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Use of Cognitive Fatigue as a Narrative Device in Golden Age Detective Fiction: Exploring Agatha Christie's Selected Works

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ABSTRACT

Mental fatigue or 'cognitive dulling' is a psychobiological state which occurs when men feel exhausted in completing their work. They abort taking more effort when they cannot prolong working on the same task anymore. This state is induced by extensive work pressure or prolonged functioning of brain cells in resolving a case or a matter.

Similar analogy is estimated in detective literature where the writer has intent to prolong in disclosing the name of the murderer involved in the criminal act in order to distract and deflect the readers at arriving at conclusion. The writer seeks that readers should take efforts to find out the name of the culprit while reading a detective story but when they are not able to find it, they should give up on resolving the clues at last. At this stage, the writer allows his devised detective character to reveal the name of the main criminal involved in crime. It is the writer's intention to induce 'cognitive fatigue' in readers who should keep conjecturing the murderer's name until getting fatigued. It is also noticed that the interest of the readers does not cease; they feel amused when the detective character blows the gaff, and reveals the name of the actual murderer. This brilliant trait was most established in the golden age of detective fiction that employed an intensive mysterious background in its narrative to baffle the readers. Its 'story world' imbibes the intriguing and complex socio- cultural context in the story to distract readers so that they do not arrive at uncloaking the mystery.

In this reference, this work attempts to estimate the foregrounding of the background settings in the narratives of the golden age detective fiction (specially of the selected works of Agatha Christie) that incorporate multitudinous complex settings with the purpose to entangle readers until they get mentally exhausted in identifying the name of the main culprit in the *syuzhet* (story that unfolds gradually).

Keywords: *Cognitive Fatigue, Golden Age, Narrative Device, Agatha Christie, Detective Fiction*

The Golden Age of Detective Fiction

The Golden Age of detective fiction was a popular age of detective fiction that predominantly occurred in the early 20th century. This age occurred between the two World Wars; generally, from the 1920s to the 1940s; otherwise, it achieved its popularity mainly in the 1930s.The term Golden Age was first coined by Edmund Wilson, a critic and writer. Many famous and significant mystery authors penned intriguing novels throughout this age. One of the most prominent writers from this time period was Agatha Christie, often hailed as the 'one of the Queens of Crime', other detective writers were Dorothy L. Sayers, Lynn Brock, Ngaio Marsh, E.C.R. Lorac, Josephine Tey, John Carter Dickson, Margery Allingham, Cecil Street, Patricia Wentworth, Gladys Mitchell, E. R. Punshon and many more, who especially hailed from America, Britain, and New Zealand. This age was distinguished by its employment of complex plots, vice mysteries, whodunits or double narrative, puzzle-solving intellectual methods, red herrings, alibi, varied ratiocination forms, and its unique background settings, complicated *fabula*, keeping in purpose to distract readers in identifying the actual murderer involved in the crime. Otherwise, American golden age detective fiction gained its popularity towards the end of the second world war. It became popular for its hard-boiled techniques, exposing the industrialized modern city.

Many detective writers during this age even founded a 'Detection Club' around 1925 where they would sit together and discuss the compositional behaviour of detective writings. They also agreed to abide by Ronald Arbuthnot Knox's

principles of writing detective fiction. Knox (1888-1957), was an English Catholic Priest and was a Chaplain at the University of Oxford from 1926 to 1939. He was also famous as an author of detective stories, especially 'Decalogue'. Ronald Knox had delivered 10 rules to the detective writers who he believed should follow while writing detective stories. His third rule states, 'Writer must not use more than one secret room or passage to create mystery.' The writers of the golden age followed that rule, like Agatha Christie in her novel allows readers to search for the tools (used for murder) in the confinement of a single room.

The golden age detective fiction employed distinguished background settings in their works that played an important role in building the intriguing and riveting story (*syuzhet*). The intriguing and complex setting in their story affects the psychology of the readers when they remain anxious to know the name of the culprit but can't find it. They get exhausted at one point and suffer from symptomatic mental fatigue. Such detective fiction are complacent and fine pieces of work that create tension, irony, and paradox in the narrative through the use of complex settings to distract readers, so that they keep trying to unravel the mystery, until they realize that narrative was highly intricate and difficult to be resolved. Hence, they surrender in identifying the felon and rely on the declaration to be announced by the detective character.

Golden Age detective novels imbibe picturesque English towns, secluded country houses like in *A Man lay Dead*, old country mansions, remote villages in *Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, isolated islands like in *An*d *Then There were None*, copse or flowery gardens like in *Sleeping Murder: Miss Marple's Last Cas*e, or eerie manor houses, gatherings or party in country houses like in *The Mendip Mystery* or in *A Speedy Death*, or even crowded places like in Josephine Tey's *A Man in the Queue*, a murder on moving road seems to be an accident in *Third Girl*, moving vehicle in *The Orient Express*, an abandoned car in *The Murder on the Burrows* etc. Hence, they are also famous as 'Country House' golden age detective mystery.

