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# Myths and Legends in Crime Fiction

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## **TITLE**

Myths and Legends in Crime Fiction

## **ANNOTATION**

The thesis deals with the use of myths and legends in crime fiction. It predominantly focuses on the works of Arthur Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie, and Dan Brown, specifically *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *The Labours of Hercules*, *Angels & Demons*, and *The Da Vinci Code*. Additionally, it mentions the works of Ben Aaronovitch and Tendai Huchu. The aim of this thesis is to analyse how the authors used various myths and legends in their works

## **KEYWORDS**

Crime fiction, myths, legends, Arthur Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie, Dan Brown, Sherlock Holmes, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Hercule Poirot, Hercules, *The Da Vinci Code*, T. L. Huchu

## **NÁZEV**

Mýty a Legendy v Detektivní Próze

## **ANOTACE**

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá využitím mýtu a legend v detektivní proze. Zaměřuje se především na díla Arthura Conana Doyle, Agathy Christie a Dana Browna, konkrétně *Pes Baskervilský*, *Herkulovské úkoly pro Hercula Poirota*, *Andělé a Démoni* a *Šifra Mistra Leonarda*. Dodatečně také zmiňuje díla Bena Aaronovitche a Tendaie Huchu. Cílem této práce je analýza, jak autoři využili různé mýty a legendy v jejich dílech.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

Detektivní próza, mýty, legendy, Arthur Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie, Dan Brown, Sherlock Holmes, *Pes Baskervilský*, Hercule Poirot, Herkules, *Šifra Mistra Leonarda*, T. L. Huchu

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## Introduction

Crime fiction is a diverse genre that has captivated readers for years. Rooted in tales of mystery and intrigue, the genre has become one of the most popular literary genres today. In general, the narratives focus on the investigations of various criminal acts. As Heather Worthington put it: “Crime fiction as a genre requires a crime, a criminal, and a victim, plus (usually) a detective and (often) the police.”<sup>1</sup> Whether it is a professional detective or an amateur investigating a murder or a thievery, all crime stories include the elements of mystery and suspense.

The aim of this thesis is to provide insight into detective stories, which somehow incorporate myths and legends. Mythological stories, as well as legends, serve as foundational narratives that shape cultures and societies, offering profound insights into human beliefs, fears, and aspirations. Since the dawn of time, they provided explanations for unexplainable natural phenomena, as well as taught moral lessons and served as cautionary tales. In literature, particularly in crime fiction, myths and legends introduce a layer of complexity and intrigue. They add cultural depth and enrich the narratives by infusing the plots with symbolic resonance. Myths and legends can be used in various ways in detective stories, and this thesis provides a few examples of such utilisation.

There have been a lot of authors of detective stories who incorporated various myths and legends into their narratives. In this thesis, three main authors are introduced, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Dame Agatha Christie, and Dan Brown. In addition, in the third chapter, Ben Aaronovitch and Tendai Huchu are briefly included. Tendai Huchu is a rather new and not very well-known author. There is no personal information available on him, nor has there been any analysis of his books. All information provided in this thesis comes from private messages via social networks between Huchu and the authors of this thesis. An excerpt from the conversation is included in the attachment of this thesis.

The thesis is divided into three extensive chapters. Each chapter consists of a theoretical part relevant to an analysis which follows it.

The first chapter, titled Arthur Conan Doyle and The Beginnings of Crime Fiction, deals with the early development of the genre, Doyle himself, and then provides the analysis of primarily *The Hound of the Baskerville*, along with *The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire*. The chapter

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<sup>1</sup> Heather Worthington, “From The Newgate Calendar to Sherlock Holmes,” in *A Companion to Crime Fiction*, ed. Charles J. Rzepka, Lee Horsley (Hoboken: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2010), 17.



begins with a description of the evolution of detective stories since Edgar Allan Poe and even notes examples from before the formation of the genre. The rest of the theoretical part of this chapter is concerned with the biography of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and his detective Sherlock Holmes. Authors' personal life experiences can heavily influence their literary works, although, in Doyle's case, it is not as obvious as, for example, with Dan Brown. Nevertheless, the background of the author is important. The analysis of the first chapter is predominantly focused on *The Hound of the Baskervilles* as it is Doyle's most famous detective story including a legend. *The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire* is provided as an additional example of Doyle's use of myths and legends.

Agatha Christie and the Golden Age of Crime Fiction is the title of the second chapter of this thesis. Following the same pattern as the first chapter, it first introduces the time during which the analysed author wrote, in this case, the Golden Age. Secondly, it provides an insight into Dame Agatha Christie's life. Her writing was influenced by her family, who encouraged her and she did not only write brilliant mysteries, she also became one. As Christie herself has written an autobiography, the majority of information concerning her upbringing comes directly from her. Furthermore, the protagonist of the analysed stories, Hercule Poirot, is described. He himself is one of the connections between Christie's detective stories and mythology. The analytical part examined Christie's short story collection *The Labours of Hercules*. In the stories, Poirot embarks on a journey to complete his self-imposed labours, modelled after the myths of Hercules' labours. As the collection consists of twelve stories, only five were selected for a detailed analysis. The remaining seven are also included, but only briefly.

The third and final chapter moves from Britain to the United States. Dan Brown and the American Crime Fiction, as the title suggests, deals with the development of crime fiction in the United States. It goes back to the hard-boiled style which birthed contemporary American detective stories. As mentioned earlier, Dan Brown is a great example of an author whose personal life influenced his literary works. Since early childhood he became obsessed with solving mysteries because of his parents, and his frequent inclusion of Christian motifs in his novels comes from growing up in the Episcopalian church. Moreover, Brown projects himself into the character of Robert Langdon, his amateur detective. Langdon is the protagonist of both of the analysed novels, therefore his description is also provided. *Angels & Demons* and *The Da Vinci Code* are Brown's novels analysed in this chapter. They are Brown's most famous mysteries, and both include Christian myths and legends. Additionally, this chapter provides

an analysis of Ben Aaronovitch's series Rivers of London and Tendai Huchu's The Edinburgh Night Series as examples of crime fiction stories in which myths are no longer myths but reality. Overall, the thesis provides a cross-section of crime fiction as a genre and analyses the use of myths and legends in selected detective stories.

## 1 Arthur Conan Doyle and the Beginnings of Crime Fiction

Crime fiction as a distinct genre began to take form in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Writers started exploring the dark aspects of human nature and creating stories of mystery, suspense, and intrigue. Edgar Allan Poe was one of the pioneers of this genre. *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, which he published in 1841, is often believed to be the first modern detective story.

However, in a way, the origin of crime fiction dates as far back as before Christ. According to Dorothy L. Sayers, two stories from the book of Daniel, one from Herodotus and one story from the Hercules myths are the early ancestries of crime fiction.<sup>2</sup> In fact, many more stories preceding Poe or Doyle included elements typical for the genre and therefore can be considered to be works of crime fiction. For instance, Shakespeare's plays had aspects of mystery and crime. In *Hamlet*, the prince investigates his father's death, and the play shares the theme of murder, revenge, and uncovering the truth with other revenge tragedies. On the other hand, Julian Symons argues, that those searching for fragments of detection in those old stories merely look for puzzles, and while puzzles are crucial to detective stories, they are not detective stories in themselves.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, although not specifically considered detective stories, works with at least some aspects of crime fiction were written before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thus demonstrating that the genre has intrigued audiences for centuries, reflecting a timeless fascination with mystery.

Enlightenment, the intellectual movement taking over the world in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, contributed to the creation of crime fiction. The religious faith was replaced by faith in reason, and discovering truth was essential to enhancing the quality of human life. The development of police forces as the answer to rising criminality contributed as well. Scientific progress and rational thinking allowed the invention of police and detective techniques. Edgar Allan Poe was the first to succeed in taking advantage of this progress in order to come up with, in his words, a "tale of ratiocination."<sup>4</sup> And in this tale, he created monsignor C. Auguste Dupin. Poe established the standard for crime fiction, and Dupin became the archetype for fictional detectives. According to Scaggs, Doyle admired Poe for his innovative contributions to the field of detective fiction. And not only Sherlock Holmes but also Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot share traits and detective techniques with Dupin. Focusing on similarities between

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<sup>2</sup> Dorothy L. Sayers, *Great Short Stories of Detection, Mystery, and Horror* (London: Victor Gollancz Limited, 1928), 12.

<sup>3</sup> Julian Symons, *Great Detectives: Seven Original Investigations* (London: Abrams, 1981), 19.

<sup>4</sup> John Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* (Oxford: Routledge, 2005), 1.

Holmes and Dupin, they are both known for their extraordinary deductive skills. Both characters rely on their intelligence, use observation, and logical reasoning and take a methodical approach to solving crimes. To an extent, they may seem to possess almost superhuman abilities as they are able to notice even the smallest details and make connections which elude ordinary minds. The downside of such superordinarity is their detachment from society. Their unique thought processes, peculiar personalities and eccentric lifestyles only add to the social alienation. Poe's style of writing was also adapted in the years to come, the first-person narration and the narrator being the detective's close friend or that the conclusion comes before the explanation of the crime. Similarly, the criminal mastermind, Minister D-, is a template for future villains, such as Professor Moriarty.<sup>5</sup> The influence of Poe on Arthur Conan Doyle is undeniable, but he was able to take it one step further and create an iconic and timeless literary figure.

In the realm of crime fiction, not many names evoke as much awe as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The Scottish mastermind behind the legendary detective Sherlock Holmes played a pivotal role in shaping and elevating the genre. Nevertheless, writing was not his first choice of career. Doyle originally trained to be a physician; he studied medicine and dabbled in botany while at university. However, he had a passion for writing since he was a child and used it as a sort of coping mechanism for dealing with the struggles of his life. Information about Doyle's personal experiences is included in this chapter because they had a significant influence on his literary works and offer insight into the characters, themes, and context of his stories.

Andrew Lycett described the various challenges Doyle faced, which contributed to shaping him as a person and as a writer. His father was an alcoholic artist and struggled with mental illness, and his mother came from a poor family, therefore, his family faced financial instability. For a while, Doyle's family was divided because of the poor housing situation; the children were sent to live with relatives and friends. The financial situation also made it difficult for Doyle to pursue his education, and he was forced to interrupt his studies and later work to be able to finish his education. After his father's death, his uncles supported him at college, which was, however, not a pleasant place for Doyle because of harsh treatment, punishment, and overall

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<sup>5</sup> Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 19-22.

medieval practices.<sup>6</sup> *A Student's Dream* is a poem he wrote at eleven years old, in a letter to his mother from the Stonyhurst College.

*The Student he lay on his narrow bed  
he dreamt not of the morrow  
confused thoughts they filled his head  
and he dreamt of his home with sorrow*

*The Student he lay on his narrow bed  
all round dark was the night  
the stars they twinkled above his head  
and the moon it shone quite bright*

*He thought of the birch's stinging stroke  
and he thought with fear on the morrow  
he wriggled and tumbled and nearly awoke  
and again he sighed with sorrow<sup>7</sup>*

The poem illustrates the early development of Doyle's literary talent as well as provides a glimpse into his formative years, reflecting the influences that may have shaped his later works. His years at the University of Edinburgh Medical School were more positive. During these years, he started writing short stories and publishing them in small magazines. His first publication was *The Mystery of the Sasassa Valley*. The university was also the place where he found inspiration for Sherlock Holmes.

Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire* are analysed later in this chapter as they incorporate elements of myths and legends. The central character in both stories is Sherlock Holmes. Therefore he is introduced in order to provide essential context for understanding his character and the dynamics within the narratives.

The ingenious eccentric detective and his chronicle and counterpart John Watson first appeared in *A Study in Scarlet*, which was published in 1887. Ever since they have become the favourite detective duo. Eventually, they appeared in over sixty of Doyle's stories and are still being adapted in a wide variety of media, with different levels of faithfulness to the original stories,

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<sup>6</sup> Andrew Lycett, *The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes: The Life and Times of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007), 89-131.

<sup>7</sup> "A Student's Dream," *The Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia*, accessed October 31, 2023, [https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/A\\_Student%27s\\_Dream](https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/A_Student%27s_Dream).

characters, and settings. For instance, the BBC television series *Sherlock*, created by Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss, is a modern take on Sherlock and Watson.

Sherlock Holmes is a brilliant detective with deductive abilities and an interesting personality. He can be characterised by his exceptional mind and his capability to observe details, people, and their surroundings and draw conclusions from them. He is extraordinary, and he is aware of it, which makes him come off as arrogant. His behaviour can be described as eccentric, and his methods of solving crimes as unconventional at the least. He possesses extensive knowledge across various fields, which he is able to remember thanks to his brilliant memory. In the BBC's *Sherlock*, he is able to access his 'mind palace', where everything he ever saw or learned is stored. What Holmes precedes in logical skills, he lacks in emotions and social skills. Therefore, he is socially distant and awkward. He is always rational and believes everything can be eventually explained, one just has to be smart enough. He, himself, is another mystery included in Doyle's books. Holmes's intentions and thoughts are not always apparent, and the uncertainty captivates readers and draws them deeper into the story.

Doyle suffered from mental illnesses and his struggles with depression may have significantly influenced the creation of Holmes. The character himself exhibits traits that suggest underlying mental health issues. Characteristics such as drug abuse, quick loss of interest, frequent episodes of boredom, restlessness and occasional manic behaviour mirror aspects of depressive and obsessive-compulsive tendencies. According to Eric L. Altschuler, MD, PhD, both Sherlock Holmes and his brother Mycroft showed signs of Asperger's Syndrome. The illness is a form of Autism Spectrum Disorder, and placing Holmes on the autism spectrum would explain his attention to detail and extraordinary memory, as well as difficulty in socialising and understanding feelings. As mental illnesses tend to run in families, the similarities between the two Holmes brothers in such qualities, support the claim.<sup>8</sup> In the BBC version of Sherlock Holmes stories, the character calls himself a "high-functioning sociopath."<sup>9</sup> Being a high-functioning sociopath, as it says on the Healthline website, includes showing signs of superior intelligence, lack of empathy, secretive tendencies, calculating and addictive behaviours.<sup>10</sup> While the television series includes a modern concept of the character, he was modelled after

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<sup>8</sup> Eric L. Altschuler, "Asperger's in the Holmes family," *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, no. 43 (September 2013): 2239.

<sup>9</sup> *A Study in Pink*, *Sherlock*, written by Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss (BBC One, 2010), 00:58:05 to 00:58:08.

<sup>10</sup> "What Is a High-Functioning Sociopath?," Healthline, last modified May 28, 2019, <https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/high-functioning-sociopath#relationships>.

the original and shares the same character traits. Thus, although some of the attributes are more profoundly depicted in the newer adaptations of Doyle's stories, Sherlock Holmes has always been an odd individual with intellectual superiority, social detachment and drug addiction.

Even though certain Doyle's characteristics come through in Sherlock Holmes, the character was based on someone else. In accordance with *The Sherlock Holmes Book*, Doyle's mentor, surgeon and lecturer at the University of Edinburgh Medical School, Joseph Bell, became the inspiration for the character of Sherlock Holmes. He also used deductive processes and was supposedly a very clever person.<sup>11</sup> Also, as mentioned before, Poe's detective archetype, C. Auguste Dupin, influenced Doyle in the creation of Sherlock Holmes. Similarly, Poe's narrator influenced the character of Doctor John Watson. He is a loyal companion and friend to Sherlock Holmes. He is relatable and serves as a representation of an average person, in contrast to Holmes, which makes it easier for the readers to connect with the stories. Watson cannot be characterised only by his allegiance to Holmes; he is also a medical doctor, and his medical knowledge is an asset to the investigation. Although Watson is not based on a specific person from Doyle's life, Doyle's medical background served as a source of inspiration for the character.

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<sup>11</sup> Martin Fido, *The Sherlock Holmes Book: The Facts and Fiction Behind The World's Greatest Detective* (Richmond: Image Publishing, 2016), 48.

This thesis is focused on the use of myths and legends in crime fiction, and as will be shown, myths and legends can enrich detective stories in many ways. They can help set a mysterious and intriguing atmosphere, add depth to the stories and provide layers of history, symbolism, and culture. Incorporating them into stories can add authenticity and a sense of place. They can also help the writer create unique motives for crimes. Sometimes myths and legends can be used as red herrings and misdirection, leading the readers to believe something supernatural is behind the mystery, while the truth lies in something mundane. Doyle is said to be the first author to incorporate myths and legends into detective fiction. In his famous Sherlock Holmes story, *The Hound of Baskervilles*, he used a legend of a supernatural black hound.

English folklore generally includes many tales of hellish black hounds with large, petrifying glowing eyes. The legends are common in East Anglia and northern countries but may sporadically occur anywhere. Sometimes, they have different names, such as Black Shuck, Barghest, Padfoot, Grim or Cadejo, but they all share similar visual traits. As it is said in the Oxford Dictionary of English Folklore, these dogs are usually ghosts, supernatural creatures, or manifestations of the devil. They can be perceived as the omen of death.<sup>12</sup> The mention of a big black hound heralding death may remind people of The Grim from *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, “taking the form of a giant spectral dog, it’s among the darkest omens in our world. It’s an omen...of death.”<sup>13</sup> J.K. Rowling most definitely drew from English folklore as well as Doyle. And they are not the only writers to include a legend of a black dog in their stories. In Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, Jane thought she encountered a Gytrash. It is said to be a spirit in Yorkshire, which can take the form of a big black dog, horse or mule. It haunts roads and leads travellers astray, or on the contrary, occasionally guides them.<sup>14</sup> There are many legends about black hounds and as terrifying as the animal sounds, mentions of a friendly Shuck also exist. Jennifer Westwood in *Supernatural Enemies* described a ghost of a Shuck at Overstand, which was seen running alongside the coast in search of the bodies of his masters.<sup>15</sup> Even though some tales about black hounds are positive, mostly, they are depicted as evil, like in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

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<sup>12</sup> Jacqueline Simpson, Steve Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 25.

<sup>13</sup> *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, directed by Alfonso Cuarón (Warner Bros. Pictures, 2004), 00:31:02 to 00:31:32.

<sup>14</sup> Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 1997), 171.

<sup>15</sup> Simpson, Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, 326.



