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Gender and Sociocultural Changes in Agatha
Christie's *Partners in Crime* and *Cat Among the Pigeons*

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Tämä tutkielma keskittyy tutkimaan sukupuolta ja sosiokulttuurisia muutoksia Agatha Christien teoksissa *Rikos yhdistää* ja *Kissa kyyhkyslakassa*. Tutkielman tavoitteena on tarkastella sukupuolirooleja salapoliisikirjallisuudessa sekä teoksissa esiintyvien henkilöhahmojen feminiinisyttä ja maskuliinisuutta. Koska teosten ilmestymisen välillä on 30 vuotta, tutkielma keskittyy myös analysoimaan teoksien sosiokulttuurisia muutoksia sekä vertaamaan kuvitteellisia naishahmoja historiallisiin 1900-luvun alun naisiin. Tutkielman johdanto-osuus käsittelee lyhyesti teosten tapahtumat, tarkastelee Agatha Christietä kirjailijana ja pohjustaa tutkimuksen teoria- ja analyysiosiota. Teosten tapahtumat sijoittuvat 1930–1950-lukujen välille. Agatha Christie oli englantilainen kirjailija, joka tunnetaan parhaiten salapoliisiromaaneista sekä kuvitteellisista salapoliisihahmoistaan, joihin kuuluvat *Kissa kyyhkyslakassa* -romaanissa esiintyvä belgialainen yksityisetsivä Hercule Poirot ja *Rikos yhdistää* -novellikokoelmassa esiintyvät Tommy ja Tuppence Beresford.

Teoriaosuus käsittelee ensin salapoliisikirjallisuutta ja feminismiä, kultakauden salapoliisikirjallisuuden pääpiirteitä sekä ajan sosiokulttuurisia muutoksia. Tämän jälkeen tutkielma käsittelee sukupuolta salapoliisikirjallisuudessa. Jakso tarkastelee suffragettien ja feminismien ensimmäisen aallon vaikutuksia yhteiskuntaan sekä naiskirjailijoiden merkitystä salapoliisikirjallisuudessa. Seuraavaksi teoriaosuudessa käsitellään sukupuolta, naisellisuutta ja mieheyttä. Jakso tarkastelee, mitkä piirteet koetaan yleisesti maskuliiniseksi ja mitkä puolestaan feminiiniseksi sekä millaisia piirteitä teosten henkilöhahmoilla on. Tämän jälkeen teoriaosuudessa tarkastellaan salapoliiseja, murhaajia sekä uhreja sukupuolentutkimukseen perustuen. Viimeisenä teoriassa tarkastellaan sukupuolentutkimusta ja salapoliisikirjallisuutta.

Tutkielman analyysin ensimmäinen osio keskittyy tutkimaan perheen ja avioliiton merkitystä teosten henkilöhahmoille. Havaintona on, että kummassakin teoksessa esiintyy nykyaikaisia uskomuksia, mutta *Kissa kyyhkyslakassa* -romaanissa niiden määrä on suurempi. Tämän jälkeen Christien teoksia tutkitaan koulutuksen ja työelämän kannalta. *Rikos yhdistää* -novellikokoelmassa näihin aiheisiin liittyvää modernia ajatusmaailmaa esiintyy ainoastaan pääsalapoliisien Tommy ja Tuppencen kohdalla. *Kissa kyyhkyslakassa* on koulutuksen ja työelämän suhteen erittäin nykyaikainen henkilöhahmojen ja asenteiden suhteen. Analyysin viimeisessä osuudessa tarkastellaan teosten sukupuolirooleja, niihin liittyviä stereotyyppioita sekä naisellisuutta ja mieheyttä. Yhteenvetona voidaan todeta, että *Kissa kyyhkyslakassa* -romaanin on *Rikos yhdistää* -novellikokoelmaa huomattavasti nykyaikaisempi henkilöhahmojen sekä heidän tekojensa ja asenteidensa vuoksi.

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This thesis focuses on gender and sociocultural changes in Agatha Christie's *Partners in Crime* and *Cat Among the Pigeon*. The aim of this thesis is to examine gender roles in detective fiction, and the femininity and masculinity of the characters in the two works. Since the two texts were published 30 years apart from each other, this thesis will also examine the possible progress in terms of gender displayed in the texts as well as compare fictional female characters with real women from the early 20th century. The introductory section of the thesis briefly explains the plots of the works, examines Agatha Christie as an author, and lays the groundwork for the theoretical and analytical part of this thesis. The events of the works take place somewhere between the 1930s and 1950s. Agatha Christie was an English writer best known for her detective novels and fictional detectives, including the Belgian private detective Hercule Poirot in *Cat Among the Pigeons* and Tommy and Tuppence Beresford presented in the short story collection *Partners in Crime*.

The theoretical section looks first at detective fiction and feminism, as well as the main features and sociocultural changes of the Golden Age detective fiction. The thesis then discusses gender in detective fiction. This section examines the effects of suffragettes and the first wave of feminism on society, as well as the accomplishments of women writers in detective fiction. Next, the theory section explains gender, femininity and masculinity. Detective fiction is often considered inherently masculine, but it also has feminist features. This section addresses which traits are generally perceived to be masculine and which in turn are feminine, as well as what traits the characters in the works have. The theory then looks at detectives, killers, and victims through gender theory. Finally, the theory looks at gender theory and detective fiction.

The first section of the analysis focuses on examining the importance of family and marriage to the characters of the texts. The key observation is that both works contain modern beliefs, however, there are more contemporary aspects in *Cat Among the Pigeons*. Christie's works are then examined in terms of education and work. In *Partners in Crime*, the modern attitudes concerning these topics appear to be associated only with the main detectives Tommy and Tuppence. *Cat Among the Pigeons* is quite contemporary in terms of the characters and their attitudes towards education and work. The last part of the analysis examines the gender roles and gender stereotypes of the works and femininity and masculinity. In summary, the thesis states that *Cat Among the Pigeons* is much more modern than *Partners in Crime* due to the characters and their actions and attitudes.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Aims and Structure of Thesis

In this thesis, I will analyze Agatha Christie's works *Partners in Crime* and *Cat Among the Pigeons*. The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the modern aspects of gender as presented in these two detective works written during a time of intense modernization and heated gender debates. Since the two texts were published 30 years apart from each other, I will also examine the possible progress in terms of gender displayed in the texts. This will be accomplished by examining the characters, their actions, and portrayals in the works. The theoretical framework used in this thesis is gender theory, which I will define in the following section, along with detective fiction. In the section following the theoretical framework, I will explain the impact of feminism in the first half of the 20th century, femininity and masculinity, as well as on the central characters of detective fiction. In the analysis section, Christie's works will be analyzed with regard to education and work, gender roles, stereotypes, femininity and masculinity, and family and marriage. The thesis will close with a concluding section.

1.2 Author and Texts

Agatha Christie is one of the most prominent detective writers of the Golden Age of crime fiction. It has been debated, whether Christie was a feminist (Fido 37, 76; Irons xii). She is one of the world's most widely known and read novelists and on the back cover of Agatha Christie's book *An Autobiography*, it is mentioned that she has often been referred to as the 'Queen of Crime' (back cover). *Partners in Crime* is the second collection of novels in the Tommy and Tuppence Mysteries series. It was first published in 1929. The famous Belgian detective Hercule Poirot has overall "appeared in 33 novels and over 60 short stories" (Makinen, "Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity" 36). *Cat Among the Pigeons* was first published in 1960. The majority of Christie's novels and short stories take place somewhere between the 1930s and 1950s, although her late novels are set in the 1960s.

1.2.1 Agatha Christie as Author

Agatha Miller was born in 1890 to an upper-class family in England. She was half American and content with her social status from a young age (Fido 11). She did not aspire to raise her status and thought of herself as an equal with other neighborhood children from different backgrounds. Despite the resistance of the Millers, Agatha married the army official Archie Christie in 1914, and her only child Rosalind was born in 1919 (Fido 25). During the First World War, she created her famous Belgian detective Hercule Poirot and began her career as a crime writer by publishing a few short stories featuring Poirot. According to Fido, at this time she also introduced Tommy and Prudence 'Tuppence' Beresford in *The Secret Adversary* (29). While her status as a rising crime writer was established, her marriage was falling apart. After the revelation of Archie Christie's affair to Nancy Neele and Agatha Christie's mysterious disappearance stunt in 1926, Christie was granted a divorce against her husband in 1928 but she retained her surname for her writing (Fido 37). The period after her second marriage to Max Mallowan in 1930 was the most prominent time in her writing. As Fido states, the so-called golden age of Christie's writing is approximately from 1934 to 1944 (88).

During the Golden Age of crime fiction between the 1920s and the 1940s, Agatha Christie gained popularity as a writer (Plain 31). Much like many other British crime novelists, she represented the form of classical detective fiction, which focused on restoring balance in society. However, Christie began to redefine the domestic in crime fiction as well as the relationship between public and private spheres (Plain 47), since women were slowly shifting into work-life outside their homes. According to Plain, in her novels, Christie represented women of all ages and social classes, who had their agendas and were responsible for their own actions (47). Some of her female characters did remain traditional, whereas others became more contemporary. In a way, Christie documented society by having modern women to indicate the changes and more traditional women to show that the process of these changes was slow (Makinen, "Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity" 6).

Nevertheless, crime fiction as a genre is very conservative. This has led Christie's Poirot stories to often wonder if anything really changes for women in the stories or do they just appear to change (Peach 111). The crimes are always unraveled by a man relying on rational thinking and psychology, and rarely are any women involved in crimes. Unlike in the Poirot novels, in the young

couple, Tommy and Tuppence Beresford, Christie introduces a young female sleuth alongside a male detective. As stated by Craig and Cadogan, Tuppence is presented as a naïve but eager woman, who appears to be hastier in finding clues or solving the cases than her calm, logical husband (80). Even though Tuppence and Tommy are frequently seen as equals while working their cases, Christie created Tuppence as an amateur sidekick to her official detective husband. Yet, of all Christie's detectives, Tuppence Beresford comes closest to an official investigator, since she is allowed to enter the predominantly male world of police work alongside her husband. Horsley states that Christie's novels do follow the rules of classical detective fiction with the closure of the case in the end (40). However, Christie does not offer her readers any nostalgia for aristocracy as she concentrates on the turmoil of family life and classes to highlight their fatality (Horsley 40). Instead, she emphasizes the importance of the individual and their role in society.

1.2.2 Texts

This thesis examines two works by Agatha Christie: *Cat Among the Pigeons* and *Partners in Crime*. In *Cat Among the Pigeons*, Poirot is invited to Meadowbank School for Girls, the most prestigious prep school in England by a distressed pupil Julia Upjohn. Late one night, two teachers decide to examine odd lights they see in the newly build sports pavilion only to find the body of the detested games mistress, Grace Springer. Chaos and panic spread amongst pupils and parents as more and more teachers end up murdered. As an older gentleman, Poirot encounters obstacles while entering the world of young schoolgirls and their female teachers. One of the girls, Julia Upjohn, discovers a secret related to the murders and asks for the help of Poirot before she is murdered. In *Partners in Crime*, restless Tuppence Beresford is longing for another adventure after many years of ordinary marital life. Suddenly she and her husband are contacted by their old friend Mr. Carter from an intelligence agency, who urges them to oversee Blunt's International Detective Agency. Tommy and Tuppence work on several cases while mimicking for their own amusement famous fictional detectives, such as Dr. Thorndyke, Sherlock Holmes, and Inspector Hanaud. After the final case, Tuppence reveals that she is expecting a child and decides to part ways with the detecting world to pursue the life of a proper housewife.

The focus of many previous studies of Christie's fiction has been on modernism and the psychology of murder. This thesis will focus on women in detective fiction with particular reference on gender roles, and masculinity and femininity. Other studies related to women and feminism have mainly centered around Christie's amateur spinster detective, Jane Marple, since she is the main character in several novels (see, e.g., McCaw). Studies on the Poirot series have focused on the relationship between Hercule Poirot and his friend Captain Hastings, his methods of detecting and using psychology while solving the cases, and the identity of Poirot as a foreign man (see e.g., Martz and Higgin). As Poirot is a male detective with distinctive masculine as well as feminine characteristics, his interaction with the female characters in stories is fascinating. His knowledge of the feminine world allows him a better position in solving the crimes, especially if the killer is a woman. This knowledge can also be seen with Tommy and Tuppence Beresford: Tommy mainly applies the logical methods of solving crimes while Tuppence provides feminine intuition and an ability to pay attention to minor domestic details. The focus of the previous studies has been the interaction between these two characters and the role of Tuppence as both a working woman and wife. With Tuppence working alongside her husband, and Hercule Poirot possessing knowledge of the feminine world, it appears that a crime requires somewhat of a feminine touch to be solved.

2. Changing Detective Fiction in the Context of Feminism

The expansion of roles for women and their perspectives in stories gave detective fiction a new, exciting enrichment. Since detective fiction relied on its capacity to surprise its readers, the addition of women in extended roles served to attract the audience. Female detectives in early detective fiction were presented as desperate women more than professional investigators interested in their work since this was socially more acceptable. As explained by Irons, there was a need to justify the reasons behind the work of the female detective, that frequently were related to them clearing the name of their loved one or only assisting a professional within the boundaries of the private sphere, and as soon as the job was complete, they returned to the domestic life (4). The analysis of gender identities and gendered representations in detective fiction can indicate the presence of modern values after the Victorian and Edwardian eras. The Golden Age of crime fiction took place during a time of traditional gendered values resisting the contemporary influence.

This section focuses on gender and the representation of women in detective fiction. In the first part, I will address the general features of Golden Age detective fiction and how the genre has changed. Secondly, I will focus on the representation of gender in Golden Age detective fiction. This section looks at the feminism of the early 20th century, detective fiction as a women's genre, masculinity and femininity, and the gendered representations of detectives, killers, and victims. Finally, I will discuss detective fiction and gender theory.

2.1 Golden Age Detective Fiction: General Features and Change

Detective fiction became popular as there was an apparent fascination with crimes, especially with the culprits behind them. The detective genre captivated its readership with puzzle-like plots and interesting crimes. As explained by Fido, Golden Age detective fiction did not have to present a gruesome crime or dislikable characters, as the readers are largely entranced with finding out who committed the crime and how (61). The formula of detective fiction is usually similar, however, there were some changes. Firstly, this part focuses on the general features of Golden Age detective

fiction. Secondly, I will discuss how Golden Age detective fiction has been affected by the social changes of the period.

2.1.1 General Features of Detective Fiction

The detective fiction genre was formed at the beginning of the 19th century when the modern state police force was introduced to the public (Faktorovich 16). Society was quite keen on criminal cases since information about the police force was published in the news, which served as an inspiration to authors (Faktorovich 16). Much like with the real-life cases the public wanted to solve the crimes written in the newspapers and name the culprit. This became the formula for mystery and detective fiction. Firstly, this section focuses on the rise of detective fiction in popularity and the impact on its readers. Then, I will address the general features of Golden Age crime and detective fiction. Lastly, this part looks at the importance of law and the characteristics of the puzzle-type formula.

The detective genre became popular in the 20th century and had a massive impression on its readers. However, the novels certainly have a different impact on contemporary readers due to the changed historical and social context (Gregoriou 49). The issues and sometimes scandalous topics presented in these novels, such as homosexuality or diverse race, can appear quite ridiculous to modern readers since they are seen in a different light nowadays. Detective fiction can be described as a sub-genre of crime fiction:

Some use the term 'detective fiction' for the whole genre, others call it 'mystery fiction'. But as a reader soon discovers, there are plenty of novels (including some by Christie) without a detective [...] There is, though, always a crime (or very occasionally just the appearance of one) and that is why I have used the generally descriptive term 'crime fiction' for the whole genre. (Knight xiii)

The public fascination with independent investigators, who sometimes work alongside the police force, but operate primarily on their own, was met in detective literature since crime fiction novels did not always have a detective. Much like other forms of literature, crime fiction profoundly impacted its readers. As stated by Messent, crime fiction allowed the public to face their everyday

apprehensions and difficulties and engage with them (7). The genre resonated with its readers during a time of intense debates around the essential social and legal concerns, for example, the rights for women and class struggles. The genre can be used to sustain and advocate for conservative ideals, however, crime fiction does present radical and modern issues often simultaneously (Messent 12). Since the genre does rely on the capacity to surprise its readers, these contemporary issues and ideals served as an ample opportunity to do that.

The Golden Age of British crime fiction takes place between the two World Wars in the 1920s and 1930s. As explained by Bradford, most notable crime writers wrote their best novels during the three decades between the World Wars (19). Although the Golden Age ended in the 1950s, many renowned authors of the Golden period continued to write detective literature well after that (Bradford 26-27). The formula of the genre was an intriguing puzzle mystery, which attracts readers even today. The genre presented an array of stock characters, as authors like Christie focused primarily on their intriguing plots and fascinating puzzles. Although the novels with female detectives may have lacked action or suspense, they invigorated the story with occasional unintentional humor, for example (Craig and Cadogan 37). The Golden Age detective fiction is often described as masculine and conservative. As explained by Makinen, these assumptions are based on the logical puzzle-solving, which is duped masculine, and the traditional restitution of the hierarchical status quo (*Feminist Popular Fiction* 92). However, many Golden Age women writers are distinguished for transforming the genre or 'feminizing' it. While the formula might be considered conservative, the variations present in it, such as women detectives and killers, prove that the genre is quite flexible in terms of gender. Although detective fiction is conservative in terms of the class structure, it can be liberal in its perspectives on gender (Schaub viii).

Although detective fiction does offer a great deal of variation, the formula is often similar. Since detective fiction is a sub-genre of crime fiction, a crime occurs in the plot, which is usually murder in detective fiction. As explained by S. Walton, a detective is hired to investigate the suspicious circumstances around the crime (51). There are many red herrings and false evidence, and the detective must investigate all the alibies and clues in order to solve the mystery (S. Walton 51). There can be different kinds of resolutions to the story, and the characters must sort their lives out after the criminal or criminals have been named. As stated by S. Walton, the criminal can be arrested or detained in some way, however, the murderer can also face death either by suicide or murder by another character in the story (51). There can appear a trial or even an execution of

the criminal at the end of the novel. Especially in Golden Age detective fiction, it is vital that the evidence and the accusations made by the detective are strong enough in order to prosecute the guilty party (S. Walton 17). The formula of the genre is quite simple and rarely changed completely, although there were some variations. The suspense is built throughout the novel with false identities, wrong clues, and lies before the end when the detective reveals the solution to the readers and often to the remaining cast of the story (Messent 32-33). Usually, everyone crucial to the crime or in the victim's life is gathered together, and the detective goes through the events in a detailed manner. As explained by Messent, the explanation the detective gives to the cast is usually very confusing and implicates almost everyone, until finally, the detective reveals the true motives and events, which are often quite simple (32-33). The formula of the plot and the revelation of a criminal is inclusive and allows the readers to participate in the solving of a crime alongside the detective.

The essence of the law and the restoration of the legal balance is present as a closure to the story in detective fiction. However, even if the criminal is named and held responsible for their crimes in the eyes of the law, deep-rooted issues around corruption in the official institutions are not revealed (Gregoriou 54). Justice is sought by investigating and naming only the person or persons directly responsible for the crime. The bigger picture does not change since the story ends with the prosecution of the guilty one, but not with the change of the fundamental political or legal power behind the corruption (Gregoriou 54). Since many women writers entered the detective fiction genre, there were some changes to the formula, but the main characteristics of the plot remained. Nevertheless, the crime altered to death from a wealth-related crime, which was the principal concern of bourgeois men (Knight 67-68). This change was the impact of women writers modifying the genre. As explained by Knight, this money-linked crime vanished from detective fiction almost entirely as women writers and readers took an interest in the genre (67-68). Another effect brought by women writers is the happy ending given to some of the characters after they have either been cleared of the murder or they have helped the detective. As S. Walton states, the mood of the story is lifted towards the end with a marriage between former suspects, and in Christie's case, these were often young people (51). Perhaps the essence of romance was introduced to detective fiction since the vast majority of the readers were women, and there was a need to feminize the plot somehow.