While these places look charming and fascinating, they also have a sinister undertone of mystery, suspense, and thus are intriguing, "The golden age of detective fiction began with high-class amateur detectives sniffing out murderers lurking in rose gardens, down country lanes, closed or constrained setting, such as country houses, isolated islands, or trains, a secret entrance in an old home, and in picturesque villages. Many conventions of the detective-fiction genre evolved in this era, as numerous writers—from populist entertainers to respected poets—tried their hands at mystery stories."[1] The purpose of the writers in golden age detective fiction is found to have incorporated these alluring and mysterious settings to arouse the curiosity of the readers who remain perplexed in solving the mystery amidst the secretive and suspenseful world. P. D. James in his article 'Who Killed the Golden Age of Crime?' states specifically to the golden age detective writers, "An original and exciting plot; distinction in the writing, a vivid sense of place, a memorable and compelling hero and the ability to draw the reader into their comforting and highly individual world."[2]

Golden Age detective fiction is also popular for its 'locked room' mysteries, in which crime is committed in very mysterious conditions that seem impossible to have been suspected. The murder victim is found in a locked room or in a bag when no suspect is noticed around. In this case, it creates more obstacles for the readers to discover the malefactor. W. H. Auden asserts in his *Guilty Vicarage*, "The story must feature a closed society so that the murderer is hidden inside the group (with the murderer included, the society is not innocent). The possibilities to meet this condition are: to employ a group of relatives (e.g., a family gathering in a country house); to place the story inside a closely knit geographical group (e.g., a small old village); to have an occupational group as the suspects (e.g., a theatrical company); or to have the group isolated in a neutral place (e.g., an island)."[3]

Despite the fact, the golden age detective writers used maps to explain the layouts of the murder scene to simplify the geographical landscape, the readers get flummoxed at resolving the clues located in the enclosed space. The publisher Dell incorporated expensive 'Dell maps' in these novels.

'Red herrings' are also visible in these writings, which aim to deceive the readers through executing deftly designed settings. Though it was a breach to the oath made by the members of the detection club, 'never to conceal a vital clue from the reader,' the authors deftly inserted misleading clues or suspicious components to draw readers' attention away from the true perpetrator. They employed difficult means to confuse the readers so as to make them engaged with the texts until the revelation begins by the detective character. While Hercule preoccupies himself in investigating the murder of Mrs

McGinty in *Mrs McGinty's Dead*, says he, "I am investigating the murder of Mrs McGinty," Mrs Summerhayes gives an instantaneous reply, "And I do not joke." "Ouch," "I've cut my hand."[4] Mrs Summerhayes cuts her hand while using the knife in the kitchen. It allows readers to imagine Mrs Summerhayes is the murderer because she has given the guilty reaction to the investigation, but she is not the murderer. Similarly, red herrings are also witnessed when the writers do not specify the gender while allowing detectives to investigate or readers to find out. In her novel *The Mysterious Affairs at Styles*, Agatha Christie states, "We all know this hand-writing and—— A howl that was almost a scream broke the silence. You devil! How did you get it? A chair was overturned. Poirot skipped nimbly aside. A quick movement on his part, and his assailant fell with a crash."[5] Here, Agatha leaves a notion of 'gender unclarity' so that readers get baffled at their cognizant specification related to the murderer.

The writers avoided using Res Ipsa Loquitor ('the thing speaks for itself', or literally 'the thing itself speaks') and prima facie. They did not employ blatant violence, a brawl until one killed another, or hideous bloodshed, or a body crippled into several pieces, rather a use of intricate, confusing, paradoxical, and ironic background settings is emphasized to entangle the plot.

Such detective fictions are great pieces of writings that excel in inducing the perplexity amongst readers in finding the 'law breaker', and ironically readers are more surprised when detective (at last) in the narrative uncovers the face of the final culprit. The incorporation of such intriguing and awkward settings in these novels allows readers to keep deciphering the mystery until their guesses collapse. In this entire course, the intention of the writer is to induce 'cognitive fatigue' in readers until the detective character reveals the name. It may perhaps be the propensity of the writer to raise the standard of the text, and to popularize his detective characters. Arthur Conan Doyle's detective character Sherlock Holmes, Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot, Josephine Tey's Inspector Grant, Ngaio Marsh's Roderick Alleyn, Patricia Wentworth's Miss Maud Silver, Gladys Mitchell's Mrs Bradley, E. R. Punshon's Police Constable Bobby Owen, E.C.R Lorac's Chief Inspector Robert Macdonald- a London Scot, or Lynn Brock's Colonel Wyckham Gore are the famous detective characters that have become writers' voices and timeless heroes.

The social and cultural conventions of the period are also reflected in the narratives of Golden Age detective fiction. According to Douglas McManis in his work *Place of Mysteries*, "A plot needs to have a setting as introductory background for a story and […] the setting for a plot should be a fictionalized version of the real-world milieus which characters would ordinarily frequent on the basis of their socioeconomic status."[6] The differences between the upper class, middle class, and the below poverty line are clearly demarcated in these writings otherwise, there is a scarce caste discrimination is found. It allows the difficulty level to rise in identifying the culprit. The numbers of suspects, thereby were enhanced which brings more difficulty to the readers to contemplate how any man from lower strata could have shown courage to enter the mansion or room in order to kill the victim! For example, in *Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, Miss Elizabeth Russell is a housekeeper at Fernly Park, John Parker is butler, Ursula Bourne –a parlourmaid, Geoffrey Raymond is a secretary; all are shown as suspects in the text. At the same time, readers enjoy such a narrative structure which encompasses a large number of suspects.

