



# Faces Behind the Mask: Deception, Trust, and Greed in Agatha Christie's "The Disappearance of Mr. Davenheim" and "The Veiled Lady"

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## ABSTRACT

This article studies two Hercule Poirot short stories by Agatha Christie. "The Disappearance of Mr. Davenheim" and "The Veiled Lady" both explore how people hide their real selves behind a smooth face. In each case a character creates a false image to protect desire pride or profit. The paper uses Psychoanalytic Theory to read the crimes as signs of inner conflict. In this approach the id seeks pleasure and gain the ego manages appearances and the superego calls for moral control. The criminals in these two stories act from hidden desire but also from fear. They cover the truth with masks of respectability or charm. Poirot works like an analyst. He watches speech and behaviour He rejects noise and searches for motive. His famous little grey cells become the tool that reveals what is repressed. In "The Disappearance of Mr. Davenheim" the banker stages his own vanishing and takes another identity to escape ruin. His act is a flight from shame. In "The Veiled Lady" a woman uses performance and a false story to win sympathy and to steal. In both cases disguise is a defence. Christie shows how deception begins in the mind and then moves into action. Poirot restores order by naming the hidden truth and by forcing the self to face its guilt. The paper argues that Christie links crime with the failure of conscience and that she treats detection as a form of moral and psychological healing.

**Keywords:**

Agatha Christie, Hercule Poirot, Psychoanalytic Theory, Deception and disguise, Trust and greed, Moral order

**Introduction**

Detective fiction is long famous for its innovative enlightening into newer themes. Agatha Christie, renowned for her mastery of the mystery genre, intricately weaves themes of deception, trust, loyalty, and personal gain into her works. It is stated in “A Brief History of Detective Fiction”: “Christie and other authors from the Golden Age of Detective Fiction have created a legacy of detective novels based on gathering clues and solving crimes as if they were puzzles the reader can solve with the detective” (Emily Martin). Agatha Christie stands as one of the most widely read writers in English literature. Her detective stories are more than puzzles. They are windows into the moral and emotional life of human beings. In each story she examines why people lie cheat or kill. Christie’s detective Hercule Poirot works through logic and psychology rather than violence. His researches become research of the human mind. In both stories *portal*, *The Disappearance of Mr. Davenheim* and *The Veiled Lady* the deception develops as an extension of individual weakness. Guilt is disguised by the characters as charisma or prosperity. In both the tales Christie instructs that greed and the truth vie in the human heart.

The detective fiction of Christie has a format of starting with peaceful normal life and then rupture with the coming in of crime. Poirot restores truth and order which solves the mystery. However, other than the plot of the crime Christie demonstrates another idea that all lies are a form of self-deception. She exposes the way the mind of the criminal justifies itself against the accusation by constructing a mask. This mask may be prosperity decency or beauty. The task of the detective is not only to locate the evidence but also to take off the mask and reveal an unconscious motivation of the crime. Psychoanalytic Theory of Sigmund Freud can be used to explain why human beings act in such stories. Freud broke the mind into three categories namely the id the ego and the superego. The id is where the instinct and desire are seated. The ego gives a balance between the id and the reality. The morality law is embodied by the superego. When they conflict the outcome is a repression and guilt. It is based on this suppressed tension that Christie uses her characters to be driven to act. Her criminals do not commit crimes out of thin air but as they are torn in between the desire and conscience. Poirot is an examiner who interprets the symptoms of suppression and brings the mind to sanity by uncovering the truth.

The words of Christie are very simple yet her understanding is profound. She deceived her to realize that not only is deception social but psychological. An individual lies to others which means that he or she lies to himself or herself. It is the same thing that conceals the guilt before the eyes of the world that conceals it before that of the self. The process of disappearance in “The Disappearance of Mr. Davenheim” made the symbol of denial itself. The Veiling of the face is a sign of the split personality in the veiled lady. With these actions Christie conveys the fact that all disguises are confessions. This paper will attempt to demonstrate how Christie uses crime to examine the human mind. It examines the manner in which desire fear and guilt have caused deception in both narratives through the use of Psychoanalytic Theory. It also demonstrates how Poirot is a symbol of moral and logical ability which reveals the truth which is hidden. Lastly it states that Christie detective fiction is not a solution of crimes, but rather a mendation of the soul by identifying the culpability.