There are several theories on what Doyle's demonic hound is based on. One legend is rooted in Devon folklore, the Yeth Hound. According to the *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, the ancient folktale from Devon tells of the haunting spirit of an unbaptised child, who appeared as a headless dog and terrorised the area.<sup>16</sup> However, the more fitting theory, which is supported by Doyle's statement, is the legend of Richard Cabell and the Hell Hounds of Dartmoor: "My story was really based on nothing save a remark of my friend Fletcher Robinson's that there was a legend about a dog on the moor connected with some old family."<sup>17</sup>

Richard Cabell served as an inspiration for the character of Hugo Baskerville, the wicked member of the Baskerville family and the source of the family curse. According to Lieutenant-Colonel John Lambrick Vivian, Richard Cabell lived in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Buckfastleigh, in Dartmoor, Devon. He was nicknamed 'Dirty Dick' and was described as an evil man. He supposedly sold his soul to the Devil and was accused of murdering his wife. When he died, a pack of hounds was seen wandering around the moors, howling at his tomb. At the anniversaries of his death, he was seen walking amongst the living, leading the pack of ghostly hounds. Villagers then built a building around the tomb to prevent him from getting out.<sup>18</sup> Richard Cabell's fate really is similar to the tale of Hugo Baskerville, which Dr Mortimer describes to Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson in the second chapter of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. He tells them, that according to the legend, the Baskerville family is cursed by a demonic hound that haunts the moors around their estate. The hound's origins can be traced back to Hugo Baskerville. Hugo fancied a farmer's daughter who lived nearby, but who avoided him because of his cruel reputation. One night Hugo, alongside some of his friends, kidnapped the girl. However, the girl escaped and Hugo, drunk and desperate, made a deal with the devil and pursued her on his mare. Hugo's friends found them both dead and a huge black beast standing on top of Hugo's body.

[...] standing over Hugo, and plucking at his throat, there stood a foul thing, a great, black beast, shaped like a hound, yet larger than any hound that ever mortal eye has rested upon. And even as they looked the thing tore the throat out of Hugo Baskerville, on which, as it turned its blazing eyes and dripping jaws upon

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<sup>16</sup>Susie Dent, *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase & Fable: 19<sup>th</sup> edition* (London: Hodder Education Publishers, 2012), 1369.

<sup>17</sup>"Wisht Hounds Part 2 – Abbot's Way & Richard Cabell," The Faery Folklorist, last modified October 18, 2011, <https://faeryfolklorist.blogspot.com/search?q=richard+cabell>.

<sup>18</sup>J. L. Vivian, *The Visitation of the County Of Devon: Comprising the Herald's Visitations of 1531, 1564, & 1620* (London: For the Author, by H.S. Eland, 1895), 124-125.

them, the three shrieked with fear and rode for dear life, still screaming, across the moor.<sup>19</sup>

Since then, the hound is said to have haunted the Baskerville family, bringing death and misfortune to its heirs. Although a little different, both legends associate the men, Richard Cabell and Hugo Baskerville alike, with mysterious deaths attributed to the supernatural, haunting spectral hounds, and themes of retribution.

In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, the legend of the hellhound is more than a background detail, it serves as a central motif. It functions as the basis of the narrative and the driving force behind the entire plot. From the very beginning, the ominous presence of the hound looms over the Baskerville family, creating an atmosphere filled with fear and uncertainty. It sets the mood for the events of the book and instils fear and superstition in the characters and the readers alike. However, the legend itself is used as a cover-up for the actual crimes, which are ultimately revealed to have a rational explanation rather than supernatural origins. But it is still a vital part of the story, and without the legend, it would not be an interesting case for Sherlock Holmes to solve or for the readers to enjoy.

The myth of the hound enhances the eerie, menacing atmosphere of the Dartmoor setting. Doyle's rich and vivid descriptions of the Dartmoor area create a visual of something that is both beautiful and ominous. In the sixth chapter, while driving to the Baskerville Hall, Watson provides a description of the scenery they pass:

Rolling pasture lands curved upward on either side of us, and old gabled houses peeped out from amid the thick green foliage, but behind the peaceful and sunlit countryside there rose ever, dark against the evening sky, the long, gloomy curve of the moor, broken by the jagged and sinister hills.<sup>20</sup>

The moors are depicted as vast, barren, and dangerous, with perilous swamps, rocks and ever-present unsettling mist, harbouring evil spirits of the past. The natural features of the moors add to the creepy ambience, supporting the plausibility of the legend of the Hound. The far-reaching moors with hidden dangers, symbolise the unknown forces at play.

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<sup>19</sup> Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (Richmond: Alma Classics, 2020), 16.

<sup>20</sup> Doyle, *The Hound*, 66.

Baskerville Hall is illustrated as a grand manor but isolated from the rest of the world, surrounded by the dark moors.

Suddenly we looked down into a cuplike depression, patched with stunted oaks and firs which had been twisted and bent by the fury of years of storm. Two high, narrow towers rose over the trees. The driver pointed with his whip. 'Baskerville Hall,' said he.<sup>21</sup>

The house embodies the dark history of the Baskervilles. It is of gothic design, with its towering structures and dimly lit cold rooms with ancestral portraits, which invoke both a sense of nostalgia and uneasiness.

The avenue opened into a broad expanse of turf, and the house lay before us. In the fading light I could see that the centre was a heavy block of building from which a porch projected. The whole front was draped in ivy, with a patch clipped bare here and there where a window or a coat of arms broke through the dark veil. From this central block rose the twin towers, ancient, crenellated, and pierced with many loopholes.<sup>22</sup>

The setting reflects the psychological state of the characters, particularly Sir Henry, who is greatly affected by the surroundings. The manor's remote location on the desolate moors enhances the feeling of helplessness and improvement, building the characters' inclination to paranoia. Overall, the setting of the moors and Baskerville Hall helps to set the tone of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Doyle's detailed and evocative descriptions set the scene for the mystery and in addition, also reflect the internal struggles of the characters, making the setting a crucial element in the unfolding of the story.

Throughout the novel, the legend serves as a constant source of tension and intrigue. It pushes the characters to uncover the truth and shapes their actions. The mysterious death of Sir Charles Baskerville is attributed to the hound, which brings in Holmes and Watson in order to investigate and draw them into the heart of the mystery.

Sherlock Holmes, the rationalist, whose reliance on deductive reasoning and scepticism towards anything supernatural is tested as he faces the mystery of the hound. Throughout the story, he persists in his belief that every mystery can be solved by close observation and diligent examination of the evidence. He approached the case with scepticism, resisting to give in to the fear and superstition that surrounded the Baskerville estate. At first, he does not even

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<sup>21</sup> Doyle, *The Hound*, 68.

<sup>22</sup> Doyle, *The Hound*, 69.

consider the murderer to actually be the ghostly hound. He remarks Dr. Mortimer's theory to be interesting merely for "a collector of fairy tales"<sup>23</sup> and at the mention of footprints at the crime scene, he automatically assumes they were human.

'Footprints?'

'Footprints.'

'A man's or a woman's?'

Dr. Mortimer looked strangely at us for an instant, and his voice sank almost to a whisper as he answered.

'Mr. Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound!'<sup>24</sup>

Nonetheless, at times, his rational worldview is challenged, and he is forced to confront the limits of his own deductive reasoning. Holmes, as a sceptic, serves as a counterbalance to the pervasive impact of the myth of the hound. While others, such as Dr. Mortimer or even Dr. Watson, are quick to attribute the deaths and disappearance to the supernatural, Holmes is set on finding a logical explanation for the seemingly unexplainable events. Throughout the book, Doyle successfully juxtaposes Holmes's rational approach to crime-solving with the omnipresent influence of the legend of the hound, generating a tension between scepticism and superstition that advances the plot and challenges readers to question what they believe in. As he digs deeper into the mystery, Holmes eventually uncovers the masterful web of lies and deceit. He reveals the truth behind the curse that has plagued the Baskerville family for generations, or rather, the man who has taken advantage of it.

Jack Stapleton is a cunning antagonist who manipulates the legend of the hound to further his wicked designs. By using the myth, a bogey hound and through his powers of cunning and manipulation, he tricks both the readers and the characters in the book, with the exception of Holmes. Yet Stapleton earns Holmes's respect as a villain. At first, Stapleton presents himself as a nature lover, butterfly collector and a friendly neighbour to Sir Henry Baskerville. However, he turns out to be a secret Baskerville who exploits the superstitions of the locals in order to inherit the Baskerville estate. His true name is Rodger Baskerville II, a secret cousin of Sir Henry. He used to live in South America, where he was forced to flee to England because of stealing a considerable sum of money. In England, he opened an ill-fated school, but after an epidemic, he returned to his life as a thief. Eventually, he came up with a plot to kill off the

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<sup>23</sup> Doyle, *The Hound*, 17.

<sup>24</sup> Doyle, *The Hound*, 23.

Baskervilles, which would make him the sole heir of their fortune. Stapleton tried to convince Sir Charles of the authenticity of the legend, and he succeeded as Dr Mortimer later confided to Holmes and Watson:

[...] he was honestly convinced that a dreadful fate overhung his family, and certainly the records which he was able to give of his ancestors were not encouraging. The idea of some ghastly presence constantly haunted him, and on more than one occasion he has asked me whether I had on my medical journeys at night ever seen any strange creature or heard the baying of a hound.<sup>25</sup>

For his scheme to work, Stapleton had bought a large hound dog and had it covered in phosphorus paint. It made the animal glow, giving it a more spectral and sinister look. He kept it in a mine in the moors, where the dog would suffer and starve, howling. Holmes described the animal as “savage and half-starved. If its appearance did not frighten its victim to death, at least it would paralyse the resistance which might be offered.”<sup>26</sup> The dog’s cries would sometimes be heard by locals, which added to the fear and supported the truthfulness of the legend. To further the superstition, Stapleton even took the dog out a few times and when people saw it, it resulted in growing paranoia.

I find that before the terrible event occurred several people had seen a creature upon the moor which corresponds with this Baskerville demon and which could not possibly be any animal known to science. They all agreed that it was a huge creature, luminous, ghastly, and spectral.<sup>27</sup>

Stapleton took advantage of Sir Charles’ weak heart and superstitious nature, scaring him to death with the bogey hound. He would have done the same to Sir Henry, if not for Sherlock Holmes.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s use of myths and legends in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is evidence of his exceptional narrative skills. By incorporating the legends of the hound into the story, Doyle creates an immersive and compelling world that captivates readers with its blend of mystery, suspense and the supernatural. Through clever blending of superstition and rational investigation, he challenges readers to contemplate deeper questions about the nature of belief,

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<sup>25</sup> Doyle, *The Hound*, 21.

<sup>26</sup> Doyle, *The Hound*, 201.

<sup>27</sup> Doyle, *The Hound*, 27.

the power of storytelling, the persuasiveness of narrative, and the enduring allure of the mysterious and unexplained.

Nevertheless, *The Hound of the Baskerville* is not the only Sherlock Holmes story to include a legend as a red herring. *The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire* is written using the same technique. It was first published in 1924 as part of a collection *The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes*. It combines the elements of gothic horror with detective fiction. Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson are investigating a vampire this time. Mr. Robert Ferguson is convinced his Peruvian wife has been sucking blood from the neck of their baby son.

[...] he saw his wife rise from a kneeling position beside the cot and saw blood upon the child's exposed neck and upon the sheet. With a cry of horror, he turned his wife's face to the light and saw blood all round her lips. It was she—she beyond all question—who had drunk the poor baby's blood.<sup>28</sup>

She has also been acting weird; she has struck Mr Ferguson's older son, who cannot walk, for no apparent reason and has locked herself in her room, where only her Peruvian maid is since allowed. Holmes considered the claim of vampires being real even more ridiculous than the reality of the spectral hound, as shown at the beginning of the story: "...with the dry chuckle which was his nearest approach to a laugh, he tossed it over to me. 'For a mixture of the modern and the medieval, of the practical and of the wildly fanciful, I think this is surely the limit.'<sup>29</sup> And later again when contemplating the case with Watson: "Rubbish, Watson, rubbish! What have we to do with walking corpses who can only be held in their grave by stakes driven through their hearts? It's pure lunacy."<sup>30</sup> He did not believe Mrs Ferguson to be a vampire, yet he decided to take on the case and travel to the Ferguson house in Sussex to prove himself right. When they arrive, Mrs Ferguson is said to have fallen ill. Holmes's powers of observation come into use as he interviews the family members and examines the house. He focuses mainly on the dynamics within the family, especially the relationship between Mrs Ferguson and her stepson, Jack. In the end, he uncovers that Mrs Ferguson was only protecting her infant son from Jack, who tried to poison him because of jealousy. The wounds on the baby's neck were caused by poisonous darts that Jack used. Mrs Ferguson found out and that is why she had struck Jack. She was not sucking blood, but the poison from the baby's neck, which is why she became sick and secluded herself in her room. She would have rather died than broken her

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<sup>28</sup> Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes* (New York: William Collins, 2011), 52.

<sup>29</sup> Doyle, *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*, 51.

<sup>30</sup> Doyle, *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*, 51.

husband's heart by calling his older son a murderer. Once again Holmes was able to reveal a rational explanation for what initially seemed to be of supernatural origins. His rationality did not allow him to be tricked by superstition and he dispelled the legend of vampires.

This story is a little different from *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Although the legend of the vampire overshadowed what was actually happening, just as the legend of the hound made people blind to Stapleton's real intentions, the young Jack Ferguson did not plan to frame his stepmother as a murderer or as a vampire. However, Mrs Ferguson, by not speaking of his actions and trying to save the baby herself, only played into his cards and framed herself.

Doyle may have chosen to include the legend of the bloodthirsty creatures of the night, because of the popularity of gothic and supernatural themes in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The concept of vampires is rooted in various cultures and folklore, the first mentions date back to ancient civilizations. As mentioned by J. Gordon Melton, the tales of demons from the Mesopotamian, Hebrew or Ancient Greek cultures were the predecessors of modern vampires. However, the folklore related to today's notion of vampires came predominantly from oral tales from early eighteenth-century southeastern Europe.<sup>31</sup> The vampiric legends spread widely in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and were incorporated into Gothic literature. Vampires are included even in some of Edgar Allan Poe's works; for instance, in his *Dead Brides: Vampire Tales*, he describes dead childlike brides who drain lives from others. But perhaps the most famous novel to include the legend of a vampire is Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. The Count has influenced countless interpretations of vampiric legends and set several cultural tropes connected with vampires such as aversion to sunlight or revulsion to garlic.

Although not explicitly mentioned in the story, Mrs Ferguson being a Peruvian woman connects her to a legend of Peruvian vampires, which could have been another reason for Doyle to include vampires in this story. A pishtaco, as described in *The Vampire Encyclopedia*, is a mythological figure from Peruvian and Bolivian legends. It is an evil humanoid creature, typically a foreigner, who looks extremely pale and kills people in brutal ways. The term comes from the Quechua word 'pishtay' meaning behead or slit throat. Pishtacos would lure their victims into the jungle, where they would suck out their body fat.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> J. Gordon Melton, *The Vampire Book: The Encyclopedia of the Undead* (Detroit: Visible Ink Press, 2011), 31.

<sup>32</sup> Matthew Bunson, *The Vampire Encyclopedia* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1993), 200.

Additionally, being a woman and a foreigner already marks Mrs Ferguson as a threat. According to Nick Groom, "...women were already formed in the image of the vampire, with supernatural lineage in Lamia and Lilith."<sup>33</sup> Groom refers to two mythological women associated with dominance over men, seduction and killing of infants. In Jewish mythology, Lillith was the first wife of Adam, who was banished from the Garden of Eden for not obeying her husband and became the mother of demons. Her characteristics of rebellion, independence, seductive nature and immortality align with traits associated with female vampires. Her titles, the Queen of the Night and Mother of Demons, also support the theory, as vampires are frequently labelled as creatures of the night or demons. Moreover, as mentioned in *The Book of Lilith*, Lillith is associated with the deaths of infants and in some interpretations, she is depicted as a succubus who drains life from her victims.<sup>34</sup> Lillith is a marginalised female figure who reflects society's fear of women's independence and sexuality, just like female vampires. The other woman, Lamia, comes from Greek mythology. As stated by Robert E. Bell, she was the Queen of Ancient Lybia, who had an affair with Zeus. Hera killed her children and drove her to madness. Slowly, Lamia turned into a snake-like monster who seduced and feasted on men, and also devoured children.<sup>35</sup> What connects Lamia and Lilith, specifically to Mrs Ferguson, is the feasting on infant children. Furthermore, from Jack Ferguson's point of view, she also seduced his father and took the place of his dead mother.

Similarly to *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, the legend helps to set up a scenario that appears to be inexplicable by other than supernatural means. It emphasises the triumph of logic and reason over superstition and highlights Holmes' rationality. The legend also helps to create a layer of mystery and suspense. Comparably to the legend of the hound, the implications of vampirism bring about an eerie and unsettling atmosphere, which makes the story more interesting for the readers.

The use of legends and myths in crime fiction is not distinctive of Arthur Conan Doyle. Many authors have used legends or myths in a manner similar to *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, using them as red herrings and cover-ups for crimes. For example, in *The Uninvited Guests* by Sadie Jones, seemingly supernatural events and ghost appearances are unveiled to be part of a

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<sup>33</sup> Nick Groom, *The Vampire: A New History* (London: Yale University Press, 2018) 146.

<sup>34</sup> Barbara Black Koltuv, *The Book of Lilith* (Lake Worth: Nicolas-Hays Inc, 1986), 69-71.

<sup>35</sup> Robert E. Bell, *Women of Classical Mythology: A Biographical Dictionary* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1991), 270-271.



blackmail scheme. In *The Skeleton in the Clock* by John Dickson Carr, another ghostly activity is a cover-up for murder. The ghost of Blackwood Hall, in the Nancy Drew Mystery of the same name by Carolyn Keene, is only a distraction from a thievery. Lastly, the famous *Scooby-Doo* franchise is based on solving supposedly supernatural mysteries, which eventually are uncovered to be completely mundane.

Legends and myths can also be used in different ways in detective fiction. In some works, it can be used as a tool for uncovering the pattern of crimes. Some stories may indeed be set in a supernatural world, where the legends are real and can help solve the crime. Alternatively, some authors of crime fiction can choose to only draw inspiration from legends and myths.

## 2 Agatha Christie and the Golden Age of Crime Fiction

A golden age is a period during which the most significant achievements were made. The Elizabethan era gave Britain one of the greatest queens who have ruled the country, the 1920s introduced another queen, the queen of crime fiction, Agatha Christie.