The stories of the golden age also followed the classic 'whodunit' formula, where a crime, usually murder takes place and the detective (often an amateur sleuth or a brilliant detective) investigates the crime in order to inquire who has committed the crime. Patricia Wentworth and Agatha Christie are famous for 'whodunit' applications. In Wentworth's *Out of the Past*, the famous detective character Miss Silver searches for the murderer amongst many friends who were enjoying the party hosted by James and Carmona Hardwick. In *Wicked Uncle*, Miss Silver investigates who has stabbed the host, Gregory Porlock. Similarly, in Agatha Christie's works almost all the detective characters invest their time in discovering the name of the murderer.

Here, we notice that these authors meticulously build stories by incorporating intricate clues, red herrings, and alibis to distract readers so that they cannot decipher the codes related to whodunit prosecutorial, and henceforth, the name is finally identified by the detective character. The writers of the golden age were adept at using locations like remote country estates, uninhabited islands, and enclosed spaces or queues so as to create dramatic background in the narratives. These carefully chosen settings not only serve as a canvas to craft enigmatic murder scenarios but also contribute to the development of complex motives in enriching 'whodunit' technique. The harrowing use of setting in these narratives emerges as a powerful

narrative device, adding depth and intrigue to the genre's 'whodunit' mysteries, and to delay suggesting the name of the murderer.

Cognitive Fatigue or Cognitive Dulling

Excess of mental stress or physical exercise leads to 'mental or cognitive fatigue'. It often occurs when men work on a difficult task for a long period and they take a lot of stress in reaching to the conclusion or in completing their work. It is caused by difficulty and complexity in work, intriguing methods used in work, intractable environmental factors, or settings used in creating more hurdles for the men in the work. They become anxious and worried, and suffer emotional turbulence when they are unable to finish their task. Its symptoms are like, they get distracted while working, they struggle balancing their emotions, face sleep loss, suffer from anxiety to fathom the result of the work, and they get irritated sometimes due to heavy exertion. It results in lack of mental clarity in probing the cause and purpose associated with the task, and men feel being washed out. It leads to 'analytic depression' when men can't extract more information, create ideas, and analyze the situation. It also leads to 'brain fog' when men perpetrate confusion and can't restore the information. Some even procrastinate, some surrender, some abort, or some hand over work to somebody else. It is well correlated to the tact used by writers in the detective age, who employ contradictory settings or backgrounds in their narrative to distract readers until they get fatigued in completing their task of identifying the main criminal.

Cognitive Fatigue in Agatha Christie's Selected Works

The investigation of setting as a plot technique in Golden Age detective fiction is an engaging field of study. After World War I, a social upheaval, deprivation of food, shelter, and extreme bloodshed, murders, corpses etc. were witnessed by commoners that encouraged this genre to emerge. Some detective writers even suffered the trauma of the wars, some served in the war, like Lynn Brock served with the British Army during the First World War in the Machine Gun Corps. Patricia Wentworth witnessed the death of her stepsons in the First World War. E.C.R. Lorac wrote to her friend on grieving her friends' death during the Second World War, "Most of my other friends have been bombed or burnt out of their homes. What a sickening insanity it all is."[7] Agatha Christie worked in hospital dispensaries during both the world wars as a member of Voluntary Aid Detachment in the Red Cross Department where she learnt about various forms of medicines. Her fiancé Archibald Archie Christie also served the British army in the First World War. These writers witnessed the rise of horrific bloodshed and crime during two world wars, which may have allowed them to write on criminal incidents while they incorporated their own imaginations to bring their works to completion.

A master of this genre, Agatha Christie skillfully uses the complex and conspicuous environment to contrast and enhance the effects of horrific crimes at the epicenter of her tales. Whether it is ostensibly a quiet English village concealing sinister secrets, the secluded and unsettling mansion ratcheting up the tension, or the cramped quarters of a train or airplane ratcheting up suspicion, settings in Christie's novels are than mere backdrops; they are essential elements in the plot that is recalcitrant and unaccommodating. The environment serves as a mirror, reflecting the motivations and inner thoughts of the characters. Christie's skill resides in her capacity to weave together the psychological and physical settings, making them complicated and variegated. For example, in her novel *Death in the Clouds*, she devises a background setting in an airplane. Here the murderer Gale uses the disguise of a dentist to stab Giselle. He stabs her with the dart of the spoon in pretext of delivering it to her, and nobody conjectures it, and the puzzle seems endless to resolve.

In addition, Christie uses a checkered environment to create more suspense. She diligently fathoms incorporating a set of factors in describing weather, time, and architecture in an extraordinarily surprising manner to heighten the suspense and mystery, characteristic of the genre. Intriguingly, Christie's use of setting frequently offers significant hints that the investigator and the astute reader could utilize to crack the cases, whereas the latter fail to solve the puzzles and investigator (detective) is allowed to announce the name during climax. Above all, the readers are motivated to engage in the mental game of deduction by taking into account the arrangement of a room, the positioning of an object, or the idiosyncratic environment behind the crime scene, allows them in unraveling the mystery until they get fatigued and surrender that they cannot find who is the actual offender, and how did he perform the act.

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Agatha Christie use of Complex Setting as a Narrative Device in her Works to allow Cognitive Fatigue

Agatha Christie wrote numerous detective novels that enthralled readers with the interesting mysteries and enduring characters. *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926) by Agatha Christie is a brilliant example of the complex setting as a plot technique. In *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, the environment is crucially unsettling. Many readers in the Golden Age would have been familiar with the village environment, as it is real, and Christie deftly draws her audience in by making use of that familiarity. Though the setting creates a sense of familiarity and relativity to the readers, they still cannot locate the tools associated with the murder. The readers' expectations are subverted when they guess a wrong man to be an assassin, heightening the impact of story twists, and this sense of security is used to deliver surprising revelations, when they are least expected by them.