### **Deception and Identity in “The Disappearance of Mr. Davenheim”**

The Disappearance of Mr. Davenheim by Agatha Christie is by far one of her greatest efforts in creating a synthesis between the outside mystery and inside psychology. The novel starts with a peculiar bet between Poirot and Inspector Japp. Poirot boasts of being able to resolve an incident even when he is not in his chair. The challenge is his credence that truth is a psychological issue of fact as opposed to physical fact. Mr. Davenheim, a respected banker, disappears after stopping by his home one day in the afternoon which was on a Saturday; therefore, it appears that the case has something of either kidnapping or even murder. However, at a very early stage, the approach that Poirot uses to solve the case shows the reader that the enigma is not concerning a foreign foe but the man himself. It is an act of self-deception, which is the result of guilt, fear and greed that brings about the disappearance.

Christie presents Davenheim as a socially powerful and rich man. There is stability to the point of his name, his home and his profession. But there is a crumbling reality behind this very image of security. Poirot notices, my friend, a man does not disappear in air. He hides himself” (Christie 86). This quote demonstrates that Poirot is sure in the concept that disappearance may become an willful act. The crime committed by Davenheim is not committed against other people but against his conscience. The Psychoanalytic Theory states that the ego in a person defends him or her against anxiety by employing the defence mechanism of repression and denial. Davenheim is not able to confront the downfall of his financial empire. Fear of disgrace before the people is too much. Thus his ego creates an escape a disappearance

fantasy. This way, he suppresses his guilt and creates a different identity that is able to withstand humiliation. The story of Christie is a process of denial. The external extinction is likened to internal extinction.

The reasoning of Poirot has Freudian understanding. He explains to Japp that the disappearance man is not a killed man. He conceals himself on the: reason being he is afraid of being caught (Christie 88). Via this line, Poirot discovers deeply motivated unconscious motive that goes behind the act. Disappearance of Davenheim is not merely a mere survival strategy but rather a figurative demise of his past life. He murders the respectable banker within himself and comes back as a tramp. The mask which he uses as a homeless man is not accidental. It is a manifestation of the underlying regrets and miscegeniousness inside him. He comes down through the ranks of society to the very bottom of the society, just like his soul.

Christie uses symbolism in this narrative well albeit in a subtle manner. The unconscious is symbolized by the lake around the house of Davenheim where the police are searching a dead body. It is there the truth lies buried and forgotten. There seem to be nothing wrong with the surface, but there is something sinister and profound about depth. The police search physical evidence in the lake but Poirot searches psychological truth in mind. This opposition between the surface and the depth repeats the Freudian concept of consciousness and unconscious mind. What the self does not want to see is buried in the lake, the same way that Davenheim does not want his own consciousness to see. Poirot is quite logical and not morally angry when presenting the truth at the end of the day. He says, "He was not murdered. He was always here, right before his own house, dressed like the tramp who had been loitering about the village on them (Christie 90). What is psychologically powerless in this simple explanation maskines itself. The breakdown of his social ego is depicted in the disguise that Davenheim wears as tramp. The man who owned banks and states, now turns into the most lowly citizen in society. This pretense can be interpreted as a form of punishment, which is taken by the unconscious. The expression of his guilt is in the form of humiliation.

Verdict of Freud was that repression never leaves guilt behind. It manifests itself in dreams, slips and symbolic actions. Even the disguise by Davenheim turns out to be one of such returns. He is unconsciously seeking to get caught by concealing himself too near home. His desire to be discovered helps to describe the human desire to confess. According to Christie the seeds of self-exposure are in it, the criminal mind. The work of Poirot is nothing more than a matter of listening and comprehending. The role of Poirot, in this work, can be compared to the role of a psychoanalyst. Instead, he sits and cogitates, he does not scourge the

world. The symbol of mental control is his chair it turns into the seat of reason. It is through the mind he believes in; not senses. Once he manages to solve the case, it seems like he has cured the patient of his repression by revealing the truth behind the case. The arrest and the publicity of Davenheim are the last in therapy. It is the breakdown of the fake identity, the unveiling of the true one. Irony is another way that Christie employs to make a comment about human pride. The name Davenheim, whose root is heime or home implies stability but he loses both home and honour. It appears that his downfall reveals that money and status cannot shield oneself against inner corruption. The moral is evident, that deceit can work in the short-run, but the truth of the unconscious can no longer be hidden.

