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BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

Motivy padouchů v povídkách s Herculem Poirot od Agathy Christie

Villains and their motives in Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot short stories

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Čestné prohlášení

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Podpis

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Annotation

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Zvolený typ práce:	Výzkumná práce – přehled odborných poznatků
Anotace práce	Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá motivy (pohnutkami) padouchů v povídkách s Herculem Poirot od Agathy Christie. První části se zabývají vymezením klíčové terminologie a diferenciací motivů s jejich definicemi a náležitostmi. Patří sem motivy řízené psychologicky, emocionálně či logicky a jejich podtypy. Následující analytická část aplikuje poznatky o motivech padouchů v povídkách <i>Bonboniéra</i> a <i>Dáma se závojem</i> . Cílem této práce je vytvořit ucelenou strukturu k analýze padouchů a jejich motivů činu v povídkách s Herculem Poirot od Agathy Christie a určit komplexnost postav padoucha a jejich vliv na spád děje.
Klíčová slova	padouch, motiv, Hercule Poirot, Agatha Christie, psychologický motiv, emocionální motiv, logický motiv, detektivní próza, <i>Bonboniéra</i> , <i>Dáma se závojem</i>
Anotace v angličtině	This bachelor thesis is concerned with the villains' motives in Hercule Poirot short stories by Agatha Christie. The first chapters aim to clarify the key terminology and to differentiate the motives with explanations and characteristics. This includes psychologically, emotionally, and logically driven motives and their subtypes. The following analysis applies the insights into the villains' motives in the stories <i>The Chocolate Box</i> and <i>The Veiled Lady</i> . This work aims to create a coherent structure to analyse the villains and their motives in the stories with Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot, and to determine the complexity of the character of a villain and their influence on the plot development.
Klíčová slova v angličtině	villain, motive, Hercule Poirot, Agatha Christie, psychological motive, emotional motive, logical motive, detective fiction, <i>The Chocolate Box</i> , <i>The Veiled Lady</i>
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Abstract

This bachelor thesis deals with the motives of the villains in Agatha Christie's short stories with Hercule Poirot, the research and classification. The reader can distinguish motives as psychologically, emotionally, or logically driven. The first chapter explains the meaning of keywords, which are crucial for the clarity in the rest of this work and, in particular, in the following chapter, where the most frequently occurring motives in short stories with Hercule Poirot are discussed. The final chapter applies the researched motive types to the analysis of the stories *The Chocolate Box* and *The Veiled Lady* and discusses how motives can influence the plot and complexity of the villain's character.

Introduction

The main concern of this bachelor's thesis is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the motives driving the villains in Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot short stories. Since I could not find any similar classification, it can be believed that providing readers a certain structure to distinguish the villains and the diversity of motives would bring more clarity not only in analysing the character of a villain, but it could also lead to a better understanding of the overall plot development and distinguishing the villain as an individual and complex role in the story. The importance of motives in crime fiction brings out many moral questions and ethical dilemmas.

The first chapter will commence by explaining essential key terms to ensure maximal distinctness in the later analysis of a selection of short stories with Hercule Poirot. I included this part to provide a perspective of comprehending several terms in detail, such as the "motive" or the distinction between an "antagonist" and a "villain". It can be firmly believed, that providing definitions of key terms will allow and help the reader to understand the thorough analysis further.

The second chapter concentrates on the main criteria for distinguishing crime fiction motives in Hercule Poirot's short stories. We focus on a distinction between psychological, emotional, and logical motives and their peculiarities with further specifics. The related themes such as "love", "trauma" or "profit" are also discussed.

The focus of the third chapter is an application of the second chapter's researched criteria to a selection of short stories by Agatha Christie, particularly to *The Chocolate Box* and *The Veiled Lady*, which are stories featuring multiple villainous characters. The purpose of applying those criteria to Hercule Poirot short stories is to prove their validity and showcase an example of a possible way of analysing the stories' villains as complex individuals in detective fiction, and hopefully better cohering the plot development. Each chapter starts with a plot summary, continuing with an analysis of a villain and ending with a short conclusion of key findings. The final concluding chapter mentions the possible contribution of this thesis.

1 Definition of crime fiction key terms

Before entering the world of Hercule Poirot which is full of crime, murder, relationship puzzles, victims, and villainous criminals, we ought to define some crucial terms that will be frequently used in this thesis. These later occurring terms are to be explained for clarity throughout the thesis. In this part, terms like crime/detective fiction, antagonists compared to villains, detective, and motive will be defined.

1.1 Crime/Detective Fiction

Starting from the peak of an iceberg, fiction is divided into several subgenres and one of them is our first term, crime fiction, or detective fiction in a narrower sense. According to *A Glossary of Literary Terms* by Abrams and Harpham “crime fiction, detective story, murder mystery, mystery novel, and police novel: These terms all describe narratives that centre on criminal acts and especially on the investigation, either by an amateur or a professional detective, of a serious crime, generally a murder” (Abrams and Harpham, 2015, p. 69). As described by Abrams and Harpham, all narratives revolve around criminal activities and especially the process of investigation of most commonly a murder by either an amateur or an expert police officer.

1.2 Antagonist/ Villain

Delving further into the suspenseful genre, the role of an antagonist should be described. The term antagonist is often replaced with the word villain. However, there is a marginal difference between them. Abrams and Harpham depict the role of an antagonist as a counterfigure, or a symbol often represented by forces like fate acting against the protagonist (Abrams, Harpham, 2015, p. 294). Iris Marsh, an expert focusing on *Editorial Services for Indie Authors*, points out the details that antagonists possess the exact opposite features or features denied being recognised in a protagonist (Marsh, 2022).