The story is set in the sleepy English village of King's Abbot; it appears to be a tranquil and ideal place. The work reflects a pastoral setting that remains intact till the end, and the readers get disillusioned looking at the aesthetic beauty of the countryside. King's Abott is a real existence in Great Britain, and the story is set around the 1800s when natives would know each place thoroughly, and would gossip as immediately as any event takes place. John Scaggs in his work *Crime Fiction,* speaks, "Incongruity of a murder committed in a pastoral setting is perceived as ironical and creates a shocking contrast between the peaceful setting and the atrocious crime."[8] All the villagers live harmoniously in the village whereas it is least expected that any murder at that peaceful place could ever take place. W. H. Auden states that the detective fiction must incorporate the place, "The more paradise-like, the greater contrast the murder creates. A corpse found in a well-to-do neighbourhood is going to shock the reader significantly more than a dead body in a slum."[9] Each villager is shocked at Mrs Ferrars death, and they invest their time in discussing her death. Soon after Mrs Ferrars dies, her parlourmaid spreads the information all across, it reaches Caroline, who informs her brother immediately. Such gossips may create a fiasco sometimes too, for instance it is rumoured that she died of over consumption of alcohol, some announce that she committed suicide, whereas some conjecture the conspiracy behind her death. It is noticed that the writer incorporates an excess of gossip to astonish the readers. At the same time, gossip harbours more skepticism amongst the readers in discovering one assassin amongst many characters. Readers keep investigating as they transform themselves in the potentially dangerous syuzhet, otherwise; only the detective character is able to resolve the dodgy plot, and reveals the accused at the end.

Agatha Christie employs possible red herrings to divert readers' attention in relation to the narrative development. Agatha keeps the readers guessing and disentangling the intricate plot full of the varied spectacles in the setting. The story's denouement depends on the discovery of unspoken facts and spectacles, and the setting is also very important in this regard. The layout of the village, the personalities of the locals and even seemingly unimportant aspects like the placement of doors and windows, dress, shoes, Dictaphone etc. play a crucial role in the process of solving the puzzle. Even Dr Sheppard admits that Agatha Christie incorporates, "Some of the incidents seemed at the time irrelevant and unmeaning."[10]

There are two deceased, and the murderer is an acquaintance in the village. He often visits their home and interacts with their family members but even then, readers are not able to find any clue that he could be the murderer. Knox's rule states, 'The criminal must be mentioned in the early part of the narrative but must not be anyone whose thoughts the reader has been allowed to follow.' So Agatha introduces readers to the murderer in the beginning, but she traps readers in a highly complex design of the puzzled syuzhet, that readers can't reach at the conclusion that that man could have been the murderer. Therefore, she slightly deviates from Knox's rule.

Agatha Christie uses all tedious settings to create tension and irony for readers who willingly keep unraveling the name of the murderer until they arrive at a state of mental fatigue. At last, the writer allows detective character Hercule Poirot to reveal the name, who at the same time, was exploring the clues till he embarks on the right answer. "Hercule Poirot's 'little ideas' are not really little at all. They are his solutions to complex, nearly unsolvable, cases. Usually, Poirot keeps the details of his 'little ideas' to himself so he can reveal the entire case in a dramatic fashion—with all the suspects assembled in a room providing an audience for his theatrics."[11] We can call this strategy as Non disclosure of minute facts to defer the conclusion. It is also evident that detective characters possess optimal mental ability to resolve the case, and they do not surrender or feel fatigued in any of the detective works. Hercule is one of those professionals who keep ratiocinating the case until he arrives at conclusion, he asserts, "I shall go through with it to the end."[12]

Christie in her other work *Murder on the Orient Express*, uses the cramped quarters of the opulent train to enhance the mysterious circumstance, showing the complex behaviour patterns of the characters, and ultimately suspicion raises on each character. The novel is set in 'The Orient Express', which aids in creating more tension and suspense inside the story. By increasing the number of suspects and potential offenders, the enclosed and remote atmosphere of the train heightens the mystery.

Due to heavy snowfall, the train is halted between Vinkovci and Brod. At this point, the passengers discover that Samuel Ratchett was murdered in his compartment. There are no police around to call for an emergency investigation, and then Hercule Poirot, who was traveling in the same train, intervenes.

The passengers cannot escape the train, and hence can't flee the investigation process until the train reaches its destination. The writer has shown that each character was traveling in individual compartments. It perpetuates more confusion to find out who was involved in the conspiracy to kill Ratchett. Here, readers are given a very tiny and congested area to revolve around the train in order to find the main perpetrator.

Most of the passengers are rich. Their lavish lifestyle and polite behaviour serve as a metaphor that helps to conceal their genuine motivations, a motto of the writer to bring attention to an appearance against reality—a popular theme in Golden Age detective fiction. The sharp contrast between the characters' external look and their actual comportment is highlighted by the contrast between the luxurious train and the bleak Balkan countryside outside.