The motif of disguise has a symbolic significance. The tramp wear, which Davenheim has adopted, enables him to view the police without his identity being noticed. However, the masquerade is the death of personality as well. After he turns into the tramp, it is difficult to revert into being Davenheim. The lie consumes the liar. Christie therefore brings out the aspect in which the mask once put on starts to be used to define the self. This deception becomes self-destruction. Davenheim can be regarded in the Freudian terms as the superego triumphing and bringing his downfall in consequence. The guilt he has should be punished. He also gives the means of his exposure through the formation of his disguise unconsciously. Poirot is only the discoverer of what is already predetermined by the mind. The rationalization of the detective is equivalent to the voice of the moral law that makes the ego face the repressed guilt. Christie makes an important presentation of the intellect of the detective. It is not pride that makes Poirot so sure, rather it is trust in the order of things. He understands the position of the human condition when he says, it is all a question of psychology (Christie 85). He depends on understanding and empathy, rather than brute force as the basis of his approach. He examines behaviour as a language of soul. Each word and every moan that she tells him something about how the mind of the person is.

In this way, *The Disappearance of Mr. Davenheim* is not just the story about the disappearance of a man. It is turned into an experience of the loss of self. It is just an extension of the inner conflict into the external crime. The work by Christie is a metamorphosis of the detective genre into the psychological investigation of guilt and denial. By Davenhill, she demonstrates how the mind tries to avoid things which are true only to turn out against itself. She uses Poirot to offer intellect and morality as the means that bring sanity.

**Desire and Disguise in “The Veiled Lady”**

Agatha Christie provides another instance of pandemonium in *The Veiled Lady*, which is more emotional and theatrical as compared to the *Disappearance of Mr. Davenheim*. The book starts with Hercule Poirot being visited by a mysterious lady wearing a heavy veil. She says that she is blackmailed by a man who has a compromising letter. The woman seems sincere and scared, which is indicated by nervous behaviour, shaking hands, and tone of emotions. But as the plot progresses, we realize that she is not a victim and she is a liar. She is the beautiful thief Lady Millicent with the lot of invention that the story is meant to fool Poirot into aiding her in stealing an expensive necklace. Since the beginning, Christie is playing around with the veil image in order to represent secrecy and enigma. The veil also covers the face of a woman, which implies both physical and psychological masquerading. The initial response of Poirot demonstrates his suspicions. He adds that a woman who conceals her face conceals her thoughts (Christie 243). This remark reveals that he thinks one should not trust appearances. Veil is used as a symbol of the masks that human beings wear in the society so as to conceal their inner desires.

Lady Millicent's disguise when analysed using Psychoanalytic Theory are a reflection of the conflict between the id and the ego. The id needs excitement, power and wealth. Knowing that society has rules, the ego needs to conceal these desires with the help of acceptable behaviour. Lady Millicent has to wear this veil in order to keep the greed of this id under control. Her work as a terrified victim is a defence mechanism referred to as reaction formation that she generates the feeling contrary to her heart. She acts weak so as to conceal the strength and ambition in her. The words that Christie uses in this story can clearly show that an emotion is a weapon. The tools of manipulation used by Lady Millicent are her tears and soft voice. In one of her pleas to Poirot, she says, I am in great trouble, monsieur. She uses the classical concepts of female vulnerability to appeal to people, as she values her whole life will be ruined should that letter be disclosed (Christie 244). Poirot, nevertheless, is objective. His head does not think with emotional appeal. He is calm, polite and ironic in his reply implying that he sees right through her disguise even before she does.