However, both Marsh and Abrams claim that a villain is a common version of an antagonist powered by evil and illegal actions but does not necessarily have to be the exact opposite of a protagonist. A villain is driven by his need to fix what they believe is incorrect by any means possible along with fighting, even indirectly, some heroic character who tries to stop them. In our case, the heroic character is the detective. Villains in general often justify their deeds as they are committing them for a higher good, their profit, or, in some instances, out of pure insanity. Certainly, the motives will be discussed in the following chapter. Their motivation for a crime can be diverse from the genre it is talked about. Talking specifically

about crime fiction, the criminal principally fits the description of a villain, since they and the protagonist usually are not complete opposites but share some similarities.

In essence, both the antagonist and the villain share similarities in their repugnance against the protagonist, but looking closer at their complexity, both our negative characters start to differ, and especially in crime fiction, these resolutions become quite important in enhancing the genre with multifaceted characters and motivations.

1.3 Detective

In the flow of crime fiction definition, we mentioned the role of an investigator, a non-professional or rather skilful detective. Clearly from the title of our thesis, the detective given as an instance will be the legendary and iconic Hercule Poirot. “Monsieur Poirot”, as often referred to, is one of the most well-known detectives in fiction. From reading or watching TV series or even movies, it is generally known that Poirot is a very tidy middle-aged man of Belgian origin with black hair, a sort of portly physique, imperfect English rich with French language-based phrases, and an impeccable, specific, and precise moustache. In *The Encyclopedia of Murder and Mystery* by writer and poet Bruce Murphy, Hercule Poirot is detailed as a former soldier and retired police officer who was always present with a walking stick as he underwent severe injury in World War One and limps from then on (Murphy, 1999, p. 395). Hercule Poirot is, therefore, a person with decades of investigative expertise followed by a high reputation and can be easily recognised by a variety of symbols like a perfect moustache, a walking stick, or a slightly abdominous body probably from leisure time in retirement and incapability to do sports after consequences of a war injury.

Fundamental to our thesis is Poirot’s choice of investigative methods and his continuous and final explanations. All this information will contribute to the categorisation of the villains’ motives. Besides Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot uses the method of deductive reasoning and logical analysis. Deductive reasoning as a logical analysis is an often-occurring method of investigation in detective fiction. According to the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary, “Deductive reasoning, or deduction, is making an inference based on widely-accepted facts or premises” (Deduction, 2023). Therefore, the author’s descriptions, storytelling, detective theories and assumptions, and primarily the conclusion in the text will reveal enough knowledge and details to classify the motives of a specific crime.

1.4 Motive

Last but not least, we should analyse the term motive. The key character in every crime

fiction is certainly the figure of a villain. However, to commit a crime, every villain needs to be driven by a certain motive. A motive, according to *The Law Dictionary* (MOTIVE Definition & Legal Meaning, 2023), is the driving force, intention, or longing, for why a person commits a crime. The motive has genuinely a significant role which in detective fiction creates a great part of suspense and tension, and its discovery allows the reader a feeling of relief in the denouement. Furthermore, we should not forget the amount of entertainment provided. Crime fiction supporters enjoy this genre as they are provoked to answer two main questions: *Who did it? And why?* Besides unexpected twists, the reader will not be satisfied, until the second question, or rather addressed as a motive, is answered.

1.5 Conclusion

Before delving into the world of Hercule Poirot which is depicted as full of crime, murder, relationship puzzles, and villainous criminals, this chapter dealt with an explanation of key terms crucial for this thesis and unambiguity. The differences between crime and detective fiction, or a villain and an antagonist together with a clarification of the detective character were the primary concern of this chapter. The occurrence of deductive thinking ability as a natural and inseparable characteristic of Hercule Poirot brings an advantage for the upcoming literary analysis of motives driving villains in their diverse misdeeds.

2 Types of motives for analysis

In the previous chapter, the key terms crucial for this thesis' clarity were discussed while mentioning crime fiction as a suspenseful narrative under the investigation of a detective. Secondly, we shed light on the terms antagonist and villain with a focus on their differences, that an antagonist is a mirrored version of a protagonist while a villain can share some similarities but causes unlawful events. Furthermore, we described the role of a detective and put Hercule Poirot as a lucent example. And finally, we mentioned motives. Motives can be distinguished into three subtypes. This part will describe the psychological, emotional, and logical motives, their differences, similarities, and peculiarities. We should not disregard the possibility of multiple motives mixed behind one crime. However, this differentiation, later in our thesis, will help us to decode and categorise motives hidden in Poirot's short stories and consequently allow us a more detailed perspective in analysing its villains in an organised structure.

2.1 Psychological motives

The first section of motives could be psychologically driven. Many short stories by Agatha Christie are inspired by the effects of the human mind. Often occurring phenomena are connected to behaviour and psyche. Observing and analysing the human subconscious is what the legendary detective masters. In terms of psychology, this type of motives rooted in the psyche persuades individuals into action and shapes their decision-making through emotions, desires, concerns, and needs (MOTIVE Definition & Legal Meaning, 2023). The author's effort for a profoundness of a character's psyche unmasks the teamwork of motives among the individual. As the second half of *The Law Dictionary* definition of the word "motive" mentioned, to precisely understand the psychological part of a motive, we have to comprehend all the peculiarities and oddities of the villain character. Again, thanks to Hercule Poirot for his descriptions and explanations through the pen of Agatha Christie, we may realise the significance of human behaviour and mind in committing a despicable crime such as murder.