'The Orient Express', a representation of wealth and exploration, serves as the setting for Christie's story. This magnificent train provides the backdrop for an original and intriguing mystery with its sumptuous furniture and diverse occupants. All character's actions are emphasized, and the large network of humble socialization and interactions amongst passengers are heightened in the unsettling atmosphere, created in the railway car's constrained spaces. Their humble conversation creates more confusion to identify the real perpetrator in this enclosed environment.

Each character is a microcosm of his class and culture, from aristocrats to domestics, from businesspeople to professionals. Christie uses the setting of the train, heightening the interest of the narrative. As the passengers interact within the train, their various backgrounds (specially affluent and above) and covert motivations collide, creating a rich tapestry of connections and potential motivations. By incorporating social criticism into the story, the environment becomes more significant than just a backdrop. The setting's impact on the conclusion of the story becomes more and more obvious as the narrative goes on. The identification of the perpetrator and the ensuing moral quandary are intricately tied to the environment. Similar to the compartments they occupy, the passengers are distinct yet interconnected—a metaphor for the complex network of humanity. In essence, *Murder on the Orient Express* by Agatha Christie shows the author's skill at using setting as a versatile narrative device. The lavish yet cramped environment of the train parallels the complexity of the characters, adds to the tension and mystery of the story, and directs the plot's development. The constrained scope puts the characters and the investigator to the test, leading to an engaging examination of morality, society, and human nature. 'The Orient Express's distinctive surroundings provide the perfect setting for Christie to compose a symphony of mystery, showcasing her mastery of writing skills.

Besides, she juxtaposes the complex setting by creating the intriguing methods of showing crime in her works. She allows the murderer to use very tiny tools to murder, and to escape gently where no one sees him/her; it implies difficulty for the readers to locate the identity of the assassin. Ratchett's body is found with twelve stab wounds, the window of the compartment is left open to baffle readers when they can opine that the murderer may have escaped from window, a handkerchief with the initial "H" is also placed there, a pipe cleaner is dropped near body, and a charred piece of paper with 'member little Daisy Armstrong' written on it to baffle readers.

And Then There Were None, published in 1939 is a great example of the Golden Age detective fiction, famous for its convoluted plots, cryptic characters, and perplexing puzzles. The story centers on a group of ten strangers who, for various reasons, are invited to a remote island by Mr. Owen. They quickly learn that they are being held accountable for a number of misdeeds that they were involved in, in their past. They assemble at the foreboding and remote estate. Each character gradually dies a strange death, echoing the children's story *Ten Little Soldiers* that was posted in each of their rooms. The island isolates the characters from the outer world, where very scarce humans are found. The characters had reached the

island by boat, and they cannot return to their native countries due to bad weather. It escalates the 'closed-circle mystery' due to a 'trope' of captivity on the island. Characters are imprisoned on the island, and the murderer is believed to have been one amongst them. It creates more difficulty for the readers to find out the main culprit, specially when each character looks innocent.

A further element of intricacy is added by the 'Soldier Island House,' a magnificent yet unsettlingly decorated home on the island. The lavishness of the place stands in sharp contrast to the nefarious activities taking place inside it; once again, it was a skill of a golden age detective fiction in showing superficial layers above a hard reality to distract readers.

While being haunted by the isolated island, the characters find themselves in a luxurious environment. The psychological impact of the surroundings on the characters is clear throughout the entire text. Their exchanges become tense as the characters give way to dread, anxiety, and foreboding. Their psychological conditions are made worse by the island's dark atmosphere caused by torment, which makes them distrustful of one another. For instance, Judge Wargrave, a retired judge, is a main mastermind in the plot. It is rumoured that he is also lost on the island, and the readers assume that he can't be the real perpetrator, but he is the actual criminal behind the entire case.

The island serves as a platform for each character to confront their guilt and deal with the repercussions of their acts when each is accused of a crime they had previously committed. They engage in a morally charged milieu that is shaped by the conflict between the luxury of the home and the horror of their conduct.

In *Death on the Nile*, Christie expertly uses the cruise ship *Karnak* as a plot component, enhancing the entire mystery to hold readers' attention. The setting of the book, which is mostly on boarding an opulent cruise ship sailing down the Nile River towards Abu Simbel, is crucial to how the story develops. The ship's cramped quarters act as a microcosm of society that enables Christie to create a diverse ensemble of individuals, each with their own goals and secrets. John Scaggs opines in support of 'cramped spaces' used in the golden age, "If the setting is cramped and claustrophobic, it could resemble a Gothic locale. Moreover, such confined space can provide an opportunity for an accident to happen and consequently complicate the plot, so the choice of an appropriate setting is essential to the story."[13]

The tight-knit environment heightens the suspense as it becomes obvious that the murderer must be one of the few suspects on board. The exotic and lavish setting of Egypt in the 1930s also contributed to the sense of intriguing and difficult findings. The colonial setting's historical framework, which is based on the issues of class, race, and cultural dynamics, helps to complicate the interactions to take place amongst characters, hence it becomes difficult for readers to find out the real murderer.

Christie also employs the case that takes place around the Nile River. 'The Nile River' symbolizes the passage of time, destiny of the pupils. As the plot gradually reveals the interwoven motives and relationships of the individuals, the metaphor of the river helps to understand the framework of the story. The setting is well depicted in *Death on the Nile*, transporting the reader to a world of opulent traveling, and in understanding its historical treasures. Readers invest their time to understand the ship's layout, the lavish furnishings, and the Egyptian setting to solve puzzles, however even then, they find it difficult in resolving the case by themselves. The cruise ship's cramped environment serves as a venue for the characters' relationships and conspiracies flourish.