The Golden Age of Detective Fiction was an era in the 1920s and 1930s, during which the classic murder mystery bloomed. Whodunnits were a majority of novels published in this time, predominantly in Britain. In the United States, it was hard-boiled crime fiction which was a more popular genre. Whodunnit, which stands for the phrase ‘Who done it?’, is a subgenre of detective fiction that focuses on solving a crime, usually murder. It has evolved and changed over the years. However, whether it is a simple dinner party mystery, where the guests have to figure out who killed the host or a more complex story with modern-day elements and the use of forensic methods, the subgenre still captivates readers and nowadays viewers alike.

Whodunnits were written already before the Golden Age, even some of the early works of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle can be classified as whodunnits, as they revolve around the central question of identifying the criminal. However, it was between the First and Second World Wars when the stories became highly popular and when the term was first used. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, News of Books critic Donald Gordon referred to the detective novel *Half-Mast Murder* by Milward Kennedy as ‘a satisfactory whodunnit’, and therefore he is credited as the originator of the title.<sup>36</sup> The term fits the title of the subgenre perfectly, as it describes the focus of the genre and also includes a play on words, which is a frequent element in many of the whodunnit stories. Later, it inspired variations such as howdunnit or whydunnit.

Whodunnit is a classic in the history of detective fiction. Its intricate narratives, intriguing characters, and exciting riddles captivated readers. This subgenre of detective fiction challenges readers to a clever game of deceit and deduction as they work with the protagonist to identify who has done it. As mentioned before, the term whodunnit is an abbreviation of ‘Who done it?’ and it perfectly captures the main question posed by these stories: Who has done the crime? This question acts as a driving force behind the plot, the central theme of the story. The protagonists, along with the readers, are propelled on a quest for the answer to that question. John Scaggs mentioned that the central appeal of these mysteries is the emphasis on

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<sup>36</sup> “Whodunit,” Merriam-Webster, last modified May 29, 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/whodunit>.

fair play and the rules of the genre,<sup>37</sup> and this can be supported by Scott Ratner who stated that “fair play is one of the key and most oft-cited principles of Golden Age and Puzzle Plot Detective Fiction.”<sup>38</sup> Both fair-play and rules are important to adhere to in order to be able to solve a puzzle effectively. Focus on solving puzzles and the revelation of hidden facts are Whodunnit’s primary characteristics. On the other, the main characters are generally not the priority. As John Scaggs notes, “character is usually seen as being sacrificed in favour of ingenious plotting.”<sup>39</sup> Yet, some protagonists from the era of whodunnits are the most memorable ones. The sole task of the protagonist, who can be a professional or amateur detective, is solving the case.

Some essential elements of a whodunnit story include a closed circle of suspects, each with a motive and an opportunity; an isolated setting, such as a country estate or a snowbound train, where the suspects are confined; a series of clues as well as red herrings, and misdirections throughout the narrative; and a climatic revelation, which is usually followed by a detailed explanation of the clues that led to the criminal’s identification. Together, these elements create a thought-provoking and compelling narrative experience. The readers are drawn into the story and turned into the role of a detective, embarking on an exciting chase, following the clues and trying to figure out who has done it.

The peak of popularity of this subgenre was during the Golden Age of detective fiction, largely because of the contributions of several prolific authors. The most famous of these writers would be Agatha Christie. She is regarded as one of the leading writers of whodunnit mysteries. Mainly because of her brilliant plots, inventive puzzles, and memorable and iconic sleuths, such as Hercule Poirot or Miss Marple. Christie’s *The Labours of Hercules*, which is analysed later in this chapter, can also be classified as a collection of whodunnits. In the present day, whodunnits continue to captivate audiences with their timeless appeal and ability to engage readers or viewers in the thrill of solving a mystery. Despite evolving literary trends, the classic whodunnit remains a beloved genre, offering a compelling blend of suspense, intrigue, and intellectual challenge. Many of the old stories, as well as brand-new ones, are being brought to broader audiences in the form of movies. For example, Rian Johnson’s *Knives Out*, starring Daniel Craig as the modern-day detective, was considered one of the best films to come out in

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<sup>37</sup> Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*,

<sup>38</sup> “Guest editorial: Scott Ratner on The Myth of Detective Fiction,” Noah’s Archives, last modified June 10, 2015, <https://hypnoticmysteries.wordpress.com/2015/06/10/guest-editorial-scott-ratner-on-the-myth-of-detective-fiction-fair-play/>.

<sup>39</sup> Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 27.

2019.<sup>40</sup> The second movie from, the Knives Out series, *The Glass Onion*, is based on a live-action whodunnit experience, or a murder mystery game, which is another one of the modern interpretations of the original whodunnit novels. As the most famous whodunnit writer, the influence of Agatha Christie is undeniable, and without her, detective fiction as a genre would, in all probability, look differently and would not be as successful.

Dame Agatha Mary Clarissa Christie, Lady Mallowan, DBE, was born in 1890 and, in her life of 85 years, produced 66 detective novels, 14 short story collections, and the world's longest-running play. She went down in history as the most famous female writer, and as stated in the Guinness World Records, she is the best-selling fiction writer of all time.<sup>41</sup> She is renowned for her contributions to the detective fiction genre.

Christie was born to an upper-middle-class family in Torquay, Devon. As she herself wrote in her autobiography, she had a very happy childhood and a loving family. Her parents were Frederick and Clara Miller, and she had two older siblings. Both of her parents had a significant influence on Agatha and her devotion to literature. Frederick was fond of storytelling, and his stories about the United States sparked her imagination. Clara was, by Agatha's words, a brilliant woman with strong character, and she loved literature, a love that Agatha inherited. Apart from her parents, Agatha was influenced by great authors from her youth; she discovered Arthur Conan Doyle, Lewis Carroll and Edith Nesbitt in the library at Ashfield.<sup>42</sup> She began writing during her adolescence. It was her mother who nudged her to write a story:

Why don't you write a story?' she suggested.

'Write a story?' I said, rather startled.

'Yes,' said mother. 'Like Madge.'

'Oh, I don't think I could.'

'Why not?' she asked.

There didn't seem any reason why not, except that...

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<sup>40</sup> Kimberly Nordyke, "AFI Reveals 2019 Award Winners for Film and Television," *The Hollywood Reporter*, December 4, 2019.

<sup>41</sup> "Five record-breaking book facts for National Bookshop Day," Guinness World Records, last modified October 4, 2018, <https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/news/2018/10/5-page-turning-book-facts>.

<sup>42</sup> Agatha Christie, *An Autobiography* (London: Collins, 1977), 9-59.

‘You don’t know that you can’t,’ mother pointed out, ‘because you’ve never tried.’<sup>43</sup>

At first, she had no success with sending her stories to editors and magazines. But her luck changed in 1920 when *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, a story featuring Hercule Poirot, was published. After the First World War, Christie had her only daughter, Rosalind. Her career took off, and she continued writing while embracing the role of motherhood.

Mystery was intertwined with her life as well as with her writing. In 1926, Christie disappeared for eleven days. She was found in a Harrogate spa hotel under the name Teresa Neele and claimed to be from South Africa. Why she disappeared and what she did during those days remains unknown, even though there are theories it was a publicity stunt, an affair or a case of amnesia. Christie never publicly commented on it. Following her disappearance, she got divorced and married again to an archaeologist, Max Mallowan. Christie carried on writing and continued her success. She became widely recognised for her contributions to crime fiction. She was the first recipient of the Mystery Writers of America Grand Master Award and later was appointed Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire for her services to literature by Elizabeth II. Agatha Christie died on January 12<sup>th</sup> 1976. She remains the crime fiction icon alongside Arthur Conan Doyle.

Similarly to Doyle, many of Christie’s stories and novels draw from her own experiences. Serving as a nurse during both wars enabled her to gain knowledge of poisons, which became a recurring motif in her writing. Moreover, travelling around the world with her second husband and spending time on digging sites with him gave her useful information. For instance, Poirot’s cases in *The Labours of Hercules* take him to various locations, mirroring Christie’s own travel experiences. The stories in this collection are not only diverse in their settings but also rich in cultural and historical details, thanks to her extensive travels.

Christie is mainly known for her mystery novels and short stories. She usually wrote whodunnits and sometimes incorporated elements of thriller and suspense. She also experimented with spy fiction or adventure mysteries. Of the sixty-six detective novels, *Murder on the Orient Express* and *Death on the Nile* are possibly the most famous. In addition, she also wrote nineteen plays and six romance novels. However, the romances were written under the pseudonym Mary Westmacott. Clever plots, intricate mysteries, limited authorial narration, and

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<sup>43</sup> Christie, *An Autobiography*, 183.

surprise endings can characterise her writing style. All of which makes her stories captivating for the readers. She also uses minimal violence and instead focuses on the puzzle-solving aspects. Memorable characters are iconic for Christie as well. Her most memorable detective, the detective to whom Christie dedicated the most stories, who made her famous in the first place and to this day remains a fan favourite, is Hercule Poirot.

Hercule Poirot is a fictional Belgian detective with a distinctive personality, meticulous methods, and iconic moustache. The first description of Poirot in *The Mysterious Affair at Style* is as follows:

Poirot was an extraordinary looking little man. He was hardly more than five feet, four inches but carried himself with great dignity. His head was exactly the shape of an egg, and he always perched it a little on one side. His moustache was very stiff and military. The neatness of his attire was almost incredible. I believe a speck of dust would have caused him more pain than a bullet wound. Yet this quaint dandyfied little man who, I was sorry to see, now limped badly, had been in his time one of the most celebrated members of the Belgian police. As a detective, his flair had been extraordinary, and he had achieved triumphs by unravelling some of the most baffling cases of the day.<sup>44</sup>

The description widened throughout the thirty-three novels, fifty-one short stories, and two plays. His attention to detail is reflected in his personal presentation and attire. He wears tailored suits and leather shoes. His shoes often become a comedic relief in the stories as he is deeply annoyed by dirtying or damaging them. Personality-wise, he is, in addition to his attentiveness to detail, very intelligent, polite, and has a strong sense of morality. However, he displays a certain level of egocentricity and vanity or in the words of Agatha Christie, he is “the complete egoist.”<sup>45</sup> A significant aspect of his character is his Belgian origin. He was born in Belgium, where he worked as a police officer. After World War I, he moved to England and became a private detective. Yet he retains Belgian habits, and although he speaks English, exclamations or phrases in French are featured in the stories. Even the name Hercule is of French origin. Christie combined the names of two other detectives: Hercule Popeau from Marie Bellox Lowndes’ stories and Monsieur Poirot, Frank Howel Evans's French police officer with a moustache. However, the similarities between the names Hercule and Hercules do not go unnoticed. In *The Labours of Hercules*, the origin of Hercules’s name is brought up.

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<sup>44</sup> Agatha Christie, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1920), 19-20.

<sup>45</sup> Christie, *An Autobiography*, 414.

After pondering his similarities with Hercules, Poirot is inspired to take on the last cases resembling the labours of Hercules.

For the character himself, there is a visible inspiration in Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes. Even though both characters also have significant differences in their personalities, backgrounds, and methods in their detective work, they share certain characteristics. Both Holmes and Poirot are exceptionally intelligent detectives skilled in deduction, they rely on logic and reason and share attention to detail. Both of them view their work as a mental challenge and enjoy solving complex puzzles. Moreover, the two detectives share their eccentricities, quirks, unusual habits and, lastly, uncommon names. In *The Labours of Hercules*, there is a comment on the likeness of the names of both the detectives and even their brothers: "Thinking of an imaginary conversation. Your mother and the late Mrs Holmes, sitting sewing little garments or knitting: "Achille, Hercule, Sherlock, Mycroft."<sup>46</sup> And similarly to Doyle's irritation with Sherlock Holmes, Christie became tired of her most famous detective. Unlike Doyle, Christie kept herself from killing him because of his popularity amongst her readers. Instead, Christie focused on Miss Marple and other detectives, who are not as well known. Miss Marple, an old spinster living in the village of St. Mary Mead, is an amateur consulting detective with a talent for solving mysteries. Her first appearance was in a short story, *The Tuesday Night Club*, and Christie did not anticipate her to become popular.

I cannot remember where, when or how I wrote it, why I came to write it, or even what suggested to me that I should select a new character—Miss Marple—to act as the sleuth in the story. Certainly at the time I had no intention of continuing her for the rest of my life. I did not know that she was to become a rival to Hercule Poirot.<sup>47</sup>

Some of Christie's other detectives are The Beresfords, Harley Quin, Parker Pyne, and Superintendent Battle. Nevertheless, most people will recall Hercule Poirot at the mention of Agatha Christie. He stands as one of the most beloved detectives in crime fiction. Christie devoted herself to him for over 50 years, and his popularity continued even after her death. To this day, stories with Hercule Poirot are being adapted into movies and TV series.

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<sup>46</sup> Agatha Christie, *The Labours of Hercules* (London: Collins, 1967), 11.

<sup>47</sup> Christie, *An Autobiography*, 413-414.

As mentioned before, in *The Labours of Hercules*, Poirot's last cases are inspired by Greek mythology. Poirot sees a connection to Hercules, not only in their names but also in some of their characteristics.

Yet there was between this Hercule Poirot and the Hercules of Classical lore one point of resemblance. Both of them, undoubtedly, had been instrumental in ridding the world of certain pests . . . Each of them could be described as a benefactor to the Society he lived in . . .<sup>48</sup>

Poirot sees himself as a modern Hercules, different from the “figure with bulging muscles, brandishing a club.”<sup>49</sup> Hercules is the Roman equivalent of the Greek Herakles. Nowadays, the name Hercules is more commonly used even when relating to Greek mythology. Agatha Christie herself used the name Hercules in the story but referred to him as the Greek hero. Hercules was a demigod, son of Zeus and Alcmena. As a demigod, he possessed incredible strength and became a legendary hero in Greek mythology. Hera resented him and sought to make his life difficult by various obstacles and challenges. The labours were given to Hercules as a punishment for killing his wife and children. Although he committed the murders because Hera induced madness on him, he undertook the labours as an atonement. As listed in the *The Classical Mythology Book*, there were originally only ten labours, but because Hercules was aided twice, two more were added. The twelve labours were: kill the Nemean Lion, kill the Hydra of Lerna, capture the Ceryneian Hind, capture the Erymanthian Boar, clean the Stables of Augeas, drive out the Stymphalian Birds, fetch the Cretan Bull, capture the Mares of Diomedes, bring back the Amazon Girdle, steal the Cattle of Geryon, retrieve the Golden Apples of the Hesperides, fetch Cerberus from the Underworld.<sup>50</sup> After completing the labours, Hercules went on plenty more adventures. Eventually, he was poisoned by his second wife with a shirt soaked in Centaur blood. Nonetheless, for accomplishing the labours, he not only purified himself of the murders but was also promised immortal life on Mount Olympus after ceasing his mortal life.

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<sup>48</sup> Christie, *The Labours of Hercules*, 17.

<sup>49</sup> Christie, *The Labours of Hercules*, 17.

<sup>50</sup> Lesley Bolton, *The Everything: Classical Mythology Book* (Avon: Adams Media Corporation, 2002), 221-223.



Agatha Christie was very fond of reading from a young age, as mentioned before. She read plenty of ancient literature and found a liking in Greek mythology, which later influenced her literary works. Christie found inspiration in the timeless themes and included the legends in more than one book. The mythological elements serve as narrative motifs or allegorical devices to enhance the complexity of the plots and make her stories even more interesting for the readers. Apart from *The Labours of Hercules*, traces of Greek mythology can be found in *Philomel Cottage*, *The Face of Helen*, *The Oracle of Delphi* and Miss Marple's last story *Nemesis*.

Doctor Tatiana V. Ternopol divided Christie's works related to Greek mythology into two groups: her earlier writings, all published between 1924 and 1947, and her novel *Nemesis*, published in 1971. As Ternopol states in her study, *The Intertextual Use of Greek Mythology in Agatha Christie's Detective Fiction*, in Christie's earlier works, although her characters sometimes share appearances and roles of the Greek heroes, she seems to be comparing her characters to the mythological figures in an ironic way. While the references to the mythological characters in *Nemesis* are obvious; Miss Marple is directly called Nemesis and lives up to the role. But the biggest difference Ternopol sees between the groups is the mood of the stories. The earlier works are hopeful, and all of them have happy endings. On the other hand, *Nemesis* is dark, and there are several murders.<sup>51</sup> However, the differences between the use of Greek legends in *The Labours of Hercules* and *Nemesis* do not seem to be as significant as Doctor Ternopol suggested. The connection between Miss Marple and the goddess Nemesis and Hercule Poirot and Hercules is essentially the same. Both detectives share certain similarities with their mythological counterparts, only Miss Marple is directly called Nemesis, while Poirot takes on the role of Hercules because of his first name. But Christie could not possibly use the same technique with the name as there is no hero in Greek mythology named Jane. Furthermore, Miss Marple herself makes a remark on the likeness of the oldest sister and Clytemnestra: "Clotilde, Miss Marple thought, was certainly no Ophelia, but she would have made a magnificent Clytemnestra—she could have stabbed a husband in his bath with exultation."<sup>52</sup> A connection almost identical to those Poirot makes in every story in *The Labours of Hercules*. Therefore, even though *Nemesis* differs in the mood and atmosphere, the use of Greek mythology is essentially the same as in *The Labours of Hercules*.

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<sup>51</sup> Tatiana V. Ternopol, "The Intertextual Use of Greek Mythology in Agatha Christie's Detective Fiction," *English Studies at NBU*, no. 6 (21 December 2020): 322-329.

<sup>52</sup> Agatha Christie, *Nemesis* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1971), 66.

*The Labours of Hercules* is a collection of short stories published in 1947. It includes twelve stories, the last twelve cases of Hercule Poirot, which resemble the twelve labours Hercules had to go through. Greek mythology serves merely as a source of inspiration for Christie and a tool for making the narrative more interesting. Mythological creatures such as the Cretan Bull, Nemean Lion or the Erymanthian Boar offer an engaging take on both the detective genre and the classical legends. Each tale in the collection is loosely based on one of Hercules' labours. Christie creatively incorporated the mythological elements into the detective stories, using them as frameworks for narrative, symbolism, and thematic depth. Some stories, such as *The Nemean Lion*, have more direct parallels with the legends; the connections are explicit, with clear reference. Other stories, like *The Lernean Hydra*, include only a symbolic reference to Hercules' labours. The famous Belgian detective serves as a central character in this short story collection, taking on the role of his namesake. His unique approach to solving cases is set against the majesty of the mythological themes, enhancing the character and narrative depth.

As the whole *The Labours of Hercules* is rather long for the analysis in this thesis, five stories were picked to be described in more detail. The analysed stories are the first four cases and additionally, the eighth one, which is included because of its possible negative reception in the present. The remaining seven stories are only briefly mentioned.