2.1.1 The role of trauma

In psychological motives, we might include the role of trauma as a significant aspect in participating in a motive. Trauma is defined by *Merriam-Webster* dictionary as "a disordered psychic or behavioural state resulting from severe mental or emotional stress or physical injury" (Trauma, 2023). This term, of Greek origin, symbolises one of the key features in the

commission of criminal action and a possible motive worth perpetrating a murder. Characters, focusing on villains, were probably disturbed for the rest of their lifetimes by someone or some pathological phenomenon. For instance, witnessing or experiencing another crime, violence, abuse, kidnapping, rape, or war incident can be included as triggers for a lifetime trauma leading to a behaviour against society.

The growing occurrence of trauma after the Great War might have been connected to the rise of crime and homicide. As German university teacher Herrmann Mannheim (1955, p. 112) adds "the general cheapening of all values; loosening of family ties; [and] weakened respect for the law, human life, and property" was experienced heavily after the First World War. From this observation, we can assume that the traumatic experience of war and the loss of fundamental values brought crime growth. We may see the connection between the definition of trauma as a reaction to a dreadful situation and Mannheim's observation of loosening all values that mattered to people presumably because of dealing with inner traumas.

Since this issue appeared in the golden age of detective fiction as most of Hercule Poirot's short stories did, it can be deduced that the author could have been inspired by some motives of villains by the psychological troubles of the time. This might help us to analyse further the motive of a villain mirroring the unpleasant results of war globally.

2.1.2 Obsession and obsessive-compulsive behaviour

Furthermore, for the leading psychological motives, we could include obsession and compulsive behaviour, mental disorders, and manipulation/gaslighting. Obsession, to begin with, might be in layperson's words described as a blurred direct focus on one person, a group of people or even an object. In this case, the villain would commit anything they assume is necessary to maintain for instance a person of their interest, thus even using violence or elimination of other characters. In whodunnits, this profile would simply fit the character of a lover of a person widowed in unfortunate and mysterious conditions. Obsession should not be considered an emotional or logical motive since it is deeply fixed in a person's psyche and blinds the ability to reason. The main reason would be a vastly repetitive occurrence of intrusive thoughts often in vivid images antithetic to the person's true desires (Veale, Roberts, 2014, p.1). We should distinguish best between a pathologically disturbed personality and an intact personality that commits a crime for purely logical reasons and not because of an impaired ability to think.

Additionally, a peculiar case of mental disorders and/or obsession can be accompanied

by compulsive behaviour leading to a probability of crime motive and act of violence. Obsessive-compulsive disorder itself is divided into two phases. Obsession and obsessive behaviour were already discussed as the first phase. Let me proceed with compulsive behaviour, which is described as a range of activities (either psychomotor or cognitive) which happen on a certain recurrence as a consequence of calming down the effect of obsessive behavioural thoughts (Veale, Roberts, 2014, p.1). Stein, Costa et al. explain this phenomenon similarly. However, Stein, Costa et al. (2020, p. 2) further add the fact, that compulsive behaviour shortened as “compulsions,” is a form of “response to an obsession according to rigid rules, or to achieve a sense of ‘completeness’”. Stein, Costa et al. agree with Veale and Roberts and comment earlier in their study that compulsions as a responsive behaviour are marked by committing any sort of activity, habit, or ritual. Therefore, a compulsion is a system of steps that must be obeyed to fulfil the need of a previously appeared obsession. Ignoring compulsive acts may lead to anxiety, distress, and a sense of incompleteness (Stein, Costa et al., 2020, p. 2).

Obsession and compulsions often occur as one disorder consisting of two phases. Firstly, inner unwanted and irritating thoughts can drive a person to doubt, fear or violate the law and secondly, the process of compensating the obsession through acts that may come true is known as compulsions. Speaking of the responsibility of OCD as a possible drive in a villain’s motive in detective fiction, both Veale, Roberts and Stein, Costa et al. agree that obsessions may include violence, such as causing harm to themselves or more suitably for a villainous character, promoting violent acts including murder, thefts, and blackmail featuring extortion. Comprehending obsession and compulsive behaviour may help to analyse the villains’ motives in Christie’s short stories featuring Hercule Poirot as obsession and compulsive-driven motives may contain unwanted violent and criminal behaviour.

2.1.3 Mental disorders

Slightly connected, other mental disorders may as well occur in detective fiction short stories. There might be a connection between the distorted mind of a person and the possibility of committing a crime. This fact should not be omitted as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), and dissocial disorders can be sorted as mental disorders that may as well have a tendency to violent, often uncontrollable behaviour. Furthermore, a person’s important mental functions like cognitive abilities, management of emotions, and behavioural utterances are disrupted with marginal distress leading to improper cognitive operations accompanied by a significant risk of violence and self-harm (WHO,

2022). The probability of laying a finger on someone's life might sound unanticipated. However, with these facts stated by the World Health Organization, it can be said that the discovery of violent deeds present in some mental health conditions could be used as a basis for a person's motive in committing a criminal deed. Therefore, in the field of Christie's literary work, this fact befits one of many possibilities for a villain's motive.