Similarly, human behaviour also plays an important role in making the plot more complex. Linnet Doyle nee Ridgeway, who is wealthy and charismatic, is the subject of the growth of conflicts and tensions. Her lavish lifestyle and attractive behaviour inspire envy and anger in the other characters, which pave the way for potential motivations. She is marrying Simon Doyle and this inflicts anger on Jacqueline de Bellefort who was the ex fiancee of Simon. There are a number of flat characters who have also been traveling on the same ship, and the story becomes more intriguing and difficult to resolve. Linnet's maid Louise Bourget; her trustee Andrew Pennington who was suspected of pushing the boulder off, and to exonerate Linnet; Salome Otterbourne a writer, and her daughter Rosalie; Tim Allerton, who stole Linnet's necklace, and his mother; elderly American socialite Marie Van Schuyler, her cousin Cornelia Robson, and her nurse Miss Bowers; a communist Mr Ferguson; an Italian archaeologist Guido Richetti; a famous solicitor Jim Fanthorp; and an Austrian physician Dr Bessner are all suspects in the novel. The main suspect is Jacqueline who is seen, at least at a gap from the boulder that fell off Linnet, and she also shoots at Simon's leg. In fact, the writer heightens the suspense, when the witnesses

are also killed before they reveal the name of the murderer. Louise Bouget and Miss Otterbourne were killed when they were supposed to reveal the names, hence the plot elongates.

The setting in Egypt adds another level of cultural intricacy. The descriptions of the ship, the lavish quarters, and the scenery of Egypt add to the air of richness and mystery. This setting not only keeps the reader interested but also creates the perfect backdrop for a complicated mystery. There is a sense of dread and suspense as a result of the sharp contrast between the lavish surroundings and the nefarious activities occurring. For instance, Jacqueline de Bellefort's personal experience with the rich woman Linnet leaves a significant impact on her passion that she had for her lover. Jacqueline's feelings for her lover and lack of her confidence invokes her to break their marriage. Her motive to murder may stem from her sense of betrayal as a result of her broken heart, and the perceived social embarrassment she received after Simon left her. It encourages readers to believe that Jacqueline could have been the real murderer.

Christie incorporates a few more intricate clues as red herrings in the plot to distract readers from arriving at inference. A good example is the incident where Linnet's pearls are discovered in the maid's cabin. When the opulent pearls are discovered in such an unexpected location, readers mistake themselves at observing that the maid could have been a murderer. Here, only the detective character can judge ably that the necklace is just an imitation of the real necklace. There are many readers who may also observe clues rightly, but even then, they seldom associate those clues to the murderer. There are two nail paints found in the room after Linnet's death took place. The narrator writes, "Finally, Poirot turned his attention to the washstand. There were various creams, powders, face lotions, But the only thing that seemed to interest him were two little bottles labeled Nailex. He picked them at last and brought them to the dressing table. One, which bore the inscription Nailex Rose, was empty but for a drop or two of dark red fluid at the bottom. The other the same size, but labeled Nailex Cardinal was nearly full. He uncorked first the empty then the full one and sniffed them both delicately."[14] The readers may not perceive closely what is the suspense behind the bottles of the nail paints, but Hercule discovers it was strange that the ink of one nail paint was almost empty. Hercule observes later that Simon had used that red ink to apply on his leg to prove it was injured after Jacqueline shot him, though she did not actually shoot.

The unrelenting flow of time and fate are represented by the Nile River itself. The characters are unable to change the direction of the river, just as they are unable to change the results of their deeds. The unstoppable flow of the river parallels Poirot's thorough inquiry, gradually illuminating the relationships between the characters and their developing motives. The character's motivations are shaped by the fascination of Egypt and the voyage. By attempting to use the environment to further his archaeological goals, Mr. Ferguson illustrates how a person's interests can entangle with the environment. His ambitions offer a driving force that is particular to the period and location. Poirot calls all the suspects in the saloon of the ship to culminate the crucial revelation scene, using the cramped space to symbolize how the guilty party's conscience is also imprisoned there. Setting up a dramatic denouement against the unrelenting river of the Nile heightens the tension as Poirot methodically reveals the truth.

Many other writers also used mysterious settings as a narrative device in their writings. Arthur Conan Doyle's writings influenced the development of this genre even though those weren't exactly associated with the Golden Age. His 'Sherlock Holmes' tales were set in Victorian and Edwardian London, which is a major part of the plot. The grandeur of upper-class society, the handsome cabs, the foggy and gas-lit streets, and other elements all add to the atmosphere and support Holme's use of deductive reasoning. Doyle also used varied settings, like the moors in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, to enhance the spooky mood of the story and add a supernatural element. Dorothy L. Sayers was a prominent Golden Age writer known for her creation of Lord Peter Wimsey, a sophisticated amateur detective. Sayers made great use of a remote community in the East Anglian Fens in *The Nine Tailors* (1934). The old church with its recognizable bells becomes a key plot point, and the dreary and barren setting adds to the feeling of seclusion and secret. As the clues and motives are strongly ingrained in the local culture and history, the setting is not just a backdrop but a crucial component of the mystery itself. A New Zealand writer, Ngaio Marsh is well-known for her Inspector Roderick Alleyn-centered detective fiction series. Marsh places the story in London's high society and the glitzy world of debutante balls and aristocratic parties in *Death in a White Tie* (1938). Although the extravagant gatherings and high-end locations give off an impression of grandeur, there is a darker side of jealousy and betrayal hidden beneath the surface. Marsh is able to investigate the setting's contrast between the powerful and the weak, offering insights into the crime's motivations.