The soft-boiled version of detective fiction famous in Britain was notable for its plot, which was like a game or a puzzle for the readers. As explained by Peach, the detective novel was essentially a game between the reader and the writer with misleading clues and intriguing twists (57). One explanation for the preference of a game or a puzzle as a plot could be the emergence of the cryptic crossword in Britain (Horsley 15). During the interwar period, this popular British game used similar tactics as the puzzles in detective fiction did since the idea in both was that the reader could not solve the riddle immediately (Horsley 15). It was especially vital for the Golden Age detective fiction that the reader could participate in the solving of a crime without the plot becoming too dull and straightforward. The novel's goal is the same for the reader and the detective, which is to solve the crime and ascertain the criminal (Bradford 2). The key is to create such a mysterious plot that is neither too obvious nor unsolvable to the reader. As explained by Messent, the marvelous wisdom of the detective is seldom relatable to the readers, even though they are expected to be able to pursue all the clues and alibies in the story (29). Although the intriguing puzzle-like plot was prominent in the most notable detective fiction novels, this limited the possibility for any character developments. As explained by Bradford, the characters of the novel were usually robotic stock types since the main focus was the plot (20). Even the characters who exist in multiple different novels rarely developed throughout the books, for example, Hercule Poirot or Jane Marple. The main detective rarely sees any character development or life-altering changes. As explained by Knight, classic detective fiction is void of romance and humor, without the exception of minor characters falling in love every now and then (87). The focus of the novel is the puzzle, which the reader can attempt to solve as well. The idea behind the clue-puzzle novel is that the reader does not merely have to follow the investigative work of the detective throughout the story but tries to solve the mystery even before the detective (Knight 87). The most prominent detective fiction writers were capable of creating narratives that allowed the reader to get quite close to solving the mystery and still surprise them with some kind of twist.

One of the many false clues in the puzzle is the presence of insane characters. As explained by S. Walton, these characters are often falsely accused and blamed for the crime, and the detective can hastily discard them as culprits (19). The unmasking of the criminal is an indication of the masquerade within the story. Seemingly normal people are revealed to have committed terrible acts, and consequently, insane or mentally ill characters are cleared from suspicions:

Each story indicates how easy it is for ordinary respectable people suddenly to become monsters of crime – the devil, the sins, human anger, and malice can so easily disrupt everyday social order. These early stories show how ordinary human resentments – at being evicted, at being married against one's will – can cause horrific crimes. And if it is unnervingly easy for crime to develop, it is not quite as simple as it sometimes seems to identify the criminals. (Knight 4-5)

Many Golden Age writers were interested in scientific methods in their novels. Instead of depicting a detective, who relies on intuition or guesswork as their method, writers advocated for scientific deduction and the use of psychology (S. Walton 222). One of the unspoken rules in detective fiction was the rejection of intuitive or instinctive approaches. Whilst the characters of the novels often remained as stereotypes or stock characters, the use of psychology in the genre brought some depth to them. According to Kungl, the use of psychology uncovered the minds of the criminals and detectives, as well as created a more detailed analysis of the other characters and the scene of a crime (9).

All in all, the detective fiction genre became popular during a time of heated debates around social changes. While the Golden Age detective fiction is often viewed as masculine and traditional, there was a good deal of variation. Despite all the changes in the genre, the formula usually stayed the same. The lure of British detective fiction is the puzzle-like plot, which allows the reader to participate in the deductions of the investigator. Nevertheless, the most prominent detective writers still had the ability to surprise their readers.

2.1.2 Social Effects on Detective Fiction During the Golden Age

Many women writers entered detective fiction and altered the perceived masculine genre in many ways. The influence of women writer's perspectives affected detective fiction as they brought a whole new feminine view on social issues and structures. As explained by Horsley, detective fiction was mainly viewed as conservative and the methods of detection supported this (18). While some issues pushed by the feminist movement were visible in the novels, the central formula and characters largely supported the gender binary and assertion of power. Although the genre saw many variations in its characteristics, neither the class structure nor the scene of the crime

changed. According to Messent, the setting is quite limited in portraying a whole social structure and depending on the writer, the environment is either rural or urban (31). The Golden Age detective fiction did have radical ideals present in the narratives, however, the genre remained largely conservative in many aspects, such as the male dominance in the legal institutions and victims often being women. This section focuses on the modern effects on detective fiction, the public interest in female criminals, and the influence of war and espionage present in the genre.

While the story often implies the restoration of moral and social order, modern influence can be seen in the Golden Age novels. As explained by Rowland, the puzzle- or game-like plot engaged readers to criticize and question depictions of already established concepts around class and gender (39). The introduction of modern issues embedded in a mainly conservative genre could be seen as an ingenious way for writers to discuss contemporary topics and concerns. The New Woman character present in the 20th-century detective fiction was a way to challenge some Victorian social issues. Victorian ideals around gender, class, and labor, which were seen as natural, were questioned by the New Woman in these novels (Ardis, "New Women, New Novels" 26). Simple acts, such as smoking, driving, or working, portrayed by the New Woman could be interpreted as subtle ways of challenging the patriarchal society and its fixed structures (Ardis, "New Women, New Novels" 26). Representation of independent New Women in the news or literature as well as in real life might have served as an inspiration for detective fiction writers to implement modern behaviors in their characters. Another modern influence on the genre was the period's glamorized view concerning Eastern or Oriental objects and the introduction of supernatural influence. As stated by Craig and Cadogan:

Romantic and highly charged objects like Eastern 'idols', bizarre jewellery and half-obliterated old documents were often central to the action, and when these began to seem repetitive a dash of supernatural suspense would be thrown in to stir things up." (114)

The notion of a mystery or foreign power began to appear in Golden Age fiction over time.

The public fascination around women killers influenced the detective genre, too. As stated by Lord and Burfoot, the trial narratives of real-life women, who were convicted for murder, represented a public interest around these women and their lives (4). The representation of women killers tends to portray a fallen woman who kills due to her surroundings and situation. Fictional or real-life women killers are not depicted as active; rather, they are presented in quite limited roles as wronged women murdering for revenge or as protectors of their loved ones (Lord

and Burfoot xiii). Early understanding of murderers was extremely limited in terms of gender, and the feminine characteristics were assumed to prevent women from killing the same way men did. Their motives were tied to maternity and sentiments, not violence. Victorian detective fiction tended to portray a different type of female criminal. As explained by Peach, early detective fiction included a female trickster, who was dangerous to men specifically (29). The idea was that this woman criminal was able to fool gentlemen with her allure and beauty, which served as a mask for her menace.

The figure of a female murderer was shocking, questioning traditional ideas around gender binary and gender-based characteristics. The interest in female criminals in crime fiction increased at the turn of the 19th century:

[C]rime narratives of the fin de siècle use the shocking figure of the female criminal to naturalize change: the fictional female criminal, a ubiquitous persona in turn-of-the-century crime narrative, was a herald of changing political and social conditions, changing gender roles, and changing definitions of “private” and “public.” (Miller 2-3)

The use of the female killer indicated an interest in drastic modernism since throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, society was captivated with the changing times and yearned for contemporary elements in their everyday lives (Miller 3). This new type of female criminal might not have represented real-life female killers accurately, however, she was an appealing creation of detective fiction before the Golden Age. The female criminal was a creation of the ever-expanding crime fiction, and she was popular amongst writers as well as readers since she differed greatly from male criminals with her looks and success (Miller 4). She represented modern culture and the elements, which made the female killer attractive to the audience and contrasted Victorian ideals of a proper woman completely. The use of this type of woman killer and her appeal to society indicated that the traditional principles around concepts of gender, ethics, society, and image could not function as they were any more in a new modern culture (Miller 6).

After the two World Wars, society viewed death and the mysteries behind it in a different light. As explained by Rowland, Golden Age fiction portrays death as solvable and the perpetrators are held accountable for their inhumane actions (26). Furthermore, the novels indicate that society can heal from the traumas caused by death (Rowland 26). The connections between detective fiction and espionage are evident in the interwar period. The detective must identify the enemy, who has hidden amongst people and expose their deceitful actions (Plain 44). The detective must

be someone the male-dominated legal system trusts since spies can mask themselves as anyone. According to Plain, those who are not worthy of this trust, such as women detectives, have a difficult time repairing the social tear caused by killers, who are also spies (44). The investigator must be loyal to the country they serve, even if they are foreign, as is the case with Hercule Poirot, for example. However, Agatha Christie wrote during a heightened time of war and espionage, yet illustrates a possibility of healing in her novels:

Christie, writing shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War, suggests the possibility of social cohesion and repair, the prospect of healing and reunion [...] Surface differences, no matter how substantial, should not obscure a fundamental shared concern with the disruption of order, the violence of shattered community and the search for some form of viable resolution that will set the world back within its familiar, if tarnished, parameters. (Plain 20)

Although the pressures of war and the importance of identifying deceitful people amongst society were tremendous, there was still a collective need for cohesion and order that was portrayed in detective fiction stories.

During the first half of the 20th century, crime fiction and espionage had a lot in common, therefore, they went well together. As explained by Bradford, both crime fiction and espionage, real or fictional, were based on something people comprehended relatively little of (97). The added factor of a spy committing crimes worked as a healing method during a time when espionage was very real and dangerous. Seeing spies caught and held responsible for their crimes in fiction produced certain trust in society. Spies were synonymous with mystery, lure, and danger, especially if they were women. However, it was vital for the story to know, which country the female spy worked for: "English women operating behind the German lines were invariably thought of as serving their country, while German women living in Britain and helping the Central Powers seemed in the popular view despicable, demoniacal and sexually corrupt" (Craig and Cadogan 53-54). Even if both female spies operated similarly, one was respectable in the eyes of the British detective fiction and the other was not. The strong lure of female spies to the audience was evident during and after the World Wars. Patriotic British female spies were respected and even praised in the story, whereas the need to identify foreign spies was great and their inevitable capture in the story brought a sense of relief to readers.

To sum up, modern topics and issues were included in detective fiction perhaps to take part in heated debates around contemporary matters. Modern characteristics embedded in female characters were most likely due to the increased depiction of New Women in the media. Although the early characterizations of female murderers were quite gendered, fictional female killers became fascinating to the public even before the Golden Age of detective fiction began. Much like female killers, spies were connected with mystery and allure in fiction. After the World Wars, the presentation of criminals and spies in fiction perhaps served as a way for society to heal after the trauma.

2.2 Gender in Golden Age Detective Fiction

The rise of the detective fiction genre took place during a time of significant changes in society, for instance, the two World Wars and the suffrage movement. The time after the World Wars can be seen as an effort in trying to restore traditional values. According to Philips and Haywood, the British society in the 1950s was seen as an era of stability with the advocacy of conservative 'family' values (1). The major change before and especially during the wars concerned the rights and new positions women gained outside of the private sphere, which was seen as countering the traditional beliefs. While detective fiction changed as a genre and portrayed women in power more often, there was still the underlying belief that men were the ones who held true and natural power in society. As explained by Riley and Pearce, even female writers were inclined to prefer male detectives and portray them in power to connect with their readers (131). Feminist detective fiction highlights certain questions around feminism while still being compliant with some traditional predisposed customs present in the formula. Even though the reader of feminist detective fiction does not need to be a feminist, one can enjoy the use of the woman detective, who does not denounce all of these customs, but instead challenges more sexist conventions in the genre (Makinen, "Feminist Popular Fiction" 15-16). Firstly, I will discuss feminism and detective fiction during the first half of the 20th century. Secondly, this part focuses on the representation of gender, femininity and masculinity in detective fiction. Lastly, I will address detectives, killers and victims and how they were presented in terms of gender.

2.2.1 A Women's Genre? Feminism and Detective Fiction

One of the most critical missions the feminist movement focused on was expanding women's lives beyond being a wife and a mother. As stated by King, the 'woman question,' which demanded the liberation of women from private spheres as mothers, was already heavily discussed during the Victorian period (9). The feminist movement in the United States and the United Kingdom focused on the inherently assigned private and public spheres that were controversial in the current climate around the 20th century. As explained by Gillis and Hollows, the fact that men and women were allocated to different spheres upheld the predisposed gendered differences (5). One of the most important reasons detective fiction has survived as a popular literary form throughout the years is its ability to change. According to Plain, the genre uses many stereotypes, but the formula can alter to keep the public's interest (12). An easy way for detective fiction to rattle its readers is to subvert cultural rules and beliefs (Plain 12). For example, the use of women detectives and killers became more and more popular in the late 19th and early 20th century since they were rarely seen in real life. This section focuses on the history of feminism in the late 19th and early half of the 20th centuries, as well as the effects of the feminist movement on society and detective fiction. Then this section looks at the women writers of the genre, particularly Agatha Christie, and their influence on detective fiction, which has been labeled as the feminization of the genre.

A new ideal of a woman produced by the trying times and expansion of roles women commenced was in term promoted by the suffragettes. As explained by Riley and Pearce, the first wave of feminism advocated the New Woman image, which was connected with strength, athleticism, and boisterousness, to challenge the previous ideals of a feminine, curvy form (59-60). In other words, the New Woman figure was created for feminists to push the idea of women who possess masculine features alongside or over their feminine qualities. It can be argued that during the Golden Age period, society was changing quite rapidly, and people were forced to acquire new roles in this different society. As explained by Peach, the lack of clear direction during the 1920s and 1930s in Britain's society perhaps made it easier for women to acquire new roles and identities (105). The effects of the feminist movement can be seen in the novels of the women writers, as they created an array of different kinds of women and gave them roles or occupations in the imaginative space that were more inaccessible to women in the real world (Peach 105).

As explained by Riley and Pearce, the first feminist movement wave took place from the 1880s until the 1940s, and the second wave started in the 1960s and lasted until the 1980s (4). The World Wars and the reconstruction of society took place during the first wave. The first wave of feminism focused on the rights for women to vote and is linked to the suffrage movement, and the second wave can be described as a liberation movement (Riley and Pearce 4). There are some variations between countries concerning the feminist movement and the results that came from it. The first wave of the feminist movement in Britain brought many new opportunities for women, however, feminism meant different things for different classes. According to Miller, the middle- or upper-class New Woman became a symbolized figure of the feminist movement due to the now earned liberty and choice to uphold public roles, as opposed to the lower-class woman, whose experience of feminism was very minute in comparison (7). Even though the effects of the feminist movement touched some women more than others, 'the woman question' was an important part of the social and political debate in the 19th and 20th centuries (Miller 7). Although the feminist movement produced various rights, it also highlighted discord amongst women since women from different backgrounds and social classes experienced diverse issues from one another. According to Lewis and Ardis, the 'woman's experience' was significant to feminists in attaining the right of access to the public sphere for women, however, this 'woman's experience' was not universally similar for all women (2). The claims about this universality divulged issues around racism and classism, for example, amongst some feminist groups (Lewis and Ardis 2).

The suffrage movement was a vital part of the feminist movement during the beginning of the 20th century. The suffragettes and their actions pushed forward many rights for women and especially the idea of the potentials of women: "The Women's Social and Political Union was founded in Manchester in 1903, and the activities of the suffragettes were in some instances to become militant during the early years of the twentieth century" (Kestner 182). The suffrage movement was very vocal and visible, especially in the public sphere. According to Lewis and Ardis, during the militant phase of the campaign in England, which lasted approximately from 1905 to 1914, feminists took to the streets and called for public attention with huge marches, specific colors, and campaigns with the imprint 'Votes for Women' (221-222). As explained by Lewis and Ardis, the feminists used printed publications to their advantage in the suffrage movement: "During the militant suffrage period and after, feminists developed and circulated gendered readings of modern everyday life in essays published in alternative publications, daily newspapers,

and political pamphlets” (222). The military period of the suffrage movement in England sparked a new interest for feminists to construct a feminist press to distribute their agenda in the early 20th century. These feminists created such things as women’s bookstores and reading groups, enacted feminist subgenres and women’s history in literature, and focused on women’s issues regarding printing and reading methods (Lewis and Ardis 225).

World War I brought many changes to society, one of them being the growing number of single women. As stated by Peach, there was an increased existence of unmarried women that represented female independence and challenged many social structures in the 1920s (110). The presence of these single women was notable not only in private spheres but, more importantly, in public spheres. For the longest time, the most significant role for women was to be mothers. As stated by Lord and Burfoot, childless women were seen as lesser than women who obeyed the traditional role of bearing and raising children (14). Anyone who did not follow the traditional rules regarding class or gender was labeled as an outsider in society. Education and paid labor were some of the issues pushed by the feminist movement since women were largely denied the right to higher education and work outside the home. As stated by Lewis and Ardis, professional knowledge was still prohibited from women in the late 19th and early 20th century (55). One of the most popular ways for women to earn a living was to become a private governess in an established household. However, according to Kungl, many universities started to offer teaching certificates, which ensured an improved wage and independence from depending on a household for an income during the late 19th and early 20th centuries (33). Women entered the workforce more prominently during wartime and proved themselves capable of doing hard labor outside their homes. However, the undertaking of these masculine jobs was more associated with patriotism, which was a more socially acceptable reason, as opposed to the desire for women to enter workplaces out of their own will (Kungl 42). A significant number of women indeed stated that their reason for working during wartime was patriotism since they felt compelled to aid the war effort in some way (Kungl 42).

After the World Wars, there was a great need to call women back to their original roles as mothers and wives taking care of their household. However, according to Philips and Haywood, several women decided to stay in the workforce; practically all single women had jobs and many women combined motherhood with paid labor (2). It is self-evident that some women did return to their lives as full-time wives and mothers as part of the redomestication of women after the

wars, but this was not common truth amongst all women (Philips and Haywood 2). During wartime, as men were in the front line fighting, women became much more visible in the public space. The more women became prominent in the public sphere, the more their skills were appreciated, and questions around education, work, and vote for women began to take place (Kungl 8). World War I showed the importance of education for women, amongst many things. According to Kungl, since women proved that education and training could make a woman just as capable of an employee as a man, education for girls became a necessary part of their growing up (37). Furthermore, opportunities and circumstances around work altered and expanded for women in many ways after the wars. As explained by Kungl, the teaching field opened for women as universities and secondary schools allowed women to become teachers in these male-dominated workplaces, and women no longer had to solely remain as governesses (32). There was an increasing need for workers in the industry, requiring young people to be educated and trained for work. According to Philips and Haywood, the Education Act of 1944 in Britain enabled boys and girls to go to schools and prove their abilities through intellect rather than social class (29). The postwar climate demanded changes in the education of both girls and boys to rebuild society as a whole.

After World War II, women were increasingly established in the public sphere, and the redomestication pushed by society would not be completely possible due to the efforts of the feminist movement. One option to include middle-class women in both workforce and motherhood was an idea of a three-phase life cycle; an education for a job, a time for motherhood, and then a return to either full-time or part-time work (Philips and Haywood 7). As explained by Philips and Haywood, this cycle also gave hope for women that they did not have to forsake their career desires due to marriage or family life (7). Whereas a man was seen as the head of a family, who provides for it financially, the duties of a wife were to take care of the house, its goods, and family members. As explained by Miller, after the modern consumer culture arrived in Britain in the late 19th century, advertisements, department stores, and commodities were primarily targeted towards women (11). Women were taught to be attractive to their husbands, and consumerism created an image of the perfect housewife. Earlier, women were instructed to appeal to their husbands, but now this image-centered consumerism turned women into social properties that needed to be maintained to meet the current standards of feminine beauty (Miller

11). The post-war society saw the potential of women workers but also pushed the idea of women returning to domestic life now that peace had been acquired.

Detective fiction portrays a certain crime, usually a murder, as a lawbreaking offense to solve. As women often become the victims of crimes, and the institutions that solve these crimes are ruled by men, the issues undertaken by feminism are apparent. The traditional difficulty arises when male-dominated institutions attempt to solve crimes in feminine fields they know very little since the crime scene, the vital clues, and the victims usually center in the private sphere, such as manor houses, schools, and homes. Although not every detective fiction writer considers themselves to be a feminist, it is clear that the crime genre itself can tackle matters important to feminism (Rowland 169). Even though detective fiction can portray feminist issues to the public in a way that is easy to relate to or understand, they are still only works of fiction. As stated by Plain, detective fiction novels are historical and depict gendered negotiations, however, they are literary texts, too (9). As explained by Philips and Haywood, popular fiction has the potential to arbitrate concerns around feminist issues, such as working women, and transform these into narrative patterns of realistic experiences and romantic resolutions (20). These fictional representations of feminist topics could alleviate the concerns around them. Although detective fiction portrays fictional characters in a made-up story revolving around a crime that is in the end solved, fiction can depict real-life issues in an easy-to-digest form. The story can concentrate on a crime, but the readers can identify the broader problems the book undertakes as they extend to the real world (P. Walton and Jones 217-218).

The image of a correct woman was heavily advertised after the wars, however, crime fiction was also influenced by consumerism and the proper femininity it advertised. According to Peach, a specific kind of society was elevated, and a certain type of a woman was repressed:

In both crime fiction and criminological writing, the elision of criminality and female desire leads to an interlinking of the mental suffering of women; the rise of a seductive, American-oriented, consumer society; and the suppression, if not criminalising, of female sexuality and independence as dangerous. (103)

Even if not every writer of detective fiction was a feminist or supported feminist concerns, the changes they presented in their novels could be interpreted to support the feminist efforts. As explained by Kestner, the use of female detectives, who work alongside police officers to track

down both male and female criminals, could display a kind of pro-feminist advocacy in stories (31).