The analytical ability of Poirot is a reflection of a psychoanalyst once again. The reason is that he reads her words and actions like the signs of a disease. He can see inconsistencies in her story. He tells Hastings later that the lady was at her most artistic (Christie 246). This remark is full of humour and psychological understanding. Poirot is aware that her feeling is an act. Her lies are imaginative yet also show the fear that is within her. Trying to fool Poirot, Lady Millicent reveals her feelings of anxiety the fear to be

discovered. The confession use in the story is soon replaced with action when Poirot and Hastings break into the house of the alleged blackmailer. The psychoanalytic symbolism enhances there. The process of breaching can be interpreted as intrusion into the unconscious. The secrecy of the rooms and the compartments symbolize repressed desires. The false composition of the story of Lady Millicent is revealed when it is disclosed that the blackmailer was nonexistent. Not only has Poirot discovered that there is a theft, but that there is identity. He says, our client, my friend, was herself herself a thief (Christie 249). Her revelation of the lie is the revelation of the psychological repression when the truthfulness that was crated in the unconsciousness is revealed.

Freud was sure that unconscious can be revealed in disguise and dreamlike behaviour Lady Millicents story looks like a dream which has emotional symbols of fear, shame, and desire. Her guilt is projected in the form of the blackmailer. She projects herself by creating him as a person who has done something wrong. All of the veil, the counterfeit letter, and the faked danger collaborate with each other as symbols of suppression. Christie demonstrates that the guilt attempts to defend itself by creating a story about hiding the responsibility. There is also a social aspect of deception that is revealed in the crime committed by Lady Millicent. Being a woman of high status, she is respected and admired, but the status restricts her. Her trickery is one of establishment in a man dominated world. To explain this tension, the psychoanalysis will focus on the conflict of inner desire and exterior repression. The society takes over as the superego, which requires moral behaviour, and her defiant behaviour is a manifestation of the id being in need of independence. Christie never justifies her wrongdoing, but she adds psychological action to her reason.

The unveiling of the truth by Poirot is nonchalant. The words he speaks to her when he says, You have great cleverness, madame, but you cannot outwit Hercule Poirot (Christie 248) have both moral and psychological connotation. Poirot is the voice of conscience that the superego combats the ego with the false explanations. His enlightenment shatters the false perception of innocence which Lady Millicent has created. This is where the story of Christie starts to have a moral climax. Falsehood is replaced by truth and false personality collapses like the burden of guilt. The problem of gendered disguise that Christie uses is noteworthy. The veil which is traditionally used as a representation of purity and modesty is turned into a criminal tool. Inverting this symbol, Christie challenges the belief that people who are feminine and pretty



are moral. The masked woman, which is usually a vulnerable character in literature, is a manipulator here.

This twist puts psychological and social depth to the story.

The closing to the story supports the notion of Christie who believes that lies are self-destructive. Lady Millicent loses her disguise power once it is uncovered. Her demise is moral and emotional. The mask which saved her turns now to be her jailer. Her aspects as a victim will not help her out of the picture. The fact, as the human conscience, can not be perennial suppressed. Comparing *The Disappearance of Mr. Davenheim* with *The Veiled Lady*, one is able to see how similar the moral structure is, though it is done with other feelings. Davenheim is afraid of being scandalous, and Lady Millicent lies because she wants fame and authority. They both are conflicted internally. The distinction is in the disguise form. The disguise of Davenheim is physical change of identity whereas that of Lady Millicent is psychological change of role and emotion. However the two disguises are ineffective since unconscious always tells the truth in action and words.

Poirot can succeed in both stories because of his knowledge about the human frailty. He is more than just a smart guy, with an understanding heart. He examines the mind of criminal in a way that a doctor examines disease. He is merciful and decisive when he takes the mask off Lady Millicent. He is symbolic of the process Freud referred to as the catharsis the purging of guilt through confessing. In unveiling the lie, Poirot sets the truth to liberate the society and the criminal out of the lie. The art of Christie consists in her mastery of the tonality. The novel is a mixture of humour, suspense and morality. Hastings brings the joy of light with his incomprehension toward Poirot and his admiration toward him, and Poirot in turn is a representation of balance. It is through deception in which he is fortunate, he sees through it because he realizes that there is truth and lie which are psychological forces. His rationality and coolness is the moral axis of the universe of Christie.