John Dickson Carr, an American author who published works under the pen name Carter Dickson, was renowned for his evocative prose and locked-room mysteries. Carr places the action in Paris in a cold winter that is full of ominous fog and snowfall in *The Three Coffins* (1935). The historical city and its landmarks provide a majestic and enigmatic backdrop, and the dramatic weather becomes a crucial piece of the jigsaw that adds to the crime's impossibility. Albert Campion appeared in many of the detective books by British author Margery Allingham. In *The Tiger in the Smoke* from 1952, Allingham places the action in a post-war London that is covered in smoke and fog from bombed-out structures. The protagonist's attitudes and the moral dilemma they confront while looking into the incident are reflected in the city's somber environment and the feeling of a nation emerging from war. The environment serves as a metaphor for the shaky lines separating good and evil.

Scottish author Josephine Tey penned thought-provoking detective stories with deftly devised plots and character-driven storytelling. Inspector Alan Grant, Tey's investigator, investigates historical riddles while lying in a hospital bed in *The Daughter of Time*. Grant investigates the case of the cold death of Richard III, who was killed in a constrained environment, upending the conventional idea of location in detective fiction and proving that even a hospital bed can be an effective narrative tool.

Anthony Berkeley, who published works under a number of aliases, was renowned for his creative storytelling techniques. Berkeley utilizes a private club as the scene for *The Poisoned Chocolates Case*, where all six members who are amateur detectives, discuss and argue the specifics of a puzzling case. The investigators present their theories at the club's closed-off environment, which serves as a forum for intellectual debate on the many viewpoints of the Golden Age detective fiction genre. The environment takes on the function of a meta-narrative device that explores the complexity of truth and the art of detection.

Research Method Used in the Article

This article aimed to find a relationship between the author and the text written by her. It also studied the theme, form, structure, and setting of her works that expose her intention in encouraging 'cognitive fatigue' in readers. Her conversational implicature or pragmatics was also studied that allows readers to try to infer her implied message, till at least denouement.

Overall, a qualitative analysis was put forth in order to understand the intention of the writer who prolongs telling the name of the perpetrator till the end is delivered. In this process, it dwells in reading a few indispensable techniques like usage of red herrings, alibi, whodunit, illusion, distraction, irony, and puzzles, which lead to an effective cognitive fatigue in readers.

Result

The pioneer of the golden age detective writings, Agatha Christie brings readers into a world where setting develops into more than just a simple backdrop—it turns into a dynamic participant in the plot's development representing the complexity of human psychology and the cultural nuances that help an introspection, becoming a difficult process. The environment functions as a microcosm of society, as shown in works like *Murder on the Orient Express*, revealing underlying motivations and conflicts that underlie the character's actions. Similarly, in *And Then There Were None*, the remote island setting heightens the suspense and fear that permeates the story, influencing how the children behave as they struggle with their impending death. These examples show how Christie's diligent use of setting influences the complex web of deception, misdirection, and revelation that characterizes Golden Age detective fiction.

Furthermore, in works like *Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, the interaction between place and character's development is clear. The charming hamlet backdrop serves as a canvas on which the secrets of the people are progressively revealed in addition to creating a sense of familiarity. By using these narrative strategies, Agatha says in prologue to *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, "The place must be definite and ordinary (e.g., a train, a hotel, a country house, or a party), and must exist in time and space, it cannot be abstract or unusual."[15]

She selects pastoral settings also to bring delusional networks for the readers so that they keep trying to find the murderer until they survive the cognitive fatigue. We have already discussed the pastoral setting employed in *Murder of Roger*

Ackroyd. She employs such a setting in *Three Act Tragedy* also. Sir Charles Cartwright climbs the mountains in "up the path from the sea"[16] and enjoys the tranquil air of the valleys. Here, the readers admire natural beauty which assists the writer to make them believe in imagining the murderer could be in valleys, however he is behind 'the closed curtains. Interestingly, her detective characters also enjoy the lavish beauty of nature while they detect the cases. For instance, in *The Mysterious Affairs at Styles,* "Poirot stopped for a moment, and gazed sorrowfully over the beautiful expanse of park, still glittering with morning dew, perceiving how innocent and "so beautiful, so beautiful."[17] It is all occupied in her works to infuse readers with the aesthetic charm while they forget determining the nature of the murderer.

Mcmanis affirms, "The role of the geographical setting in the works of Agatha Christie and Sayers is threefold."[18] Thus, the setting does not propose an idea that a sudden change of weather can suggest something bad is about to happen. In *The Mysterious Affairs at Styles,* the heaven-like weather is replaced with a sharp, sighing wind foreshadowing the arrest of an innocent character. The investigators must suddenly face a conflict and exonerate the innocent. King's Abott's peaceful location does not specify that the murderer could be an acquaintance. Žaneta Stýblová in her article 'The Role of Setting in the Golden Age Detective Novel' adds, "The specified setting makes the story more believable and helps the reader to forget reality, to retreat. Were it not for the setting, the characters would simply "float" somewhere in abstract space and the reading process would not trigger the readers' imagination as much as when there is a well-depicted scenery or a thoroughly described house.``[19]

Agatha Christie employs daedalian clues to baffle readers, as much as they could, until they get mentally fatigued at resolving the crime taken place in her works. This way her works become more suspenseful and sources of enthrallment for readers. Dorothy Sayers says, "The reader must be given every clue — but he must not be told, surely, all the detective's deductions, lest he should see the solution too far ahead. Worse still, supposing, even without the detective's help, he interprets all the clues accurately on his own account, what becomes of the surprise? How can we at the same time show the reader everything and yet legitimately obfuscate him as to its meaning?"[20] Agatha Christie a pioneer of the golden age writings, states, that detective fiction tends to offer a game to the readers to 'guess the murderer' in preface to her work *Cards on the Table,* where Mr Shaitana is killed while playing the game.