Women writers crossed boundaries and entered the public sphere by earning a living with writing, while their adventurous female sleuths strove to gain authority in a male-dominated profession (Kungl 19). While Agatha Christie relied on stereotypes and stock characters in her novels, she presented an array of young and active women, too. According to Makinen, these female characters were incredibly active, social, daring, and adventurous (*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity* 1). It is evident that these young women were used in a precise and deliberate way during a time when women were seen as less than men (Makinen, "Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity" 1). Some of the female stock characters used by Christie included nosy old spinsters, cat ladies, or damsels in distress, for instance. It can be argued that the portrayal of this old woman, who snoops on the people around her in order to know everything about everyone, is a quite conservative stereotype (Makinen, "Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity" 56). However, one can also view this nosiness as a deliberate façade of a brilliant older woman that would make them appear harmless in the eyes of the authorities, for example.

Traditional detective fiction was very profitable for women writers, especially during the Golden Age of detective fiction. Although not all the Golden Age detective fiction writers were women, a significant portion of them was and are remembered as the 'queens of crime': Margery Allingham, Ngaio Marsh, Dorothy L. Sayers, and Agatha Christie (Riley and Pearce 131). The most famous women writers all varied in their beliefs towards feminism, the roles of women in society, and gender politics. The social changes women experienced during the first half of the 20th century were acknowledged by these women writers as potential causes of tensions around the subjects of the feminine and power, however, they still addressed these topics in their works in different ways (Rowland 166). Whereas Christie believed in a traditional gender hierarchy with perhaps some desired optimism, others approached the issues with a more liberal outlook (Rowland 166). The efforts pushed by the feminist movement during the Golden Age of crime fiction were visible in the novels produced at that time. Although it is debated whether the most popular women writers were feminists or supported their efforts, it is clear that they presented women who were in an improved position if compared to earlier works of fiction. As explained by Rowland, the concept of women in power was debated amongst women writers: "The [...] golden age writers all

variously exhibit unease with the concept of women *in* power but are critical of women *under* arbitrary power" (164; emphasis original).

The Golden Age of detective fiction existed in both the United States, where the hard-boiled version was popular and Britain, known for the soft-boiled British detective fiction. However, the Golden Age is often connected with the British version due to its popularity established by renowned writers, such as Christie (P. Walton and Jones 119). The hard-boiled version of crime fiction was connected more with male writers and masculinity, whereas the British soft-boiled crime fiction was associated with women writers. The soft-boiled version of detective fiction preferred by British writers is characterized as more feminine with poisons and very little gruesome violence set in the countryside (Plain 30). On the other hand, the American hard-boiled detective fiction addressed an urban setting, violence, and melancholy (Plain 30). There was apprehension towards women writing such a masculine genre since only men were thought to have been able to write about detective fiction. As explained by Kungl, like many detectives, most writers of this genre were thought to have been men since there was doubt about the capability of women, who were primarily confounded in the domestic sphere, to know anything about detective work, or be fit to write about crime, psychology or murder (2). However, these assumptions have since been proven to be false by notable female writers, who popularized the genre.

One can ask why women writers decided to enter such a male-oriented genre to become reputable writers? As Kungl states, male-dominated detective fiction became increasingly popular during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and women writers had to figure out a way to establish themselves in this genre (7). Women writers created many changes in the genre that were successful in the literary marketplace: they produced strong female lead characters, changed the scenery of the crime to the domestic, proved that this domestic environment and the knowledge about it could be a functional detective narrative, and expanded the prevailing roles for female characters (Kungl 7). These alterations proved to be very prosperous for many women writers of the genre. There were other changes in society as well as in the literary business that led to the genre and these women writers becoming popular. The changes within the publishing industry, for example, the founding of book clubs, the advertisements in magazines, the marketing of cheaper editions of the novels, and maximizing sales of the novels to libraries for easy public

access, significantly affected the rise of detective fiction and their writers in the 1920s and 1930s (P. Walton and Jones 25).

The combination of the conservative formula with modern topics and issues created an exciting variation in detective fiction. Women writers responded to desired fluctuations within the genre and kept the public interest by constantly adapting to these changes. As explained by Kungl, women writers reacted to disputes in the cultural history of their society, for example, the roles of women, and the relationship between popular culture and writers (9). As explained by Schaub, especially British women writers created these amalgamations, which were conservative about class and quite contemporary in presenting gender politics (2). Evidently, the readers of detective fiction do not have to be feminists to understand the subtle indications of the concerns raised by the feminist movement, that are perhaps presented in the novel in a positive light. According to P. Walton and Jones, detective fiction could have been an effective way for underlining the issues concerning feminism without the reading experience becoming too political:

This equivocal position allows novels to dramatize feminist politics for readers who may not consider themselves "feminists." [...] One of the pleasures of reading novels with strong female detectives, it seems, lies in the ability of these works to negotiate what we would call the territory of gender politics in a manner that readers saw as "normal" rather than "political," one identified with "realism" rather than "ideology." (P. Walton and Jones 58-59)

The issues related to social class and gender are heavily debated by many of the popular women writers of detective fiction. As Rowland states, the whole concept of class itself should not be destroyed, however, it should adapt and change in modern times to remain as a stabilizing social structure, according to the fictions created by the most notable women crime writers (40). The fictions of the Golden Age women writers tend to criticize the class structure as it has not kept up with the changing times. The inherent drive for justice seen in their detectives unmasks the class structure as an outdated, hollow theatrical performance, and they attempt to not only revive but enhance the class structure in the postwar climate (Rowland 42).

Whether Agatha Christie was a feminist or not has been debated by feminist literary critics for a long time. As Kungl explains, it is not relevant if Christie was a feminist, since in her novels she depicts an array of women working in all kinds of jobs, such as nursing, acting, office work, and teaching (114). Christie was competent in creating combinations of female characters that expanded the roles for women without upsetting the inherent conservatism of the genre. As

explained by Rowland, her heroines appear to renegotiate conventional roles since Christie endorses female self-expression without disturbing conventional constructions too much (158). However, Christie herself believed in the gender hierarchy and traditional roles for women, and these beliefs can be seen in her writing. Christie's political conservatism does not fully extend to her novels since there are also modern gender structures present in them. According to Kungl, Christie's depiction of resilient female characters could come from her own woman-centered youth, and her use of the conservative formula in her plots could echo her conventional upbringing (110). As established before, many male and female writers did create women detectives in their novels as main characters. However, aside from Tuppence Beresford, Christie did not create any young female lead detectives (Schaub 78). However, Christie presented an array of young and bright women, who often assisted the actual lead investigator. However, Christie has always focused more on the plots of her novels rather than the characters or the crimes. As explained by Makinen, Christie has created incredibly clever plots since her characters are often merely stereotypes seen in other works of fiction (*Feminist Popular Fiction* 101).

Women writers had altered the detective genre and were well established in the literary marketplace in the 20th century. Whereas many women writers saw themselves as career women, Christie valued her family and marriages more. According to Rowland, Christie regarded her writing as secondary to being a wife (7). Although Christie's first marriage was not successful and ended in her husband's infidelity and divorce, she was one of the few women writers to be a mother and viewed her daughter as a vital part of her life despite the scandal the marriage caused (Rowland 7). Detective fiction during the Golden Age was described as unsentimental and connected with logic and psychology. Unlike other writers, Christie was critical of this unsentimentality (Schaub 114). This desire for sentimentality and her own primary identity as a mother and a wife is visible in Christie's novels. Although her female characters appear to be quite independent and professional, they ultimately often find their happy ending in a marriage and a family as opposed to a career (Rowland 158).

Although detective fiction heavily relies upon its capability to change and surprise its readers, there are few guidelines that most detective novels used as unspoken rules. Later these unspoken truths about the formula of the genre were established as rules in a club founded by writers:

In 1928 the Detection Club was formed in Britain. Its founding members included Chesterton, Bentley, and Sayers. The Club resolved to reject unfair resolutions which the

reader would be unable to decipher for themselves [...] The Club effectively designated a canon of 'true' detective fiction and an ideology of readership that accorded to a 'gentleman's agreement.' This canon rejected the more feminine conventions of the genre, by ruling out 'intuition' by the detective, and denigrating the highly successful feminine 'If I Had But Known' school. (Makinen, "Feminist Popular Fiction" 100)

The Golden Age was a very turbulent time culturally and socially, and many issues raised by the feminist movement did appear in the novels produced during that time. According to S. Walton, feminist studies have re-examined detective fiction novels from the interwar period focusing on feminist issues, such as domesticity, social relationships, and the power structure of the aristocratic and bourgeois home (5). As mentioned above in this section, the Detection Club in Britain belittled the 'Had I But Known' school as not 'true' detective fiction since it relied on feminine intuition and knowledge in solving the crime (Makinen, "Feminist Popular Fiction" 3). Although detective fiction saw the emergence of psychology in the early 20th century, there was some use of feminine methods, for example, intuition, present as well. However, the official Detection Club rejected the use of intuition as a crime-solving method.

One of the ways Golden Age women writers feminized the genre was to relocate the crimes to private spheres. As explained by Rowland, this relocation meant that the clues to solving the crime became feminine details, such as missing domestic objects, torn pieces of clothing, or changes in the household's daily routine (20-21). Furthermore, the detective in charge of naming the criminal would have to be sensitive to these domestic details and value them as valid clues (Rowland 20-21). By relocating the crime scene to domestic spaces, the characters involved with the crime, in turn, were more domestic-oriented. In addition to this, women writers also created amateur or even professional female detectives to lead investigations, thus making the whole genre all the more feminine. As explained by Messent, these female protagonists operated in a difficult space and struggled with their own identities:

We see, then, a series of women detective writers looking to re-fashion the genre and re-gender it "female." This has, however, led to several difficulties and contradictions: to women protagonists who are, to varying degrees, self-divided - treasuring their independence and autonomy but looking for some kind of sustaining group solidarity; tough (at times violently so), and thus veering toward the type of "machismo" behavior incompatible with a feminist consciousness, but aware too of their own vulnerability and

physical powerlessness; looking to combine gender traits conventionally seen as “masculine” with the “feminine,” but sometimes caught uncomfortably between the two. (Messent 93)

The so-called feminization of the genre was a sum of many changes mostly created by women writers. As explained by Kungl, women writers could express their experiences and perspectives as women in their literary works (16). By establishing the private sphere as the scene of the crime, domestic knowledge as the required method, and household clues as valuable evidence, women writers highlighted the strictly woman-centered world, which was largely ignored by society as insignificant in fiction (Kungl 16-17). Although detective fiction depends heavily on the use of stereotypes, especially in Christie’s novels, there were other ways women writers could still convey their opinions about female stereotypes in their writing. For example, an unmarried woman was seen as a failure in society since she was not a mother or a wife and was often dubbed as a nosy spinster in detective fiction (Kungl 10). While women writers did use and sometimes mock this stereotype of a spinster in their novels, they could also criticize and indicate discontent in the ridiculing and ostracizing of these women in society (Kungl 10). For instance, Christie created a nosy and brilliant elderly woman detective, Jane Marple, who became one of the most famous fictional female detectives.

In conclusion, detective fiction has remained as a popular literary form for many years due to its ability to change. Women writers combined the conservative formula with contemporary issues creating an intriguing variant in detective fiction. Although there was doubt about the abilities of women writing a traditionally masculine genre, women writers established themselves in the market during the 20th century. Owing to the acceptance of these changes in the genre, women writers could create popular fiction that addressed the heated debates around gender questions. The renowned women writers feminized the genre as they moved the location of the crime to the private sphere, which was largely ignored by men.

2.2.2 Representation of Gender: Masculinity and Femininity

The period during the Golden Age of crime fiction saw many changes in society. The difference between gender and sex was not entirely defined in the 20th century. According to Riley and Pearce,

changes in the legal system began to transform traditional male and female roles (41). The second wave of feminism challenged women to scrutinize the roles and traits that had been assigned to them by society (Riley and Pearce 43). Women were given certain characteristics and positions in societies ruled by men, and deviating from these boundaries was frowned upon. As stated by Plain, to preserve patriarchal society in the 1930s and 1940s, strong gender stereotypes were established for both men and women (44). Masculinity, and therefore men, have continuously been connected with logic, strength, work, and authority. Women were seen as emotional and incapable of logical thinking, hence men were responsible for setting and maintaining the boundaries and rules for them (Plain 44). Undoubtedly feminine and masculine have always been seen as opposites. As explained by Spence and Helmreich, femininity means the lack of masculinity, and vice versa (17). Therefore, men would be expected to inherit masculine traits, whereas women would only exhibit feminine characteristics. Undoubtedly the two sexes differ in many ways, thus the labels 'masculine' and 'feminine' are useful in classifying certain attributes connected to gender (Spence and Helmreich 123). Yet, these labels are fluid and can be found in every individual to varying degrees, even if they were previously connected to only one of the sexes. This part looks at the characteristics of men and women, the representation of gender in society, and the definitions of feminine and masculine during the first half of the 20th century.

'Feminine' has always been associated with domesticity, passivity, and motherhood (Riley and Pearce 41). For instance, the concepts of work and sexuality were inherently linked with men, but they were also feminized for women. Female sexuality was profoundly associated with marriage and reproduction during the 19th century (Pykett 103). Although women did have professions at the time, they still worked within the boundaries of feminine occupations, such as secretaries, nurses, or housemaids. However, the beginning of the 20th century shaped society drastically. The two World Wars and changes in the political and legal world transformed the traditional bourgeois gender system. According to Philips and Haywood, women faced the complications of the 'dual role' of being a mother and a working woman (5). The feminine private sphere and the masculine public sphere began to merge and became open for both men as well as women in the middle of the 20th century. According to Faktorovich, the inferiority of the female gender was inherently biological, and this was used as an argument to deny women an education similar to men (41). As women proved themselves proficient in the workforce, especially

during the World Wars, they demanded equal education more forcefully. Since the gender system was altering, it gave way for women to point out the insufficiency of the biological justification. Another reason for women to exit the domestic sphere was modernization since modern equipment and methods allowed women to have more free time. Household chores, such as cooking, cleaning, and sewing, were now easier and quicker, which left women with ample time to pursue their professional and educational dreams (Faktorovich 43). This change would also benefit the entire household since the family would not have to solely depend on the man's income. Yet, there was resistance to these slow and inevitable changes.

Both in society as well as in fiction, the traditional Victorian woman, who stayed at home and behaved within her confines, was challenged by the emerging New Woman (Ardis "New Women, New Novels" 13). This new female identity included independence, career over motherhood, and sexual freedom. According to Riley and Pearce, the concept of the New Woman commenced discussions around gender roles in society: "The distinction between sex and gender was not fully articulated until well into the following century, but the New Woman figure was a launching point for the debates around cultural constructions of (especially female) identity that fed into its articulation" (41). At the end of the Victorian and throughout the Edwardian era, the New Woman began to emerge in public, which caused tensions amongst the British gender and social classes. As explained by Heilmann and Beetham, the old Victorian woman figure was fading away, and it gave way to the New Woman, but the adjustment to this was not easy:

'The New Woman' with her short haircut and practical dress, her demand for access to higher education, the vote and the right to earn a decent living, her challenge to accepted views of femininity and female sexuality, this ambiguous figure was the focus of much media debate and intense anxiety as well as hope in the decades spanning the end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth century. (Heilmann and Beetham 1)

The New Woman brought hope to women struggling to fight for equality, and as the years progressed, more and more women took to these new changes of female identity. After World War I and the attained suffrage in the 1930s, young women returned to this New Woman figure that the preceding generation of women launched at the end of the 19th century (Schaub 39). Once again, women sought equality in education and paid labor and advocated for sexual freedom. According to Riley and Pearce, respectable women did not dress in revealing clothes and confined themselves to the domestic, while sexuality was connected solely to men and masculinity (66). The

New Woman desired to experience full sexual freedom as men could, without the traditional connection of sex to motherhood or marriage.

The emergence of this New Woman figure did not go unnoticed and it raised a great deal of worry in a society already troubled by the economic and political instability after the World Wars. As indicated by Ardis, society had concerns about the New Woman entering the public sphere: What would happen to society once these New Women appeared in public, how would their desire for a career affect the standard family structure, and what would happen to society and the economic system as a whole once New Women flooded the workplaces (*New Women, New Novels* 21)? The resurrection and protection of the British class and gender structure could be seen as a way for society and its citizens to heal from the traumas of the two major wars. The subtle changes amongst these young women, such as smoking in public, riding a bicycle, appearing unescorted in public, or dressing in more masculine or revealing outfits, questioned both the gender system altogether and the restrictions of proper female behavior (Schaub 38-39). According to Makinen, bicycles were greatly connected to the New Woman, and later cars gave modern women the independence to travel on their own wherever they wished at any time (*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity* 6). If the proper Victorian woman did not enter the public unchaperoned and focused solely on her home and family life, bicycles and cars gave modern women freedom to escape since they now had the means to expand their lives beyond their home. As Hollows explains it, the concept of Stepford Wives was introduced in the 1950s; they were women, who faced mental damage and exhaustion as they were pressured by media to see themselves simply as a wife or a mother (*Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture* 11).

The New Woman appeared in media, advertisements, and literature. The modern commercial world saw the New Woman as a tool in advertising, and thus the public would be incentivized to purchase the products being promoted. As stated by Heilmann and Beetham, the New Woman became synonymous with lust and passion, and she was presented as a fetishized, sometimes Orientalized, object of erotic charm (4). This new female figure interested consumers in a modern world and was now broadcast everywhere. However, the New Woman was not simply just a part of consumerism. Rather, the commercial world, while choosing to promote this new female figure in order to benefit from it, inadvertently also popularized and created a conversation around it. The image of the New Woman during this period was mostly connected with feminists, young people, and career women, who opposed the conventional status of women

with subtle changes to their looks, clothes, and attitudes (Heilmann and Beetham 145). As women had obtained new positions in the workforce that were previously accessible only to men, they often dressed in practical and manly attire, not only in traditionally more feminine clothes. As explained by Hollows, 'the feminine mystique' of the post-war years saw women wear increasingly more revealing and feminized fashion after mainly dressing in masculine clothes during the wars (*Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture* 148). It could be argued that women aspired to preserve their newly acquired, practical looks while still wearing nostalgic and feminine outfits as well. In addition, the sexual freedom desired by women at the beginning of the 20th century allowed them to venture outside their homes in more revealing clothes. All things considered, the New Woman was a combination of feminine features, such as interest in cosmetics, beauty and fashion, and masculine features, for example, smoking in public, buying tailored clothes suited for work, and having an interest in rights and politics.

The changes in the social status of women created concern amongst men regarding their own behaviors. According to Peach, women who rebelled against the Victorian system exposed it as a masquerade, as the behaviors of the middle-class men and women did no longer comply with that ideology (81). Society was much more accepting of men who cheated, deserted, or abused their families, even though this went against the Victorian ideology. Men were essentially allowed to deviate from their roles as protecting and loving husbands, but this behavior was not tolerated in women, and women were openly shamed if they failed to conform to the standards given to them. As Heilmann and Beetham state, the first two major contributions of the suffrage movement were largely displayed as threats to men instead of rights for women (60). Equality between men and women was seen as against the natural gender order, and as such, it also questioned previously natural characteristics of femininity and masculinity. However, the 1920s saw complications between feminine and masculine traits as World War I challenged these characteristics. According to Makinen, as men who returned from the war suffered from neurasthenia, or more commonly known as shell-shock, the problems around the concept of masculinity began (*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity* 25). Since men now seemed to exhibit these previously designated feminine attributes, could it not be possible for women to have masculine traits as well? The traumas of the two wars proved that both feminine and masculine characteristics reside in every individual, male or female. They can also vary to a degree depending on an individual's age, location, upbringing, or life experience, for instance, rather than biology.

All in all, the extreme transformations in society forced women to enter masculine professions, and they proved themselves capable of undertaking them and maintaining a household at the same time. This also revealed that women longing for a career could obtain new skills related to hard work and logic while still sustain their feminine virtues, such as idle domestic life or beauty and fashion (Philips and Haywood 6). Women were required to enter the public spheres, and they were eager to preserve their new roles after World War II, which saw society trying to return to normal. After World War II, women were pushed by society to return to their previous positions as mothers and wives. Nevertheless, the newly given rights and roles to women and the appearance of the New Woman figure shaped the identity of many women fundamentally. It could be argued that despite the initial resistance and shock, consumerism and advertising normalized the New Woman figure in the public eye.

2.2.3 Detectives, Killers, and Victims

During the Golden Age of crime fiction, women were involved in the criminal world to some extent in literature and real life. However, men and women were seen in a different light when it came to committing a crime. As explained by Abouddahab and Paccaud-Huguet, educated women could not commit any crime, whereas men from all backgrounds could be involved in any type of criminal activity (x). People rarely thought of women as capable of committing similar acts of violence as men due to the belief that the characteristics of a woman prohibited her from so. In reality, both men and women can take a life, although there could be some differences in their methods, for example, women are prone to rely on poisons and other non-violent ways of killing. Victorian society experienced events that led to various adjustments in the gendered legal system. According to Kestner, the atmosphere in the late 19th century was favorable for the emergence of female detectives, for example, the Ripper murders caused wild speculations about the killer, doubts about the competence of the police, and fear amongst women (33). At the beginning of the 20th century, the roles for men and women in crime fiction were still very clearly appointed: women could only be victims and men could be detectives, killers, and sometimes victims. However, female characters in crime fiction began to slowly acquire new roles as both criminals and detectives, and deepen the lure of the desire of a woman that went directly against their

traditional characteristics (Abouddahab and Paccaud-Huguet vii). This section focuses on the characteristics of fictional male and female killers, victims, and investigators in crime fiction from the late 19th century to the 1950s.