By *The Veiled Lady*, Christie introduces not only a kind of crime, but it is also a drama of the mind. The veil is a symbol of repressiveness, the lie is a symbol of desire and the truth of Poirot is the truth in released conscience. The unveiling which appears on the end becomes an effective image of psychoanalytic revelation. The same way that the patient in the therapy gets the layers of repression off, the detective gets the layers of the falsehood off. Christie therefore makes the simple detective story a moral and psychological allegory of truth.



## Comparative Discussion: Psychology of Deception

Both works, *The Disappearance of Mr. Davenheim* by Agatha Christie and *The Veiled Lady* have the similar structure and theme despite the difference in tone and different feelings. The two tales discuss the issue of deception as a form of psychology than a mere lie. In both the characters are in both instances concealing themselves not only as far as society is concerned but also to themselves. Christie transforms crime into the reflection of the mind demonstrating the interaction of fear, guilt and lust to form false identities. Hercule Poirot, her detective is a rational thinker as well as a moral guide, who instills sanity by bringing out the truth. Through the lens of Psychoanalytic Theory, deception in both stories arises from the conflict between the id, the ego, and the superego. The id seeks pleasure and gain. The ego tries to manage reality. The superego demands morality and truth. When these three forces collide, the result is repression and disguise. Christie dramatizes this psychological battle through her characters' actions and choices. It is stated in *Psychology Today*,

People may deliberately create false information or fabricate a story. But most often, sheer invention is not the soul of lying. Rather, people deceive by omitting information, denying the truth, or exaggerating information. Or they might agree with others when in fact they don't, in order to preserve a relationship. Self-serving lies, on the other hand, help liars get what they want, make them look better, or spare them blame or embarrassment. ("Deception")

In "*The Disappearance of Mr. Davenheim*", the crime grows out of fear. Davenheim is a man who appears successful but is secretly facing financial ruin. His id pushes him to escape disgrace, while his ego builds the plan to vanish. His superego, the voice of conscience, cannot be silenced and returns as guilt. His disappearance thus becomes both an external act and an inner confession. Poirot's observation that "the man who disappears hides himself" (Christie 88) captures the essence of repression. Davenheim hides not from the police but from his own moral failure. His disguise as a tramp is the visible form of his inner fall. He becomes the image of what he fears most poverty and shame. The desire is the motive in the case of *The Veiled lady* and not fear. The id of Lady Millicent is what propels her to chase money and excitement, and it is the ego that makes up a fabricated narrative to support her image. She starts fantasizing an emotional act to defraud Poirot. Her behaviour, however, reflects anxiety also. She is unconsciously guilty of her false tears and trembling hands. According to Freud, repression has a tendency to become symbolic in expressing feelings of the unconscious. Christie employs such minute details as indications of the unconscious. Poirot,

the super ego, peruses them accurately. His comment that her distress was most artistic (Christie 246) is an acknowledgement of her effort to make guilt performance.

Davenheim, as well as Lady Millicent, has a split personality. On the surface they are behaving like good citizens; deep inside they are a lie. The disguises are defence mechanisms, which help the ego to avoid moral pain. However, such defences end up failing. Freud used to teach that repression cannot hide the truth irreversibly. The unconscious will always find a means of expression. The reality in both narratives comes back in the reasoning of Poirot. He has a job of interpreting the symptoms the same way an analyst interprets dreams. Physical and emotional disguise is applied by Christie as a symbol of the strata of the unconscious. The tramp costume of Davenheim is the outward mask of the ego, the veil of Lady Millicent an outward mask of the id. Both attempt to dominate the world perception of them. But the mind of humans cannot maintain such duality. Both characters get stuck in their own deception as they get more into their lies. Tramp disguise captures Davenheim in the persona he made. Lady Millicent becomes locked in her fake feelings by the veil. The message conveyed by Christie is very evident, as people make up lies to shield themselves, and these lies end up owning them.

