals are not gender biased, a good example for that would be Lady Macbeth and Tamora. Lady Macbeth from the play *Macbeth* is greatly addressed for her clever solicitation, manipulation and non-compassion. Her dark desire for power drives her to ponder her husband into murdering the king. Tamora in *Titus Andronicus* is a vengeful Roman Empress who avenges her son's death by conspiring against Titus Andronicus. Aaron, a partner in all her crimes, promises to return Titus' sons better later beheads them. Claudius in *Hamlet* being a notorious criminal exhibits murder, manslaughter, adultery and regicide. He first usurps the throne by killing his own brother and later marries his sister-in-law. He also makes several attempts to murder his nephew Hamlet.

One of the most hated villains of Shakespeare is Iago from the play *Othello*. Iago being a manipulative character kindles purest manifestations of evil is Iago in *Othello* making him the most hated villains of Shakespeare. Iago is a cunning manipulative character, who kindles Othello's suspicion which leads him murder his own loyal wife. His jealousy for power motivates him to plot against Othello himself resulting in the tragic end of the play. The protagonist in *Richard III* murders his two nephews, his wife's brother and father in order to get the throne while falsely accusing his own brother of these murders. Violent crime mostly revolves around gruesome bloodshed and tragic ends with many people dying.

Shakespeare also includes 'Moderate crimes' which encompasses as a small part of the story that are not too violent. Such crimes can be seen in *Julius Caesar* (1599), *King Lear* (1606), *Merchant of Venice* (1600), *Measure for Measure* (1623) and *Romeo and Juliet* (1597). These plays have a background story and crime is just a part of that story but not a dominating one, making them a little less gruesome.

Cassius in *Julius Caesar* plots against Julius Caesar with the help of Caesar's most trusted friend Brutus, by manipulating false evidence against Caesar and framing him for being too ambitious, in the end they kill Caesar. In the end Cassius himself gets killed for his selfish motives. *Measure for Measure's* Angelo is known for his hypocrisy who fails to follow the law decreed by him. In *King Lear* the king's daughters Regan and Goneril's desire for power and family wealth drove their father insane in the street. Edmund on the other hand was jealous of his brother, Lear and was ready to kill his father and brother for the title. He even manipulates Lear's daughters to give an order to kill Lear and Cordelia. Edmund is thus seen as a villain who plotted against the king of England for his personal gains.

Shakespeare's famous play *Merchant of Venice* is a typical play where law and order is involved. Shylock lends money to Antonio who fails to pay it back within the stipulated time. As a result, he asks for a pound of flesh from Antonio's body as stated in their agreement. Upon meeting at

the court to reach a compromise, Shylock insists on the pound of flesh. But Shylock's daughter's clever argument favors Antonio. For centuries there has been a debate whether Shylock is truly a villain or if he is a fair merchant, however that doesn't explain his insignificance towards the human body. Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet* belongs to the Montague family, he detests the Capulet. He challenges Romeo in many instances. His inclination towards violence makes him kill Romeo's friend Mercutio and finally in return Romeo kills Tybalt leading to a tragic end. Family feud becomes a driving force here for Tybalt's murder.

Shakespeare's comedies also have its fair share of misdemeanors. Unlike tragedies or histories, his comedies did not contain many violent materials but still as far as the law is concerned during the time of Shakespeare's it was a crime to wear a disguise and deceive someone. Even though these acts do not cost much life threatening incidents it creates a slight disturbance in the plot, but since it is a comedy there is always a happy ending with the villain either sent to prison or he escapes when he is found. These works can be categorized into 'petty crime dramas' by Shakespeare.

In *Much Ado About Nothing* (1600) Don John, the bastard brother of Don Pedro had always been jealous of Don Pedro's trusted friend Claudio. He fabricates a lie about Claudio's fiancée to call off the wedding. But just like most of the comedy plays this ends with everyone getting to know about Don Pedro's involvement. In *Twelfth Night* (1602) Viola disguises herself as a boy to work under the Duke. As a result, many confusions arise making the plot intriguing. But it does not deny the fact that she could be jailed for manipulating through false identity. In *The Tempest* (1623) Caliban is a magical creature doomed on an island and was loyal to Prospero and carried out all his evil commands. Both these characters have a dark past which drives them to conspire against Prospero's brother Antonio.