In the preface, Hercule Poirot is looking for the perfect cases to solve before his retirement from detective work, and he wants them to be memorable. While talking to his friend Dr Burton about the origins of his name, Poirot decides to draw inspiration from Greek myths. He instructs his secretary, Miss Lemon, to find him the perfect cases, each resembling one of Hercules' labours. Those will become Poirot's self-imposed labours.

The first story is called the *Nymean Lion*. At first, the case lacks any excitement for Poirot and, more importantly, any resemblance to the myth. Poirot is disappointed and in disbelief at what Miss Lemon presented him with; it is the kidnapping of "a Pekinese dog. A Pekinese dog!"<sup>53</sup> However, eventually, Poirot does find something that piques his interest. He decides to take on the case even if, in his mind, finding a stolen dog is far from defeating a fearsome lion.

The Nemean lion was a beast in Greek mythology which lived in the mountains near Nemea. As it says it in *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology*, the animal was raised by Hera in

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<sup>53</sup> Christie, *The Labours of Hercules*, 20.

order to be a trial for Hercules. The lion was large and ferocious and had an impenetrable hide, which made him almost unkillable. There are several theories on the origin of the lion; it could have been one of the children of Orthros<sup>54</sup> and Echidna<sup>55</sup> or the child of the moon goddess Selena. Similarly, there are different versions of how Hercules eventually killed the lion; nevertheless, the most widespread tale describes Hercules killing the beast by strangling it.<sup>56</sup> Afterwards, the lion's hide becomes Hercules' trophy and a part of his signature costume, but more importantly, he uses it for protection.

The similarities between the Greek legend and the story by Agatha Christie are mostly only in the animal itself. However, while the specifics of the task differ, both involve the retrieval of a prized possession in a way. Poirot is tasked with finding the dog, while Hercules aims to kill the lion and retrieve its valuable hide. In both the myth and the story, there is a sense of overcoming a challenging task, in case of considering Poirot's investigation as a challenge. Both Poirot and Hercules had to show the utilisation of their skills and use their wit and cunning nature to manage the labours that were put before them.

Although it may seem odd, the animals central to the stories do carry a lot of resemblances. This is, in high probability, why Christie chose a Pekingese (also spelt Pekinese) breed to be included in the first tale. Just as lions are considered of royal blood in the animal kingdom of Africa, Pekingese dogs were royalty in Imperial China. According to Juliette Cunliffe, Pekingese dogs were bred by the emperors and considered almost sacred. They kept their station as the companion to the monarch even after they were brought to England. During the Arrow War, where the Western Allies fought against China in the 1860s, the emperor's family was evacuated and left behind their Pekingese dogs. The dogs were taken to Britain, where Queen Victoria adopted them.<sup>57</sup> Soon, the dogs became favourites among the high societies on the British Isles, therefore, they fitted the setting of Christie's *The Nemean Lion*. Considering the appearance of the animals, Pekingese and lions both have a light brown coat and a blunt snout. The dogs's coats are longest at the neck and shoulders, which gives them a mane, just like lions have. The similar traits between the animals were noticed already in ancient times. There is a legend of the origin of the Pekingese breed:

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<sup>54</sup> Orthros was a multi-headed dog, a brother of Cerberus, who guarded Geryon's cattle and was eventually killed by Hercules.

<sup>55</sup> Echidna was a half-snake half-woman who mothered many mythological monsters.

<sup>56</sup> Robin Hard, *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology* (London: Routledge, 2004), 256.

<sup>57</sup> Juliette Cunliffe, *Pekingese: A Comprehensive Guide to Owning and Caring for your Dog* (Irvine: Kennel Club Books, 2003), 11-17.

[...] a lion met a marmoset in a forest and the two fell in love. Because of their size difference, the lion approached Buddha, praying to be made smaller. This was agreed, the lion sacrificing size and strength, but keeping his large heart, form and dignity.<sup>58</sup>

In the Greek tale, the Nemean Lion was a fearsome beast, while the Pekingese dog is hardly that. Hercule Poirot called it “a veritable lion, indeed”<sup>59</sup> as he was doubtful of the resemblance of the domesticated animal with the fierce lion. Yet, likeness can be found even in the nature of the furry beasts. As it says in the comprehensive guide to Pekingese dogs, a Pekingese should be fearless and not timid and “the breed has long been known for its rather majestic disregard of other creatures.”<sup>60</sup>, which could as well have been a description of a lion.

Christie’s narration of Pluto, the stolen Pekingese, attacking Poirot’s ankles supports the lionhearted attitude of the dog. “As Sir Joseph and Hercule Poirot entered, a small Pekingese dog rushed forward, barking furiously, and circling dangerously round Poirot’s ankles.”<sup>61</sup> Although the dog could not hurt Poirot as much as the lion endangered Hercules, in its mind, the dog may have seen itself as a menacing lion; after all, the breed has been treated as such for centuries.

The second story, labelled *The Lernaean Hydra*, is concentrated on the theme of gossip. There is no animal which could represent the mythological creature as was in the first story. The connection to the tale is merely the interpretation of gossip. Similar to the head of the hydra, if one gossip source is severed, another grows in its place. Hence, the goal is to find and remove the primary gossip source, much to how the hydra can be killed by chopping off its vulnerable head. Poirot himself creates this link between the struggle Dr Charles Oldfield came to present him with and the second of Hercules’ labours: “Rumour is indeed the nine-headed Hydra of Lerna which cannot be exterminated because as fast as one head is cropped off two grow in its place.”<sup>62</sup>

The Lernaian or Lernaean Hydra was a monstrous water snake with multiple heads. According to Robin Hard, it was once again a child of Echidna and similarly to the Nemean Lion, it was

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<sup>58</sup> Cunliffe, *Pekingese*, 35.

<sup>59</sup> Christie, *The Labours of Hercules*, 27.

<sup>60</sup> Cunliffe, *Pekingese*, 32.

<sup>61</sup> Christie, *The Labours of Hercules*, 26.

<sup>62</sup> Christie, *The Labours of Hercules*, 61.

raised by Hera for Hercules.<sup>63</sup> It is usually depicted with nine heads, but the precise number of heads it could have had is uncertain. It varies from three to hundred. It was supposedly extremely hard to kill because if one head was cut off, a new head, or even two, would grow in its place. According to *Mythology in Our Midst*, nowadays, the term hydra is used to “express a diverse evil that is not overcome by a single effort. Hydra-headed describes an organization that has many branches.”<sup>64</sup> The use of this term can be found, for example, in the well-known Marvel comics and movies, where Hydra was a resilient terrorist organisation.

When Hercules went to fight the Lernean Hydra, he was taken aback by the newly appearing heads after already slaying them. After Hera sent an enormous crab to make the fight more difficult for Hercules, he called upon an ally. Iolaus, who, according to *The Everything: Classical Mythology Book*, was another Greek hero and Hercules’ nephew and squire<sup>65</sup>. He came to help Hercules, and together, they were able to defeat both the hydra and the crab. Supposedly, the proverb “Even Herakles cannot fight against two”<sup>66</sup> originated from this legend.

The case Poirot takes on this time is dispelling the rumours about Dr Charles Oldfield poisoning his wife. As mentioned before, the similarities between the story and the legend lie in the metaphorical comparison between the Hydra and the spreading of rumours. The comparison emphasised the pervasive nature of the gossip. Another analogy can be the inability to face such an overwhelming challenge alone. Dr Oldfield calls upon Poirot just as Hercules calls upon Iolaos, and only together are they able to overcome the problem; Poirot helps Dr Oldfield uncover the real killer and put an end to the rumours, and Iolaos helps Hercules slay the monster. Of course, in such a case, Hercule Poirot would not represent his namesake, which is what Christie’s *Labours of Hercules* is based upon.

In *The Arcadian Deer*, Poirot investigates the disappearance of a young girl. Ted Williamson asks Poirot to help find a maid named Nita. They met at a nearby house, Glasslawn, where Nita was staying with her employer, Madame Katrina Samoushenka. When Ted returned to see her two weeks later, Nita was no longer there. He tried to contact her but was unsuccessful; it was

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<sup>63</sup> Hard, *The Routledge Handbook*, 258.

<sup>64</sup> Amy T. Peterson, David J. Dunworth, *Mythology in Our Midst* (London: Greenwood Press, 2004), 78.

<sup>65</sup> Bolton, *Classical Mythology Book*, 221.

<sup>66</sup> Hard, *The Routledge Handbook*, 258.

as if she completely vanished. Poirot begins the investigation, but each person he talks to seems to give him a different answer, and eventually, the investigation takes him all over Europe. Finally, in Switzerland he locates sick Madame Samoushenka. He puts it all together, revealing that Madame Samoushenka posed as Nita during her visit to Glasslawn and had a romance with Ted. She had no maid, as her previous one had already left to go home because of an illness. In the end, Poirot persuades Madame Samoushenka to start a life with Ted.

The third, or in some versions, fourth labour, prepared for Hercules by Eurystheus and Hera, was to capture the Ceryneian Hind. The Ceryneian Hind was a sacred deer belonging to Artemis, the goddess of wild animals and hunting. A beautiful creature with golden antlers and bronze hooves. The animal was renowned for its extraordinary speech and elusiveness; it was supposedly so fast it could outrun an arrow. The task of capturing the deer was exceedingly difficult as the animal could not be harmed in any way or he would risk enraging Artemis. According to Robin Hard, Hercules was quite lucky in locating the animal. However, it took him a whole year to seize it. On his way back to Eurystheus with the hind, Hercules encountered Artemis. She allowed him to take her animal to the king after he explained his reasons for capturing it and promised to let the deer go free afterwards. Eurystheus suggested this task in hopes Hercules would anger Artemis, which is why he wanted to keep the deer in his menagerie. Nevertheless, Hercules outsmarted him by agreeing to give him the animal only if Eurystheus himself comes and takes it from him. The King was too slow for the animal; once Hercules let go of it, it ran away, back to Artemis.<sup>67</sup>

Agatha Christie changed the title from *The Ceryneian Hind* to *The Arcadian Deer*. It can be attributed to several potential reasons. It could be because the term Arcadian Deer is more simple and straightforward. It makes the story more comprehensible for the general audience and readers who might not be familiar with Greek mythology. Deer is a more elementary word than hind. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, hind means a female deer and also the back of an animal's body.<sup>68</sup> The latter definition seems to be more common in modern English. This supports the potential reason for choosing to use deer instead of a hind, to make the story more accessible to a broader audience. Although she could have chosen doe instead of deer, as the equivalent to the animal in her story is the missing girl Nita. Titles play a significant role in attracting readers, *The Arcadian Deer* is more alluring and easier to market, while *The*

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<sup>67</sup> Hard, *The Routledge Handbook*, 259-260.

<sup>68</sup> "Hind," Cambridge Dictionary, accessed May 4, 2024, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/hind>.

*Ceryneian Hind* can seem cryptic. Arcadia is a commonly known term. It is associated with beautiful scenery and harmonious nature. As referred to by the poet Virgil, in Ancient Greece, Arcadia was the domain of Pan, an alluring wilderness which was home to many animals, nymphs and dryads.<sup>69</sup> If the readers are familiar with the term Arcadia, it can help them to understand the connection to the myth of the hind.

Both stories revolve around a quest to capture an elusive being; Poirot is investigating the disappearance of a maid named Nita, while Hercule is hunting Artemis' Ceryneian Hind. For both protagonists, it is a test of persistence as it takes a long time and a journey through multiple countries to achieve the task. Katarina is described as "the loveliest thing you ever saw. Her hair was like gold – it went up each side like wings – and she had a gay kind of way of tripping along."<sup>70</sup> She was reminiscent of the allusive animal and even danced a part of the hind in one of her ballet performances. When Poirot finds Katarina, she is very sick and does not see a future for her, but he encourages her not to give up and start a new life with Ted. In a way, he gives her an opportunity to fight. Hercules, although without the encouragement, gives the hind a chance to fight for her freedom and run from Eurystheus. One more parallel Poirot makes is when he compares Ted Williamson to a handsome Greek Arcadian or even a Greek God: "Perfect physique was a thing he admired greatly.' He said to himself approvingly: 'Yes, a Greek god – a young shepherd in Arcady."<sup>71</sup> And since Ted represents a Greek God and Katarina the Ceryneian Hind, their reunion at the end, thanks to Poirot, can be compared to the reunion of the hind and the Goddess Artemis, which Hercules makes sure of.

*The Erymanthian Boar* continues where the previous story ended, and it is a perfect example of a whodunnit mystery, yet still drawing from the myth of Hercules' fourth labour, the capturing of the Erymanthian Boar. Poirot receives a note from the Swiss Commissaire of Police about a notorious gangster Marrascaud, who is believed to be meeting his gang at the mountain-top hotel Rochers Neiges. The note includes a particular sentence, which intrigues Poirot: "He is not a man – he is a wild boar – one of the most dangerous killers alive today."<sup>72</sup> The naming the commissaire has given to Marrascaud makes this case a perfect fit, therefore Poirot decides to investigate. The funicular has been sabotaged, and Poirot, alongside staff and

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<sup>69</sup> Richard Jenkyns, "Virgil and Arcadia," *The Journal of Roman Studies*, no. 79 (November 1989): 26–39.

<sup>70</sup> Christie, *The Labours of Hercules*, 104.

<sup>71</sup> Christie, *The Labours of Hercules*, 100.

<sup>72</sup> Christie, *The Labours of Hercules*, 127.

other guests of the hotel, is trapped at the mountaintop. He meets a fellow investigator, Inspector Drouet, who is also there to catch the gangster. Poirot is attacked and almost misled by a red herring in the shape of a dead body. In the end, he manages to see through the charade and catches Marrascaud.

Similarly, Hercules starts his fourth labour in Arcadia, where he previously went to catch the hind. He is to capture the Eryanthian Boar and bring it back to Eurystheus alive, just as Poirot is tasked with capturing his 'wild boar', Marrascaud, and delivering him to the Swiss police. On his way, Hercules visits his friend Pholus, a centaur. They drink Dionysus' wine, which lures in other centaurs. A connection can be made between the centaurs and the hotel guests Poirot encounters, some friendly, like Inspector Drouet, and some foe. The drunken centaurs attack Hercules, but he is able to win, just as Poirot survives the ambush from Marrascaud's gang. The legend diverts into a story about Chiron, however, that is not relevant. Eventually, Hercules climbs to the mountain, frightens the boar out of its lair and chases it into deep snow, where he is able to catch it. Correspondingly, Poirot's investigation takes place on a remote mountain, only he does not have to drive Marrascaud into the snow to capture him. Hercules then carries the boar on his back to Eurystheus, while Poirot simply calls the Swiss police to take the gangster in.

Overall, Christie's *The Erymanthian Boar* cleverly parallels the myth of Hercules' fourth labour. Both protagonists are tasked with capturing 'a wild boar' on a mountain top and they both use clever strategy to do it.

*The Horses of Diomedes* is the eighth case Poirot takes on. He is approached by Dr. Michael Stoddart who is worried about a young woman, Sheila Grant. She has gotten involved with questionable people in a wild party scene and drug-addled lifestyle. Poirot discovers that Sheila's supposed father, General Grant, is, in fact, the leader of a drug ring who is using Sheila and her three sisters to push the drugs for him. Sheila agrees to testify against the General in order to help shut down the drug network. In the end, with Poirot's help, Sheila is able to break free, leave behind the criminal life and start over with Stoddart looking after her.

Hercules' eighth labour takes him to the north to steal the formidable horses of Diomedes.<sup>73</sup> According to *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology* the horses, although they have

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<sup>73</sup> Diomedes was the king of Argos and fought in the Trojan War.



masculine names, are commonly described as mares. They were raised by Diomedes to be vicious and to feed on humans. Hard provides two versions of the legend. In one telling, Hercules completes the task on his own, using an unfortunate victim to distract the horses while he harnesses them. Diomedes, who is attempting to stop him, gets killed in the process and eaten by his own horses. In an alternative version, Hercules is accompanied by a group of volunteers. Being unaware the horses eat human flesh, Hercules focuses on Diomedes, while the mares kill one of the volunteers, Abderos. Enraged, Hercules feeds Diomedes to his horses. Then he goes on to found the city of Abdera in his companion's memory.<sup>74</sup> In all versions, the horses are calmed down by eating human flesh, which is how Hercules is able to capture them. Also, in all the versions, they, at some point, feed on their own master, Diomedes.

The parallels between the legend and Agatha Christie's story are once again merely symbolic. Both stories highlight the consequences of manipulation and control. The story makes a comparison between the four drug-dealing sisters and the mares of Diomedes, as well as between Diomedes and the General. The mares are under the control of Diomedes, who teaches them to feed on human flesh. Similarly, the sisters are controlled by the General, who, under the guise of a father figure, manipulated them into a life of crime and drug addiction. Poirot himself makes a comparison between drug-peddling and feeding on human flesh: "It is my belief that you have not known, not really known, what it is you and your sisters have been doing. You have been feeding, like the mares of Diomedes, on human flesh."<sup>75</sup> As always, he looks for any connections, which in his mind, makes the case a corresponding labour.

Poirot wants to redeem the sisters, offering them an opportunity to escape the General's influence. And it is the fact, they turn on their pretend father, which sets them free of their old life and the drugs. Similarly, Hercules releases the horses of Diomedes' possession and once he feeds him to them, they are calm. However, there is another version of the legend when the horses are calmed even after eating someone else. Charles Osborne has explained the connection between the case and the legend in an essay provided at the end of *The Labours of Hercules*: They suddenly became tame when Hercules fed their master to them. Poirot equates them with beasts of another kind who symbolically feed upon humanity, and he seems to expect that at least one of the breed will be tamed.<sup>76</sup> Drugs are a sort of parasite that feeds upon humanity, draining the strength and vitality of people. One quickly becomes addicted to drugs,

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<sup>74</sup> Hard, *The Routledge Handbook*, 262.

<sup>75</sup> Christie, *The Labours of Hercules*, 287-288.

<sup>76</sup> Christie, *The Labours of Hercules*, 449.

the girls were continuously exposed to them and encouraged to take them, making it even easier for them to get addicted. For the horses, it was human flesh to which they became addicted, and it was their master, Diomedes, who enabled them.