Two authors who may agree with the previously stated point are Jan Volavka and Leslie Citrome. In one of their periodically published works, called *Schizophrenia Bulletin*, they mention and simultaneously match the ideas of the WHO. Still, it is stated that the current and notable situation is what partially influences the behaviour of mentally disordered people (Volavka and Citrome, 2011, p. 921). Speaking of schizophrenia and similar mental illnesses at the same time, mentally disabled people may cause violence after being triggered by an extraordinary or highly stressful situation leading them to hostility and agitation. In a detective short story, this could be compared to, for example, a character suffering from schizophrenia who after going through an agitating and sudden situation is most likely capable of committing a deed of criminal violence. Therefore, if we come across a villain in literary analysis, who depicts signs of mental stability deficit, they can be surely incorporated into this category.

2.1.4 Psychopathy

A specific case of mental illness is psychopathy. This disability when untreated often occurs in detective fiction stories as it might be connected to violence and crime perpetration. Psychopathy itself is defined as a "mental disorder especially when marked by egocentric and antisocial activity, a lack of remorse for one's actions, an absence of empathy for others, and often criminal tendencies" (Psychopathy, 2024). In other words, psychopathy could be explained as a lifelong deviant state of mind distinct by an absence of empathy and regret of committing deeds against society with a possibility of criminal actions.

In detective fiction with Hercule Poirot, this mental disorder is depicted in characters, who are charming, brimming with tendencies to manipulate other characters, and secrets connected to the indifference of society. This type of villain behaves in their self-welfare to fulfil their psychopathic needs by any means possible, such as gaining power, possessions, or some inner necessities. These ways in the course of the story might become appealing to the reader, as they can experience indirectly something thrilling and unpredictable conveyed in extreme scenarios of a villain completely driven by their role in the story. What might be even more dopamine-compelling is the hidden battle between the detective and the villain. Hercule

Poirot is a personification of order, and the psychopathic villain embodies the role of chaos. Such perspective with the unfolding of the plot might be pleasant for the reader when Hercule Poirot wins, and the order is upheld.

2.1.5 Manipulation/gaslighting

The following section might be rather ambivalent, as its classification might depend on the point of view. Manipulation and gaslighting can be understood as both psychologically and logically driven motives. The psychological perspective of manipulation and gaslighting is observed and examined by dark psychology. According to Ryan Mace's book *Dark Psychology and Gaslighting Manipulation*, "manipulation and gaslighting is nothing more than a study of human subjects in their natural environments when they are operating in either insidious or self-preserving ways" (Mace, 2022). It is visible that dark psychology's point of interest is the unappealing and vicious periphery of human nature which, as the book states, is either studied by people to prevent the techniques of manipulation and gaslighting or by individuals who desire to practise it for them to prosper (Mace, 2022). From the logical perspective, the fact that dark psychological techniques can be abused for someone's interest may bring suspense and a question of how far the interest may go in exploiting the methods of gaslighting and manipulation in both real-life and literary fiction situations.

James W. Williams declares that behaviour related to manipulation and gaslighting may drive a person to perpetrate a criminal deed for several reasons such as because the person might have suffered a trauma in childhood leading to narcissistic behaviour with a lack of empathy, simplifying the moral dilemma of criminal behaviour impact or leading to psychopathy or Machiavellianism (Williams, 2013). All these three symptoms of probable manipulative behaviour may be a source of crime indicated by a lack of empathy, distorted mind, or cunningness.

Conscious exploitation and use of manipulative and gaslighting techniques can be categorised as a logical motive. However, the influence of those methods together with the person's/villain's possible unfavourable background and the current diagnosis like trauma consequences suggests that manipulation and gaslighting should be more likely presented as psychologically driven motives. Later in the literary analysis of Hercule Poirot's short stories, the distinction between psychological and logical drives in manipulation and gaslighting as a motive will depend on the mentioned point of view and the amount of evidence.

2.2 Emotional motives

The second section considers the role of emotions as a possible drive of a villain's motive. In the previous chapter, a variety of psychologically rooted motives was discussed. However, this part will focus on how the affective states and reactions may impel the villain's motive. Emotions play an important part in real-life situations as well as in detective fiction for they provide reaction escalation to certain impulses. These impulses can be ambiguous in amount and duration to each person/character depending on the situation. Furthermore, emotions have been a significant catalyst since the dawn of human civilization. They provided immediate reactions to ensure survival, and now they can even deepen the course of communication between people through emotional intelligence, they help in decision-making situations and call for action via motivation which in detective narratives is understood also as a motive of a villain.

Hercule Poirot has not always dealt with properly considered cases, but also with cases driven by passion, love, hatred, jealousy, greed, desperation, and fear featuring the instinct of preserving themselves from danger or protecting their loved ones. Even though emotions might align with psychologically driven motives, they are almost poetically attributed to the heart as the source rather than biologically to the brain as the place of origin. The main reason might be spontaneity or nearly uncontrollable speed of reactions while the brain is mostly believed to be responsible for rational and logical deeds. This subchapter will discuss the presence of various emotions covering the rational thinking in a villain's mind in detective fiction. These affective states are love and affection, jealousy and envy, greed for wealth and power, and fear and desperation. A classification cohesive with analysis of the emotional motive and exploring its real-life background may help us to understand the motive and its owner.

2.2.1 Love and affection

The first emotions to be described are love and the feeling of affection and how these two influence the villains' motives. Since love holds a significant role in crime fiction narratives, its presence should not be omitted as a possible drive or a significant contribution to why a character commits a certain crime. Love as a motive was cleverly described by the philosopher William Lyons. In his article called *Emotions and Motives*, he comments that love in action is either initial reasoning or serves as an appetitive aspect of a motive (Lyons, 1976, p. 508-516).