During the Golden Age of crime fiction, the importance of the investigator increased. As stated by Craig and Cadogan, the focus of the crime transferred from the victim to the detective, and the genre itself changed to become more practical instead of emotional in solving the identity of the killer (38). The role of the investigator is to uphold the law and name the murderer to restore the social and legal balance. However, this task would not be easy for the detectives in crime fiction, as crimes evolved into remarkably complicated webs of puzzles and false clues. Every suspect involved in the crime has motives and dubious alibies, the killer displays supreme intelligence in committing the crime, the character of the victim plays a crucial role in solving the mystery, and the detective faces a difficult task in sifting through all the intriguing clues in order to outsmart the clever murderer (Horsley 37). The patriarchal institutions, such as courtrooms and the police force, were previously forbidden to women as they belonged in the male-occupied public spheres. According to Kestner, the presence of women in the male-dominated legal system transformed in the late Victorian society due to various Married Women's Property Acts and suffragism, for instance (24). Although these events brought various rights for women, the female detective was still an extremely new concept in both fiction and real life up until the beginning of the 20th century.

Female detectives were often put in a position to defend their right to uphold the law. Their male counterparts did not have to constantly prove themselves capable of bringing justice in a criminal investigation since their sex deemed men rational and powerful enough in patriarchal institutions, such as courtrooms, police stations, and the jail system. Women did not have a proper role in the justice system either in real life or in fiction. The Golden Age of crime fiction preferred amateur women detectives, possibly since there were very few certified female detectives in the police force. As explained by Makinen, some women acquired some patrol duties in the Metropolitan Police Force in London in the late 1910s and early 1920s, but they did not have the power to arrest, they were mocked by the public and their male colleagues, and later they were disbanded and were only asked to aid in certain cases involving women or children (*Feminist Popular Fiction* 99). As women detectives were reasonably new in the police force, both in fiction and real life, they introduced new skills and methods in detecting and created a competition

between male and female investigators. According to Kestner, female detectives in crime fiction frequently side with the victims, often women, to oppose malicious men and women, but their practice as an enforcer of the law is more limited compared to male investigators (24). It could be argued that female sleuths can connect with submissive female victims due to their understanding of the cultural gender inequality and may have a desire to expose female criminals in order to shed light on their unspoken presence amongst criminals. However, the use of women detectives was very reformist and sometimes even radical. According to Craig and Cadogan, there are generally two approaches with female detectives working alongside their male colleagues: the woman detective prospers and obtains respect due to her knowledge of the feminine area, or the woman detective competes on equal terms against male investigators (12). As the legal system was adapting to the growing female representation in positions of power, there was resistance until this was normalized.

The purposes for women in entering legal occupations varied a lot. One of the most popular motives, especially in fiction, was a woman who sought to support and save their male relatives from wrongful convictions:

Among the twenty or so women detectives who followed Valeria between 1875 and 1919, there is a large sprinkling of ladies who became investigators solely because they wished to redeem the reputations of their husbands, fathers, brothers or fiancés. In the eyes of their readers this steadfast support for wronged male relatives made their incursions into non-domestic and possibly dubious male preserves respectable - especially if the women in question acted as unpaid enthusiasts rather than career detectives (fees and femininity did not go together in polite society). (Craig and Cadogan 21)

Although this was not the motive for all women to help the law enforcement in their quest to solve the mystery and save their loved ones, it became a chief motive, and possibly a path to an official career in the police force, amongst amateur female sleuths. In detective fiction, the outbreak of the First World War generated young female sleuths portraying their abilities in male-dominated institutions. As explained by Craig and Cadogan, the intelligent Edwardian New Woman created by the popular magazines was daring and fearless while undertaking simple mysteries, such as petty crime, either as a professional or as an amateur in order to help her own country during trying times (35). Instead of staying as passive helpers and assistants to male detectives, women sought to become more active in solving the crimes themselves.

During the 19th century, the introduction of female sleuths in fiction was the outcome of many changes in society. As explained by Kestner, as legal, moral, and social institutions altered in light of gender debates, some female detectives appeared as legitimate investigators in the police force, some worked through private agencies, and others were self-employed (1). Although female sleuths had better opportunities at Scotland Yard in fiction as opposed to real life, the idea of having women in previously male-dominated institutions became increasingly popular. The Edwardian society where the New Woman detective appeared had encountered many challenges. According to Kestner, these female sleuths functioned in a society facing various tragic incidents that would ultimately cause World War I (184). Perhaps the road for female investigators into male-dominant occupations in real life was not as romanticized as in detective fiction, however, as the police force was collecting itself after the World Wars and modernizing everything, this opened the possibility and the need for women to stay in these professions. Even though men and women in the justice system did not start as equals, women's positions improved from helpers and assistants to independent investigators over time.

Women as killers were long thought to have been virtually impossible. Well into the 20th century, women were only seen as the protectors of their family, as caring, kind and motherly. According to Makinen, the traditional detective fiction before the Golden Age era portrayed women often as victims, sometimes as suspects or culprits of some petty crimes, but seldom as killers, since that would have been quite unfeminine (*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity* 116-117). Victorian society heavily leaned on the idea that a woman is incapable of expressing masculine characteristics such as violence, power, aggression, and logic. Irons explains, that by apprehending female criminals, uncovering them as killers, and revealing the truth about their lives, their loved ones, and their roles in societies this meant the acknowledgment of women as capable of possessing masculine features alongside or instead of their feminine virtues (72). To develop the justice system to solve crimes in the private sphere, such as homes, and apprehend female criminals just as well as male criminals, late Victorian society had to question the traditional bipolar gender structure. Regardless of the nature of the relationship between a victim and a female killer, the traditional characteristics that society bestows upon women do not align with the typical persona of a murderer who is often strong, frightening, and male (Jensen 1). One key factor in women killers is their life situation and close relationship to the victim, often their spouse. As stated by Jensen, these women are often victimized and restrained to inescapable domestic

lives, as homicide committed by women is usually connected with domestic violence, unstable home life with children, low quality of life, and spouses who are involved in criminal behavior (2). Although this was not a motive for all female killers, it was a fairly common reason for women to escape their poor and unbearable lives since wives and husbands did not have equal rights in a marriage, and the position of the woman was significantly worse.

Although women killers were a rare type of criminals, society was very intrigued by them. According to Lord and Burfoot, actual real-life women killers stood out from the usual criminals and created a public fascination (4). They are frequently represented as sexual and evil women who have deviated from the traditional role women are allowed to have. Whereas the magazines were fascinated by the Edwardian New Woman undertaking various detective tasks, another female figure was created around the same time but on the opposite side of the law. This femme fatale character already appeared in the hard-boiled fiction in the late 1940s and 1950s, although she became the most prevalent after World War II (Parker 59). As opposed to an insane or emotionally unstable female killer, the femme fatale would be the perfect murderer in a detective novel for her seemingly masculine features that were purposefully hidden behind her feminine mask. As explained by Parker, the femme fatale prudently planned her crimes, chose her victims carefully, and familiarized herself with her environment, all the while executing her crimes brutally and efficiently (60). Only a detective, who could see behind this feminine and often sexual mask, could solve the murder committed by the femme fatale. As stated by Lord and Burfoot, the lure of the female killers is in their empathetic sexuality, although this image is very misleading from actual real-life women killers:

Woman-as-murderer is unspeakable and does not fit social norms and codes of femininity. Despite the fact that they have been portrayed as evil, deceitful, and cunning, female murderers throughout history are usually common people, and female-perpetrated murders occur in disturbingly ordinary circumstances. Often, their stories function to illuminate women's daily lives and common experiences of violence. In what ways can these counter-images of murderous women negotiate with public spectacle? Traditional portrayals of women killers are saturated with images of particularly sexual and evil creatures randomly killing. However, the scientific literature, accounts from actual murderers, and court evidence suggest that women who kill do not usually kill strangers

but, rather, loved ones (e.g. partners, children). Nor do they kill randomly - often, they kill their violent partners. (Lord and Burfoot 4)

It could be claimed that female characters were the best killers during the Golden Age of crime fiction. Even though the magazines popularized different types of female murderers, they were still quite unexpected and, hence, more puzzling and entertaining for the reader. However, a publicly presented female, who portrayed masculine and feminine features, was a very new concept both in literature and real life. Therefore, it was not yet seen as natural for proper women.

Whereas male violence is seen as natural, violence done by women is unnatural since cruelty does not fit the feminine characteristics of a proper woman. According to Parker, the sense of control and power, often sexual, of a murderer was considered more common with men rather than women (62). A proper woman was considered by society to be asexual in nature, and by that logic, proper women could not find pleasure in violence or murders. The feminist view in representing violence committed by women has focused on the paradoxical explanation for female violence: as women should not be able to kill due to their gender, they are therefore unnatural, or they are not in their right mind and in control of their actions, in other words, they are overcome by emotions and hormones (Makinen, "Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity" 138). They were considered to be either unnatural, since killing was not natural for a woman, or insane, as no sane woman would do such a thing. A common theme with female murderers is the lack of knowledge or purposeful malice in representing their motives. Either they are overcome by hormones, are deemed insane, or are otherwise driven by passion. According to Makinen, another type of female murderer was a wife aiding her husband in committing or covering up a crime due to her passion for her husband and her sense of wifely duties (*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity* 125). Although the Golden Age of detective fiction expanded the motives for female killers, there was often an element of feminine emotions present.

Usually, the victim is known to the killer, and the motive is often some sort of gain or freedom, for example, inheritance, freedom from a marriage or other type of contract, or silencing the victim from exposing something detrimental about their killer. As explained by Knight, the most common type of combination of traits seen in a victim is their wealth and influence accompanied with a lot of negative sentiments attached to them, such as anger, envy, or fear, from other people around them (86). There is always a reason for the people surrounding the victim, including relatives, friends, and household staff, to either wish their death or even cause it. As

stated before, during the Golden Age of crime fiction, the focus shifted from the killer to the detective. Another major change was in relation to the victim and their location. Previously the main emphasis in crime fiction was on the physical location of the body, but later the socio-geographical and cultural site was more highlighted (Peach 64). However, it was still quite relevant to the story where the victim was killed: the atmosphere, cultural norms, and the surrounding people were also important for the writers as well as readers. It can be argued that the actions committed against the victim and the reactions to these actions of the people around the victim mirror the cultural norms and ideologies of the time the story takes place. According to Peach, the victim has always had a key role in defining these sexual and cultural norms (64). For instance, the trauma of a female victim, sexual or not, brings light to the attitudes towards the type of violence women face and to the circumstances around her life, that lead up to her murder. The main role for women in detective fiction tends to be the helpless murder victim. As explained by Horsley, especially crime fiction written by male authors is inclined to portray clichéd types of women as feeble victims or femme fatales, who are inherently evil by transgressing away from the meek, subservient female figure (244). Specifically, crime fiction tends to focus on the body of a horrendous crime if the victim is a woman.

All in all, the Golden Age of crime fiction saw the emergence of bodies, that were both sexualized and as well as gendered, and of women, who emerged from the shadows of a male investigator and entered the spotlight. The idea of women in power was popularized by the media at the beginning of the 20th century. Later, female detectives acquired a more permanent position in the police force, both in fiction and eventually in real life. The progressive nature in relation to gender, for example, the emergence of women as detectives and the nuances added to the female killers and victims, combined with a conservative take on restoring the status quo, shaped the genre drastically and made it increasingly popular during the 20th century.

2.3 Detective Fiction and Gender Theory

The involvement of female characters and writers in crime fiction indicates the changeability of the genre as a whole. The crime itself is scary and fascinating but safely contained within the story. As stated by Abouddahab and Paccaud-Huguet, the representation of women in the genre shows

their capabilities beyond the societal roles given to them based on their gender (vii). Since women were viewed as inferior to men, their motives, thoughts, and actions were not considered similar to men, and fiction had the power to give these inferior people a voice and a viewpoint (Abouddahab and Paccaud-Huguet 93). The Golden Age detective fiction utilized women in various ways in their narratives instead of limiting them to specific roles or locations assigned to them. It can be argued that women detectives were represented in a slightly humorous way compared to male detectives, who, based on their gender, were already respected as investigators. The use of the terms 'spinster' or 'sleuth' ridiculed especially elderly women as detectives since they were viewed as nosy people prying on other people's lives, and alongside the readers, they were the amusement of the official male investigators of the story (Irons 6). However, restricting women detectives solely to this position would not have benefitted the genre since its essence was to change, not to become too boring or easy for the readers to solve. Therefore, the roles of women characters needed to expand.

To give freedom for women to explore and alter the detective genre can be viewed as a radical means to change society and its views on gender. However, limiting this representation of women to fiction might not alter society itself: "To label something literary rather than 'real' is to quarantine it, in effect: to isolate it in a special corner of life, to box it off as a special kind of phenomenon, not something one encounters in society at large" (Ardis "New Women, New Novels" 12). Although women were represented in a new light in detective fiction, would it affect the beliefs of society in the end? By insinuating that women writers feminized detective fiction, it implies that the genre is originally masculine due to the inherent binary gender structure. According to Kestner, following the story through the viewpoint of a female detective opposed the authority of the male gaze, even if the female detective was not a professional (17-18). One could argue that the inherent characteristics assigned to women by society would create a good detective. As explained by Kungl, detecting was easy for women since they could enter places prohibited from men, they focused on details and were naturally assumed to be more inquisitive than men (75). The norms based on gendered characteristics can make both men and women good detectives, as men were viewed to be logical and women understood the emotional aspect of the killer. The detecting in a story usually required rational thinking as well as detail-oriented intellectuality and sentimentality towards other people. In this regard, a detective, who possesses both masculine

and feminine characteristics, or a man and woman detective duo was capable of solving fictional crimes the best.

Contemporary mindsets towards Golden Age crime fiction would condemn most of the fiction as sexist and racist, for instance. The historical context, however, offers an explanation to this, and there can even be quite radical and modern views towards race, sexuality, and gender embedded in the stories. To understand crime fiction, one must inspect all the elements of transformation as well as traditionalism in the genre:

Whether the detective is male or female, straight or gay, she or he always exists in negotiation with a series of long-established masculine codes. The extent to which a detective conforms to or challenges these models is thus essential to an understanding of crime fiction and the changing role of the investigator within the genre. (Plain 11)

Perhaps these negotiations present in the narratives around concepts of gender or class, for example, should be viewed as a progression in a society still substantially influenced by Victorian ideals. According to Craig and Cadogan, however, the genre is not notable for being radical, at least in terms of the female detectives, who often remained middle-aged and were treated quite similarly whether they were professional or not, up until the middle of the 20th century (232). The possible liberal views can nevertheless be seen in the female killers and young women present in the narratives, and to some extent in the male detectives trying to solve murders in a domestic environment. As explained by Horsley, many Golden Age narratives uncover the concealed frictions around views of class and gender, which are revealed to be deceitful and pretentious:

Many golden texts, upon closer inspection, reveal the hidden tensions beneath the surface of genteel English society, exhibiting its insularity, its greed, the instability of identity, its obsession with the hierarchies of class and gender [...] The nature of the crimes themselves is a metaphor for the lengths to which such a society is willing to go in the interests of hypocritical concealment. (Horsley 19)

Even if women are represented in the field of detective work, the treatment of male and female detectives differs significantly in fiction. As stated by Irons, controversial male detectives, such as Poirot, are treated as outsiders in the beginning, but ultimately, they are respected and the police willingly involve them in the investigation, which is often unheard of in the case of female detectives (x). Although Poirot is contrasted with the traditional English male investigator and his peculiar characteristics might be ridiculed, his talent is still well-known and valued by other men.

One of the masculine features appearing in modern women in the period was the desire for sexual freedom. As explained by Rowland, regarding gender in the Golden Age fiction, the feminine is often described as a masquerade, and sexuality is linked with danger (162). Whereas men could enjoy their sexual desires more freely, the Victorian view of sexual women was animalistic, and a proper woman should be in control of their sexuality (Ardis, "New Women, New Novels" 14). During the Golden Age, society was still adjusting these Victorian values to modern times, and views on women's sexuality changed slowly. As explained by Peach, the anxiety around female sexuality was visible in real life as well as fiction:

The ultimate symbol of women as street spectacle and masquerade is the prostitute. The association of assertive female sexuality, and even in some texts the mere suggestion that women have sexual desires and fantasies of their own, with the spectre of prostitution is a recurring trope in the criminalising of independent female subjectivity. (Peach 90)

The independence of young women around topics of career and sexuality was viewed as immoral and often connected with malice. Furthermore, very little was known about violence committed by women, hence, it was often viewed as unnatural. As stated by Parker, violence done by women is possible but often regarded based upon readily supposed and acknowledged norms (12). The sinister view on the female gender regarding violence and sexuality, for example, was questioned during the women's emancipation from old-fashioned values in the early 20th century.

The modification of the gender binary has been an essential part of the detective fiction genre due to its necessity to change and surprise its readers. As explained by Plain, the actual bodies are crucial in the story and they indicate many things: "Murder literally is 'written on the body' and bodies are never neutral. They inevitably bear the inscriptions of their cultural production - socially determined markers of gender, race, sexuality and class that profoundly influence the ways in which they are read by witnesses, police, detectives and readers" (12-13). Bodies tend to be gendered and even sexualized, although detective fiction does try to reform normative sexuality and transgress beyond the socially accepted gender boundaries (Plain 5-6). The reactions to finding or seeing a corpse are also gendered, as women are expected to be appalled at the sight of a body. This shock or disgust is often labeled as 'feminine nausea,' and if a female detective, for example, does not react this way, her femininity can be questioned (Craig and Cadogan 99). The interest in crime fiction, although it involves a crime and a violated body or bodies, remained strong even through the terrible wars and losses suffered in them at the

beginning of the 20th century. As explained by Plain, it is quite impossible to mourn over each body lost during a war, which is why crime fiction served as an alternative, imaginary way for readers to find and mourn over a specific body in the story (34). There is a need for the ritual of grief during a turbulent time of war:

Thus the fragmented, inexplicable and even unattributable corpses of war are replaced by the whole, overexplained, completely known bodies of detection. The detective reassembles that which war had exploded, and the over-invested signifier of the corpse becomes a ritual, 'grievable' body reassuring society with both its integrity and its explicability. There is even comfort in the certainty of death offered by detective fictions.
(Plain 34)

The persons responsible for the death are indicated and convicted, giving the audience closure to the crime.

In conclusion, the practices of the female detective served as a challenge to the masculine assumption of power. If women were presented differently, such as killers or spies, they were considered abnormal. Since female sexuality was perceived to be nonexistent in proper women, female characters exploring their sexual appetites could only be seen as evil and dangerous. However, modern views can be seen in young female characters in detective fiction, as well as in some male detectives who had to operate within a private sphere in order to solve a murder. Women's alteration of the genre can be seen as a drastic way of demanding to transform society's views on gender. The public interest in crime fiction remained even after all the years of war and trauma experienced by society.

3. Analysis

As Agatha Christie was brought up in Edwardian society, she viewed gender roles in a traditional way. However, Christie's most notable fictional works take place during a time of heated gender debates. Although detective fiction is an inherently conservative genre, Christie's fiction is affected by the gender reformation of the first half of the 20th century. Firstly, this part focuses on family and marriage in the texts. Secondly, I will address education and work. Lastly, I will discuss gender roles, more specifically gendered stereotypes and expectations, and femininity and masculinity present in the texts.

3.1 Family and Marriage

As stated by Rowland, Christie's domestic environment usually conceals the evil behind seemingly ordinary and happy lives (161). In *Partners in Crime*, Tommy Beresford appears to reject any action in the beginning and craves for a simple and hassle-free life. In *Cat Among the Pigeons*, an ordinary school term, which bores even the headmistress Miss Bulstrode, turns into a story of espionage, stolen Eastern jewels, and murder. Agatha Christie presented various women who lived outside the norms of conventional family values (Makinen, "Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity" 93). These female characters, such as unmarried mothers or mistresses, are depicted quite compassionately even though their contentment does not come from traditional, accepted norms (Makinen, "Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity" 93). In *Cat Among the Pigeons*, Christie creates a young secretary, who refuses to settle down for marriage, and a teacher who had an illegitimate child in secret in order to keep her career, for instance. According to Agatha Christie, she did not care for love in her novels, however, since detective fiction during her career typically had a love story, she included it in her works as well (Christie, "An Autobiography" 266). As Christie did not understand the importance of connecting scientific deduction and love story in detective fiction, she sometimes addresses sentimentality and love quite sarcastically. This is evident in *Partners in Crime* when Tommy and Tuppence are enjoying the Christmas after solving a case: as they declare their love to one another, they remark how awfully sentimental they are becoming. Therefore, the focus of Christie's works is on the ingenious plots and technical issues her scientific knowledge on poisons, for example. Although love is not perceived as significant in Christie's

stories, she does present traditional as well as modern views on marriage and family roles in her fiction. Firstly, this part focuses on motherhood and marriage. Secondly, I will address traditional family roles and, lastly, discuss the contemporary views present in the two texts.