The use of the legend in this particular story, although used only as inspiration, might not have been the best choice. The narrative Christie has decided to write, based on the legend of the wild horses, may not be well received nowadays. The narrative essentially compares women to savage mares in need of taming. That can be viewed as sexist and misogynistic and as highlighting underlying societal attitudes and cultural views toward women. Drawing a parallel between untamed horses and women implies a perception of women as inherently wild and uncontrollable, echoing historical stereotypes of women being emotional and irrational and in need of male control. Furthermore, the comparison of women to animals is dehumanising and reinforces the idea of women as property or possessions which are to be owned by men. However, during the twentieth century, mystery novels commonly presented women in a negative light, mostly because the stories mirrored the society of those times. According to Alexis Hardee, Agatha Christie implemented gender stereotypes in her stories and validated misogyny. She, alongside other female authors of the Golden Age of crime fiction, allowed oppressive patriarchal views to be present in her novels. As Christie's stories were widely popular, she aided in normalising the gender stereotypes against women. Hardee further promotes that Christie could have used her platform to speak out against misogyny and present both sexes as equal in her novels, instead of promoting sexist views.<sup>77</sup> However, Agatha Christie has compared multiple human characters to animals or beasts from Greek mythology. The four sisters are being controlled by the General, just like the horses by Diomedes. The reason for choosing four female characters instead of men could have simply been because the animals were mares in the legend. Moreover, Christie has been praised by Gillian Gill, among many others, for promoting feminism by showing independent and ambitious female characters.<sup>78</sup> Ultimately, comparing women to horses was a poor choice, although it may not have been ill-intended and simply reflected society's views, as well as straying true to the sex provided in the legend. This degrading portrayal contributes to a culture of objectification and exploitation of women, where their worth is measured by their obedience and compliance to

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<sup>77</sup> Alexis Hardee, "Oppressive Gender Roles in Crime Novels," *Bridges: A Journal of Student Research*, no. 11 (January 2017): 8-13.

<sup>78</sup> Claire Jarvis, "Looking at Agatha Christie and Feminism," *The New York Times*, January 10, 2020.

male authority. This dehumanising image feeds into a culture that values women only when they submit to and obey male authority, objectifying and exploiting them in the process.

Overall, *The Horses of Diomedes* seem to reflect rooted sexist and misogynistic attitudes prevalent in society, promoting harmful stereotypes and reinforcing power imbalances between men and women. Nonetheless, from a different point of view, the four sisters really are being controlled by a man, just like the horses by Diomedes. The reason for choosing four female characters instead of men could have simply been because the animals were mares in the legend.

As mentioned before, only five stories from *The Labours of Hercules* were detailly analysed. *The Nemean Lion* was picked because of the direct connection between Christie's story and the Greek legend. The second story, *The Lernean Hydra*, showed a different take on the use of myths; only as a symbolic reference. *The Erymanthian Boar's* connection was again a little bit different as it focused predominantly on the setting. *The Arcadian Deer* shows symbolic as well as direct connections, and moreover, a change of title, which happens only twice. Lastly, *The Horses of Diomedes* were included because of the underlying misogynistic attitude, which is nowadays perceived negatively as opposed to the 1940s. The remaining seven stories are no less interesting, although some have very little connection to the Greek myths, such as *The Cretan Bull*. Nevertheless, they are all worth mentioning.

In *The Augean Stables* and the Myth, the protagonists are dealing with the seemingly impossible task of cleaning a mess, for which they have to come up with innovative and unconventional methods. Poirot 'cleans up' a political scandal by embracing Hercules' solution to cleaning the stables of King Augeas. Hercules redirected a river to flow through them and cleanse them in the process, Poirot came up with his own adaptation:

What Hercules used was a river,' Poirot exclaims, 'that is to say one of the great forces of nature. Modernize that! What is a great force of nature? Sex, is it not? It is the sex angle that sells stories, that makes news. Give people scandal allied to sex and it appeals far more than any mere political chicanery or fraud.<sup>79</sup>

By creating a sex scandal, he diverts the public's attention from the political one.

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<sup>79</sup> Christie, *The Labours of Hercules*, 186.

*The Stymphalean Birds* comes next. Both stories involve the protagonists confronting and neutralising a deceptive menace. The Stymphalean birds have metallic feathers and toxic dung and cause widespread destruction. In Christie's story, initially, it is two Polish women who are compared to the birds because of their looks.

They had long, curved noses, like birds, and their faces, which were curiously alike, were quite immobile. Over their shoulders they wore loose cloaks that flapped in the wind like the wings of two big birds. Harold thought to himself. 'They *are* like birds' he added almost without volition, '*birds of ill omen.*'<sup>80</sup>

But Poirot is able to uncover the real criminals, who, for him, represented the Stymphalean birds, as he called them the "well-known birds of prey."<sup>81</sup>

In the seventh story and labour the central theme is the father figure. Poirot reveals a father has been deliberately poisoning his son, while Hercules has to capture the Cretan Bull, the father of the Minotaur.<sup>82</sup> The connection in this story is the most far-fetched; there is no link in the plot, nor between the characters. The father in the detective story is not even a real father to the young man, which is why he is trying to drive him mad with drugs.

*The Girdle of Hippolyta* is concerned with the investigation of the missing Rubens painting. While Hercules' ninth labour is about retrieving the belt of Hippolyta, the Queen of Amazons. Although both stories are about retrieving a valuable object, the plot is completely different. The shared motif is disguise and misdirection. Hera hid among the Amazons to rally them against Hercules. Similarly, Poirot must uncover a smuggling scheme, including a girl impersonating a schoolgirl, hiding the Ruben painting under a childish drawing.

*The Flock of Geryon* is the second story in the collection to have a different title from Hercules' labour. Hercules is tasked with obtaining the cattle of Geryon, the three-bodied giant. The change was most likely made in order to fit the story better, as opposed to *The Arcadian Deer*, where it was presumably done with the aim of making the title more comprehensible. Poirot investigates a leader of a religious sect, who represents the giant Geryon. His religious

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<sup>80</sup> Christie, *The Labours of Hercules*, 190-191.

<sup>81</sup> Christie, *The Labours of Hercules*, 219.

<sup>82</sup> The Minotaur was a part man, part bull, who resided in the centre of the Labyrinth in Crete.

followers are called “the Flock of the Shepherd,”<sup>83</sup> which is, in all likelihood, the reason for the title change.

The eleventh case Poirot takes on is the retrieval of a gold goblet from which Pope Alexander VI was poisoned. The story shares thematic parallels with the theft of golden apples Hercules has to do. Therefore, both stories involve the retrieval of valuable objects. Both objects are golden, and apples are even depicted on the chalice.

The whole collection is enclosed with *The Capturing of Cerberus*. Poirot, as well as Hercules, have to descend into the underground, in other words, into hell, for their final labour. Poirot’s hell is not literal, although, for the type of man he is, it might as well be; he goes into a nightclub called ‘Hell’, which is even decorated to look like the Underground and guarded by a big black dog. Hercules, on the other hand, has to journey into the literal Underworld to capture the three-headed hound and bring him to Eurystheus. The important connection is the hellish theme of the nightclub. However, it is in the dog’s mouth where Poirot ultimately finds a pack of drugs; therefore, in a way, he also captures Cerberus.

With that last case, Hercule Poirot has finished his labours. “‘From the Nemean Lion to the Capture of Cerberus,’ murmured Poirot. ‘It is complete.’”<sup>84</sup> Just as Hercules eventually enjoys the immortal life on Mount Olympus, Poirot is now ready to hang up his detective shoes and enjoy his retirement...or is he?

According to Charles Osborne, “*The Labours of Hercules* is generally regarded as the best of Agatha Christie’s short story collections.”<sup>85</sup> Christie was able to use Greek mythology as inspiration, which elevated her stories. Although not always in a straightforward way, the myths are represented in every story. Hercule Poirot serves as a perfect central figure. His connection to Hercules in their first name brings about a great pretext for the inclusion of Greek legends. However, Christie is able to make further comparisons between the two protagonists. Although Poirot calls Hercules “a large muscular creature of low intelligence”<sup>86</sup>, they both possess unique

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<sup>83</sup> Christie, *The Labours of Hercules*, 322.

<sup>84</sup> Christie, *The Labours of Hercules*, 411.

<sup>85</sup> Christie, *The Labours of Hercules*, 449.

<sup>86</sup> Christie, *The Labours of Hercules*, 16.

wit and intellect. In order to overcome their labours, they have to use their respective strengths. Poirot's methodical investigation parallels Hercules' physical strength.

The Queen of Crime became one of the greatest crime fiction writers of all time. She was able to craft intricate and engaging stories, which transcend time and appeal to generations of readers even today. Christie became a source of inspiration for countless detective authors over the years, even on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.

### 3 Dan Brown and the American Crime Fiction

Edgar Allan Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* is believed to be the very first American crime story. However, the foundations of American crime fiction were laid by Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, whose works established the hard-boiled style characteristic of the detective genre in the United States.

Detective fiction in the United States became slowly popular after the Civil War when westward expansion and urbanisation provided a market for the genre. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, detective novels became more complex. They started to incorporate elements to engage readers, such as puzzles, investigative techniques, criminal motives, and red herrings. Similar to the development in Britain during their Golden Age, the genre matured into a more structured form in the 1920s and 30s. Whodunnits also became popular; however, in the US, the novels were set in urban settings and frequently included gangsters, reflecting life in cities and adding a layer of realism to the stories. Just as the incorporation of forensic science, which reflected contemporary advancements in law enforcement. During the interwar years, a hard-boiled style of crime fiction was introduced. The subgenre brought a more realistic and naturalistic approach to crime novels as opposed to the cosy mysteries written in Britain. As stated by Andrew Pepper, "Crime was no longer seen as it had been in the 'classic' detective fiction of Christie and Sayers as the product of occasional and atypical tears in the otherwise secure moral fabric of genteel English society, but rather as bastard offspring of an urban-fuelled modernity."<sup>87</sup> Hard-boiled style can be characterised by fast-paced dialogue, the use of slang, vivid and dark urban settings, and graphic depictions of violence. The novels reflected the darker side of contemporary American life. It depicted filthy cities, with dangers behind every corner and corrupted officials. Samuel Dashiell Hammett set the foundation for the hard-boiled style and is credited as the inventor of the genre. He was described by The New York Times as "the dean of the 'hard-boiled' school of detective fiction."<sup>88</sup> His stories, which include *The Thin Man*, *Red Harvest*, and *The Maltese Falcon*, greatly influenced the genre of crime fiction. His detective in *Red Harvest*, Continental Op, is described as a "hard-boiled, pig-headed guy."<sup>89</sup> As were the detectives in hard-boiled novels to follow. They were usually well-built, rough, and street-smart men, who navigated a corrupted and dangerous world. As stated

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<sup>87</sup> Andrew Pepper, *The Contemporary American Crime Novel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 200), 16.

<sup>88</sup> George Stade, "Dashiell Hammett," *The New York Times*, October 16, 1983.

<sup>89</sup> Dashiell Hammett, *Red Harvest* (Berkeley: Vintage Crime/Black Lizard, 1989), 56.

by John Scaggs, the term hard-boiled itself describes the protagonist of crime novels, meaning tough or shrewd. In spite of Hammett being the one to coin the term, John Daly's detective, Race Williams, is acknowledged to be the first hard-boiled detective hero and became the prototype. Even Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe is created in Williams' image; a big, tough, and violent man.<sup>90</sup> However, Race Williamson as a character and archetype for the hard-boiled detectives was soon forgotten. He was overshadowed by more prominent figures like Sam Spade and the previously mentioned Philip Marlowe. As stated by Hans Bertens and Theo D'haen, these private detectives stood for decency, honour, and comradeship. But because they navigated a rotten world, they had to sometimes bend the law.<sup>91</sup>

Another important writer of hard-boiled crime fiction and the creator of Philip Marlowe, is Raymond Chandler. Chandler's writing can be characterised by complex characters, striking metaphors and evocative descriptions of Los Angeles. Philip Marlowe first appeared in Chandler's novel *The Big Sleep*, and he soon became 'a fan favourite.' As a true hard-boiled detective, he was cynical, honourable and relentless in his fight against corruption. Although not as famous as Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poirot, he stood as an inspiration to many hard-boiled private detectives, such as Robert B. Parker's Spenser or Ross Macdonald's Lew Archer.

As mentioned in *Crime Fiction*, both Hammett and Chandler started their careers as pulp writers by publishing their short stories in Black Mask magazine, the most successful pulp. The weekly publications known as 'pulp' got their name from the cheap paper they were printed on. They were low-cost publications with eye-catching covers designed to attract readers.<sup>92</sup> Because of their availability to a broad public, they played a pivotal role in the popularisation of crime fiction in the United States. The predecessors of pulps were the dime novels, which first appeared during the American Civil War. Similarly to pulps, they were aimed at a broader audience and by their affordable price, they made popular literature accessible to the masses and greatly contributed to the development of crime fiction as a genre in the United States. These small paperback books often featured thrilling stories that revolved around adventure, romance, or crime. Generally, dime novels focused on themes which resonated with the public, such as the Wild West, but more importantly detective stories.

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<sup>90</sup> Matthew J. Bruccoli, Richard Layman, *Hardboiled Mystery Writers: Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, Ross Macdonald: A Literary Reference* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2002), 225.

<sup>91</sup> Hans Bertens, Theo D'haen, *Contemporary American Crime Fiction* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 2.

<sup>92</sup> Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 67.



The hard-boiled style had an impact on contemporary American crime fiction, which is supported by John Scaggs:

Hard-boiled themes, structures, and devices have had an enormous influence on the development of the genre of crime fiction, from the police procedural to what is often broadly termed the crime thriller, the main focus of which is the crime, and the criminal committing it.<sup>93</sup>

Many tropes and conventions still used nowadays were established by both dime novels and pulps. The archetype of the hard-boiled detective, the femme fatale, and cunning villain, as well as the intricate twisty plots. The blunt, direct, and action-oriented prose of pulps has shaped the narrative voice of modern crime fiction in the US. The emphasis on snappy dialogue, fast-paced storytelling, and vivid, often lurid descriptions remains a hallmark of the genre. Dan Brown utilises many of these established conventions. His novels, with their complex intricate plots, direct prose, and fast-paced narratives featuring crafty villains and high-stakes scenarios, reflect the pulp fiction tradition. His vivid descriptions and snappy dialogue solidify his place among writers influenced by the hard-boiled style. The commercial success of pulps and dime novels demonstrated the widespread appeal of crime fiction, encouraging the growth of the genre across various media. Today, detective fiction thrives in novels, films, and television series, reaching new audiences and constantly evolving.

The late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries brought diversification within the detective genre. Contemporary American crime fiction includes subgenres such as legal thrillers, forensic mysteries, and domestic noir. The authors brought new perspectives and innovative storytelling techniques. The genre has also evolved in terms of multiculturalism. As stated by Pepper, American crime fiction serves as a cultural barometer, engaging with the complexities and contradictions of society. Its diverse voices and perspectives reflect the complexities of contemporary American life, rejecting a simplistic narrative for a more nuanced understanding of social and cultural issues. Early writers like Dashiell and Hammett depicted a brutal urban American, and contemporary authors continue to explore these themes, addressing racial and social inequalities through their narratives.<sup>94</sup> However, critics often approach multicultural elements superficially, treating diverse characters and settings as exotic spectacles, and overlook their deeper significance. Gina and Andrew MacDonald argued that “non- mainstream detectives explore cultural differences and act as links between cultures,

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<sup>93</sup> Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 105.

<sup>94</sup> Pepper, *The Contemporary American Crime Novel*, 5-8.

interpreting each to each.”<sup>95</sup> And according to Pepper, American detectives are not just cultural mediators but also agents of disruptions. They expose corruption and challenge social hierarchies, highlighting the genre’s potential for social critique. They grapple with the contradictions and tensions within American society, often operating in morally ambiguous environments.<sup>96</sup> Diverse narratives, as well as diverse characters reflect the complexity of life in the contemporary United States. Through them, authors are able to address issues such as racial and social inequality, corruption, and moral ambiguity. American contemporary crime fiction not only entertains but also provokes thought and challenges readers to consider the underlying social dynamics. Through its rich tapestry of characters and stories, the genre continues to evolve, providing a mirror to society and a means of critiquing its flaws and celebrating its diversity.

American crime fiction keeps changing and incorporating a variety of subgenres and narrative techniques that appeal to modern audiences. Among these subgenres, the thriller genre gained significant prominence. Thriller is a genre of fiction and can be characterised by the mood they evoke in their audiences – suspense, excitement, surprise, anticipation, and anxiety. James Patterson noted that thrillers have a common feature: “the intensity of emotions they create, particularly those of apprehension and exhilarations, of excitement and breathlessness, all designed to generate that all-important thrill. By definition, if a thriller doesn’t thrill, it’s not doing its job.”<sup>97</sup> The thriller subgenre intersects with traditional crime fiction and explores themes of conspiracy, history, and the battle between good and evil on a global scale. Authors like Dan Brown have become masters of such a genre. With novels that blend elements of crime, mystery, and thriller in order to create captivating narratives for a wide range of readers. Brown’s novels, particularly noted for their intricate plots and deep dives into historical and religious themes, represent a distinctive yet related trajectory within the larger spectrum of American crime fiction.

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<sup>95</sup> Gina Macdonald, Andrew Macdonald, “Ethnic Detectives in Popular Fiction: New Directions for an American Genre”, in *Diversity and Detective Fiction*, ed. Kathleen G. Klein (Bowling Green: Popular Press, 1999). 60.

<sup>96</sup> Pepper, *The Contemporary American Crime Novel*, 5-8.

<sup>97</sup> James Patterson, *Thriller* (Ontario: MIRA Books, 2006), 3.

Dan Brown is an American crime fiction writer known for his gripping detective thrillers. As stated on his website, he was named by TIME Magazine as one of the hundred most influential people in the world.<sup>98</sup> He sparked new interest in art, history, and puzzles in readers all around the globe. Brown is a great example of how an author can draw from personal experiences to enhance their works. Frequent motifs, such as puzzling mysteries, Christian themes, and historical facts, can all be traced back to his upbringing. Therefore, before the analysis of Brown's *Angels & Demons* and *The Da Vinci Code*, this chapter provides an insight into Brown's life.

Daniel Gerhard Brown was born on June 22, 1964, in Exeter, New Hampshire, in the United States. His father, Richard G. Brown, was a teacher of mathematics, but as well as Brown's mother, he was an enthusiastic musician. Both his parents served as choirmasters, and his mother, Constance, was the church organist. He has a younger sister and a brother, who became a composer and inspired the novel *Origin*. Growing up in an academically and musically inclined family influenced Brown, fostering a love for both the arts and science, which is visible in his books.