The approach that is used by Poirot is the same in the two stories. He does not start with the facts but with psychology. He questions what is the reason, anxiety and interest that may drive someone to behave in a given manner. According to him, the truth is not evidence, by which he means the truth is in the nature of humans (Christie 85). His reasoning has both moral and intellectual power in this belief. Similar to a psychoanalyst, Poirot recognizes that the last aim is confession. Finally, when he finds the truth he is like curing the patient by bringing the repressed guilt to view. This psychological process is supported by the composition of Christie. Both narratives are based on a transition between order and disorder and vice versa. Initially, the world of life seems peaceful: it does not even seem to be threatened by a home of Davenheim or even by a reputation of Lady Millicent. Then a falsehood comes between this order. At last, Poirot brings sanity to the situation by revealing the truth. This cyclic system is analogy to the process of therapy in Psychoanalysis repression causes anxiety, analysis brings recognition and confession brings relief.

The issue of the relationship between the detective and the criminal is also psychologically symbolic. The criminal embodies the unconscious that is full of suppressed desire and guilt, whereas the detective is the embodiment of the conscious mind that tries to gain insight and intervention. Poirot restores these two elements of the psyche when he resolves the case. His revelation of truth is a cure to the gap between the

appearance and reality. This is the reason why Christie shares her stories with peaceful moral contemplation as opposed to bloody revenge. Poirot does not merely arrest criminals, but he makes them confront themselves. The two stories are linked by the imagery portrayed by Christie of a hiding place. In disappearance of Mr. Davenheim, lake which is close to the house of banker is where people believe truth is lost. It is a representation of unconsciousness. The secret cannot be erased because it is placed in the water. The veil in *The Veiled Lady* also serves the same role. It conceals and at the same time attracts attention. Just as the lake is enticing to search, the veil is enticing to unveil. The two symbols hint at the fact that repression is testimonial. The more secretive a person is the more we see the lie.

The psychological insight of Christie is also enriched by such a gender difference between the two criminals. The illusion perpetrated by Davenheim is founded on the pride of men, fear of loss and failure. The manipulation in the deception by Lady Millicent is one founded on feminine defence of emotion in a man-dominated world. Christie does not depict these qualities as male or female frailties but as the human reaction to the pressure. Both the characters adopt the instruments that are presented in their social position to conceal the guilt. Davenheim is rich; Lady Millicent is beautiful. Christie in both exposes the way in which the social identity has become a source of psychological drama. The Freudian theory can be used to explain the reason why these lies ultimately backfire. The ego which is torn between the desire and conscience can suppress guilt only so much. Constant energy is required in the process of repression. When the energy goes dead the reality comes out as anxiety, confession or revealing. This tension is exposed through how Davenheim is nervous to watch the police in disguise. He does not want to seem stupid but deep within him, he hopes that he will be found out. The same wish is desired in the shaking acting of Lady Millicent. The unconscious wish to be punished comes out in both of them.

The super ego in the fictional world created by Christie is the intelligence of Poirot. He symbolizes the power of reality. But his tone towards him is not cruel, made by Christie. She puts him out as tender and benevolent. Once Poirot has unraveled a crime, he pities the feeble nature that led to the creation of the crime. His cool voice transforms into the law of reason. He demonstrates how intelligence could be used to administer justice without being vicious. Such is the balance of morality which is at the center of the world of Christie.

As can be seen in the comparative reading, these two stories Christie turned the genre of detective fiction into a work of study about the human condition. In them, crime is just an outward occurrence. Under it is the conflict of the truth and illusion, conscience and desire. Not just a capture of a criminal but the return to moral clarity is the victory of Poirot. His studies illuminate the dark side of the self. This deep psychological quality is available through the style of Christie. Her lines are straightforward, her dialogue is natural. But here there is a framework of profundity of insight. Each action, statement or thing symbolized. The ring of the banker, the lake, the veil, the false letter, all lead in the same direction here being the fact that this world of man is a sort of pattern of disguise and discovery. Christie demonstrates that the truth can be deferred, however, not destroyed.