While many of the characters in Christie's fiction marry for love, some of the secondary characters appear to choose money or a position of power as their reason. In *Partners in Crime*, for example, Miss Gilda Glen, who is described as beautiful but not smart, is rumored to eventually marry Lord Leconbury. Although Tuppence does not find him to be a pleasant man, Marvyn Eastcourt, a friend of the Beresfords, points to the social position of Lord Leconbury as a possible enticing factor: "He doesn't look a very nice sort of man to marry," remarked Tuppence. 'A title has a kind of glamour still, I suppose,' he said." (*Partners in Crime* 117). Married women are presented in a negative light in both texts quite frequently. In *Partners in Crime*, for instance, a married woman is thought to have been jealous of her lover's interest in another wealthy American woman. In *Cat Among the Pigeons*, Ann Shapland tells, how the wives of the men she worked for could become too troublesome for her if the husbands paid too much attention to Ann. A housewife is expected to do many things, for example, take care of her husband and children, and maintain her beauty at the same time (Gillis and Hollows 38). The influence of the wife over her husband is evident in many scenes in *Partners in Crime*. Tuppence conspires with her friend Janet to create the first case for the agency and at the same time entice young St. Vincent to marry Janet for his own good. Tommy points out the fact that Janet and St. Vincent are not from the same social class, but Tuppence convinces him that they are well suited to each other. Moreover, Janet would be a good influence on St. Vincent:

You can see with half a glance what his family needs. Some good red blood in it. Janet will be the making of him. She'll look after him like a mother, ease down the cocktails and the night clubs and make him lead a good healthy country gentleman's life. (*Partners in Crime* 20)

Undoubtedly, in the two works the responsibilities of a wife to her husband are emphasized more often than the responsibilities of a husband to his wife.

As explained by Heilmann and Beetham, the sexual satisfaction of a woman was to be found in marriage (147). Most people advocated for romantic marriage in the 20th century, and the role of a woman was to be a good mother and a seductive wife to her husband (Heilmann and Beetham 147). Such a role cannot fully be seen in the marriage of the Beresfords in *Partners*

in Crime, as married life is not enough for Tuppence. She does indicate that they are very much happily married, although her frustration with the lack of excitement and action in their lives is quite evident. As stated by Makinen, Tuppence is a modern woman with a long and happy marriage based on equality between her and Tommy (*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity* 29-30). Clearly, Tommy is just as satisfied with their relationship as Tuppence is, stating that there is “no reward like the love of a good woman” (*Partners in Crime* 149). After all the action and adventure in the stories, Tuppence wishes to return to a quiet life and start a family. As stated by Makinen, it is remarkable that only motherhood appears to halt Tuppence from craving any more action (*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity* 34). Tuppence seems quite happy about the prospect of motherhood and even views it as a new kind of adventure: “‘I’ve got something better to do,’ continued Tuppence. ‘Something ever so much more exciting. Something I’ve never done before.’ [...] ‘I’m talking,’ said Tuppence, ‘of Our Baby. Wives don’t whisper nowadays. They shout. OUR BABY! Tommy, isn’t everything marvelous?’” (*Partners in Crime* 271).

In the case of a divorce, the blame is very often put on a woman. According to Kestner, women had to establish more than the adultery of their husbands to obtain a divorce (14). Therefore, men were free to behave differently in marriage compared to women, and women could not obtain their freedom from their husbands as easily as men could. In *Partners in Crime*, Gilda Glen is a young woman who married young and later wanted a divorce from her husband. The sister of Gilda, Mrs. Honeycott, is horrified by her sister’s desire to divorce and praises the husband for resisting this. The fact that Gilda does not care for her husband anymore and wishes to be free is not important in the eyes of society, and a loveless marriage is better than a divorce. As stated by Makinen, in Christie’s novels love and sexual connection are not enough in a good marriage as compatibility is very important as well. (*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity* 102). Though few of Christie’s male characters abandon their wives for their mistresses, however, some may resort to murdering their wives in order to have money and the mistress (Makinen, “Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity” 102). In *Partners in Crime*, for instance, Lady Merivale is murdered by her husband, Sir Arthur, for her money, since Sir Arthur has suspected Lady Merivale might leave him for young Captain Hale. As explained by Jensen, the consequences of women who kill their spouses are vast as their children and society as a whole suffer from them (2). Gender inequality in a marriage and power imbalance increases the possibility that wives kill their spouses (Jensen 12). However, the works present an array of various reasons for women to kill their

husbands, for example, money and jealousy. In *Partners in Crime*, Tuppence expresses to Tommy that she always suspects wives, who appear to have perfect alibies for the murder of their spouses, as the culprit. Tuppence explains that the wife would be an obvious suspect if her husband was entangled with another woman: "If she found her husband carrying on with that girl, it would be quite natural for her to go for him with a hatpin" (*Partners in Crime* 159).

As explained by Lord and Burfoot, until the 20th century women who had lovers outside their marriages were condemned for it, unlike their husbands (13). It was vital for women to choose their husbands carefully since men and women were not seen as equals in a marriage. As a sign of this, Christie explains the enjoyment of choosing one's husband and consequently one's own future in the process (*An Autobiography* 131). The social position, class, occupation, and wealth of a man were key factors to consider. In Christie's novels, love and respect are important for women. In *Partners in Crime*, Tuppence encounters a female client who must choose between two men from different backgrounds, and she prefers the one with little money or prospects. Tuppence sympathizes with her, as she can relate to this dilemma, and wishes to help her solve the mystery and gain wealth, so that she can marry the man she loves. In the end, the young woman obtains the money with the help of the Beresfords and is free to marry the young man she desires. Tuppence is exceptionally glad for her since she believes in the importance of love in a union: "You can go on telling yourself how good and worthy he is, and adding up his qualities as though they were an addition sum—and it all has a simply refrigerating effect" (*Partners in Crime* 217).

Christie presents an array of young women, who spend a lot of time searching for the right man, which may indicate that true happiness is to be found in a marriage with a man. Though many of Christie's female characters prepare themselves for marriage, she has also created many unmarried women who are content with their lives as well. One such female character can be found in *Cat Among the Pigeons*: Princess Shaista, who cannot wait for an arranged marriage to happen, does come off as a bit peculiar in contrast to all the other young women eager to educate themselves first. Shaista's constant desire for marriage and dislike for education is portrayed rather negatively: "But you are too young to get married yet awhile. You must first finish your education.' 'Education is very boring,' said Shaista" (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 137). The idea that women could find stability and wealth on their own without or before marriage, popular by the 1960s, is evident in *Cat Among the Pigeons*.

According to Rowland, women in Christie's novels often find happiness in marriage and family life rather than work (158). However, this is not the case for the majority of the female characters in *Cat Among the Pigeons*. For instance, the secretary Ann Shapland prefers her career over marriage as she finds it rather dull compared to work. Her friend Dennis, who wishes to marry Ann, points out that it was the time for Ann to stop working, implying that marriage and family life would be the natural option for a woman at some point:

"I wish you'd get tired of all these jobs," said Dennis. "It's quite time, you know, Ann, that you stopped all this racketing about with jobs here and jobs there and—and settled down." [...]

"I daresay," said Ann, "but I'm not ready yet. And anyway, you know, there's my mamma."

(*Cat Among the Pigeons* 149)

Even if Ann Shapland states multiple times in the text, that she wishes to remain unmarried and focus on her career, she expresses a wish to marry Dennis. She tells this to Adam Goodman, an operative for Special Branch working undercover as a gardener in the school. Since Ann is revealed to be the murderer and a secret agent masquerading as a secretary, her motives for expressing her wish to settle down after all the events in Meadowbank are dubious at best. Christie herself believed in a marriage as a binding contract that should not be broken. She explains that divorce was wrong, especially if there were children involved, and she had been brought up to believe this (Christie "An Autobiography" 365-366). This idea is quite evident in *Partners in Crime*, Gilda Glenn's sister Mrs. Honeycott states that divorce is a sin, and although she wishes to help her sister, she would have nothing to do with the possible divorce. Still, Christie tends to portray married women in unhappy marriages in a negative light, which contradicts her resistance to halt these unhappy unions with a divorce. Christie herself expresses that respect towards one's husband is the founding force behind a happy marriage (*An Autobiography* 64). Tuppence echoes the same belief about respect to Tommy: "I always think respect for your husband's abilities should be the foundation of married life." (*Partners in Crime* 209). Whereas ideals about marriage and divorce appear to be quite traditional in Christie's novels, Christie presents modern ideas about the necessity of young women to marry, and when a marriage be suitable in working women's lives. After all, Christie creates many young women who take marriage seriously and do not rush into them if they are not ready or willing. For example, when Tommy wonders why a young woman and a man, who clearly fancy each other, had not yet married, Tuppence scoffs at Tommy's presentation of marriage as a simple and quick solution.

Christie's novels are filled with unhappy marriages, but the fault often falls onto the wife, not the husband. As explained by Makinen, mothers who abandon their children or their spouses are considered to be morally corrupt (*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity* 97-98). Wives are expected to behave respectfully, and any woman who strays from this path is described as problematic. For instance, in *Cat Among the Pigeons* Lady Veronica, a mother with twin girls in Meadowbank, is described as a poor mother due to her excessive drinking. Her abilities as a mother are questioned because of her behavior, even though her drunken actions do not harm anyone, only embarrass those around her. A woman's worth is tied to her ability to be a good wife and a mother. Makinen points out, that in *Cat Among the Pigeons* Eileen Rich, who hid her pregnancy and delivered her dead baby abroad, wanted to be a mother and keep her child (*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity* 97). Her character might have been questioned if she had not claimed that she wanted to have the child, even if the child was illegitimate. Although Miss Rich explains to Miss Bulstrode that she was never going to marry the father of her child, Miss Bulstrode still needs confirmation, that the child was not a mistake and Miss Rich did want to have it:

"[...] You've probably denied your instincts too long. There was a man, you fell in love with him, you had a child. I suppose you couldn't marry?" "There was never any question of marriage," said Eileen Rich. "I knew that. He isn't to blame." "Very well, then," said Miss Bulstrode. "You had a love affair and a child. You wanted to have that child?" "Yes," said Eileen Rich. "Yes, I wanted to have it." (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 247)

The illegitimate child was not scandalous enough for Miss Bulstrode not to offer the position as her successor, though, if Miss Rich would not have wanted to be a mother, Miss Bulstrode might have questioned her character and suitability completely.

Although Christie exhibits very traditional views on marriage and family roles in her fiction, she also presents a cast of female and male characters who represent a more modern outlook. In addition to her traditional women, some of her main and secondary characters appear to reject Victorian and Edwardian morals entirely. As explained by Ardis, the Victorian angel or the pure woman was replaced by a heroine, who quite frequently contradicted Victorian ideals of a proper woman (*New Women, New Novels* 3). One of these women is Tuppence Beresford who refuses to settle down as merely a housewife and a mother as she regularly works alongside her husband as an intelligent agent. As stated by Gill, the Beresfords appear to live traditional lives only outside the texts (ch. 3). Tuppence and Tommy work as equals and see themselves as a team, rather than

as a male leader with a female sidekick: "Tommy provides the common sense, the brawn, and the professional contacts, while Tuppence provides the brainpower, the flair, and the audacity" (Gill ch. 3). As evident in *Partners in Crime*, they see their marriage as an advantage in their detective work and recognize the significance of the individual skills each of them possess:

"Rather a triumph for Blunt's Brilliant Detectives," said Tommy to Tuppence, as they emerged into the street together. "It's a great thing to be a married man. Your persistent schooling has at last taught me to recognise peroxide when I see it. Golden hair has got to be the genuine article to take me in. [...]" (*Partners in Crime* 250)

Since Tuppence Beresford takes part in the action, occasionally leads the investigation, and provides vital knowledge required in the deduction, she is not merely Tommy's sidekick, rather they work on equal terms. According to Makinen, the new ideal of women and men negotiating new marital relationships based on equal terms was heavily debated in the media from the 1930s onwards, and Christie's novels engage in this debate as well (*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity* 88). Tommy often refers to Tuppence as "old girl" when he wants to know her opinion on a case or a client (*Partners in Crime* 49). However, especially after solving a case together Tommy occasionally refers to Tuppence with affectionate nicknames, such as "my dear fellow" or "brother Francis", that unite them as a team working on even terms (*Partners in Crime* 250, 61).

According to Gill, one of the influences for Christie's fictional young heroines could have been Pussy Richards, a friend of Christie's mother (ch. 1). She was an unmarried woman adventuring in the masculine world of business (Gill, ch. 1). Although women in Agatha Christie's youth usually held traditional beliefs in regards to marriage and family life, she herself encountered women who appeared to live a very modern life. In addition to creating modern young women in her fiction, Christie also challenged some traditional ideals towards older, married women. As stated by Makinen, Christie usually depicts dutiful wives with Victorian or Edwardian ideals in a negative light (*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity* 106). Tuppence Beresford is arguably an excellent example of the opposite of an unselfish wife, who stays at home and does not work. Moreover, she quite often refers to Tommy as a cozy husband, whereas she demands action in their lives. For instance, when their agency is not getting many clients, Tuppence desires to solve a mystery she sees in a newspaper but has a hard time convincing Tommy to attend a ball related to the possible mystery. The traditional gender roles in marriage appear to have been reversed, as Tommy is at first

reluctant to leave home at night to a party, but Tuppence cannot wait to dress up, dance, and drink while solving a mystery:

“When I was a nice young girl,” said Tuppence, “I was brought up to believe that men—especially husbands—were dissipated beings, fond of drinking and dancing and staying up late at night. It took an exceptionally beautiful and clever wife to keep them at home. Another illusion gone! All the wives I know are hankering to go out and dance, and weeping because their husbands will wear bedroom slippers and go to bed at half past nine. And you do dance so nicely, Tommy dear.” (*Partners in Crime* 64)

After Tommy finally agrees to attend the ball he does find the evening to be successful in many ways. Not only do they find a new mystery to solve, but the ambiance of music, dresses, and dancing proves to be appealing to the young couple, too.

The Beresfords do not usually embody the traditional marital roles in their life. As explained by Makinen, the hollowness of unequal marital roles is unveiled in many detective novels (*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity* 108). The ongoing negotiation of women’s rights in the first half of the 20th century is quite visible in the texts’ the secondary characters as well, although the female characters must explain their views to the male characters and the reader, too. For instance, when a male client of the Beresfords requires their help to solve a riddle and win a bet posed by a young woman, Una Drake, Tuppence defends Una’s actions. Although Tommy is worried that Miss Drake must marry the young man if the Beresfords are successful in solving her riddle, Tuppence reminds him that Miss Drake would not gamble so wildly unless she was willing to marry the young man in the first place:

“Unless that girl was already perfectly prepared to marry that pleasant, but rather empty-headed young man, she would never have let herself in for a wager of this kind. But, Tommy, believe me, she will marry him with more enthusiasm and respect if he wins the wager that if she has to make it easy for him some other way.” (*Partners in Crime* 195)

The choice of whether to marry or not has become more and more common for women, although the progress has been very slow. Moreover, women are negotiating a new role within a marriage, as they call for a partnership, such as the Beresfords have, instead of the woman being a housewife and the man her master (Makinen, “*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity*” 114). Tuppence Beresford represents a modern woman, and her marriage does not align with the traditional views either.

By the 1960s the second wave of feminism had begun in Britain. As explained by Gillis and Hollows, some feminists of the second wave sympathized with women, who were possibly confined in their homes undertaking unpaid labor for their family (1). The heavily debated notion was that a home could be viewed as a prison that limited women's lives in private spheres (Gillis and Hollows 1). In *Cat Among the Pigeons*, the school secretary Ann Shapland prioritizes her career over marriage. As Makinen notes, a career is far too important for Ann to give it up and settle down with a man, particularly her old friend Dennis (*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity* 91). Although fond of Dennis, Ann viewed the idea of marrying him as boring:

And there was always Dennis! Faithful Dennis returning from Malaya, from Burma, from various parts of the world, always the same, devoted, asking her once again to marry him.

Dear Dennis! But it would be very dull to be married to Dennis. (*Cat Among the Pigeons* x)

In *Cat Among the Pigeons*, nearly all of the teachers and staff at Meadowbank are unmarried women of various ages. Furthermore, the young schoolgirls have different kinds of ambitions regarding their education and career in the future. Nevertheless, Princess Shaista, cannot wait to be married and is not too keen on studying any longer. She is half Turkish and half Persian and represents what Christie views to be traditional values and beliefs from the East. Although Shaista's views in regard to marriage and family roles are quite traditional, she represents a more modern outlook on femininity and beauty compared to that of the English. As explained by Heilmann and Beetham, the East was considered as exotic and sensual in contrast to the Western culture, since wives, as well as unmarried women acquired quite mature skills in sexuality and seduction (152). Since Shaista is revealed to be an older imposter pretending to be a student, it can be argued that her views on female sexuality are that of an adult and not a teenager.

Society for upper-class women, in particular, did not have many occupations to choose from other than becoming a wife and a mother in the first half of the 20th century. As explained by Fido, the most important objective for a young lady was to prepare for her debut into upper-class society as an adult ready for marriage (20). Although the majority of Christie's young fictional women are at least aware of the importance of securing a good marriage, this is not the case with all of her female characters. As pointed out by Makinen, Christie was half American, brought up with no strong male figures in her life, and lived abroad quite frequently for various reasons (*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity* 7). Christie did not have the typical Edwardian upbringing for a young lady, which is perhaps the reason why she included other paths in life for her female

characters. While Christie appreciated the importance of a stable marriage and family life, some of her fictional women did find happiness and gratification outside the norms of a proper family role.

3.2 Education and Work

As explained by Christie, although her mother was first against the idea of educating her young daughter, she finally decided to arrange for Christie to learn some subjects at a girls' school (*An Autobiography* 153). Education was primarily reserved for boys in the Edwardian period, however, she and her sister had modest schooling during their childhood. According to Armstrong, while men needed an education since they were assigned to be providers for the family, women's role was diminished to the private sphere, which did not require them to have high education (66). Similar education and work were not provided for both genders. The societal changes of the World Wars and the efforts of the suffragettes allowed women to finally enter the male-dominated workplaces. The changes in women's education and work are visible in Christie's fiction written in the first half of the 20th century. Firstly, I will address the schooling experience of young girls. Secondly, there is a section on women's training and work. The third section focuses on detective work in the texts. Lastly, I will discuss espionage and the work of spies and agents.

According to Gill, Christie's knowledge about boarding schools stems from her experience in interviewing headmistresses for her own daughter's education (ch. 4). This experience is evident in *Cat Among the Pigeons*, as the lives of the parents and particularly the pupils are described in detail. For instance, the description of Meadowbank and what the school offers feels quite personal and something a parent would hear directly from the headmistress: "Your daughter was educated in the way you wished, and also in the way Miss Bulstrode wished, and the result of the two together seemed to give satisfaction" (*Cat Among the Pigeons* xiv). The young girls at Meadowbank definitively appear to have a profound interest in educating themselves to be academically or professionally successful later in life. Moreover, Miss Bulstrode is quite aware of this and encourages her students to study hard.

Unlike the girls at Meadowbank, Christie's own mother thought that girls should be allowed to run wild and free and not be tied to education, whereas boys should have strict schooling (*An Autobiography* 95). While Christie may have had more modern ideas in relation to girls' education,

the girls at Meadowbank appear to be educated in a contemporary and academic fashion, much like the boys in Christie's youth. Since the parents send their girls to Meadowbank for the majority of the year, the school and its staff are quite responsible for the upbringing as well as the education of these girls. The idea appears to be that Meadowbank coaches the girls to become young women with good manners in addition to academic knowledge. Some of the girls, such as Jennifer Sutcliffe, are not too keen on learning old-fashioned etiquette as opposed to actual skills or sports:

"I don't know that I really want to go to Meadowbank," said Jennifer. "I knew a girl whose cousin had been there, and she said it was awful. They spent all their time telling you how to get in and out of Rolls-Royces, and how to behave if you went to lunch with the Queen."

(*Cat Among the Pigeons* 43-44)

Although the girls are sent to Meadowbank for various reasons, most girls are only interested in the academic side of the school.