Brown was raised in the Episcopalian church but slowly drifted away. As he mentioned in an interview, he began to stray from his faith, when a priest dismissed his question about the Big Bang.<sup>99</sup> Since then, his inclination has shifted from faith to science. He commented on his beliefs as follows: "...a lot of people think I'm anti-religious. I'm actually quite the opposite. I am not an atheist – I think I'm happily confused and a work in progress; I'm sort of more agnostic. I do think that science has become the lens through which we see the world more and more."<sup>100</sup> His Christian upbringing, as well as his inner fight between faith and science, has definitely affected him as a writer, as he frequently uses Christian myths and legends in his novels.

Another common theme in his books is mysteries, puzzles, and treasure hunts. Brown developed an interest in them when he was a child, thanks to his parents. According to *The Dan Brown Enigma*, the 'treasure hunt' in *The Da Vinci Code* was inspired by his father's treasure hunts, which he used to do for Brown and his siblings.<sup>101</sup> And even the relationship between

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<sup>98</sup> "Dan Brown," Dan Brown, accessed June 6, 2024. <https://danbrown.com/#books>.

<sup>99</sup> James Kaplan, "Life after The Da Vinci Code," *Parade*, September 13, 2009.

<sup>100</sup> Lakshmi Singh, "Dan Brown Puts Creationism Against Science In His Latest Novel, 'Origin'," npr, October 22, 2017.

<sup>101</sup> Graham A. Thomas, *The Dan Brown Enigma: The Biography of the World's Greatest Thriller Writer* (London: John Blake Publishing Ltd, 2011), 14.

Sophie Neveu and Jacques Saunière has visible similarities with his relationship to his father. His interest has developed into a career, and his success in the world of crime fiction can be traced back to his childhood love for secret codes and ciphers.

Brown gained his art and history knowledge, showcased in his books, during his college years; he studied art history at Amherst College. His skills of creative writing and critical thinking were acquired at the Phillips Exeter Academy, where his father taught. And again, like many things from his life, it made it to his books; his protagonist, Robert Langdon, is written to have attended the same high school.

Brown has dabbled in several career paths before settling as a writer. As stated by Graham A. Thomas, he first pursued a career in music. He even released several music albums, including a CD titled *Angels & Demons*, which would later inspire the title of one of his novels. However, he was not very successful in the musical industry. Brown returned to his alma mater to teach English and creative writing and started working on his novels.<sup>102</sup> His first novel, *Digital Fortress*, was published in 1998. It is a techno-thriller, which delves into themes of cryptography and government surveillance. It showcased Brown's interest in complex puzzles and secret codes, elements that would become hallmarks of his later works. In 2000, he published *Angels & Demons*, introducing Robert Langdon, soon to become the most famous symbologist. Followed by *Deception Point*, both novels explored themes of science and religion. It was his fourth novel, which catapulted Brown to international fame, his most famous crime mystery, *The Da Vinci Code*. Its intricate plot, which incorporated symbology, Christian mythology and art history, captivated millions of readers around the world and established Brown as a master of the modern thriller.

Brown's writing style can be characterised by fast-paced narratives, cliffhanger chapter endings, and the inclusion of historical, mythological and scientific elements. His novels are both thought-provoking and entertaining. He is able to integrate history with myths and legends, and this blend of fact and fiction enhances the narratives and captivates readers.

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<sup>102</sup> Thomas, *The Dan Brown Enigma*, 15.

The main character in *The Da Vinci Code* and *Angels & Demons*, Brown's novels analysed in this thesis, is Robert Langdon. He is a symbologist, a professor at Harvard University and an amateur detective. So far, he has appeared in five of Dan Brown's books: the two novels mentioned earlier and *The Lost Symbol*, *Inferno*, and *Origin*.

Robert Langdon is in many ways similar to his creator, Dan Brown. Langdon was born on 22nd June in Exeter, as was Brown, and attended the Exeter Academy. Both men were raised in the Christian faith but later drifted away from it. They are both fond of mysteries, codes and cyphers, and although in different fields, they both made a career out of it. Even in terms of appearance, they resemble each other. Langdon is described at the beginning of *Angels & Demons* as follows:

Although not overly handsome in a classical sense, the forty-five-year-old Langdon had what his female colleagues referred to as an "erudite" appeal—wisps of gray in his thick brown hair, probing blue eyes, an arrestingly deep voice, and the strong, carefree smile of a collegiate athlete.<sup>103</sup>

He favours turtlenecks and tweed jackets, which are clothing items Dan Brown is commonly seen wearing. However, Brown stated that Langdon was inspired by "a brilliant alchemist of symbols and language,"<sup>104</sup> a professor of typography and graphic designer, John Langdon. Brown admired his work before writing his novels and got interested in symbols and ambigrams because of him.

His writings on semiotics, comparative religion and mythology in particular "The Power of Myth" and "The Hero With a Thousand Faces" helped inspire the framework on which I built my character, Robert Langdon... I remember admiring Campbell's matter-of-fact responses and wanting my own character Langdon to project that same respectful understanding when faced with complex spiritual issues.<sup>105</sup>

John Langdon created ambigrams, which are images, words or phrases that look the same when viewed upside down or in a mirror image. Langdon's ambigrams were used in many of Brown's novels, one example is the word *Illuminati* in *Angels & Demons*.

Robert Langdon is no detective by profession or his choice, as opposed to Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poirot. He gets pulled into investigating because of his knowledge of symbols or connections to victims. In *Angels & Demons*, he is asked to help on account of his book *The*

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<sup>103</sup> Dan Brown, *Angels & Demons*, (London: Transworld Publishers, 2001), 21.

<sup>104</sup> Finlay Greig, "The man who inspired Robert Langdon," *inews*, October 13, 2016.

<sup>105</sup> "Dan Brown: By the Book," *The New York Times*, June 20, 2013.

*Art of the Illuminati* and in *The DaVinci Code* due to his association with Jacques Saunière, the victim. Langdon's intellect, knowledge of symbols, and relentless curiosity make him a great sleuth, even though he lacks experience in detective work. Similar to Poirot, Langdon relies on his mind rather than physical force. He solves mysteries through critical thinking and extensive knowledge of history and culture. Apart from extensive knowledge, he is a great problem-solver and has a photographic memory. During his detective adventures, he does not only have to solve crimes and mysteries, he is also faced with ethical dilemmas and gets into a great amount of danger.

Like most detectives, his exceptional traits are balanced by weaknesses. Langdon suffers from claustrophobia, as a consequence of him falling into a well when he was seven years old. His phobia is referenced throughout the novels, for instance in *The Da Vinci Code*, when he has to take an elevator:

Langdon exhaled, turning a longing glance back up the open-air escalator. *Nothing's wrong at all*, he lied to himself, trudging back toward the elevator. As a boy, Langdon had fallen down an abandoned well shaft and almost died treading water in the narrow space for hours before being rescued. Since then, he'd suffered a haunting phobia of enclosed spaces—elevators, subways, squash courts. [...] Holding his breath, he stepped into the lift, feeling the familiar tingle of adrenaline as the doors slid shut. *Two floors. Ten seconds.*<sup>106</sup>

Robert Langdon is typically accompanied by a female character. The women serve the role of a sidekick, like, for example, John Watson to Sherlock Holmes. They provide assistance in solving the mysteries, various expertise and a layer of personal relationship which enriches the narrative, or they are someone the protagonist can show off their cleverness to. In *Angels & Demons*, it is Vittoria Vetra, a CERN scientist. She is the daughter of the victim, and she provides expertise in physics, which Langdon lacks. Sophie Neveu is featured in *The Da Vinci Code*. She is a cryptologist and the supposed granddaughter of the victim. However, she plays a far more important role, as is revealed in the end. In *The Lost Symbol*, a researcher in Noetic Science and a sister of Langdon's friend, Katherine Solomon, works with Langdon and is also involved in the central conspiracy. Rather different from the previous companions is Sienna Brooks. She is a doctor with a mysterious past who eventually betrays Langdon in *Inferno*. The last novel in the Langdon series is *Origin*. In this story, a fiancée of the future king of Spain and a museum director, Ambra Vidal, assists Langdon.

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<sup>106</sup> Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (London: Transworld Publishers, 2004), 43-44.

All women play important roles in the novels, they are an integral part of the stories. They bring their unique skills and perspectives and contribute to solving the mysteries. Robert Langdon has some kind of personal relationship with all of them, and even a romantic one, for example, with Sophie and Vittoria. However, he is no James Bond, and although there are hints of romance in some of the novels, it is not a central theme.

Dan Brown is a master at weaving elements of mythology into his narratives and captivating readers with intricate layers of symbolism. His two most famous novels, *The Da Vinci Code* and *Angels & Demons*, both feature elements from Christian mythology. The myths are used as a central plot, red herring, and even portrayed as real.

It is essential to recognise that the Christian motifs in the analysed works serve primarily as literary themes rather than religious dogma. This analysis does not seek to engage with or critique the theological truthfulness of Christian doctrines. Instead, it focuses on how Brown utilises these motifs as elements of legends and myths in his stories. By treating these religious narratives as myths, Brown creates complex stories that enhance his novels, making them more interesting and engaging. Thus, the exploration of Christian themes in this analysis aligns with the broader objective of examining myths and legends within the genre of crime fiction.

The first novel to be analysed is *Angels & Demons*. In the novel, Dan Brown blends history with conspiracy theories. He weaves together facts and fiction, making the readers question what is real and what is made up. The story ignited both controversy and outrage, but it was overall well-received. The Church's response was mixed, as the narrative does not depict them in the best way. However, the book also ignited people's interest in Christianity and increased tourism in the Vatican. Although second to *The Da Vinci Code*, *Angels & Demons* has become a best-seller, it was even adapted into a movie in 2009. Proving Tom Hanks', the on-screen Robert Langdon, statement: "who doesn't love a good conspiracy theory."<sup>107</sup>

The plot revolves around the battle between faith and science. The myth of the Illuminati is present from the very beginning of the story. Leonardo Vetra, CERN's<sup>108</sup> physicist, who discovered how to create antimatter, is found dead with an ambigram of the word Illuminati branded on his chest, and a canister of antimatter had been stolen from his lab. Supposedly, the secret society has resurfaced and plans to blow up Vatican City with the use of antimatter and weaken the Church. The antimatter represents scientific progress, which the Church has always been opposed to.

The Illuminati is said to have been a secret organisation which promoted science, reason and freedom from religious and political oppression. "Europe's most learned minds... dedicated to

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<sup>107</sup> *Angels & Demons Decoded*, directed by David Comtois (Prometheus Entertainment, 2009), 0:1:02 – 0:1:05.

<sup>108</sup> The European Organisation for Nuclear Research.



the quest for scientific truth”<sup>109</sup> as described in *Angels & Demons*. Although the Illuminati were probably not a brilliant group of scientists and artists who hid coded messages in paintings and built churches as their secret meeting points, they were, in fact, real. According to David Livingstone, the Illuminati was founded in 1776 by Adam Weishaupt in Germany. Weishaupt was a professor of Canon Law and practical philosophy at a Bavarian university. Due to him being the only non-clerical professor there, he was frequently discredited. It prompted him to become deeply anti-clerical and eventually anti-church. He started spreading the ideas of the Enlightenment and eventually founded a secret society with the goal ‘to enlighten’ the whole world. The order was forced to disband in 1784.<sup>110</sup> Nevertheless, throughout history, many individuals and secret organisations pursued the same goals as the Illuminati, and that is what Dan Brown built upon. Yet, he exaggerated their reputation by depicting them as an underground organisation with a vendetta against the Church.

Nowadays, an Illuminatus is anyone, commonly a scientist, in history who somehow opposed the Church. In *Angels & Demons*, Galileo Galilei is said to have been a member of the Illuminati. It is mentioned frequently throughout the book, Langdon even calls him “their most revered member.” It is a popular theory because of Galileo’s scientific work. However, the order itself was founded well after his death in 1642.

The Hassassin<sup>111</sup> who killed Vetra and stole the antimatter, kidnaps four Preferiti.<sup>112</sup> He is planning on ritually killing the cardinals, as he says in a call with Camerlengo<sup>113</sup> Carlo Ventresca: “*Sacrifici vergini nell’ altare di scienza*”<sup>114</sup> meaning ‘virgin sacrifices at the altar of science’ in Italian. The Altars of Science as Langdon discovers, are four architectural sights in Rome, which carry tributes to the classical elements, and together create a path of illumination.

By donating the artwork anonymously to specific churches and then using their political influence, the brotherhood facilitated placement of these four pieces in carefully chosen churches in Rome. Each piece of course was a marker... subtly pointing to the next church... where the next marker awaited. It functioned as a trail of clues disguised as religious art. If an Illuminati candidate could find the

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<sup>109</sup> Brown, *Angels & Demons*, 50.

<sup>110</sup> David Livingstone, *Terrorism and the Illuminati: A Three Thousand Year History* (Charleston: BookSurge LLC, 2007), 16-17.

<sup>111</sup> Member of the Ismaili Muslim order of assassins.

<sup>112</sup> The Cardinals who are most likely to become the next Pope.

<sup>113</sup> A right-hand to the Pope. During sede vacante (vacancy of the Pope) he takes on all Pope’s responsibilities.

<sup>114</sup> Brown, *Angels & Demons*, 186.

first church and the marker for Earth, he could follow it to Air... and then to Fire... and then to Water... and finally to the Church of Illumination.<sup>115</sup>

The Path of Illumination is again not based on real historical facts, but as Brown states in the author's note, "references to all works of art, tombs, tunnels, and architecture in Rome are entirely factual (as are their exact locations)."<sup>116</sup> This adds a layer of plausibility to the story.

The Preferiti are branded with symbols of the four classical elements, and subsequently killed thematically, matching their brand. The branding refers to a non-factual legend about the Church branding four scientists with crosses. Robert Langdon describes the legend:

Galileo's arrest threw the Illuminati into upheaval. Mistakes were made, and the church discovered the identities of four members, whom they captured and interrogated. But the four scientists revealed nothing... even under torture.

[...] They were branded alive. On the chest. With the symbol of a cross. Then the scientists were brutally murdered, their dead bodies dropped in the streets of Rome as a warning to others thinking of joining the Illuminati. With the church closing in, the remaining Illuminati fled Italy.<sup>117</sup>

The Cardinals are to suffer the same fate as a form of revenge. The addition of the made-up legend, helps in convincing the characters that the Illuminati have, in fact, returned.

The antagonist of the story is Camerlengo Carlo Ventresca. His involvement in the crimes is hidden for most of the novel. It is only at the end of the story that, due to a camera recording, Langdon is able to uncover that it was the Camerlengo all along. He orchestrated a calculated plan; slowly poisoned the Pope, hired the Assassin, and then played the hero who saved the whole city. Throughout the novel, he seems to be mourning the Pope and is weighted by the responsibilities which now fall onto him. He is seemingly doing everything to help Langdon and the police to capture the kidnapper, save the Preferiti and prevent the annihilation of the Vatican City. At least the very last part was not an act; he indeed does not intend for the antimatter to blow up the city. He carries the canister into the sky in a helicopter. However, it is from solely selfish reasons as the heroic act almost makes him eligible to become the next Pope. His primary motivation for the crimes was his belief that the Church was losing the battle against science, and he believed he was the one who could fix it. He viewed modern scientific advancements as threats to the Church's influence. Moreover, he discovered he was the Pope's

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<sup>115</sup> Brown, *Angels & Demons*, 209-210.

<sup>116</sup> Brown, *Angels & Demons*, 11.

<sup>117</sup> Brown, *Angels & Demons*, 52.

biological son conceived through artificial insemination, which he saw as a betrayal of the Church's doctrines.

The Illuminati myth functions as a red herring, diverting attention from the true villain, the Camerlengo. By invoking the mythical secret society of the Illuminati, he was able to create an elaborate smokescreen to mask his involvement. All through the novel, the readers, as well as the characters, are led to believe that the Illuminati are behind the attacks. The reveal that the Camerlengo himself is behind it all is a masterful twist, showcasing how myths and legends can be exploited to manipulate perceptions and conceal the truth. This use of a red herring is reminiscent of classic crime fiction techniques. A similar use of myth can be found in Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, analysed in the first chapter of this thesis. Jack Stapleton can be directly compared to the Camerlengo, as they both exploited myths to cover their crimes.

In *Angels & Demons*, Dan Brown incorporates conspiracy theories about the Illuminati into a thrilling detective mystery set in the Vatican City. By including myths and legends in the story, he not only creates a gripping narrative but also delves deeply into topics of religion, power, and the long-lasting conflict between faith and science.

Following *Angels & Demons*, Robert Langdon finds himself intertwined in a war between the Priory of Sion and Opus Dei in *The Da Vinci Code*. Similar to the previous novel, the narrative combines conspiracy theories and historical truths.

The novel predominantly draws from Christian mythology, particularly the legend of the Holy Grail. The Christian myth is central to the plot and functions as a foundation for the mystery. In order for the story to be more entertaining, the myth is complemented by Da Vinci mysteries and secret cults. Although many things in the novel are products of Dan Brown's mind, he drew inspiration from well-known myths and legends. That creates the illusion of veracity, which is supported by the mentions of real historical figures like Da Vinci and the inclusion of existing sights, such as the Louvre or Rosslyn Chapel. *The Da Vinci Code* is Dan Brown's most famous novel. However, it was criticised for its historical inaccuracies and denounced by the Church. Nonetheless, it had a huge success with the general public and was picked up by Columbia Pictures and turned into the first movie in the Robert Langdon series.

The novel begins with a murder in the Louvre. Jacques Saunière is killed by Silas, a member of Opus Dei. Before Saunière, he killed three others. They were the guardians of the secret of the Holy Grail and members of the Priory of Sion.