Shakespeare's works in general have always stood the test of time and so have his works on crime and criminals. From petty crimes to gruesome murderers he developed his characters. The characters' evil motives and their deceptions make the plots more intriguing. Crime is nevertheless an art for many writers of today but to Shakespeare and his characters it was a pure form of artistry to express their conceived emotions and evil deeds. We can thus conclude by saying Shakespeare was a crime dramatist and he played a huge part in being an inspiration to modern crime fiction.

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## Revenge as Wild Justice in Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*

S. Jenosha Prislin & J. Santhosh Priyaa

### Abstract

*Murder on the Orient Express* is one of Agatha Christie's most famous crime novels of all time. The novel begins with a group of passengers trapped in a train stuck in a snow storm with the body of a dead person inside. Poirot, a Belgian detective is also trapped in the train and suspects the killer to be one of the twelve passengers on the train. The novel is an intricate mystery crime revolving around a group of characters cut off from the world. Instead of treading from the well-worn path from confusion to clarity, the novel is seen as a problem of ethics but not logic. In this article through the themes such as justice, insufficiency of law, moral law versus written law, deception, revenge, lies and trail by jury, Agatha Christie was able to manifest revenge as a form of wild justice acted against logic but accepted by morals in her novel *Murder on the Orient Express*.

**Keywords:** Crime Fiction; Deception; Intricate Mystery; Justice; Revenge.

The article explores revenge as a means to restore social order because of the insufficiency of the law which had disrupted the lives of many characters. In order to regain justice twelve passengers in the novel act as the jury and punish the criminal. Christie's novel, *Murder on the Orient Express* portrays the far-fetched idea of justice through deception and revenge. She further identifies revenge as a manifestation of wild justice in the novel.

Crime fiction or a detective fiction is a literary genre with narratives that revolves around criminal acts by one or many characters in a novel. The crime becomes the root cause of the plot and the detective trying to solve the case gets involved in the development of the plot. In normal scenarios, the criminal commits the crime because he is driven by a motive. But in Agatha Christie's novel, *Murder on the Orient Express* the motive of 'Revenge' is prominent among her murderers. This paper concentrates on

every character's motive for revenge. Christie tries to show the outer crust of the story and attempts to make her readers understand the deeper emotional impact created in the characters because of an indelible incident that took place in their lives.

Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* is a famous mystery-crimefiction revolves around a murder of a wealthy American criminal, Ratchett. The story is set in the far east of Europe, in a confined train where the crime takes place. Hercule Poirot, an ex-detective who travels in the Orient Express along with the victim and the murderers, helps his friend in solving the murder. Poirot suspects all the twelve strangers on the train and he tries to find the killer before anyone else is murdered.

Agatha Mary Carissa Miller was born on September 15, 1890 in England, UK. She was the youngest among her siblings. Though Agatha Christie wrote six romance fictions under the name Mary Westmacott, she was well known for her crime fictions numbering sixty six. She was married to an archaeologist, whom she travelled with and explored new places. These travel experiences formed the background for many of her stories especially her novel, *Murder on the Orient Express* which was first published in the United Kingdom on 1st January 1934.

The complete plot takes place in a luxury train named Orient Express, where an American tycoon lies dead in his compartment, stabbed a dozen times with his door locked from inside. Isolated in snowy mountains and with the killer on the loose, detective Hercule Poirot must identify the murderer before he or she strikes again. The underlying plot of the story was based on the true story of the abduction and murder of Charles Lindbergh's son around the same period. This dreadful incident forms the back drop for the revenge of the passengers.

The underlying question the author puts forward is to what extent a person would go to avenge for the loss of his loved one. Christie weaves up a tale of mystery and crime which unravels to a heartfelt story of love and loss. With all the twelve characters having a motive where they were not ready to compromise for morals. So they plot and act making the detective struggle with assumptions. Based on the past of every character the truth slowly unfolds in the end.

Christie creates an enthralling narrative of family using flashback technique. The story in the background consists of the murder of Daisy Armstrong which took place in the 1930's in which Ratchett whose real name

is John Cassetti kidnaps Daisy Armstrong for a ransom but ends up killing the child even after receiving the ransom. On hearing this Sonia Armstrong, the mother of Daisy and her unborn daughter die of shock. Later Daisy's father commits suicide.