Miss Bulstrode's methods seem quite modern when it comes to her girls at Meadowbank. For example, as the investigators are searching the girls' lockers at the Sports Pavilion, they discover a risky book, which does not alarm Miss Bulstrode: "'She won't come to harm with *Candide*,' said Miss Bulstrode. 'It's a classic. Some forms of pornography I do confiscate'" (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 123; emphasis original). Other items in the lockers somewhat surprise the investigators, however, they are items contemporary girls would hide from the staff at Meadowbank: "Photographs of pin up heroes, packets of cigarettes, an occasional unsuitable cheap paperback" (*Cat among the Pigeons* 168). As the headmistress, Miss Bulstrode is undoubtedly aware of these items but does not find them to be scandalous or unsuitable for her students.

According to Makinen, Christie's fiction addresses issues related to the necessity of women's education and employment (*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity* 93). In *Partners in Crime*, Tuppence does not have official training or occupation in the Secret Service like her husband has. Although Tommy occasionally teases Tuppence about her lack of expert knowledge, ultimately, they consider their work in the agency to be equal. However, in *Cat Among the Pigeons*, the attitude towards the education and employment of women is drastically different. The importance of school is highlighted with the young girls, the desire to have a career over a family is appreciated, and the significance of training and experience is recognized by the female characters. For instance, Ann Shapland notes that with looks, women could obtain many things in life, but aptitude

is a better option in the long run: "She could be attractive when she wanted to be but life had taught her that efficiency and competence often paid better results and avoided painful complications" (*Cat Among the Pigeons* viii-ix). As stated by Makinen, those women, who had the typical Edwardian or Victorian upbringing, often did not have high education or career as opposed to the young women who craved for work later in the 20th century (*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity* 93). This can be seen in *Cat Among the Pigeons* with Eileen Rich, whose true vocation in life is work. She represents the contemporary ideals that women sought to obtain an education and a career in order to have meaningful lives outside domestic spheres. Although the headmistress, Miss Bulstrode, is significantly older than Eileen, she believes that a domestic life would not satisfy Miss Rich as much as work does: "I believe that in spite of this love affair, your real vocation in life is teaching. I think your profession means more to you than any normal woman's life with a husband and children would mean" (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 247-248).

Although professional female detectives were fictional creations at the beginning of the 20th century, their use in fiction could aid in alleviating the societal restrictions of women in real life (Kungl 13). Tuppence Beresford comes closest to a professional detective, although she acquires it mainly because of Tommy's position in the Secret Service. Even if Tuppence is reduced to playing the role of secretary in *Partners in Crime*, behind closed doors Tommy sees them as equals. Tommy frequently trusts Tuppence to handle the information given by the clients to process and deliberate before delivering the important facts to Tommy for a discussion between the couple. The discussions between Tommy and Tuppence usually lead to a solution in a case or give an idea to one of them on how to proceed with the case: "'You put these things rather well, Tuppence,' he said at last. 'You've given me an idea'" (*Partners in Crime* 239).

According to Philips and Haywood, working women were considered a social advantage in the early years after the war (2). They were praised in popular culture as a product for a modern future in Britain (Philips and Haywood 2). This postwar celebration of professional women can certainly be seen in *Cat Among the Pigeons* with Meadowbank school. Multiple times in the text, the two founding women, Miss Bulstrode and Miss Chadwick, are praised for their success with the school. They live for their work and express a great pride over Meadowbank:

[S]he and Chaddy (faithful Chaddy!) had started the great enterprise with a mere handful of children and backing from a banker of unusual foresight [...] Well, from the material point

of view, both women had done very well out of it. If they retired now, they would both have a good assured income for the rest of their lives. (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 57)

Even though Miss Bulstrode and Miss Chadwick founded Meadowbank and built it so successful that they would be financially well off, their career path is still quite connected with women. As stated by Kungl, it was believed that some careers should be performed only by women, and while consequently women now had the opportunity to enter the work field, they were restricted to jobs that society would allow for them (35). This is the case with Meadowbank and its founders, as teaching was considered a woman's work.

The contacts of the Beresfords with the Scotland Yard indicate a sense of trust between the police force and the Beresfords. As stated by Shpayer-Makov, the reputation of the Scotland Yard as a professional and powerful institution is world-renowned (2). For this reason, their trust and close connection with the Beresfords lends credibility to the couple's abilities as detectives. In *Partners in Crime*, Chief Carter allows the couple to run an agency, Blunt's Brilliant Detectives, by themselves in order to assist in finding a perpetrator connected with foreign affairs. Mr. Carter recognizes Tuppence's desire for some action when he visits the couple: "You can run the Agency as you please. I fancied'—his eyes twinkled a little—'that it might amuse Mrs. Tommy to try her hand at a little detective work'" (*Partners in Crime* 8). The police force and the Scotland Yard acknowledge Tuppence's abilities, and the offer is directed to both of them. There appears to be a great trust directed at the Beresfords by the Scotland Yard as they seem to rely on them in some cases. For instance, Tuppence notices that Inspector Marriot attempts to provoke the couple to take a closer look at a case in order to solve it properly:

"Tommy,' said Tuppence, when her husband returned from showing the Scotland Yard man out, 'why do you think Inspector Marriot keeps repeating that it's a perfectly clear case?' 'I don't know. Smug satisfaction, I suppose.' 'Not a bit of it. He's trying to get us irritated.'" (*Partners in Crime* 74-75)

While the Inspector seems to not be able to solve the case, he knows that Tommy and Tuppence have the ability to discover the true killer.

While the Beresfords try to work as equals in their cases, this is not always possible. According to Makinen, Tuppence is more involved with tasks related to the private sphere, whilst Tommy deals with the legal institutions of the public sphere (*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity* 32). This separation could be based on the inherent sexism of the public institutions or

the possible comfortability they each exude with the sphere designated to them by society. Nevertheless, the Beresfords seem to reject these gender-based separate spheres but recognize that they must obey the rules in order to effectively operate their agency. For instance, when Inspector Marriot requests the help of the Beresfords to investigate a gang, Tommy admits this to be out of his league:

“The amateur crime, the crime of quiet family life—that is where I flatter myself that I shine. Drama of strong domestic interest. That’s the thing—with Tuppence at hand to supply all those little feminine details which are so important, and so apt to be ignored by the denser male.” His eloquence was arrested abruptly as Tuppence threw a cushion at him and requested him not to talk nonsense. (*Partners in Crime* 135)

As explained by Kungl, women writers created female detectives since women were thought to naturally be nosier, more in tune with details, and more sensitive to other people than men (30). Such is the case with Tuppence Beresford, and she is aware of her ability to understand people better than Tommy: “There is a feminine subtlety about my conversation, a *je ne sais quoi* that no gross male could ever attain to” (*Partners in Crime* 211; emphasis original). Although Tommy exhibits more feminine knowledge than other male investigators, he does not have the same understanding or experience Tuppence has as a woman. For example, when the couple encounters a client, Mr. Montgomery Jones, Tommy is frustrated by his guarded demeanor, whereas Tuppence observes that “a sympathetic feminine touch was needed” (*Partners in Crime* 191).

This feminine touch and intuition about their clients seem to be more connected with Tuppence than Tommy. When Tommy cannot comprehend the needs of a potential client, Miss Hargreaves, Tuppence immediately realizes that she is hiding vital information from them: “Tommy looked at her curiously, but it was Tuppence who spoke. ‘I think,’ she said quietly, ‘that it would be as well if Miss Hargreaves told us *everything*.’ She laid especial stress upon the last word, and Lois Hargreaves flushed nervously” (*Partners in Crime* 170; emphasis original). Since Tuppence’s intuition about their clients seems to be better, Tommy has no problem with letting her lead those investigations. This is evident when a female client, Miss Deane, approaches the detectives with a problem and Tommy has a hard time understanding her motives for seeking assistance from them. Tuppence comprehends that Tommy’s presence makes Miss Deane uncomfortable as her problem is quite delicate, therefore Tuppence suggests she should have

lunch with Miss Deane alone. Tommy immediately supports this idea as he completely trusts Tuppence's judgment about Miss Deane.

According to Kungl, women writers often pass on their specific domestic knowledge to their detectives (60). This is evident with Tuppence, as she served in the Voluntary Aid Detachment during the war, therefore, she has certain skills from this work that Tommy does not have. Christie has clearly passed onto Tuppence her knowledge of poisons and medicines:

"By the way, did you notice a lot of small red dots on Miss Logan's arm?" "I don't think I did. What about them?" "They looked as though they were made by a hypodermic syringe," said Tuppence. (*Partners in Crime* 184)

Tuppence's observation about the marks on Miss Logan's arm indicates that she has been injecting herself with small doses of poison, therefore, she is the murderer. These injections would make Miss Logan immune to the poison she puts in fig paste to murder her victims. Tommy appears to be at a loss in this case and needs Tuppence's help on multiple occasions since it requires a lot of knowledge about poisons: "'Ricin,' he murmured. 'Know anything about it, Tuppence? You used to be rather well-up in these things'" (*Partners in Crime* 185).

In addition to domestic knowledge, female detectives often possessed intuition about people (Kungl 73). This is evident in both Tommy and Tuppence, and they are aware of their ability to connect with people better than official investigators can:

And remember what Marriot once said about the amateur points of view—that it had the *intimacy*. We know something about people like Captain Sessle and his wife. We know what they're likely to do—and what they're not likely to do." (*Partners in Crime* 160; emphasis original).

While this intuition is usually connected with female detectives, it is evident that both Tommy and Tuppence possess it in *Partners in Crime*. The Beresfords also discuss their individual special knowledge that aid in their investigations: "'I mean—tell me, Tuppence [...] would it be very difficult for a man to look like a woman, and then change back to being a man again? Could he wear a skirt over plus-fours, for instance?' 'Certainly he could'" (*Partners in Crime* 162). Their individual knowledge results in solving the murder of Captain Sessle. Tuppence illustrates how a man dressed as a woman could have done it, and Tommy's knowledge about golf proves this theory to be true.

As explained by Makinen, the adventure-seeking young Beresfords, as opposed to Poirot, are relatable to the readers since they are middle-class and English (*Agatha Christie: Investigating* 27). This desire for adventure is clear early in *Partners in Crime*, as Tuppence indicates that she misses the days they used to work as intelligence agents during the war. Unlike Poirot, the Beresfords are more connected with foreign intelligence and have extensive experience working as agents as well as detectives. Since the war has ended, Tommy is still linked with the Secret Service, whereas Tuppence wishes to be more involved in the service again: "Wouldn't you like to go chasing German spies again, Tommy? [...] Of course I know you're more or less in the Secret Service now, but it's pure office work" (*Partners in Crime* 2). Tuppence clearly longs for the active side of the agent work they used to do, whilst Tommy is satisfied with the current post-war office work.

According to Craig and Cadogan, female spies were connected with sexual attention and duplicity during the first decade of the 20th century (52). Ann Shapland appears to represent this type of traditional female spy in *Cat Among the Pigeons*. There is an air of femininity and sexual attention in her efficient work as a spy: "The woman slipped quickly to the door of the next room. It was locked, but she had expected that. The hairpin she had with her and the blade of a small knife did the job quickly and expertly" (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 17). She masterfully breaks into a room to steal the jewels she previously witnessed Bob Rawlinson attempting to hide. When Ann is eventually caught, Poirot explains that she had acquired all the information she needed through her work as a secretary to powerful and influential men. From an early age, Ann's work in counterespionage has been dependent on her power over men: "Ever since you were seventeen you have worked as an agent—though for many different masters. Your services have been for hire and have been highly paid. You have played a dual role" (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 237). Another female agent, Mrs. Upjohn, who recognizes Ann to be a dangerous spy, is described in a different way. After the World Wars, the female spies began to operate with patriarchal purposes in fiction (Craig and Cadogan 52). Mrs. Upjohn represents a more patriarchal agent working for her country. Much like Ann, she enjoyed her time as an agent before her marriage:

Plotting things on a map, I mean—not the story telling kind of plotting. But of course it was exciting sometimes and it was often quite funny, as I just said—all the secret agents followed each other round and round Geneva, all knowing each other by sight, and often

ending up in the same bar. I wasn't married then, or course. It was all great fun. (*Cat Among the Pigeons* xx-xxi)

The espionage connected with Mrs. Upjohn is described in a positive light, as her motivations are purely patriarchal, unlike Ann Shapland's.

All in all, *Cat among the Pigeons* displays modern ideals towards women's education and occupation when compared to *Partners in Crime*. The education of young girls is quite modern in *Cat Among the Pigeons*, which includes many subjects as well as a variety of different sports. *Partners in Crime* was published in 1929, therefore, it lacks a similar contemporary outlook on working women. Nevertheless, having a female detective in the 1920s with close connections to official criminal institutions, such as the Scotland Yard, and experience as an intelligence agent indicates a modern approach by Christie.

3.3 Gender Roles

Christie's fiction has evolved in terms of gender stereotypes from her Golden Age towards the 1960s. As explained by Fido, Christie's fiction from the 1960s indicates a clear effort to change with the times and create contemporary characters in modern settings (96). This section focuses first on the gender roles present in the texts. Secondly, I will discuss gendered stereotypes and expectations, and later, representations of femininity and masculinity in the texts.

3.3.1 Gendered Expectation and Stereotypes

Christie's power as a detective writer comes from her well-drawn puzzle-like plots, which often means that many of her characters in the story are reduced to stereotypes, such as a nosy spinster or the dependable vicar. While Christie used many stock characters in her fiction, there are many male and female characters that exhibit conventional beliefs and actions. Firstly, I will address gender stereotypes in detective work and aspects in texts that go against traditional gender stereotypes in the texts. Secondly, this section focuses on gendered stereotypes relating to class, age, and nationality. Thirdly, I will discuss the stereotypical spheres assigned to men and women, and lastly, there is a section on independent women present in the texts.

As explained by Lewis and Ardis, women were believed to be inclined to connect and be influenced by the fiction they read due to the stereotypical nature of a woman being sensitive to emotions (224). This stereotypical thought is evident in *Partners in Crime*, as Tommy frequently mocks Tuppence for reading cheap fiction, therefore, having a wild imagination about certain subjects. Although Tommy considers Tuppence to be as good of a detective as he is, these remarks about her being influenced by the fiction she reads stand out in the text. Whereas Tuppence's imagination sometimes irritates Tommy, there are many moments when her creative thinking results in the solving of a case. There are few moments when Tuppence points out that Tommy's deductions appear to be irrational and warn him not to be "too cocksure" (*Partners in Crime* 36). Still, Tommy is not once accused of reading cheap fiction and being influenced by it, unlike Tuppence.

According to P. Walton and Jones, some belittling words, such as "girl," have been used in detective fiction to describe the female characters in a demeaning manner (142). Tommy's use of "old girl" in reference to Tuppence can be interpreted as an endearing dialogue between a married couple (*Partners in Crime* 49). However, such is not the case when other characters, specifically male characters, use belittling speech towards Tuppence. When Tuppence outsmarts a criminal, he refers to Tuppence as "little devil" in a fit of rage. (*Partners in Crime* 61). This demeaning language is due to the criminal underestimating Tuppence's capabilities as an investigator. Even Tuppence uses belittling language to refer to herself when Tommy suggests that she should stay at home to avoid a risky situation. Begrudgingly Tuppence agrees to return home like "a good little girl" (*Partners in Crime* 53). This sarcastic remark is directed at Tommy for possibly underrating Tuppence's ability to face danger during an investigation.

Stereotypical ideas about female murderers and their methods, motives, and circumstances are still quite widespread (Parker xiv). This is evident in *Partners in Crime* whenever a case might involve a female suspect or a killer. For example, when a keen golf player, Captain Sessle, is murdered and a female figure was last seen near him in the golf course, Tommy's ideas about the murder weapon and method are quite gendered. Tommy is convinced that a woman must have killed Captain Sessle since the murder weapon was a hatpin. However, Tuppence dismisses this theory completely and explains to Tommy why a hatpin does not automatically prove the culprit to be a woman:

"That hatpin, you think, points to the crime having been committed by a woman?"
"Naturally. Don't you agree?" "No. Men are notoriously old-fashioned. It takes them ages to rid themselves of preconceived ideas. They associate hatpins and hairpins with the female sex, and call them 'women's weapons.' They may have been in the past, but they're both rather out of date now. Why, I haven't had a hatpin or a hairpin for the last four years."
"Then you think—?" "That it was a *man* killed Sessle. The hatpin was used to make it seem a woman's crime." (*Partners in Crime* 160; emphasis original)

Without Tuppence's perspective as a woman and her knowledge about women's accessories, male investigators would have searched for a female culprit based on gendered clues.

As explained by Spence and Helmreich, men were anticipated to control their wives in traditional marriage (4). In *Partners in Crime*, the power equation of the Beresford's is mocked by some characters when Tuppence is insulted for being too powerful, and Tommy is ridiculed for not being more dominant over Tuppence. Tommy's confidence shows on multiple occasions around other male characters, for his ego is not bruised by Tuppence's dominance or his submissiveness to her. However, Tuppence indicates an uneasiness when confronted by men, who question the characteristics of either her or Tommy:

"The rather vivid imagination of a charming lady who reads too much fiction."
"You think so?" said Tommy. "And a husband who is guided by his wife," said Sir Arthur. "I do not fancy you will find anybody to take the matter seriously." He laughed out loud, and Tuppence stiffened in her chair. (*Partners in Crime* 79)

Tuppence's discomfort can also be explained by the aggressiveness of the male characters who confront them. As the power balance of the Beresford's is praised by the police force and mocked only by the criminals, Christie intended this modern relationship to be viewed as positive.

According to Makinen, since the feminine was seen as inferior to the masculine, female detectives may have been viewed as dishonorable compared to male detectives, as they operated in the masculine sphere (*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity* 26). This can be seen in the attitudes of some of the characters in *Partners in Crime*, who question Tuppence's choice of profession. The aversion is based solely on her gender, not her talent or desire to work as a detective: "'Is that you, my dear?' said Miss Logan. 'You know you are much too young and pretty to be a detective'" (*Partners in Crime* 186). As stated by P. Walton and Jones, female detectives have a harder time proving their abilities than their male colleagues in a patriarchal society (170). Out

of all Christie's detectives, Tuppence comes closest to an official detective, though merely because of her gender, she faces difficulties in her work. Tuppence is all too aware of this as she acknowledges the requirement of having her husband Tommy work with her in order to be taken seriously. Nonetheless, the Beresfords understand that the separate spheres for women and men limit only Tuppence's possibilities of exercising her profession:

"That wouldn't be any good," said Tuppence. "They wouldn't let me go with you and I'm the person who wants something to do so badly. Something to do. That is what I keep saying all day long." "Women's sphere," suggested Tommy, waving his hand. (*Partners in Crime* 3)

Though Tommy views Tuppence's skills as a detective as equally good to his own, the limitations posed by society are out of their control.

As explained by Makinen, one of the most notable details in *Partners in Crime* is the fact that Tuppence is reduced to the role of secretary in their Detective Agency, while Tommy can present himself as the main detective (*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity* 31). The Beresfords always play these roles openly in front of their clients. While the clients speak to Tommy with glory and respect, Tuppence's presence may be ignored, or she is addressed with less respect:

"Excuse me, Mr. Blunt," said Tuppence, interrupting in a deferential tone. "Did I understand Dr. Bower to say that these notes on—er—obscure alkaloids—are kept in the desk with the other papers?" "They are kept in the desk, my dear young lady, but in a secret drawer, the position of which is known only to myself." (*Partners in Crime* 48)

Perhaps the Beresfords, being aware of the negative attitude towards female investigators, sought to make their potential clients comfortable by explaining Tuppence's presence as Tommy's secretary. While the Beresfords see themselves as a team with equal abilities, they seemingly conformed to traditional social norms in order to work effectively.

Both the Beresfords and Hercule Poirot represent a modern outlook in relation to gender in different ways. As explained by Makinen, Tommy and Tuppence Beresford redefine equality in marital relationships and advocate the presence of women in the public sphere (*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity* 62). In *Partners in Crime*, the contemporary attitude of the police force and the Scotland Yard towards the Beresfords is remarkable, as the femininity of Tommy and the masculinity of Tuppence are accepted and appreciated by the male-dominated institution. Poirot's lack of masculinity, which does not prevent him from being successful in his line of work, differs greatly from the historical manly figure of Victorian and Edwardian gentleman (Makinen, "Agatha

Christie: Investigating Femininity" 62). In *Cat Among the Pigeons*, the reputation of Poirot instantly gains him the respect of the police force, and his feminine sensitivity allows Poirot to earn the trust of the female staff and the girls.

As explained by Armstrong, the domestic woman, whose form of work was to dominate the private sphere and all the areas related to the household, had long been embedded in British culture (10). This type of domestic woman does not entirely appear in *Cat Among the Pigeons*, as most of the female characters are either working in the school, are young students, or mothers of the girls at Meadowbank. The teachers are described as strict working women who often observe families and their relationships through the schoolgirls without having a family themselves. Although the teachers are older and traditional women compared to the students, their beliefs about domestic life are more modern. This is evident early in *Cat Among the Pigeons* as the matron of Meadowbank, Miss Johnson, describes the school as her sole interest in life as opposed to her sisters, whose lives revolve around their families and households.