The Priory of Sion was supposedly a secret organisation founded in 1099 during the First Crusade. According to Robert Howells, the name came either from Mount Sion, on which Jerusalem was founded, or a different hill called Sion, where Pierre Plantard lived. Plantard claimed to be the Grand Master of the Priory during the 1970s and the first to publicly propagate the organisation.<sup>118</sup> Many believe the organisation to be made up and the documents which support its existence, called *Dossiers Secrets d'Henri Lobineau*, to be forged. Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln published a book called *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*, based on the *Dossiers Secrets*, in which they came up with the hypothesis that Mary Magdalene, or rather her womb, was the Holy Grail. According to them, the Priory of Sion was supposedly established to protect and preserve the secret of the Merovingian bloodline, which is considered to be the lineage of Jesus Christ. Mary Magdalene was said to have fled to France, where she gave birth to a child. Christ's descendants married into noble families and eventually created the Merovingian dynasty. The members of the Priory guard those descendants, as well as the sarcophagus with Mary Magdalene and, with it, the secret of the Holy Grail. The *Dossiers Secrets* listed many famous historical figures such as Leonardo da Vinci, Botticelli, Isaac Newton, and Victor Hugo as members or even Grand Masters.<sup>119</sup> However, many scholars believe this to be a hoax. Historian Richard Barber called the hypothesis claimed by *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* “the most notorious of all the Grail pseudo-histories” and “a classic example of the conspiracy theory of history.”<sup>120</sup> Anthony Burgess stated: “It is typical of my unregenerable soul that I can only see this as a marvellous theme for a novel.”<sup>121</sup> And that is exactly what Dan Brown did.

In *The Da Vinci Code*, the Priory of Sion plays a central role in the storyline. It is depicted as a powerful, ancient society with a mission to keep the Holy Grail hidden and protect the descendants of Jesus Christ. Langdon describes them to Sophie: “The *Prieuré de Sion*—the Priory of Sion. They're based here in France and attract powerful members from all over Europe. In fact, they are one of the oldest surviving secret societies on earth.”<sup>122</sup> And goes on to list Leonardo Da Vinci as the Grand Master:

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<sup>118</sup> Robert Howells, *Inside the Priory of Sion* (London: Watkins Publishing, 2011), 15.

<sup>119</sup> Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, Henry Lincoln, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail: The Secret History of Christ & The Shocking Legacy of the Grail* (New York: Dell, 2004), 123.

<sup>120</sup> Richard Barber, *The Holy Grail: The History of a Legend* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2005), 271.

<sup>121</sup> Anthony Burgess, *Homage to QWERT YUIOP: Essays* (London: Hutchinson, 1986), 35.

<sup>122</sup> Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, 157-158.

The Priory's membership has included some of history's most cultured individuals: men like Botticelli, Sir Isaac Newton, Victor Hugo... And, Leonardo da Vinci.

[...]

Da Vinci presided over the Priory between 1510 and 1519 as the brotherhood's Grand Master, which might help explain your grandfather's passion for Leonardo's work.<sup>123</sup>

The theory that Leonardo da Vinci was a member of the Priory, enabled Brown to include Da Vinci's paintings and inventions in the story. At the very beginning of the novel, Jacques Saunière arranges himself in the pose of the Vitruvian Man and creates a 'treasure hunt' of Da Vinci's paintings for his granddaughter Sophie and Robert Langdon. Later, The Last Supper is referenced as the hidden proof of Mary Magdalene being the Holy Grail.

The opposing side to the Priory of Sion in the story is Opus Dei. They are trying to eradicate any proof of Jesus Christ's descendants. The storyline particularly focuses on the character of Silas, an albino monk, and Bishop Aringarosa, who guides him. As opposed to the Priory, Opus Dei is actually a real institution recognised by the Catholic Church and is not derived from myth or legend. However, Brown has taken considerable creative liberties with their portrayal. Their depiction illustrates how religious belief can motivate actions within Brown's narratives.

The central element in *The Da Vinci Code* is the legend of the Holy Grail. Traditionally, the Holy Grail is regarded to be the cup or chalice that Jesus Christ and his apostles drank from during the Last Supper. It is also known as Sangreal. According to the Oxford Reference, the word comes from the conjunction of two Old French words, 'sang' and 'real', which mean 'royal' and 'blood.'<sup>124</sup> In Matthew 26:27-28, it is written that Jesus said "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."<sup>125</sup> Similar description of the cup is included in Luke 22:20: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."<sup>126</sup> Both mentions link the Holy Grail to Jesus's blood. A different function of the Grail is mentioned in *Mythology in Our Midst*: "Additionally, it is also believed that the cup was used to collect the blood that poured from the side of the

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<sup>123</sup> Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, 158.

<sup>124</sup> "Sangreal," Oxford reference, accessed June 10, 2024, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100440827#:~:text=Quick%20Reference,the%20actual%20blood%20of%20Christ>.

<sup>125</sup> "Matthew 26:27-28," Bible Gateway, accessed June 12, 2024, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2026%3A27-28&version=NIV>.

<sup>126</sup> "Luke 22:20," Bible Gateway, accessed June 12, 2024, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+22%3A20&version=NIV>.

crucified Christ after he was stabbed with a spear. As such, the cup was believed to have wondrous powers.”<sup>127</sup> Regardless of the purpose, it is a sacred relic connected to Jesus Christ that has inspired several legends and stories, of which the most well-known are the tales about King Arthur and his knights.

Dan Brown has used the meaning of the word Sangreal, to support the theory of the secret Jesus’ bloodline. As it is revealed at the very end, Sophie is a descendant of Jesus Christ; her parents “had been from Merovingian families—direct descendants of Mary Magdalene and Jesus Christ.”<sup>128</sup> The Merovingian bloodline was created from Christ’s lineage and noble French families, as mentioned before, and they were meant to become the monarchs of France. Therefore, royal blood takes on two meanings in the novel: the blood of Jesus Christ and the blood of the French monarchy.

Essentially, the Holy Grail in *The Da Vinci Code* is a symbol of a larger mystery involving Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene. As Sir Teabing suggests “The Holy Grail is not a thing. It is, in fact...a person.”<sup>129</sup> Mary Magdalene herself is thought to be the Grail. It draws from the theoretical legend, also mentioned in *Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*, that Mary Magdalene was Jesus Christ’s wife and gave birth to his child. In Brown’s novel, Sir Teabing claims them being married is even mentioned in the Bible:

The Gospel of Philip is always a good place to start.

[...]

*And the companion of the Saviour is Mary Magdalene. Christ loved her more than all the disciples and used to kiss her often on her mouth. The rest of the disciples were offended by it and expressed disapproval. They said to him, "Why do you love her more than all of us?"*

[...]

As any Aramaic scholar will tell you, the word *companion*, in those days, literally meant *spouse*.<sup>130</sup>

Apart from the verse cited in *The Da Vinci Code*, which can be interpreted in many ways, there is no specific mention of her and Jesus Christ’s romantic relationship. Nevertheless, there is also no proof of the untruthfulness of such a claim. According to Bruce Chilton, Mary Magdalene is referred to as ‘the apostle to the apostles.’ She is mentioned more than any other

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<sup>127</sup> Peterson, Dunworth, *Mythology in Our Midst*, 59.

<sup>128</sup> Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, 579.

<sup>129</sup> Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, 319.

<sup>130</sup> Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, 331.

apostle in the gospels. Supposedly, she travelled with Jesus and was present at both his crucifixion and resurrection. It was Pope Gregory I who called her a prostitute, resulting in a widespread belief she was one,<sup>131</sup> and thus reduced her importance. The demonisation of women by the Church is quite common. As stated by William E. Burns, since early Christianity, women have been linked with sin and moral weakness. During the medieval period, many women were labelled as witches as the female gender was supposedly more susceptible to the Devil's influence.<sup>132</sup> *The Da Vinci Code* refers to the Inquisition and the witch hunts, and even goes back to the very first sin:

*Malleus Maleficarum*—or *The Witches' Hammer*—indoctrinated the world to "the dangers of freethinking women" and instructed the clergy how to locate, torture, and destroy them. Those deemed "witches" by the Church included all female scholars, priestesses, gypsies, mystics, nature lovers, herb gatherers, and any women "suspiciously attuned to the natural world." Midwives also were killed for their heretical practice of using medical knowledge to ease the pain of childbirth—a suffering, the Church claimed, that was God's rightful punishment for Eve's partaking of the Apple of Knowledge, thus giving birth to the idea of Original Sin.<sup>133</sup>

During those processes, the Church violently “converted the world from matriarchal paganism to patriarchal Christianity.”<sup>134</sup>

Paganism worshipping female goddesses, is included, in no small measure, in the *Da Vinci Code*. Dan Brown himself called it “a novel drawing so heavily on the sacred feminine.”<sup>135</sup> It is Mary Magdalene who represents the Sacred Feminine in the story.

The Sacred Feminine, often referred to as the Divine Feminine, represents the spiritual and metaphysical qualities traditionally associated with femininity, as mentioned in *The Sacred Feminine Through The Ages*. It is usually associated with creation, fertility, and nurturing. The Divine Feminine is present not only in paganism; it can be found in various religions and spiritual traditions. For instance, in Hinduism, it is the female goddesses such as Kali, Lakshmi, or Parvati. Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite in Greek mythology and ancient Egyptian religion included Hathor and Isis. Christianity is traditionally patriarchal. However, certain branches, such as Marian devotion, celebrate Mary, the mother of Jesus, or Mary Magdalene.<sup>136</sup> Such a

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<sup>131</sup> Bruce Chilton, *Mary Magdalene: A Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 8-13.

<sup>132</sup> William E. Burns, *Witch hunts in Europe and America: An Encyclopedia* (London: Greenwood Press, 2003), 12-14.

<sup>133</sup> Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, 173.

<sup>134</sup> Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, 172.

<sup>135</sup> Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, 12.

<sup>136</sup> Paula Marvelly, *The Sacred Feminine Through the Ages* (London: Watkins Publishing, 2024), 13-39.

branch is the Priory of Sion, as depicted in *The Da Vinci Code*. It is showcased through the character of Jacques Saunière.

Jacques Saunière was considered the premiere goddess iconographer on earth. Not only did Saunière have a personal passion for relics relating to fertility, goddess cults, Wicca, and the sacred feminine, but during his twenty-year tenure as curator, Saunière had helped the Louvre amass the largest collection of goddess art on earth—labrys axes from the priestesses' oldest Greek shrine in Delphi, gold caducei wands, hundreds of Tjet ankhs resembling small standing angels, sistrum rattles used in ancient Egypt to dispel evil spirits, and an astonishing array of statues depicting Horus being nursed by the goddess Isis.<sup>137</sup>

In short, the Priory is said to be “the pagan goddess worship cult.”<sup>138</sup> They supposedly practised pagan rituals, which involved sex. According to Christine Kraemer, for pagans, “the sexual body is a site of religious practice, a place in which we can meet divinity flesh to flesh and heart to heart.”<sup>139</sup> Fundamentally, the Priory of Sion worships the bloodline of Jesus Christ, as well as the Divine Feminine, Mary Magdalene, who was the bearer of the lineage. It puts them directly against the Christian values Opus Dei stands for, as orthodox Christianity recognises the Divine Masculine.

Throughout the book, there are several more nods to the sacred feminine. For example, the pentacle Saunière draws on himself before dying is said to be the “representative of the *female* half of all things—a concept religious historians call the 'sacred feminine' or the 'divine goddess.’<sup>140</sup> Although the pentacle is associated with femininity, as mentioned by Jean Markale, it was a symbol of the Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar,<sup>141</sup> not a representation of the Sacred Feminine. Going back to the mentions of Da Vinci and The Last Supper, he allegedly not only depicted Mary Magdalene in the painting, but he also included the symbol of femininity. Jesus and the person sitting to his right, claimed to be Mary Magdalene, create a V shape in between each other. That is, according to the novel, the symbol known as ‘the chalice,’ an ancient astronomical symbol for the planet-goddess Venus. It is all tied together to the legend of the Holy Grail, as Langdon describes: “The chalice, he said, resembles a cup or vessel, and more importantly, it resembles the shape of a woman's womb. This symbol communicates femininity, womanhood, and fertility.”<sup>142</sup> Making the quest for the Holy Grail “a journey to pray at the feet

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<sup>137</sup> Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, 42.

<sup>138</sup> Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, 158.

<sup>139</sup> Christine Kraemer, “Erotic Religion: The Body and Sex for Wiccans and Pagans,” *Downsizing for Divinity*, October 4, 2016.

<sup>140</sup> Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, 61.

<sup>141</sup> Jean Markale, *The Great Goddess* (Rochester: Inner Traditions International, 1997), 187.

<sup>142</sup> Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, 321.



of the outcast one, the lost sacred feminine.”<sup>143</sup> In other words, kneeling before Mary Magdalene. However, there are no reliable sources which would support the meaning of the symbol as described in the novel. Therefore, although sounding plausible in the story, it is a made-up reference. The falsity of the symbol also suggests the improbability of Mary Magdalene being in the painting, moreover her being the Holy Grail. Nonetheless, it creates a compelling and captivating narrative.

In *The Da Vinci Code*, mythology plays an integral role. It is interconnected with the narrative in order to enhance the novel’s complexity and thematic depth. Apart from myths, Brown uses symbolic references and historical facts, as well as figments of his imagination. The novel’s provocative yet captivating reinterpretation of historical and religious mysteries, blended with fiction and elements of detective stories, creates a compelling narrative that challenges readers to consider the possibility of hidden truths beneath the surface of accepted history while maintaining the suspense and intrigue characteristic of crime fiction.

Dan Brown has incorporated myths and legends in several of his novels, not only in *Angels & Demons* and *The Da Vinci Code*, but they are not central to the plot as they are in those two stories. For instance, in *Origin*, Brown juxtaposes religious myths of the creation of life with scientific theories. In *Inferno*, references to the myths of hell complement the central motif, which is Dante Alighieri’s *Divine Comedy*. Overall, Brown’s novels include a blend of myths and legends, historical facts, and fiction. Each story not only takes the readers on a mysterious quest filled with puzzles but also challenges them to reflect on deeper questions, and figure out what is the truth and what is the work of Brown’s imagination.

In the realm of crime fiction, the incorporation of mythology and legends has provided a rich tapestry of narratives and thematic depth. In most detective stories, they only serve as an inspiration or help to create an atmosphere. However, some crime novels can also be set in worlds where myths are no longer myths but reality. Such settings offer a unique framework that brings together the familiar motifs of mystery and investigation with the fantastical dimensions of mythological lore.

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<sup>143</sup> Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, 344.

Christian mythology and historical legends in Dan Brown's novels are regarded as factual aspects of the characters' reality. In *The Da Vinci Code*, the premise of the Holy Grail being Mary Magdalene is built on the notion that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were real historical figures whose lives and legacies have been shrouded in mystery and myth. Characters like members of the Priory of Sion and Sir Leigh Teabing believe in the hidden truth of Christian mythology. For those characters, they are not myths and legends, but reality. Similarly, Silas and other members of the Opus Dei, reluctantly believe in God. This belief excuses their crimes, as they were done in service of a divine mission. In *Angels & Demons*, although the myth of the Illuminati proves to be only a charade, the cardinals and other priests also deeply believe in the reality of divine power. And again, the antagonist's belief in God and divine destiny profoundly influences his actions.

Brown's portrayal of Christian myths and legends as real serves multiple purposes. It grounds the fantastical elements of the plot in a tangible reality, making the mysteries more compelling. Robert Langdon has to navigate layers of belief and scepticism. For him, as a non-Christian, many of the 'myths' are not reality, yet by investigating the mysteries, he proves some of the legends to be facts, not fiction. The interplay between faith and reason, myth and reality, creates a dynamic narrative tension and results in his character development.

Overall, the use of Christian mythology as reality not only enriches the narrative complexity but also engages the readers in an exploration of faith, history, and the enduring power of religious myths. By presenting mythological characters and legends as real and influencing the present, Brown creates stories in which the sacred and the secular are linked.

All myths are as real as people believe them to be. A Christian God, heaven and hell are considered mere myths and fairytales by many. On the other hand, millions of people believe in their existence, making them their reality. It is the same with any other myth or legend, such as the Holy Grail.

Dan Brown treated religious and mythological elements as authentic components of his storylines. This method of integrating mythology as a concrete reality is not unique of Brown. Other examples of crime stories where the myths are reality are The Edinburgh Night series by T. L. Huchu and Ben Aaronovitch's Rivers of London. All three authors, though diverse in their narrative styles and thematic focuses, share a common feature in their literary approach: the integration of mythology as a fundamental reality within their works. Aaronovitch blends

elements of British myths with the contemporary setting of London, crafting a world where mythical creatures and magical occurrences are part of everyday life. Similarly, Huchu's works infuse Zimbabwean folklore into modern-day Edinburgh, creating a narrative that bridges the supernatural with the real world.

Firstly, *Rivers of London*. It is a series of urban fantasy novels by Ben Aaronovitch. It includes titles such as *Rivers of London*, *Moon over Soho*, or *The Hanging Tree*. The series presents an interesting blend of urban crime fiction and myths.

A London Metropolitan Police officer, Peter Grant, finds himself navigating a supernatural world. He quickly has to accept the fact that he only knew myths and legends are real; "I didn't believe in ghosts, or fairies or gods, and for the last couple of days I'd been like a man watching a magic show."<sup>144</sup> He becomes an apprentice wizard, which adds cases involving supernatural beings to his detective repertoire.

The central mythological elements are the river gods and goddesses, which embody the spirits of London's waterways. Mama Thames, the goddess of the River Thames, is the powerful matriarch who controls the tidal portion of the river. Her counterpart, Father Thames otherwise called The Old Man of the River, oversees the non-tidal Thames. These river deities are rooted in British folklore, but the mentions of water spirits can be found in many mythologies around the world. In the series, river spirits and gods are formidable supernatural creatures. They take the appearance of actual persons who have sacrificed themselves in the rivers. Mama Thames was once a young Nigerian girl studying in London to become a nurse. She describes her becoming a river god to Peter as follows:

And then the river said to me, "We can take the pain away, we can make you happy and give you many children and grandchildren. All the world will come to you and lay its gifts at your feet."

[...]

"What must I do? What do you want from me?"

And the river answered, "We want nothing that you were not already willing to give."

So I jumped into the water – splash! And I sank all the way to the bottom.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Ben Aaronovitch, *Rivers of London* (London: Gollancz, 2011), 26.

<sup>145</sup> Aaronovitch, *Rivers of London*, 73.

The river gods, as well as any other mythological creatures in London, are part of the world's order, they are as real as any human. Therefore, police laws apply to them as well, as Peter's master Nightingale teaches to him: "They exist, they have power, and they can breach the Queen's peace – that makes them a police matter."<sup>146</sup>

In addition to river gods, in *Moon over Soho*, Grant also encounters vampires. The depiction of vampires in *Rivers of London* differs from the Gothic portrayal of blood-sucking evil creatures; they draw the life force from their victims. Peter calls them "jazz vampires"<sup>147</sup> because they feed off of musicians.