In these two stories, Christie also criticizes the status and looks craze in the modern world. The failure of Davenheim shows how futile material wealth is. The failure of Lady Millicent reveals the fact that glamour is morally corrupt. The quest of self-interest kills the person in both. This social comment is in line with the Freudian ideas that even civilization is founded on repression whereby people are required to conceal their passions in order to keep order. This collision of civilization versus instinct is found in the fiction of Christie. It is the most remarkable aspect of the two which is that Christie transforms the detective into a healer. The logical reasoning of Poirot is not a machine. He is guilt-reading, just the way a doctor reads sickness. His revelation of the truth is like some form of confession, which is a relief to the criminal and the reader. This intellect and empathy together make the work of Christie having its eternal power. Finally, the lies in fiction by Christie are not only of lies to others but lies to oneself. Davenheim covers up his failure, Lady Millicent covers up her guilt. These two people find out that the truth is painful but inevitable. We can create imaginary fences around the mind, and we will always discover a crack in conscience.

### **Moral Vision, Symbolism, and Conclusion**

The Agatha Christie detective fiction attains beyond amusement. It is a ethical and psychological reflection of the society. By writing *The Disappearance of Mr. Davenheim* and *The Veiled Lady*, she reveals the corruptions of human kind in greed, pride and desire. Through her stories, it has been made clear that what is really mysterious is not outside the self but rather in the self. Every criminal invents the mask to conceal the guilt but this very mask is the reason of failure. Christie proves that the natural law of the mind is the truth through Hercule Poirot. The denial of it causes suffering to people. The moral vision that is held

by Christie is the notion that deception will be self-destructive. Davenheim tries to remain out of his financial ruin only to be exposed and disgraced. Manipulation of emotions and lies by Lady Millicent fails as soon as her mask is taken off. The two characters can be said to be a manifestation of what Freud referred to as the return of the repressed. They attempt to hide guilt with disguise, but it reveals when it comes to behaviour, language and circumstance. It is the work of Poirot to read these signs and bring back into awareness the unconscious truth.

Christie emphasizes her moral message with the help of symbolism. In the disappearance of Mr. Davenheim the lake is a symbolism of the unconscious mind. There is nothing demanding or loud on the surface but beneath everything is a secret. The police, emissaries of common-sense, scour its surface round in search of a corpse, Poirot examines its exterior in search of motive. The tramps masquerade is an indication of the social and moral anonymity. The ring left behind by Davenheim is metaphorical to be attached to richness, the very thing that makes him go down in ruin. Every thing has moral significance. The veil is used as a major image in *The Veiled Lady*. It is symbolic of suppression and hiding. When Lady Millicent conceals her face she conceals her guilt. Poirot discovers her deception and the veil is dispensed. The action of unveiling can be described as revealing the truth that is in the unconscious mind. This symbol is used by Christie to bring together the moral revelation and the psychological discovery. As soon as the reality is presented, the world of the story gets back to order.

Christie tends toward symbolism, which is usually in contrast. The decent banker turns into a beggar; the elegantly dressed lady turns into a robber. These changes of direction reveal the duplicity of human nature. It is the theme of the anti-corruption between the outside and the inside, which is the key to the moral world of Christie. She reminds the readers that evil can act in a polite way, and that the truth can be found in the unlikely places. A sense of irony is used by her to make these revelations have emotions. Poirot is a character that portrays rational morality. He has faith in thought and observation and not emotion. Yet his method is never cold. He learns with pity about weaknesses in human beings. He is able to reinstate both mental and moral balance when he is able to solve a case and bring back social order. The fact that crime cannot be explained by anything but human motive is revealed in the statement of Christie in *The Disappearance of Mr. Davenheim* in which he says that it is all about psychology (Christie 85). Poirot is not a policeman in a pursuit of a criminal but rather a thinker that tries to restore the moral disease that crime symbolizes.