According to Bradford, Christie's characters are often void of any noticeable personality traits, however, their behavior is in accordance with their social status and class (22). Such stereotypes around class and social positions are unmistakable in *Partners in Crime* with many characters. However, the Beresfords discuss the upper-class stereotypes and often appear to mock them: "'I'll tell you my idea of what we shall find at The Laurels,' said Tuppence, quite unmoved. 'A household of snobs, very keen to move in the best society; the father, if there is a father, is sure to have a military title'" (*Partners in Crime* 26). While Tuppence criticizes the stereotypical upper-class family, Tommy indicates his disdain for the older generation in a position of power. When a potential client questions Tommy's abilities due to his age, Tommy divulges his animosity towards the older generation and disputes their wisdom over the younger generation.

As explained by Rowland, Poirot is a foreign detective who rejects the masculinity of the English men with his feminine features of tidiness and obsessiveness over luxury (63). Poirot is quite aware of his own manners, which differentiate him from the English, and knows to expect his femininity and foreignness to be a disenchantment:

Hercule Poirot had prepared himself to beat down an insular prejudice that a headmistress might have against aged foreigners with pointed patent leather shoes and large moustaches. But he was agreeably surprised. Miss Bulstrode greeted him with cosmopolitan aplomb. (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 185)

Christie's fiction is fairly neutral in terms of race, as she did not want to cause uneasiness in her readership with political topics (Gill introduction). However, there is a certain amount of racism, sexism, and ageism present in *Partners in Crime*. For example, Mrs. Kingston Bruce accuses the suitor of her daughter, Mr. Rennie, of stealing a teaspoon since he is a known socialist: "'—but I know who / think took it,' she ended. 'That dreadful socialist young man. He loves the Russians and the Germans and hates the English—what else can you expect?'" (*Partners in Crime* 31; emphasis original). Despite Christie's neutral tone, the historical context of the World Wars or English xenophobia and sense of superiority could explain the slight detestation towards Germany and Russia present in the text. Tommy seems to represent a new generation who believes that respect is earned and not automatically given purely based on age. For instance, he refers to an elderly woman, Lady Laura, as "the old bird" multiple times (*Partners in Crime* 34). The reason for this could be the fact that she is a kleptomaniac, therefore, Tommy has a hard time respecting her for it. Though, he refers to her in such a manner only in the presence of Tuppence. Similarly, in *Cat Among the Pigeons*, a senior male gardener, Briggs, refers to the headmistress, Miss Bulstrode, as "the Old Bitch" (64). His lack of respect seems to stem from having a woman as his boss, for his ideas about women are quite sexist and old-fashioned.

According to Gill, after the 1940s, Christie presents an array of young sleuths in her fiction, such as the schoolgirls at Meadowbank (ch. 7). Although Julia Upjohn definitively shows some talent at sleuthing in *Cat Among the Pigeons*, there is distinct skepticism directed towards the girls in the text. For example, when the official investigation into the murder of Miss Springer has begun at Meadowbank, Miss Bulstrode warns the police not to put too much credence in the stories of her girls: "[O]ne or other of the girls may wish to make herself important by exaggerating some incident or even by inventing one. Girls do very odd things: but I expect you are used to dealing with that form of exhibitionism" (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 91). Based on young age and gender, the stereotypical schoolgirl is expected to be immature and attention-seeking. While Miss Bulstrode shows quite modern ideals in relation to women's education and work, she still views her pupils as too childish and unreliable in such a serious situation as a murder investigation. However, in terms of sexuality and attraction, Miss Bulstrode sees her girls in a more mature light:

Miss Johnson gasped. "Well, yes, the idea did come into my head just for the moment. One of our Italian girls, perhaps. Foreigners are so much more precocious than English girls."
"Don't be so insular," said Miss Bulstrode. "We've had plenty of English girls trying to make

unsuitable assignments. It was a very natural thought to have occurred to you and probably the one that would have occurred to me." (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 81)

The pupils at Meadowbank are described as immature girls to the police, however, they are occasionally viewed as young women in different stages of development amongst the teachers and the staff.

As explained by Christie, her great-aunt Margaret Miller clarified that young women needed to pay close attention to the amount of food they ate in front of men in order to maintain their looks (*An Autobiography* 48). This rule is clearly directed only towards women, and the issue of women's weight is present in *Partners in Crime*. A famous explorer, Gabriel Stavansson, is concerned when he cannot find his fiancé, The Honorable Hermy Leigh Gordon, and Hermy's aunt, Lady Susan, will not divulge the whereabouts of Hermy to him. While discussing the missing lady, Mr. Stavansson expresses his extreme hatred towards fat women: "I loathe fat women—always have—fat women and fat dogs are an abomination unto the Lord—and unfortunately they so often go together!" (*Partners in Crime* 84-85). Unbeknownst to Mr. Stavansson, this aversion to overweight women has caused Hermy to become self-conscious about her looks, therefore she decided to seek medical treatment in secrecy to help her lose weight. While the case of Hermy is the only one focused on women's weight issues in the text, there is a reoccurring theme that women typically need to maintain and improve their looks to please men. The stereotypical woman in the text is concerned with her looks and seeks to preserve her beauty for men. Out of all the male characters in *Partners in Crime*, only Tommy seems to have a practical approach to women's looks and clothes. He frequently wonders why Tuppence must buy new hats, for example, and he views this as quite wasteful: "'You do throw money about, Tuppence,' he remarked" (*Partners in Crime* 44).

According to Peach, 20th-century British literature was quite gendered in viewing violence, which was still typically connected with males (33). Such is the case in *Cat Among the Pigeons*, as the first murder of Miss Springer is suspected of having been committed by local male juveniles. For many of the characters, it was inconceivable that murder could occur at Meadowbank, let alone be done by someone of the female staff or students:

Such an ugly violent word—coming in from the outside world like an ill-mannered storm wind. Murder—a word associated by Miss Chadwick only with delinquent boys with flick

knives, or evil-minded doctors poisoning their wives. But murder here—at a school—and not any school—at Meadowbank. Incredible. (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 147)

While the location of the murder and the surrounding people point to a female killer, the first instinct of the teachers implied that a man must have committed the crime for some unknown reason. According to Miller, for the longest time, women had used means, such as make-up, wigs, or outfits, to alter their appearances (14). However, in relation to crimes committed by women, investigators had to consider, that female killers were capable of drastically changing their looks while committing the crime (Miller 14). The image altering of a female murderer occurs in *Cat Among the Pigeons*, and this is not discovered by the investigators until Poirot uncovers it:

It has been a one woman job all through [...] Ann was accustomed to quick disguise. A fair wig, differently penciled eyebrows, a 'fussy' dress and hat [...] I saw from Miss Rich's clever sketches how easy it is for a woman to alter her appearance by purely external matters. (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 246).

As stated by Fido, there appear to be suggestions that women are bewildered by beautiful jewels and find them irresistible in some of Christie's novels (75). This stereotyping of women is absolutely present in *Cat Among the Pigeons* with the smuggled jewels of the late Prince Ali Yusuf. In Ramat, Prince Ali gives his best friend, Bob Rawlinson, his jewels to smuggle out of the country in secret. Since Bob is a man, Prince Ali entrusts his jewels to him:

"Men are not the same when it comes to jewels. [...] For with women it will not only be the value. It is something to do with the jewels themselves. Beautiful jewels drive women mad. They want to own them. To wear them round their throats, on their bosoms. I would not trust any woman with these. But I shall trust you." (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 6)

When Bob Rawlinson tries to figure out a way to smuggle the jewels out of Ramat, he considers asking help from his sister, Joan Sutcliffe: "Good old Joan! *She* wouldn't lose her head over jewels. Trust her to keep her feet on the earth. Yes—he could trust Joan. Wait a minute, though... could he trust Joan? Her honesty, yes. But her discretion?" (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 11; emphasis original). While Bob Rawlinson trusted that his sister would not be affected by beautiful jewels in a way women typically are, he knew she could not keep a secret to herself. Later, these jewels are discovered by Julia Upjohn, and the effect of these jewels on a young woman is connected with her maturity: "In that moment, Julia grew up. She was no longer a child. She became a woman. A woman looking at jewels...." (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 175). Poirot recognizes the change in Julia

Upjohn after she finds the jewels and brings them to him. Once again, the jewels have turned Julia from a young child into a woman: "And suddenly, as had happened last night, a woman looked out of the child's eyes. Poirot looked keenly at her and nodded. 'Yes—you understand—you feel the spell'" (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 182). This stereotypical belief that women lose control over gorgeous jewels is quite present throughout the text, and these jewels are the motive of the murders committed by Ann Shapland at Meadowbank.

Despite being a wife, Tuppence Beresford clearly represents a modern woman. Much like many young women in the 1920s that found their quest for freedom and independence, Tuppence's marriage does not prevent her from being resourceful and self-sufficient (Makinen, "Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity" 29-30). Such is the case when faced with trauma or danger, Tuppence usually displays independence and confidence: "Tommy gave a sigh of relief. 'I hoped you'd be sensible. After a shock like this—' 'It's not the shock. You know I never mind shocks'" (*Partners in Crime* 270). Tuppence often indicates to other men besides Tommy that she is not a delicate wife that needs to be shielded from the action or taken care of. For instance, when the foreign operatives in Moscow have noticed the success of the Beresfords' detective agency, Chief Carter warns the couple to be careful. As Mr. Carter expresses worry over the safety of Tuppence, in particular, Tommy assures the Chief that he will look after her. However, at the same time as Tommy suggests this, Tuppence declares to them "I can take care of myself" (*Partners in Crime* 252). Tommy's nurturing and protective side over Tuppence shows from time to time, and Tuppence must remind Tommy of her resilience.

As explained by Abouddahab and Paccaud-Huguet, the strict stereotypes specified the roles for women, which centered in the private sphere in the 19th century (viii). Well into the 20th century, the Victorian ideal of a well-behaving housewife provided a contrast to modern independent women present in the texts. Another modern woman in *Partners in Crime* is Hermy, who appears to have gone missing, but is described by her relatives as a clever, independent woman who makes her own plans without reporting her goings to anyone. Much like other young women, Hermy's life is not tied to home.

Another form of independence found in the texts is the power women possess over men around them. In *Partners in Crime*, Marvin Estcourt proudly presents Miss Gilda Glen to the Beresfords, as her presence and company give Mr. Estcourt pride and glory. Although another man, Mr. Reilly, appears to have a negative reaction to Miss Gilda Glen, it is evident that his disdain

derives from jealousy or unreciprocated feelings: "Did you see that creature who was trailing around here just now? Gilda Glen, she calls herself. Gilda Glen! God! how I've worshipped that woman" (*Partners in Crime* 119). Miss Glen is the center of attention, especially in relation to men, even though she is described as attractive but not smart. Her power derives from her looks as opposed to her intellect. Another woman in *Partners in Crime*, Marguerite Laidlaw, is described in a similar way to Miss Glen, although her intelligence is not questioned as much. The power Mrs. Laidlaw holds over men stems from her looks as well as her foreign accent, which creates an interest in her: "She was a charming creature, with the slenderness of a wood nymph and the face of a Greuze picture. Her dainty broken English was fascinating, and Tommy felt that it was no wonder most men were her slaves" (*Partners in Crime* 139).

An example of an independent woman in *Cat Among the Pigeons* is Ann Shapland. Although she is revealed to be behind the murders at Meadowbank and has a history of espionage, she is a modern and independent woman. Early in the text, her thoughts about men are revealed as she watches the handsome gardener, Adam Goodman. She clearly views him as a possible entertainment for her to pass the time with: "'He looks,' said Ann to herself, 'he looks as though he *might* be amusing....'" (*Cat Among the Pigeons* xi; emphasis original). Whereas previously women sought the company of men in order to contemplate marriage with one of them, Ann has a modern outlook in dating and chasing men for her amusement. Miss Bulstrode notices the modernity of Ann and comments how restless girls nowadays seemed to be. Miss Bulstrode mentions this "chopping and changing," which refers to the lack of stability in Ann's life (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 59). Although Miss Bulstrode herself appears not to be overly traditional in her beliefs, she is not as modern as young Ann Shapland is. While Mrs. Upjohn's life is quite different from Ann Shapland's career-oriented life, they have many things in common that make them independent in their own way. As they both used to work as agents or spies during the war, they are extremely brave and self-reliant. As stated by Makinen, Mrs. Upjohn represents an independent mother with a hidden past as an agent who loves to travel alone in a foreign country and interact freely with local people (*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity* 161). While her daughter is at Meadowbank, Mrs. Upjohn decides to travel to Anatolia, however, her preferred methods of travel puzzle the investigators trying to track her down:

We've been trying to get in contact with Mrs. Upjohn, but the whole thing's a headache! [...]
Seems she's just taking local buses to anyplace she happens to fancy! [...] She's all on her

own, wandering about. What can you do with a woman like that? She might be anywhere.

(*Cat Among the Pigeons* 198)

Her independence and confidence in herself show throughout the text, and Poirot appears to be the only male character to understand it.

All in all, there appear to be more gendered stereotypes present in *Partners in Crime* than *Cat Among the Pigeons*. In *Partners in Crime*, women especially are reduced to stereotypical characters, such as the beautiful but dumb blonde or the overbearing and dominating elderly woman. The only contemporary woman in the text is clearly Tuppence Beresfords, and her modern outlook and marriage stand out next to these other female stereotypes. Conversely, the traditional characters or aspects stand out in *Cat Among the Pigeons* as most of the characters in the text are quite modern. Christie's female characters have evolved over the years and display more contemporary ideals than before since Christie's fiction kept up with the changing times.

3.3.2 Femininity and Masculinity

Christie's detectives present quite contemporary ideals about femininity and masculinity. Both Poirot and Tommy Beresfords display many feminine features, although they still differ greatly from one another. Tuppence Beresford, on the other hand, shows masculine characteristics alongside feminine features. Even though neither Poirot nor the Beresfords exhibit typical gendered behavior, they are still respected by the official authorities as well as the other characters. Firstly, I will address women and femininity in the texts. Secondly, this part focuses on young schoolgirls and their sexual presentation. Thirdly, I will discuss the use of intuition and logical thinking in detective work. Then, there is a section about masculinity presented by women and feminine male characters. Lastly, I will address femininity and masculinity in detective work.

Christie presented plenty of career women with femininity, which could be quite deceptive and treacherous (Makinen, "Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity" 127). Miss Chadwick, who is driven by her jealousy and anger, kills another teacher, Miss Vansittart, in an emotional state. Her caring and compassionate nature hide her true feelings towards her possible rival for the position of Miss Bulstrode's successor at Meadowbank. However, as stated by Makinen, female killers, whose motive is love, tend to reinforce the concept of femininity related to emotions and

sentiments (*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity* 133). This motive of love often refers to a spouse or a lover, but in *Cat Among the Pigeons*, Miss Chadwick's intense love for Meadowbank drives her to kill her possible rival.

As explained by Gill, Christie created extremely energetic and attractive heroines and murderesses who strive for success in their lives (ch. 2). Although this certainly applies to Tuppence Beresford in *Partners in Crime*, the same cannot be said about all the other young women in the text. For instance, the beauty and confidence of Miss Gilda Glen are described in detail, but she is also portrayed and mocked as unintelligent: "She was reported to be the most beautiful woman in England. It was also rumoured that she was the stupidest" (*Partners in Crime* 115). Although people are astonished by Miss Glen's looks and feel honored to be seen with her in public, they frequently comment on her child-like stupidity. Perhaps these stereotypically dumb blondes, such as Gilda Glen, in *Partners in Crime* emphasize the brilliance of Tuppence, who possesses both the looks and the brains. As explained by Fido, the Beresfords exhume youthful joy of interwar modernity, which sometimes surprises the older generation (78). They playfully comment on other people's sex appeal and joyfully tease each other from time to time (Fido 78-79). This playfulness while working on their cases is quite evident in *Partners in Crime* on many occasions. When faced with the task of uncovering a forgery ring in a gambling club, Tuppence cheerfully comments on the luxurious aspect this case brings:

"I shall enjoy this case," said Tuppence. "Lots of night clubs and cocktails in it. I shall buy some eyelash-black tomorrow." "Your eyelashes are black already," objected her husband. "I could make them blacker," said Tuppence. "And cherry lipstick would be useful too. That ultrabright kind." (*Partners in Crime* 138)

Although the case is quite serious and most likely dangerous, the carefree attitude of the Beresfords stands out on more than one occasion.

In *Cat Among the Pigeons*, the young girls at Meadowbank take their education quite seriously and seem to resent the contradicting ideals expressed by the foreign girl Shaista. The two most prominent schoolgirls in the texts, Jennifer and Julia, often ridicule Shaista's desires for an arranged marriage and her constant worry over her looks: "'Shaista never thinks of anything except things to wear,' said Julia scornfully as the two friends passed on. 'Do you think we shall ever be like that?' 'I suppose so,' said Jennifer gloomily. 'It will be an awful bore'" (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 130; emphasis original). Julia and Jennifer represent modern young women, and their beliefs about

marriage, sex, and education differ entirely from traditional morals. The New Woman is a heroine with opposing ideals to the pure Victorian woman (Ardis "New Women, New Novels" 3). This type of New Woman can be seen clearly in both Julia and Jennifer. Although they are not mature women yet and conversations around sex and love are quite rare, their ambitions for their futures indicate a more modern outlook. Nonetheless, the teachers in *Cat Among the Pigeons* believe their students to be more sexually driven and active than they may be. Since Adam Goodman infiltrates in Meadowbank as a gardener in order to observe Princess Shaista, the staff express their worry over it: "The two ladies nodded their heads in agreement. They knew, none better, the havoc caused by a good-looking young man to the hearts of adolescent girls" (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 62). The sexual maturity of the schoolgirls appears to be overestimated by the adult women in the text, while the key girls in the story express interest only in their studies. Alongside the female staff at Meadowbank, Colonel Pikeaway, the supervisor of the handsome young agent posing as a gardener, warns Adam Goodman about sexually driven teenagers and forbids him from responding to it. The idea about the sexual freedom of modern women appears to be mistaken for increased sexual activity.

One of the conservative aspects present in the texts is related to female sexuality. As explained by Makinen, the ethics about female sexuality were traditional in detective fiction (*Feminist Popular Fiction* 2). The juxtaposition between the heightened sexuality of the Eastern girls and the apparent purity of the English girls is heavily contemplated in *Cat Among the Pigeons*. The adverse reactions to Shaista's body and sexuality are constantly brought up in the text: "She was also fashionably dressed and perfumed. Her age, Miss Bulstrode knew, was fifteen, but like many Eastern and Mediterranean girls, she looked older—quite mature" (*Cat Among the Pigeons* xvii). Although the ideas about the maturity of the Eastern girls are frequently observed by the teachers and the pupils, the contradicting idea about their modesty and pure manners is also mentioned. For instance, Miss Bulstrode desires to send pupils to the Near Eastern countries to acquire proper manners for young women. Adam Goodman comments in a letter to his supervisor how Shaista appears to be more experienced for a girl of her age since he assumes that Shaista would have learned about modesty in her upbringing. Nevertheless, out of the staff at Meadowbank, Miss Bulstrode's views about female sexuality are quite modern, as she understands Shaista's desire to look more feminine:

"I understand perfectly," said Miss Bulstrode. "And I quite see your point of view. But in this school, you see, you are amongst girls who are, for the most part, English, and English girls are not very often women at the age of fifteen. I like my girls to use makeup discreetly and to wear clothes suitable to their stage of growth. I suggest that you wear your brassière when you are dressed for a party or for going to London, but not every day here. We do a good deal of sports and games here and for that your body needs to be free to move easily." (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 56)

Miss Bulstrode is willing to compromise and allow Shaista to enhance her looks occasionally, yet she stresses that teenagers in her school should dress and wear make-up tastefully. Although Shaista's behavior is interpreted to be due to her nationality, another reason could be the fact that she is exposed by Poirot to be a twenty-year-old imposter. The remarks of the staff about Shaista's maturity compared to the other girls at Meadowbank can be explained with the revelation of her real age or her background, possibly both. However, Poirot is not surprised that the false Shaista was able to fool everyone: "This substitute, of course, was necessarily much older than the real Shaista. But that would hardly attract attention since Eastern girls noticeably look much more mature than their age" (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 228). Poirot was able to determine the real age of the substitute by looking at her knees, which other people did not notice as they apparently had no reason to suspect foul play. The reason why Poirot even suspected Shaista's false identity and wanted to confirm it by asking about her knees can be explained with intuition.