Lyons explains the first form in an example of a merciful murder of a relative, who

was suffering from a long-term incurable disease and begged for an opiate overdose. This moral dilemma involves emotions such as love, which makes the final decision whether to honour the dying person's wish or to ignore it as they have a strong emotional bond of love and they would lose their firm emotional bond (Lyons, 1976, p. 508-516). The murder *out of* love could simply be interpreted in detective fiction and short stories by Agatha Christie. The example of a merciful murder might not be the only case for the reason that criminal deeds of killing might involve the reason of protecting someone the murderer loves and similar reasons where love drives them to action.

On the other hand, there is the appetitive aspect of the love motive. Lyons describes this type of motive where love is, besides a former driver as an affection, also a gain. Characters seeking appreciation and love are willing to commit anything "since the appetitive aspect of love seems to entail such wants as a wanting to be in someone's company in preference to that of other's, and a wanting to cherish and please that person, then actions such as constantly seeking out that particular person's company, constantly being protective towards that person and constantly trying to please that person in various ways, will most often be the result of love" (Lyons, 1976, p. 515). From this excerpt it can be stated that the emotion of love may be a likelihood for a motive. Since the fragment mentions motives or "wants" in general, it can be assumed that this polemic can involve motives ordinary to detective fiction, such can be for example a murder of a secret lover or a murder by a secret lover. Therefore, the murder *for* the reciprocation or the sake of love could simply fit the circumstances of a plot twist in narratives featuring the renowned detective.

Applying Lyons' work in this thesis brings an insight into love as a motive in detective fiction. In short stories by Agatha Christie, the love-driven motive could be understood in two approaches as well, relying on the appetitive love motive, where love is meant as a final gain, and the second group of cases, where this emotion expresses the beginning point of action influencing it with moral and ethical dilemmas.

2.2.2 Jealousy and envy

Another emotion, often occurring in detective fiction and disliked by most people, is jealousy. The problem with jealousy is that this inadequate but natural emotion occurs for instance in relationships, where one person might be overly controlling and suspicious of their current partner who might be cheating or cannot stand the happiness of their former companion. This emotion is generally known for the loss of one's inhibition including the possibility of dangerous behaviour. Slightly connected, envy as an emotion encompassed with

negative appearance rather than within human relationships, aims its impact on a connection between people and material possessions, social status, any significant success, talent, and popularity. In short stories with Hercule Poirot, readers often come across jealousy within relationships, and envy for someone's possessions, status etc. This section will discuss how the emotions of jealousy and envy can influence the motive of a villain.

Jealousy, to begin with, finds its portrayed tradition deeply rooted in crime fiction as it can maintain suspense, might be unveiled in or as a plot twist, and can be reasoned as a motive. Since jealousy affects relationships between people, in several studies it is referred to as sexual jealousy. This phenomenon is characterized by Paul E. Mullen as a frequent experience among adults causing anguish and disturbance which might lead to verbal abuse and violence. His work mentions a sum of studies encountering the fact that approximately a fifth of the researched homicide cases were supposedly motivated by jealousy (Mullen, 1995). This staggering information proves jealousy as a possible motive for murder. In the context of short stories with Hercule Poirot, one could imagine for instance a murder committed in a love triangle or a murder of unrequited love.

An extreme example of jealousy bordering on psychosis is called morbid jealousy. Alongside Mullen, an Indian psychiatrist O. Somasundaram defines morbid jealousy as a complex of irrational behaviour blurred by delusion, enriched by intrusive thoughts, and aggressive tendencies (Mullen, 1995 and Somasundaram, 2010, p. 284-288). These symptoms of morbid jealousy provoking the expectations of a reader would suggest that those indicators can denote more likely a psychologically driven motive. However, Somasundaram themselves states that "Morbid jealousy is not a psychiatric disorder, but a syndrome that occurs in many psychiatric conditions" (Somasundaram, 2010, p. 284). For the reason that morbid jealousy can be rejected as a mental health condition and instead reconsidered to be a syndrome, it should not be included in the psychologically driven motives fully, but rather partially as morbid jealousy still fulfils the conditions for jealousy as an emotion.

The second part of this section will focus on envy. Envy was introduced as an emotion with a negative notion in society, being problematic for several reasons. Delving into human nature that can be filled with envy to drive its crimes will help the upcoming literary analysis and strengthen the comprehension of the motive distinction in short stories by Agatha Christie featuring Hercule Poirot.

While jealousy involves a higher number of participants, James L. Knoll, Stephen G. White, and J. Reid Meloy (2022, p. 462-468) focus on the role of envy and extreme violence as an inseparable measure of envious behaviour and proclaim that envy needs only two

participants. Projection of feelings like depression, shame, anxiety, paranoia, resentment, or deficiency of recognition as feelings of envy might even lead to illegal practices and moral conflicts by distorting one's perceptive ability and cognition. These conflicts include a probability of harmful and criminal behaviour towards society, its material possessions, values, and other types of belonging people can compare (Knoll, White, Meloy, 2022, p. 462). To explain once more on account of detective fiction, characters, and villains mainly in suppressed and excessive phases of envy tend toward committing criminal deeds. Some circumstances of murder, assault, fraud, vandalism, and sabotage could be counted as potentially driven by envy. In cases where villains are accused of doing so, they justify their actions in their disordered mental functioning, do not quite comprehend the impact of their measures, and therefore can find their acts ethical.