She adds, "There is an idea prevalent that a detective story is rather like a big race—a number of starters—likely horses and jockeys. [...] The favourite is by common consent to be the opposite of a favourite on the race course. In other words, he is likely to be a complete outsider! Spot the least likely person to have committed the crime and in nine times out of ten your task is finished."[21]

Literary Devices used by Agatha Christie in Detective Fiction that assist in the development of Cognitive Fatigue

S.No	**Literary Devices that allow to defer the identification of the murderer.**	**References from Agatha Christie's selected works**	**Does cognitive fatigue work here?**
1	Red Herring	Use of distraction in the conversation held in *Mrs McGinty's Dead,* "I am investigating the murder of Mrs McGinty," Mrs Summerhayes gives an instantaneous reply, "And I do not joke." "Ouch," "I've cut my hand." In *Death on the Nile,* Linnet's pearls are discovered in the maid's cabin. So, readers assume the maid could have been the murderer, but she is not.	Yes
2	Alibi	John Parker is a butler at Fernly Park. He does not leave his job even after Mrs. Ferrars's death in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd.* It works as alibi for him to corroborate that he was not involved in	Yes

		blackmailing her. Were he involved, he would not keep continuing working as a butler.	
3	Methods of Murdering	The murderer Gale uses the dart of the spoon in the pretext of delivering it to the victim Giselle in *Death in the Clouds.* It is done secretly so that the readers can't find it out easily.	Yes
4	Complex Setting	The writer uses the cramped quarters of the opulent train in *Murder on the Orient Express* to enhance the mysterious circumstance and to show the complex behaviour patterns of the characters. In *Death on the Nile*, the cruise ship *Karnak* as a plot component is used. The ship's cramped quarters act as a microcosm of society that enables Christie to create a diverse ensemble of individuals, each with their own goals and secrets. John Scaggs opines, "If the setting is cramped and claustrophobic, it could resemble a Gothic locale. Moreover, such confined space can provide an opportunity for an accident to happen and consequently complicate the plot."	Yes
5.	Human Behaviour, Class, Race, and Psyche	Most of the passengers in *Murder on the Orient Express* are rich.Their lavish lifestyle and extreme sophistication serve as a metaphor that help to conceal their genuine motivations, a motto of the writer to bring attention to an appearance against reality—a popular theme in Golden Age detective fiction.	Yes
6.	Complex Plot	In *Death on the Nile*, Linnet Doyle nee Ridgeway is a wealthy and charismatic woman. Her lavish lifestyle and attractiveness inspire envy and anger in the other characters, which pave the way for potential motivations. She is marrying Simon Doyle, and this inflicts anger on his ex-fiancée Jacqueline de Bellefort. Now, the readers may suspect that Jacqeline may have been the murderer. This makes the story more intriguing and difficult to resolve.	Yes

Discussion

Therefore, this article concludes in a belief that the more strenuous clues are offered in the narrative structure of the detective fiction, the better the work becomes. In such detective fiction, readers try to solve the long impenetrable, complex, and manipulated mystery, but they get mentally exhausted before they can identify the real perpetrator. Otherwise, very few win in knowing the name of the murderer. At this point, they entrust the detective character to reveal the name of the murderer. The detective discloses the name in the end when readers have already got exhausted in attempting to resolve the unpredictable and misinformed clues given by the writer. Peter Brooks helps us to conclude our thought, "Of course, detective fiction lends itself to these cognitive games, to misdirection and rhetorical manipulation. The condition of all detective stories is that, "the detective repeat, go over again, the ground that has been covered by his predecessor, the criminal."[22]

Veera Tobin in her article 'Cognitive Bias and the Poetics of Surprise', mentions, "Writer must include crucial information, but in such a way that you can be fairly sure most readers will overlook it until you draw attention to it, later on. It has to be planted firmly enough that it will be remembered when the proper moment comes, but subtly enough that it will go

unconsidered until then. This kind of 'self-negating trickery' is an order of magnitude thornier than a confidence game, because a con artist can be perfectly successful if the victim never recognizes the deceit. A satisfying narrative surprise, by contrast, requires that the author simultaneously present both a ruse and a delayed-action means by which the ruse will be destroyed.23

Here, Tobin equates the process of distracting the readers with the curse of knowledge, when reader get surprised, because they have been seduced into projecting aspects of their own knowledge onto Ida's partially represented perspective, only to have the rug pulled out from under us by the revelation that the two differ in a crucial respect. (Here Ida refers to a phlegmatic woman and a friend of the victim Hale in Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock* (1938). She investigates the case and keeps emphasising it as a murder by creating a curse of knowledge when at last she reveals, it was a suicide.)

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