During the court trial on this case, the nurse who took care of Daisy was suspected, and because of the shame of being blamed for a murder she never committed, she too commits suicide. A group of friends, family and loved ones who are connected with these four people's lives are distorted and shattered. They believed that the reason for their loss began with the single murder of Daisy Armstrong by Ratchett. These friends and family members later plan to avenge him for the murder.

The retired Belgian police officer Hercule Poirot suspects all the twelve passengers who are in that same compartment. Initially, when Poirot informs the passengers the death of Ratchett, several characters expressed satisfaction in his death and that it was deserved. Poirot becomes suspicious of this behaviour. So he tries to find the truth behind each character through his interrogations. He understands that those close to the Armstrong family boarded the Orient Express as everyone of them is related to the deceased. Hence, leading to the belief that everyone had a motive to kill Ratchett.

Ratchett's secretary Hector MacQueen's father was involved in the trial following Daisy Armstrong's murder, which ends up destroying his career. So MacQueen wants to take revenge on behalf of his father. Edward Masterman, who was Armstrong's butler, becomes Ratchett's valet to get closer to him and to avenge him for his master's family. The mastermind behind gathering all the people is Linda Arden who is the grandmother of Daisy Armstrong and pretends to be Caroline Hubbard. Arden also calls her other daughter.

Similarly many characters such as: Mary Debenham, Armstrong's governess; Pilar Estravados, Armstrong's nurse; Hildegard Schmidt, Armstrong's family cook; Dr. Arbuthnot served with Daisy's father in the army and a close friend to him; Biniamino Marquez, Armstrong's family chauffeur; Helena Goldenberg pretends to be Countess Elena Andrenyi who is Daisy's aunt; Gerhard Hardman, an American detective, who was in love with the Armstrong's family nurse and finally Pierre Michel, the accused nurse's brother. All these characters are either friends or family members of the Armstrong's and their only motive is to avenge Ratchett.

The role of Poirot in the novel is important as he was the one who unravels the mystery step by step. Since the beginning he vaguely suggests that, "perhaps, all these here are linked together-by death" (Christie 24) which is the actual truth. The characters are gathered there because of the murder of Daisy Armstrong. Without giving much thought he utters those words but the author second-handily gives out clues through him.

Poirot investigates all the twelve passengers in the train where they all give a negative opinion about Ratchett. Some of them directly express satisfaction in his death. Ratchett had been involved in the murder of many children and some passengers felt as if his death did save the lives of many other children. As Poirot passes by Ratchett's body he feels that a savage wild animal passes by him and he mentions feeling an evil presence emitting from Ratchett. It indirectly defines Ratchett's true character.

Finally Poirot solves the mystery by saying, "Ratchett has escaped the justice in America. There was no question as to his guilt. I visualised a self-appointed jury of twelve people who condemned him to death and were forced by exigencies of the case to be their own executioners. And immediately, on the assumption, the whole case fell into beautiful shining order." (Christie 249). This understanding gave more clarity to Poirot which helped him identify the twelve murders.

Each passenger had a hand in plotting and executing Ratchett's death. The passengers are personally too close to the events of the murder of Daisy Armstrong and her family, so they were not able to make a rational decision rather they completely relied on their instinct and emotions to carry them through the murder. The characters and decisions made in the book *Murder on the Orient Express* revolved around a corrupt theme of justice that the passengers were clinging on to and this made their actions morally acceptable. With the gruesome murder of a child these twelve people's life were shattered and they were pushed to the extent of revenge.

"Revenge is a kind of wild justice; . . ." (26) is the opening line of Francis Bacon's essay "Of Revenge" written in the year 1625. In this essay he talks about 'Revenge' and its role in the human interactions. According to Bacon revenge turns a man into an unconstrained human being, who takes up the law in his own hands. The term 'wild' is often connected with beastly behaviour. What differentiates humans from beasts is the conscience but in the novel these characters lose their humane side and expose their animalistic nature by killing a human being. The term 'wild' is connected with 'justice' to define the cruel method used to attain justice.