Faeries are also depicted in the series. In this case, Aaronovitch drew from Irish mythology. The Fairy People, or the Sidhe, are mythical beings who supposedly live in the mountains and forests of Ireland, as stated in *Celtic Mythology*. Their name comes from the Old Irish word 'síth', which means 'mound' or 'hill', as these creatures are believed to inhabit Fairy Mounds. Nowadays, the Irish believe the Sidhe to reside in the Otherworld, or in other words, a fairyland.<sup>148</sup> Peter Grant is trapped in such a place in *The Fey and the Furious*, and he has to escape the Fairy Queen, as well as catch a trade dealer.

It is not only the myths from the British Isles which make an appearance in the series. The introduction of Detective Inspector Miriam Stephanopoulos, who is of Nigerian descent, allows African deities to be present in the stories. It also shows the blending of mythological tradition, which is possible because of London's diverse population.

In summary, *Rivers of London* offers an extensive exploration of London's mythological heritage. The mythological beings that are part of the real world add an interesting layer to the narrative and ordinary crime-solving is enriched by the mythological lore.

The second series, which incorporates mythology as reality, is *The Edinburgh Night* series by T.L. Huchu. Tendai Huchu was born in 1982 and is a Zimbabwean writer living in Scotland. That is just about all that can be found out about him. He is a private person, based on his social media. The information about Huchu included in the following analyses is provided by himself

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<sup>146</sup> Aaronovitch, *Rivers of London*, 66.

<sup>147</sup> Ben Aaronovitch, *Moon over Soho* (London: Gollancz, 2011), 84.

<sup>148</sup> John Arnott MacCulloch, *Celtic Mythology* (New York: Dover Publications Inc, 2004), 35-38.

through private messages. Although he has published five stories so far, he is not a very well-known author, and none of his stories have been previously analysed.

While also set in Britain, The Edinburgh Night series by T.L. Huchu, consisting of *The Library of the Dead*, *Our Lady of Mysterious Ailments*, and *The Mystery at Dunvegan Castle*, incorporates elements of Zimbabwean mythology. Huchu previously published a short story called *Ghostalker*, which inspired the main character of The Edinburgh Night series, Ropa Moyo. The short story was set in Bindura, Zimbabwe, but for the novels, he wanted a larger canvas to work on. Edinburgh is the city he knows best, which is why he decided to set Ropa's stories there. Ultimately, the city provides an urban setting, which contrasts with the Zimbabwean culture. Through Ropa's cultural heritage, Huchu creates a compelling and complex world where myths and modern reality collide.

Zimbabwean mythology is the cultural heritage of the Shona people. They are an ethnic group native to Zimbabwe, with their own traditions, language and religion. Although the Shona language is not featured in the series, the names of the protagonist and her sister originate from it. According to the Shona dictionary, 'ropa' means 'blood' in Shona.<sup>149</sup> However it is not typically used as a name among the Shona people. The author, Tendai Huchu, mentioned in an interview that he named the main character after his cousin.<sup>150</sup> Figuratively the name can represent Ropa's connection to her heritage. Ropa's sister's name, Izwi, is again not a common personal name. It translates to 'word'<sup>151</sup>, which can be associated with the talkative nature of the character.

In the series, Ropa is able to communicate with the dead, which aligns with traditional beliefs in Zimbabwean culture. They maintain a connection with their deceased relatives and worship their ancestors. She uses a traditional Zimbabwean instrument called mbira. According to Māhealani Uchiyama, the mbira is a musical instrument as well as a cultural practice practised by the Shona people of Zimbabwe. It supposedly has the power to comfort and protect all who hear its music.<sup>152</sup> In *The Library of the Dead*, Ropa mentions that her instrument "was used by the Shona to commune with their ancestors during ceremonies and stuff."<sup>153</sup> She describes it

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<sup>149</sup> "Ropa," VaShona Project, accessed June 12, 2024, <https://vashona.com/en/dictionary/sn/ropa>.

<sup>150</sup> T. L. Huchu, "T. L. Huchu talks witch-hunting aunties and the Zimbabwean magic in Scotland that inspired his fantasy novel," *Young Adult*, Pan MacMillan, October 19, 2021.

<sup>151</sup> "Izwi," VaShona Project, accessed June 12, 2024, <https://vashona.com/en/dictionary/sn/izwi>.

<sup>152</sup> Māhealani Uchiyama, *The Mbira: An African Musical Tradition* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2021), 26.

<sup>153</sup> T. L. Huchu, *The Library of the Dead* (London: Tor, 2021), 11.

as “an ancient musical instrument about the size of a small laptop”<sup>154</sup> and “made of a wooden boards from the mubvamaropa tree with rusty iron keys laces against it.”<sup>155</sup> Ropa works as a ghost talker, meaning she delivers messages from ghosts to the living as well as performing occasional exorcisms and gets paid for it. She was born as a medium, therefore she is able to see the spirits. However, until she plays her mbira, she is not able to understand them.

A light grey figure appears in front of me, so fragile, a hint of mist against the grim night.

[...]

“Booga-wooga-wooga,” it replies.

[...]

I can’t understand ghosts without the right music to unscramble their voices into words. All I get is gibberish until I fix it the right tune.<sup>156</sup>

Her special abilities run in the family. Ropa’s grandmother is also a medium, but in the stories, she also embodies the role of a witch doctor. As stated in *African Traditional Religion*, in Zimbabwe, witch doctors or the ngangas are the healers. They use their knowledge of herbs and spiritual practices to heal and protect the community.<sup>157</sup> Ropa’s grandmother has great mastery of traditional healing and herbs and tries to pass the knowledge to her granddaughter.

The inclusion of Zimbabwean mythology into the series adds a unique layer to the narrative. Ropa’s ancestry makes the stories culturally rich and depicts her as a complex character. It also allows the series to explore themes of heritage, identity, and immigrant experience. Additionally, it makes her a unique amateur detective, as because of her special abilities, she is able to solve mysteries like no one else. The blending of a Scottish urban setting and Zimbabwean culture provides a multicultural perspective and fabricates a diverse narrative. Altogether, the series’ presentation of Zimbabwean myths as reality creates a fascinating world with previously unexplored plots in crime fiction.

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<sup>154</sup> T. L. Huchu, *The Library of the Dead*, 6.

<sup>155</sup> T. L. Huchu, *The Library of the Dead*, 11.

<sup>156</sup> T. L. Huchu, *The Library of the Dead*, 10-11.

<sup>157</sup> Aloysius Muzzanganda Lugira, *African Traditional Religion* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2009), 100.

## Conclusion

This thesis explored the incorporation and purpose of myths and legends in crime fiction. Specifically, the thesis focused on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Dame Agatha Christie, and Dan Brown. Each chapter was dedicated to one of the authors. As a theoretical framework, general information on the development of crime fiction during their authors' time was provided, as well as their background information, which can help understand motifs used in their works. Furthermore, the protagonists of the analysed works were also introduced. The analysis dealt with the use of myths and legends in selected works.

The first chapter centred on Arthur Conan Doyle, who is considered the first author to include myths and legends in detective fiction. As revealed in the analysis, in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire*, the mythical elements drive the plot and contribute to creating a mysterious and intriguing atmosphere, adding layers of history, symbolism, and cultural context. By incorporating myths and legends into his narratives, Doyle also offered a sense of authenticity and unique settings, as well as enriched the depth and motives within the stories. Additionally, the myths and legends within the two detective stories serve as red herrings, leading the characters and readers to believe in supernatural forces, when the truth is completely mundane. In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, the legend was intentionally exploited by Jack Stapleton in order to mislead people about his crimes and true intentions. In *The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire*, the myth served the same purpose, only Jack Ferguson did not plan for it.

The second chapter focused on Agatha Christie. She drew from her interest in Greek mythology and used the myth of Hercules' labours as an inspiration for *The Labours of Hercules*. Five stories from the collection were details analysed in this chapter, but all twelve were mentioned. Aspects of Greek mythology were evident throughout the collection. However, certain stories align more closely with their mythological templates, while others incorporate mythological elements more subtly. Overall, in *The Labours of Hercules*, mythology serves as a structural framework and provides thematic continuity, linking separate cases through the common narrative thread. Moreover, the myths offer allegorical interpretations, where characters reflect their mythological counterparts.

Dan Brown's novels *Angels & Demons* and *The Da Vinci Code*, blend together elements of Christian mythology and legends and historical facts. In *Angels & Demons*, he explored the conflict between faith and science, using myths and legends to enhance the narrative. The

Illuminati legend was utilised as a central plot device, as well as a red herring, similar to Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. In *The Da Vinci Code*, Brown delves into the legend of the Holy Grail, mixing together conspiracy theories and historical facts. The myths play an integral role and drive the plot. Overall, his novels demonstrate how myths and legends can be powerful tools in crafting thrilling stories that provoke thought and debate. Brown presents Christian mythology as factual components of his characters' realities. Similarly, Ben Aaronovitch's Rivers of London series introduces a contemporary London where beings from British folklore are real. The incorporation of myths creates an interesting narrative for the otherwise ordinary detective stories. Comparably, T. L. Huchu uses Zimbabwean mythology to enrich the cultural backdrop of urban Edinburgh.

In conclusion, this thesis highlighted the various uses of myths and legends in crime fiction, examining their integration and purpose through the works of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Dame Agatha Christie, and Dan Brown. The analysis revealed that myths and legends enrich narratives and add symbolic depth. Doyle used legends in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire* as red herrings, tools in creating a suspenseful atmosphere and to add to the veracity of the stories. Christie was inspired by Greek mythology and created a thematic framework and allegorical interpretations with mythological elements. Brown's novels, blending Christian myths and legends with historical elements, show how myths can drive complex plots.



## Resumé

Tato diplomové práce se zaměřuje na použití mýtů a legend v detektivní próze. Hlavním cílem je identifikovat za jakým účelem vybraní autoři použili mýtické prvky ve svých detektivních příbězích. Detektivní próza je rozmanitým a jedním z neoblíbenějších žánrů. Tajemné zápletky detektivních příběhů jsou založeny na zločinu, nejčastěji vraždě, a jeho vyšetřování profesionálním nebo amatérským detektivem. Použití mýtů a legend v detektivních příbězích může mít různé formy, a tato práce poskytuje několik příkladů takového využití.

Práce je rozdělena do tří kapitol. Každá kapitola se zabývá jedním autorem, s výjimkou třetí. Vždy je popsán vývoj detektivní prózy v době autora, autor samotný, hlavní hrdina analyzovaných příběhů a v neposlední řadě se v každé kapitole nachází analýza samotná.

První kapitola se zabývá Arthurem Conanem Doylem a rozborem jeho děl *Pes Baskervilský* a *Upír v Sussexu*. Arthur Conan Doyle je jedním z průkopníků detektivního žánru a tudíž se nejprve kapitola věnuje prvotnímu rozvoji detektivní prózy; zmiňuje Edgara Alana Poa jako 'otce detektivky,' ale i dřívější díla, která obsahují určité prvky detektivek. Jelikož Doylovi osobní zkušenosti ovlivnily jeho tvorbu, dále kapitola popisuje i jeho život. Ještě před analýzou je zmíněna postava Sherlocka Holmes jako nesmrtelná ikona prudce iteligentního detektiva, se schopnostmi dedukce a důrazem na racionalitu. Analýza se nejprve zaměřuje na Doylův slavný román *Pes Baskervilský*, ve kterém vystupuje Sherlock Holmes a Dr. Watson. Mýtické příběhy o černých psech jsou propletené Bristkou historií, tudíž se mohl Doyle inspirovat z mnoha zdrojů. Nejpravděpodobněji ale vychází z legendy o pekelných psech a Richardu Cabellovi, která je podrobně popsána v kapitole a porovnána s příběhem Huga Baskervilla. Doyle využil tajuplnost legendy pro vytvoření děsivé atmosféry. Nadpřirozené prvky vycházející z mýtů jsou neústylám zdrojem napětí a tlačí postavy k odhalení pravdy. Sherlockova racionalita je postavena oproti pověřčivým naturám ostatních postav. Dále je legenda využita jako zástěrka pro činy antagonisty příběhu Jacka Stapletona. Druhým analyzovaným dílem je *Upír ze Sussexu*, která pojednává o ženě údajně vysávající krev ze svého nemluvněte. Mýtus o upírech je použitý stejným způsobem jako legenda o psovi Baskervillském v prvním románu.

Druhá kapitola se zaměřuje na Agathu Christie. Autorka je synonymem zlatého věku detektivní prózy, kdy se žánr nejvíce rozvíjel a zpopularizoval. V teoretické části kapitoly je popsán zmiňovaný zlatý věk a vysvětlený podžánr 'whodunnit.' Termín je odvozený z anglické věty 'Who done it' (Kdo to udělal) a vystihuje zaměření deketivních příběhů psaných v této době,

kteřé se zaměřují na odhalení pachatele. Dále kapitola zmiňuje život Agathy Christie. Stejně jako v případě Doylea, Christie byla ovlivněna osobními zkušenosti při psaní svých děl. Například, její zcestovalost se promítla v analyzované sbírce *Herkulovské Úkoly pro Hercula Poirota*. V neposlední řadě je představený nejznámější detektiv Christie, Hercule Poirot, který je centrální postavou analyzovaných příběhů a ve kterých představuje ‘moderního Hercula.’ Analytická část kapitoly se soustředí na onu sbírku, ve které Poirot vyšetřuje dvanáct posledních případů připomínající zkoušky kterými si musel projít řecký mytologický hrdina Hercules. Mezi ně patří například poražení Nemeanského lva, v Poirotově případě hledání ztraceného psa, zabití Lernské hydry, neboli vypořádání se s drby, nebo chycení pekelného psa Cerbera které přivádí oba protagonisty do Pekla. Christie umně propojila antické mýty s moderními detektivními příběhy, čímž přináší ojedinělé zápletky. Analýza ukazuje že Christie se Řeckou mytologií inspirovala a využila její alegorické významy. V kapitole je detailně popsáno pět příběhů. Nemejský lev reprezentuje přímé spojení mezi detektivkou a mýtyckým příběhem, Lerneanská hydra je pouze symbolický odkaz, Erymanthianský kanec se soustředí na podobnost prostředí, a Arkádský jelen obsahuje jak symbolické tak přímé spojitosti a je navíc ukázkou změny názvu od původní legendy. Pátým podrobněji rozebraným příběhem jsou Diomedesovi koně, které jsou z dnešního pohledu misogynistické. Zbýlých sedm je jen krátce zmíněno, i když některé mají velmi malou souvislost s řeckými mýty, jako například Krétský býk.

Třetí a poslední kapitola pojednává o Danu Brownovi. Na začátku uvádí rozvoj americké detektivní prózy. Nejvíce americkou detektivní tvorbu ovlivnil styl ‘hardboiled’ neboli americká drsná škola. Jeho nejvýznamější reprezentanti, Hammett a Chandler, jsou tak v této kapitole zahrnuti. Americká detektivní próza se nejvíce zpopularizovala díky novinovým povídkám, takzvaných ‘pulp,’ a šestákovým románům, které oba zmiňovaní autoři psali a které nadále ovlivňují americké detektivní spisovatele, mezi které patří i Dan Brown. Brown se stal jedním s neznámějších detektivních autorů díky úspěchu jeho románu *Šifra mistra Leonarda*. Ve svých románech čerpá z vlastního života. V části, která popisuje Brownův život je patrné že postava Roberta Langdona, protagonisty později analyzovaných románů, vzešla z autorovi osobnosti, i když jak je zmíněno v části věnované právě Langdonovi, byl inspirován někým jiným. Kapitola zmiňuje i motiv pomocníka, do jehož role je v každém románu obsazena nějaká žena s bližším vztahem k Langdonovi. Jejich dynamika pak funguje podobně jako například mezi Sherlockem Holmes a Doktorem Watsonem. Analýza se zabývá díly *Andělé a Démoni* a *Šifra mistra Leonarda*. Díla jsou analyzována pro jejich použití

křesťanských mýtů a legend, které jsou prezentovány jako skutečné události v rámci jejich světů. Rozbor pracuje s křesťanskými motivy jako literárním námětem, ne jako s náboženskými dogmaty, stejně jako Dan Brown ve svých dílech. V románu *Andělé a Démoni* Robert Langdon vyšetřuje údajné znovu objevení mýtického spolku Illumináti. Avšak na konci odhalí, že mýtus kterým Illumináti jsou, funguje jako falešná stopa a odvádí pozornost od skutečného padoucha Camerlenga, podobně jako legenda o psovi v *Psovi Baskervilském*. V *Šifře mistra Leonarda* je Robert Langdon zapleten do války mezi mýtickou společností Převorství sionské a Opus Dei, které je v příběhu vyobrazeno jako katolická sekta. Centrálním tématem je mýtus Svatého grálu, kde Brown vychází z konspiračních teorií. Propojuje legendu s pohanským motivem postvátného ženství, které v románu reprezentuje Máří Magdaléna. Křesťanská témata jsou stejně jako v *Andělich a Démonech* doplněna o historická fakta, která dodávají románu na pravdivosti, i když je to ve výsledku pouze fikce. Mýty a legendy v obou románech tak napomáhají k vytvoření napínavých příběhů, které podněcují k zamyšlení a debatě.

Poslední část třetí kapitoly se věnuje Benu Aaronovitchovi a T. L. Huchu, kteří podobně jako Brown pracují s mýty a legendami jako fakty v jejich díle. Série *Řeky Londýna* od Aarnovitche, propojuje moderní Londýn s mýtickými postavami z Britského folkloru, jako například říční duchové, upíři, nebo víly. T. L. Huchu pak ve své sérii *Edinburgh Nights*, přináší prvky Zimbabwské magie skrz hlavní hrdinku Ropu. Oba autoři využívají mýty a legendy k obohacení vyprávění, jakožto i Dan Brown, Agatha Christie a Arthur Conan Doyle. Avšak, jak ukazují analýzy děl, každý využívá mýtických prvků trochu jinak.

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## Appendix

Tendai Huchu via Instagram direct messages:

I am not too sure what general information I could give. I've published two literary novels as Tendai Huchu, and three fantasy novels as TL Huchu. I have also published a number of short stories under both names.

- I wrote the Edinburgh Nights series because in 2015 I published a short story called 'Ghostalker' in "Electric Spec" a Canadian eZine. I liked the voice of the character and thought she could one day carry a novel. The story was set in Bindura, Zimbabwe - hence the Zim magic. However when I set about to write the novel, I wanted a larger canvas to work on and Edinburgh is the city I know best so I relocated the action there.

I hope this is useful and helpful to your work.