The psychoanalytic notions used by Christie are rather discreet but steady. She makes no direct reference to Freud, but Freudian principles can be seen through the plots. The crime normally comes as a result of repression, the logic of the detective is akin to an analysis and the ultimate confession is catharsis. The sober mind of Poirot serves as the superego and leads the reader to the moral knowledge. The form of both stories is like the process of therapy: disruption, introspection, insight, and reprieve. Christie has a sense of justice which is another element of her moral vision. In her world, exposure is always a result of crime. The truth is discovered even in cases where the law is not involved. This assurance of revelation lends her fiction some moral rhythm. Her characters can be deceitful to people, and they cannot be deceitful to conscience. Both the punishment is commensurate to the crime. Pride is what makes Davenheim live like a beggar; and emotional deceit causes embarrassment to Lady Millicent. The moral order that prevails in the end of each of the stories is the poetic justice that is used to show that Christie believes in moral order.

Christie too links failure in morality to loss of identity. The mask makes Davenheim into the monster he abhors. It is his riches, which were his strength, which lose their meaning. In the same way, the beauty and charm of Lady Millicent that used to be her weapons of power are made to be an object of hypocrisy. Their deception kills them until they are left with the feeling of guilt. However, in either of them, the self is lost behind the mask. The truth that Poirot finds finds back individuality to reality. The discovery of the lie turns out to be the rediscovery of the human face. These stories are also very strong in terms of their social message. Christie portrays that charity takes modern life and compels one to cherish looks rather than honesty. The banker has to appear prosperous; the lady to appear chaste. Such positions are psychological pitfalls. Christie attacks social masks emptiness because he transforms them into lies. According to her fiction, truth tells or moral courage is the only way to be at peace.

This message is enhanced by the Psychoanalytic reading. To Freud, it was the guilt that was the logical outcome of the conflict between desire and conscience. Christie expresses this thought through the plot of her mysteries. The desire is the crime, the conscience bringing the individual back is the investigation, and inner peace is restored through the solution of the case. Poirot is thus a spiritual and intellectual approach. He reinstates the sanity of things and of self that lies eradicate. The moral vision that Christie has is never harsh. She knows how weak humans are. Her criminals are not monsters but the normal people giving up hope or giving into temptation. This empathic feeling by the human being makes her stories emotional. When they are brought out by Poirot he does not do it cruelly. He turns into a teacher and

shows people that the truth is as brutal as it can be but puts the freedom at stake. According to him, order and method, they lead to truth (Christie 86). His composure is opposed to the mayhem of betrayal. In his story *The Disappearance of Mr. Davenheim* Poirot notes:

But certainly they are! They fall into three categories: First, and most common, the voluntary disappearance. Second, the much abused 'loss of memory' case—rare, but occasionally genuine. Third, murder, and a more or less successful disposal of the body.

Do you refer to all three as impossible of execution? (Christie 42)

The last interpretation of both *The Disappearance of Mr. Davenheim* and *The Veiled Lady* is about the connection between the truth and self-realization. The stories both climax on the uncovering of the concealed truth. The discovery that the detective had is the reflection of self-consciousness. By revealing the lie, Christie glorifies the triumph of the intellect and goodness over instinct and greed. Using her stories, the most important lesson that was given to me is that it is not who does crime but why. To sum up, Agatha Christie has depicted the concept of deception in the two stories discussed in this paper to illustrate the view she possessed about the human psyche. She explains how human behaviour has been influenced by repression, desire, and guilt using concepts of Psychoanalysis, since both Davenheim and Lady Millicent are attempting to avoid their conscience by creating fake identities, only to have the lies of their mouths brought back against them. This quiet rationality of Poirot is the superego that helps to unveil these unknown facts. Moral significance behind the mask and uncovering makes the story symbolic.

The detective fiction by Christie then becomes an investigation of the psychology of morality. Every instance is an act of moral healing wherein a confession instead of repression is necessitated. The self that lies to his/her self has to come to terms with the truth at one point. The wisdom of Christie could be traced in the fact that she believes that truth, after it is unveiled, cleansed both the criminal and the reader. Her novels give us a reminder that we can start with deceit in our heads just as we can start with redemption. We are informed by Poirot (through his quiet voice) that the best thing to do is not to punish but to understand.



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