Recognising emotions like jealousy and envy and further proving the mentioned possible reasons and the background will contribute to the motive analysis and hopefully create a nuanced differentiation of motives involving jealousy and envy into emotionally driven motives of villains in short stories featuring Hercule Poirot.

2.2.3 Greed for wealth and power

Another level of envy could be defined as greed for wealth and power. While jealousy focuses on interpersonal relationships and envy aims for another person's possessions accompanied by resentment or deficiency of social recognition, defining greed might be slightly complicated. Greed is often associated with materialism, which resolves around the preference for owning possessions rather than developing a spiritual life on its account of being one of the seven deadly sins. Greed itself is of ambiguous perception as it is both praised for running the world's economy forward but despicable when it comes to a crisis caused as well by greed (Seuntjens et al., 2015, p. 505). Seuntjens et al. highlight the contrast between seeing greed in a profitable and damaging way and point out the possibility of causing harm to society. The authors listed in one of their research projects from the previously cited study *Defining Greed*, what the most often features of greed are. They registered selfishness, striving for quantity, acquisitiveness, materialism, and lack of satisfaction and generosity. People driven by greed are additionally often associated with egocentrism, money, and envy (Seuntjens et al., 2015, p. 511). Greed is mentioned as one of the motors driving the economy and simultaneously the embodiment of one-seventh of the deadly sins endangering the world's situation. Moreover, Seuntjens et al. proclaim that greed among people is led by many characteristics, i.e. selfishness, materialism, and desire and want

for more.

Besides the key features of this emotion, according to Lyons (1976, p. 503), greed can be viewed as a motive driving a person to commit a crime, even containing violence and moral quandaries and actions considering the seeming ambiguity of legality. Additionally, a statement by social anthropologist Alexander F. Robertson from a book called *Greed: Gut Feeling, Growth, and History* agrees with Lyons' argument. "More than a raw motive, greed is a critical judgment, and its moral complexity suggests that, like other 'emotions' such as guilt or shame, its meaning derives as much from what happens between people as from what goes on within their brains" (Robertson, 2001). Further in the book, Robertson continues the thought that one meaning of greed may lead to an absence of moral boundaries and gives space to crimes such as murder, rape, or plunder (Robertson, 2001). Both Lyons and Robertson seem to view greed as a complex emotion controlled by morality. When the presence of morality within a human mind fades away, the person then may commit violence and criminal deeds.

To conclude, associated with materialism, greed can cause economic growth but even an emergency in terms of a more general scope provided in a study by Seuntjens et al. greed is proven to be a possibility for crime motive or more as stated by Lyons and Robertson. This could be seen as personality traits such as selfishness and yearning for a quantity of possessions to fill some endless void in the individual. Adapting greed attributes to detective fiction characters can aid in achieving the aim of providing a motive-distinguishing structure and serve as an insight behind the curtains covering the villain's deed.

2.2.4 Fear and desperation

Last but not least from the emotionally driven motives, crimes of fear and desperation could be counted as a way to deal with certain situations. Fear is a deeply rooted emotion that has accompanied the human race since the beginning. It might be an immediate reaction as fragile human beings think rather intuitively than rationally when exposed to vulnerability. Desperation causes people to commit crimes since they might see it as the only conceivable way to solve their issues. This section will hopefully reason, why fear and desperation can be a potential explanation of a motive for a crime that occurs in Hercule Poirot's short stories and give an insight of why the villain might have committed their illegal approach.

Fear has an irreplaceable position in detective fiction. For example, combined with greedy intentions it can drive a person to unutterable actions. Pamela H. Bucy, a university law professor, et al. state that fear can force people towards illegal behaviour by provoking a

risk of losing employment, lifestyle, or possessions (Bucy et al., 2008, p. 407). They even mention that people causing criminal deeds out of fear might be threatened with harm and violence (Bucy et al., 2008, p.409). Admitting the surrounding aspects does not apologise for the forbidden gestures of crime, but realising the possibilities of understanding motives driven by fear permits a comprehensive view of villains and their motives in detective narratives.

Fear and desperation might lead to overwriting one's moral compass and therefore, defending their villainous manners (Bucy et al., 2008, p.407). Differing one's moral compass may be caused by desperation when a person sees committing a crime as the only possible or the easiest option. Agatha Christie explores the characters in her narratives deeply through the lens of Hercule Poirot. Fear and desperation play a significant role not only as possible motives, but additionally serve to support the self-protection reflex and security of people and possessions e.g. money, property, and other resources.

2.3 Logical motives

Finally, it ought to be mentioned that logically driven motives may as well occur in several Poirot short stories. In the previous subchapter, the motives guided by an emotional core like fear, love, or greed were displayed to the reader. Some logically urged motives might seem rather emotional to the reader, however, the important difference between these two is the step of proper strategic planning and thought-through outcomes. Acts such as cover-up crimes, revenge, and protection of others will be discussed from the logical perspective and final motives-considering part focuses on the surrounding motives of the rationalisation of crimes and their impact on logically driven motives in Hercule Poirot's short stories.

2.3.1 Rationalisation of crimes

The reader should be familiar with the process of rationalisation of crimes. A character, or rather a villain, who commits a crime in the name of justice, revenge, threat elimination, gain or profit, and ideology or to cover up their previous illegal act may as well occur in short stories with Hercule Poirot. What might come across the villain's mind is the moral ambivalence and rational questioning of perpetrating a crime.