As explained by S. Walton, Hercule Poirot's deduction appears to rely a great deal on intuition alongside rational thinking (59). Frequently Poirot's intuition directs his attention to minuscule details, clues, or persons that turn out to be vital for the investigation (S. Walton 59). He then uses logical thinking to tie these intuitive ideas together to form a sequence of events and reveal the culprit. Although Hercule Poirot takes over the investigation late in the story in *Cat Among the Pigeons*, he seems to understand the characteristics of each person involved with the school rather quickly. Without talking much with the staff and the teachers at Meadowbank, he has a precise instinct about their personalities. For example, he understands the motives behind the murder of a senior teacher, Eleanor Vansittart, who was killed by the second founder of Meadowbank, Miss Chadwick. The murder of Miss Vansittart is a crime of opportunity, and Poirot is able to reveal that this murder was not done by the main culprit Ann Shapland and therefore was not connected to the other murders. Without knowing the teachers personally, Poirot's intuitive mind concludes

that Miss Chadwick killed out of jealousy, and she expressed genuine remorse for her crime: “She was appalled then, I think, at what she had done. It has preyed on her ever since—for she is not a natural killer, Miss Chadwick. She was driven, as some are driven, by jealousy and obsession” (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 244). In the case of Ann Shapland, Poirot determines her to be extremely bright and a killer by nature. He discloses the reasons for Ann Shapland’s methods of killing, such as the use of a sandbag to kill the third victim, Mademoiselle Angèle Blanche. Although Poirot obtains feminine intuition as his method of deduction, ultimately, he highlights his excellent rationalism over intuition (S. Walton 224). As explained by S. Walton, there is a distinction between intuition and conscious connection of feminine information, which frequently appears in Golden Age fiction (226). It is evident that Poirot relies on intuition in assessing the characteristics of the teachers at Meadowbank. However, he has the ability to connect domestic and feminine details, such as idle gossip or pieces of clothing, together to form a deduction on a member of the staff or an event at the school. This ability to connect seemingly meaningless domestic information together can be Poirot’s interpretation of logic and rational thinking. Nevertheless, it is often intuition that allows Poirot to investigate something or someone in the first place.

Aside from Poirot, other characters in *Cat Among the Pigeons* rely on intuition to form an opinion on someone as a potential suspect or realize the importance of a minor detail. For instance, the headmistress Miss Bulstrode is haunted by the notion that she missed something vital in her conversation with Mrs. Upjohn, the mother of a pupil Julia Upjohn. This instinct proves to be correct as the information Mrs. Upjohn gave indicated Ann Shapland as a notorious spy and a killer. Whereas Miss Bulstrode only had a hunch about the importance of missed information, Julia Upjohn uses logical thinking in determining the cause of the murders. Much like Poirot, Julia connects all the clues she observed related to a tennis racquet, which ended up having the missing jewels of late Prince Ali Yusuf hidden inside it:

She stood staring down at the racquet. How could there be anything hidden in a tennis racquet? “But there must be,” said Julia to herself. “There *must*. The burglary at Jennifer’s home, the woman who came with that silly story about a new racquet....” Only Jennifer would have believed that, thought Julia scornfully. [...] So really then, *this* was the racquet that everyone was looking for in the Sports Pavilion. And it was up to her to find out why! (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 174; emphasis original)

The operative for Special Branch, Adam Goodman, who works undercover as a gardener at Meadowbank, expresses his intuitive knowledge about Ann Shapland. He recognizes her intelligence and level-headed thinking early in the investigation, although Ann is not yet suspected as the murderer. Adam Goodman manages to convince everyone at the school about his cover-up as a gardener except Ann Shapland. Perhaps Ann's intuition exposed the true occupation of Adam as an agent, and she even cunningly confronts Adam about it: "You're an ambitious girl, you wouldn't like to marry a humble jobbing gardener." "I was wondering about marrying into the C.I.D.," said Ann. "I'm not in the C.I.D.," said Adam. "No, no, of course not," said Ann" (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 215). The intuitive thinking of both Adam and Ann about each other is correct, although Adam perhaps saw Ann as an intelligent woman but not a murderer. When Ann Shapland is detained for the murders, Adam discloses that he thought Ann was "a nice girl" (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 239).

As stated by Rowland, Poirot wishes to talk with possible suspects in order to find discrepancies and mistakes in their stories (93). This method is also used by the Beresfords, as they wish to interview the key suspects and witnesses involved in the cases. In *Partners in Crime*, the first interview often comes to them since possible clients must initially approach the Beresfords in their detective agency. The potential client presents their case to Tommy and Tuppence, and after the client leaves, the couple begins to discuss the interview amongst themselves. Frequently in *Partners in Crime*, Tommy requests to hear Tuppence's opinion first and then weighs in his thoughts about the client or the case. The Beresfords rely immensely on intuition in order to assess the client and their story before planning their course of action in the investigation. Much like Poirot, the Beresfords have intuitive ideas about the people involved in the case, and then they follow up on these hunches to form a logical deduction. However, their intuition appears to be a lot faultier than Poirot's, and they sometimes misjudge suspects. For instance, Tuppence feels uncomfortable in the presence of a suspicious man, Dr. Horrison, and she believes that a missing woman, Hermy Crane, is in danger because of Dr. Horrison: "That woman's in some awful danger; I feel it in my bones." "Don't let your imagination run away with you." "I can't help it. I mistrust that man" (*Partners in Crime* 91). Although Dr. Horrison behaves suspiciously, in the end, Tuppence finds out that he was merely trying to help Hermy, who had gone missing voluntarily for health reasons. Whereas Poirot seems unmistakable in his intuition about people, Tommy and Tuppence's intuition sometimes proves to be wrong. Nevertheless,

in *Partners in Crime*, these mistakes mainly serve as an exciting twist or a surprise in the plot for the reader.

As explained by Rowland, Christie has also depicted criminals whose evilness is individualistic and not a creation of troubling social structures (47). Furthermore, these murderers created by Christie often have an increased interest in the sexual notion of crimes (Rowland 47). In the case of an individualistic criminal in *Cat Among the Pigeons*, Ann Shapland may not align with it completely. Though Poirot views Ann as a “cold-blooded killer,” there is a mention of her troublesome youth, which might indicate the source of her wickedness (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 253). Yet, Poirot and a gentleman involved in international affairs, Mr. Robinson, speculate this horrible childhood to be a rumor, and so Ann Shapland is not an evil creation of her unfortunate past. On the contrary, Ann Shapland resembles a femme fatale serial killer. As explained by Parker, femme fatale is a clever, cold-blooded killer that often lacks the sexual motive that male serial killers have (61). Despite her age and gender, Ann is described by the former British Intelligence agent, Mrs. Upjohn, as “one of the most dangerous agents” (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 237). As Christie’s detective fiction rarely depicts murders that are only done impulsively, these premeditated and masterfully planned murders are similar in terms of violence and intelligence regardless of the murderer’s gender (Makinen, “Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity” 152). Since the location of the crimes in *Cat Among the Pigeons* is an all-girls prep school, the likelihood of discovering a male killer is slim. However, in *Partners in Crime*, depending on the case, the chance of uncovering a female killer is just as likely as uncovering a male killer.

Christie portrays great diversity when creating her female villains (Makinen, “Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity” 118). This is evident in both texts with the variety of female murderers and criminals with different backgrounds and ages. As stated by Makinen, Christie presents complex varieties of femininity with her female killers: “Christie insists on an equal agency in behaving badly and asserts the competency of femininity to disrupt society” (*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity* 118). This variety can be seen, for example, in the seductive and dangerous Miss March, motherly but controlling Miss Logan, and the foreign French maid Elise in *Partners in Crime*, as well as with the beautiful but deceptive Ann Shapland, and an elderly, nonsexual Miss Chadwick in *Cat Among the Pigeons*. In addition to the female criminals in the texts presenting various degrees of femininity and masculinity, some of the female suspects and detectives vary, too. In *Cat Among the Pigeons*, the first victim, Miss Springer, is described as an unattractive but

fearless woman. When the investigators contemplate the possibility of blackmail as a reason for Miss Springer's death, Shaista comments that it is quite possible with Miss Springer:

"Do you not think it would be nice instead to have money, to travel, to do what you want? Especially someone like Miss Springer who is not beautiful, at whom men do not even look! Do you not think that money would attract her more than it would attract other people?"
(*Cat Among the Pigeons* 110)

The traditional belief about women's looks remains; since Miss Springer is unattractive, she should rely on money to charm other people, particularly men. The lack of femininity appears to be overshadowed by Miss Springer's masculinity. She works as a sports teacher at Meadowbank and is described by other people as tough, harsh, and unsympathetic. Whereas the other teachers have a hard time understanding why Miss Springer had entered the Sports Pavilion at night to investigate, the investigators have assessed her to be quite brave: "Being a tough and fearless young woman, she went out to investigate. She disturbed someone there who was—doing what? We don't know. But it was someone desperate enough to shoot her dead" (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 117).

According to Gill, Christie created female murderers and protagonists who express features that do not align with patriarchal society (Introduction). An example of this in *Partners in Crime* is Tuppence Beresford. As noted by the police force and official investigators, she is brave and not afraid of taking risks: "I don't think you are the kind who shrinks from risks, are you, Mrs. Tommy?" (*Partners in Crime* 7). When Tommy is worried for Tuppence as the main criminal of the text, a man known as "No. 16" has captured her, a porter from the Beresford's flat, Albert, comforts him. Albert refers to Tuppence as "indestructible," comparing her to a resilient rubber bone that is purchased for dogs (*Partners in Crime* 267).

Various sports, especially tennis, are included in the curriculum of the pupils in Meadowbank. As explained by Peach, tennis allowed women to become active in showing and maintaining their agility and physical strength (106). In *Cat Among the Pigeons*, tennis and other sports are clearly important to many girls in the school, and one pupil, Jennifer Sutcliffe, is a keen and skillful tennis player. The various sports available at Meadowbank and the sportiness of the schoolgirls is even remarked by the French teacher, Angèle Blanche, as a bit unusual to her: "'They are very fine courts here, and the swimming pool and the pavilion too. Oh! *le sport!* You think a lot of in England of *le sport*, do you not?' 'Well, I suppose we do, miss'" (*Cat Among the Pigeons* 72;

emphasis original). One of the clear indications of changing times is the presence of tennis and other forms of physical activity presented in *Cat Among the Pigeons*.

Christie was aware of her large female readership, and the combination of scientific thinking and feminine knowledge created an understanding between the readership and Hercule Poirot (S. Walton 59). Although Tommy Beresford's personality is more in line with a traditional English gentleman, he too appreciates the feminine aspects and details present in the cases he and Tuppence attempt to solve. Throughout *Partners in Crime*, Tommy is presented as a cosy husband who likes to stay close to home and welcomes a quieter lifestyle compared to Tuppence. The feminine knowledge necessary to solving a crime is often understood better by Tuppence, but at times Tommy shows his ability to indicate seemingly trivial domestic details relevant to the case, such as a bar of soap that revealed a thief. The domestic happiness of Tommy displays on many occasions and often contrasts with the other men around him. When Tommy is kidnapped by criminals, he will not even try to intimidate his kidnappers physically. Instead, he deliberately presents himself as the opposite of a fighter: "'If we'd had a pack of cards here, we might have had a game of picquet to pass the time,' drawled Tommy. 'Women always keep one waiting'" (*Partners in Crime* 60).

The masculine heroism was contradicted with the creation of a more feminine detective, Hercule Poirot. Indeed, Poirot is the opposite of a traditional English investigator since he is foreign, quite particular about his appearance, wealthy upper-class, and feminine. However, his femininity enhances his ability to be a successful detective:

Protagonists such as the spherical, obsessively neat Hercule Poirot (whose name is mock-heroic in the combination of macho 'hercules' and 'poirot' - buffoon) [...] seem feminised, creating an ambivalence about gender which moves away from prewar styles of male heroism [...] A particular factor in the anti-heroic detective is the way personal weaknesses and vulnerabilities are not external to the success of investigations but intrinsic to them. That which appears as 'excessive' or unnecessary to the detective function becomes a vital ingredient of success. (Rowland 19)

In many ways, Poirot's peculiar characteristics, which appear ridiculous in the eyes of other male detectives, are key factors that allow Poirot to solve cases others cannot. Without his femininity, and especially his appreciation of the importance of feminine details, Poirot would not be the great detective he presents himself as. As explained by Fido, female readers can understand Poirot's

sensitive feminine nature, which is frequently misinterpreted by male readers (69). The female readership can connect with the feminine Poirot and appreciate his eventual appearance in the story, as they know that the murder will now be solved. Once Poirot takes on the case at Meadowbank, the investigation appears to proceed at a quicker pace.

As stated by Munt, Christie created a feminine hero, Poirot, and proceeded to reject this masculine heroism with the Beresfords (8). Although Tommy does not appear to be as feminine as Poirot is, he does not completely align with masculine heroism either. Both Tommy and Tuppence are aware of Tommy's lack of masculinity compared to other men, but this does not bother either of them. Tommy's desire for cozy home life and faithfulness to Tuppence is remarkable in *Partners in Crime*: "'Shall I neglect you a little?' suggested Tommy. 'Take other women about to night clubs. That sort of thing.' 'Useless,' said Tuppence. 'You would only meet me there with other men'" (2). Tommy's devotion to Tuppence and their equality in their marriage appears quite modern compared to other couples seen in the text. Furthermore, the Beresfords appear to recognize how modern their marriage is; however, they often acknowledge the traditional gender roles of society while discussing the people involved in their cases.

A dualistic conception suggests that feminine and masculine features coexist in everyone regardless of their gender to some extent (Spence and Helmreich 18). Such an example can best be seen in the Beresfords. From early on in *Partners in Crime*, Tuppence's crave for adventure and action and Tommy's desire for a comfortable life indicate that they both possess characteristics traditionally viewed as masculine and feminine. Nevertheless, while they investigate their cases, Tommy expresses less feminine features than Tuppence expresses masculine characteristics. Domestic aspects in their cases appear to sometimes bewilder Tommy, and he prefers Tuppence to handle them: "'After that, I will interview the servants—or rather my assistant, Miss Robinson, will do so.' He felt his nerve quailing before the terrors of questioning the servants" (*Partners in Crime* 30). Although Tommy has significantly less understanding in domestic matters than Tuppence, he values these details in the investigation and allows Tuppence to explain them to him.

According to Makinen, the time after the First World War when the Beresfords start as detectives saw detective fiction developing into a less masculine direction with their heroes (*Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity* 28). Tommy Beresford is an excellent example of this hero character with less masculine features. Still, in comparison to his partner Tuppence, he provides

the physical strength occasionally needed in the investigation. As Tommy presents this new type of feminine male detective, the moments when Tommy expresses intensely masculine characteristics in *Partners in Crime* are quite prominent to the reader:

Tommy was dying to say several things, but the gag in his mouth prevented him. Also, he was dying to *do* several things—mostly with his hands and feet—but alas, that too had been attended to. He was securely bound. (*Partners in Crime* 56; emphasis original)

Although Tuppence shows the ability to undertake tasks that require agility and strength, Tommy is often the one who is tasked with facing actual fighting. For example, when Tuppence decides to climb a ladder to enter a house through the second-floor window in order to investigate, Tommy stays on the ground to keep watch and protect her: “You stay below. I don’t mind climbing ladders and you can steady it better than I could. And in case the doctor should come round the corner you’d be able to deal with him and I shouldn’t” (*Partners in Crime* 96). Despite Tuppence’s active role in the investigations compared to other female detectives, between the couple, Tommy is the one responsible for the physical aspect most of the time.

All in all, Christie’s works present detectives and criminals that share both masculine and feminine features regardless of their gender. While the crimes depicted in Christie’s fiction typically lack gory descriptions of violence, the crimes could have been committed by either a female or a male. Since Poirot is Belgian, his femininity is often explained by his foreignness. Both *Cat Among the Pigeons* and *Partners in Crime* depict contemporary ideals in terms of feminine and masculine features present in detectives.

4. Conclusion

In this thesis, I have argued the ways in which contemporary characters, behaviors, and attitudes, as well as traditional ones towards gender, are presented in these two detective texts by Agatha Christie: *Partners in Crime* and *Cat Among the Pigeons*. I focused on the main detectives of the two works, Tuppence and Tommy Beresford and Hercule Poirot, as well as examined some secondary characters in the analysis. Through the analysis of the characters from a gender perspective, it can be concluded that although the texts present traditional views regarding gender, they also display characters that challenge gender stereotypes and characteristics. Furthermore, Christie's works appear to have kept up with the changing times, as the analysis indicates that *Cat Among the Pigeons* is significantly more contemporary than *Partners in Crime*. The thesis began with an introduction that clarified the aims of the thesis and offered a short summary of the author and the analyzed works. This was followed by the theoretical framework of the thesis. As the thesis has aimed to examine the characters, especially female ones, through gender, femininity and masculinity, I have approached the works through gender theory. The theoretical framework discussed the general features and social changes of the Golden Age detective fiction and explained the effects of feminism on the genre. Furthermore, the influence of women writers on the genre was examined, and the representation of gender, femininity and masculinity was presented. Lastly, the theoretical framework discussed the key characters of detective fiction, e.g. detectives, killers and victims, through gender theory.

The analysis was divided into three sections; family and marriage, education and work, and gender roles. In the first section, I aimed to examine how motherhood and marriage are presented in Christie's work, in what ways traditional family roles are depicted, and how contemporary views are displayed in the two texts. The presence of modernity in terms of family and marriage is equal to traditional views in the works. However, the analysis indicates that there are less traditional beliefs in *Cat Among the Pigeons*, for example, most of the key female characters are not married women with children. For instance, I explained that Ann Shapland expresses her desire for a career over marriage, and the infidelity and scandalous pregnancy of Miss Rich does not prevent her from obtaining the position as Miss Bulstrode's successor. Christie portrays more traditional views on family and marriage in *Partners in Crime*, as even the main detective, Tuppence Beresford,

decides to return to domestic life when she finds out she is pregnant. However, the contemporary marriage of the Beresfords is clearly a modern creation by Christie.

In the second analytical section, I examined the ways in which education and work are presented in the two texts. I aimed to focus on young schoolgirls and their training for careers, as well as how Christie portrayed working women in her works. I also examined the work of the detectives, spies, and intelligence agents present in both works. The analysis examined the contemporary portrayal of education and work in both texts. While the occupation of the women in *Cat Among the Pigeons* is teaching, they are portrayed as independent and successful. I aimed to analyze the portrayal of the schoolgirls and their attitudes towards education. I discovered that apart from Princess Shaista, the students at Meadowbank are presented as young and modern girls who prioritize education above all else. Although the staff and the students represent different generations, their attitudes towards women's education and work are quite modern. In *Partners in Crime*, the Beresfords are equals in terms of their work, and they are both appreciated by official institutions, such as the Scotland Yard.

The third section of the analysis concerning gender roles was further divided into two parts: gendered stereotypes and expectations, and femininity and masculinity. In part 3.3.1, I examined gender stereotypes in detective work and aspects that go against traditional gender stereotypes in the texts. I also aimed to address gendered stereotypes relating to class, age, and nationality, as well as discuss the stereotypical spheres assigned to men and women. Finally, I looked at the presence of independent women in the works. The analysis indicates that *Partners in Crime* presents various traditional gendered stereotypes, such as belittling language used towards Tuppence, Tommy's lack of dominance over his wife, and expectations on female characters' looks and intellect. Contemporary aspects are limited to the Beresfords as they display an aversion to traditional gender norms. *Cat Among the Pigeons* presents more modern presentations of women, for example, there are many working, independent and self-sufficient women, and the female characters do not appear to be inferior to the male characters compared to *Partners in Crime*. Much like with the Beresfords in *Partners in Crime*, most male and female characters in *Cat Among the Pigeons* seem to have a more playful and relaxed connection with each other. Nevertheless, the analysis examined ageism towards the schoolgirls regarding their trustworthiness and traditional views on women in the way jewels supposedly affected them.

In part 3.3.2, I examined the representation of women and femininity and how Christie portrayed young schoolgirls and sexuality. I focused on the use of intuition and logical thinking in detective work, as well as studied the presentation of masculinity and femininity in the characters and detective work. In the analysis, I have shown that both works display contemporary elements in numerous ways. In *Partners in Crime*, for example, there are various types of female killers, the masculine heroism is rejected by Tommy, and to an extent, both Tommy and Tuppence display feminine and masculine characteristics. The contemporary aspects in *Cat Among the Pigeons* include, for instance, the importance of various sports, the intuition displayed by Poirot, and the masculinity of the killer, Ann Shapland. I have also analyzed the New Woman aspect found in the schoolgirls, particularly Julia Upjohn, and the deceptive nature of femininity present in Miss Chadwick.

Due to the limited scope of this thesis, I could not include two particularly interesting novels by Christie in the analysis. *Cards on the Table* and *Hallowe'en Party* could have provided further perspective as they feature Hercule Poirot more prominently, as well as include Poirot's friend, the mystery writer, Ariadne Oliver. Further research on Hercule Poirot and Christie's connection with Ariadne Oliver through gender theory could cover aspects left out from this thesis.

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