A study that discusses the rational view of crime and its perpetrators is called the Rational Choice Theory. According to Ayesha Perera, "Rational choice theory of criminology views offenders as rational actors who weigh the costs and benefits of committing a crime. It assumes individuals decide to offend based on a cost-benefit analysis of both personal factors

and situational factors, choosing to commit crimes when the perceived benefits outweigh potential costs” (Perera, 2024). Adapting justice and revenge, characters viewed as villains might feel a need to deliver righteousness for unpunished crimes and other triggering behaviours. This need might be connected to proper planning, which involves rationality and considered evaluation of upcoming steps toward the aim. For the rational choice theory, threat elimination could also be assumed to be valid in cases such as a precise consideration of solving a scenario illegally where the current victim/former villain is for example blackmailing or threatening to hurt the investigated villain or their relatives.

What might also be attached to rationalised crime motives are misdeeds committed for the villain to profit or gain for instance an amount of money, property, or most likely an inheritance, as directly mentioned in the definition by Perera. A villain, after rationally validating all the circumstances, may choose to commit a crime for instance for their gain, benefit, and/or higher social class status.

As mentioned in the introduction to this section, it is nearly common in detective fiction that a villain might commit a whole series of criminal deeds. In some cases, this might be reasoned to cover a crime by perpetrating another one or anything else to conceal the former illegal act (COVER UP Definition & Legal Meaning, 2024 and Cover-up, 2024). However, to conceal a crime in the shade of another one or any deed concealing a crime, the villain has to rationally plan their procedure and therefore, the next motive in case of illegal action. This case of a cover-up crime as a logically driven motive may as well occur in short stories featuring Hercule Poirot.

Connected to most logically driven motives, a question of morality might come to a villain's mind. A villain who acts for the concept of morally ambivalent acts might feel that their actions may outnumber the immorality and illegality through excuses of their deeds and allows them to maintain sanity for the extreme feeling of guilt and shame (Clarke, 1997, p. 16). Committing a crime for justice, revenge, threat elimination, and profit could be adjusted to Clarke's affirmation, and this additionally confirms the structural outlook of logically driven motive because the villain defends their action through excuses. The apologetic behaviour reveals that the villain might still argue about the morality of their deed to keep moral integrity. Furthermore, ideological crime commission may as well appear to be a motive that needs to be morally reasoned. *Obsessive ideological passion*, as described by Blanka Rip, Robert J. Vallerand, and Marc-André K Lafrenière (2011, p. 573 and p. 578) may lead to malignant and aggressive behaviour in internally or externally triggered situations that the person may feel threatened by. Therefore, in detective fiction, this could be examined in

an instance of strict religious beliefs induced to extremism and violent behaviour.

2.4 Conclusion

The conclusion to the second chapter highlights crucial criteria for distinguishing the motives in Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot short stories, which drive each villain to commit their deeds. To ensure proper analysis, terms like trauma, obsessive-compulsive behaviour, other mental disorders with a focus on psychopathy, and manipulation and gaslighting were explored sufficiently for the scale of this thesis. Investigation of the psychologically driven motives might help in further understanding the essence of a villain's character in detective fiction short stories by Agatha Christie. Her work may offer an opportunity to investigate how motives like trauma are reflected in the post-war societal background of her stories.

Adapting Christie's view to the structure of emotionally driven motives might help distinguish the catalysts of villainous deeds in Hercule Poirot's short stories. From research, it can be declared that love, affection, jealousy, envy, greed for wealth and power, fear, and desperation do indeed play an exceptional part in being a motive conducted by emotions and shape the reaction of each person to different situations. Using Poirot's deductive descriptions rich in detail may suggest a perspective of understanding the emotional motives hidden in villains' criminal activities by the structure given thus far.

After an insight into logically driven motives, there might be visible some similarities between motives driven by emotion and logic. However, applying the Rational Choice Theory proved that motives motivated by logic can stand as a self-sufficient category of crime motives in detective fiction. This is visible in the rational planning of crimes like actions in the name of revenge, and/or justice or the elimination of a threat. Evaluating the benefits of a crime might be a motivation for murder for profit like inheritance or to commit a cover-up crime. However, what might prove the sufficiency of logical motives is moral ambivalence where the rational consideration of morality tries to balance guilt, shame, or ideologically reasoned crime to maintain sound judgment even after a crime commission.

3 Literary analysis of a selection of short stories featuring Hercule Poirot

This chapter focuses on a literary analysis of two short stories from the collection of Agatha Christie, a famous woman writer of the Golden Age of Detective Fiction (1920s and 1930s) in the United Kingdom. Each analysis consists of a plot summary followed by the description of a villain and their background in the text. The analysis will identify, with the evidence provided, what category of motives the specific villain fits the best. After proving which motive occurs in the story, we may be able to understand the important role of a villain, seeing them as complex individuals, further understand the plot development, and provide the reader with a possible structure for comprehensive analysis and distinction of motives in short stories featuring Hercule Poirot.

3.1 The Chocolate Box

The Chocolate Box is one of fifty-one Agatha Christie's short stories that feature Hercule Poirot as its mystery solver, who at the time of solving was a young detective officer in Belgium. According to the collection, it was first published in *The Sketch* on 23 May 1923 as *The Clue of the Chocolate Box* (Christie, 2008, p. 141). This story is narrated exceptionally by Hercule Poirot and told to Hastings as one of the stories where Hercule Poirot had failed in solving a crime. The story delves into the mysterious case of Paul Déroulard, a French Deputy in times of conflict between the Catholic church and the state, who had married a younger lady born to a wealthy family, who suddenly died two years after their childless marriage from falling down the stairs. Monsieur Déroulard gladly inherited all her possessions and a house on the Avenue Louise in Brussels. Later, in the same house, Déroulard was found dead, with heart failure pronounced as a probable cause of death. He died on the evening of his promotion. Déroulard had no reason for a heart attack at such a young age as "*He was so robust, so strong*" (Christie, 2008, p. 143), not drinking or smoking. Hercule Poirot on a personal vacation, was beseeched by a veiled lady and solved this case thanks to a single nearly undetectable clue, a box of chocolate. More specifically, chocolate box lids were accidentally swapped. This evidence led the almost desperate detective toward a discovery that Déroulard was poisoned with small trinitrin tablets inserted in the chocolates.

The prime suspect of Hercule Poirot was Monsieur de Saint Alard for he, as a strict Catholic, might have had a motive to hurt Paul Déroulard for the reason of strong feuds between the church and the state matters. Poirot's suspicion deepened when the doctor, who

had attended Déroulard, said that the friendship between them was ruined thanks to the seditious topic. *“To Monsieur de Saint Alard, Déroulard appeared almost as Antichrist.”* (Christie, 2008, p. 146)

Expecting Poirot’s interim plot deduction, Monsieur de Saint Alard’s behaviour could be explained as fanaticism in the course of religious beliefs. Applying this hypothesis to the structure of motives, Alard’s behaviour coheres with logically driven motives, especially with the ideological motive for a crime defined by Blanka Rip, where Alard might have felt a threat out of Déroulard’s behaviour and after moral consideration, Alard managed to stop Déroulard.

Being in disguise, Poirot even found the bottle of trinitrin in Alard’s mansion. However, when Hercule Poirot conveyed his explanation to Déroulard’s mother, he was proven wrong. Madame Déroulard confessed to killing her son.

This time I obeyed, going over each step that had led me to the discovery of the truth. She listened attentively. At the end she nodded her head.

“Yes, yes, it is all as you say. All but one thing. It was not Monsieur de Saint Alard who killed my son. It was I, his mother.” (Christie, 2008, p. 150)

Confession of Madame Déroulard startled Poirot, as his flawless grey cells brought him to a mistaken explanation. This undoubtedly brought a dramatic plot twist and revealed a whole different solution to a villain’s motive in this short story.

“My son was an evil man. He persecuted the church. He led a life of mortal sin. He dragged down other souls beside his own. But there was worse than that. As I came out of my room in this house one morning, I saw my daughter-in-law standing at the head of the stairs. She was reading a letter. I saw my son steal up behind her. One swift push, and she fell, striking her head on the marble steps. When they picked her up, she was dead. My son was a murderer, and only I, his mother, knew it.” (Christie, 2008, p. 150)

Here, Madame Déroulard confesses to the murder of her son. Her motive could be reasoned mainly as a logically driven motive for she rationalised her deed by explaining to Poirot, why it was necessary to commit it as her son was a sinful person who preferred politics over friendship, persecuted the church, and the worst part, he killed his wife cold-bloodedly by pushing her down the stone stairs. Further in the text, she argues with more explanations for her moral instability to probably maintain sanity. Providing examples of excuses points out the guilt and shame of the murder perpetration. This evidence might show that the main motive for murdering her son was to provide justice that could not have been served. What was the last straw were Paul’s plans to murder another woman, his deceased

wife's cousin Virginie.

"Then I saw my path clear. He was my son. I had given him life. I was responsible for him. He had killed one woman's body, now he would kill another's soul! ... I opened a new box by mistake. The other was on the table also. There was just one chocolate left in it. That simplified things. No one ate chocolates except my son and Virginie. I would keep her with me that night. All went as I had planned-, " (Christie, 2008, p. 150-151)

Besides explaining the course of the murder commission, she describes her awakening and the choice and necessity for the deed. The middle part depicts the moment when she accidentally switched the lids, which was the initial clue for Poirot. The last sentence proves, that her crime was rationally thought through, as explained in logically driven motives by Ayesha Perera. There appear to be some secondary intentions like protecting others such as protecting Virginie and the constant burden of desperation. These two, even though despair falls into the motives of emotional arc, support the motive of delivering justice as the core motive. Commenting on the costs and benefits based on the rational choice theory, Madame Déroulard did not hesitate much as she later in the story admits that she is struggling with a lethal illness.

The Chocolate Box short story featuring Hercule Poirot states two possible motives for the murder of the not-entirely innocent Paul Déroulard, who through his immoral, greedy, and selfish behaviour created a few enemies. The villain of this story, Madame Déroulard, is mainly driven by a logical motive that could be described as a justice delivery. Madame Déroulard might have felt a desire for the righteousness of the unpunished murder of her daughter-in-law. While Hercule Poirot accused a different character of the crime with an explanation of a motive driven by ideology and logic as well, the true motive is accompanied by two minor motives of protecting others and despair, whereas Madame Déroulard sees committing crime as the only possible option to stop her villainous son. Thanks to Christie's attention to detail and Poirot's articulacy, the motive of a villain can be examined and understood. Therefore, Christie's narratives can serve as an insight into villain/human complexity, fragility, and overall nature.

3.2 The Veiled Lady

The second short story chosen to prove the motive distinction structure is The Veiled Lady. This short story was published as well in The Sketch, only five months after The Chocolate Box. Poirot's close friend Hastings takes back his usual role as a narrator in this story. The plot revolves around a case where the legendary Hercule Poirot and Cpt Hastings

were temporarily manipulated to commit a crime. A suggestion like that would point to psychologically driven motives, especially to manipulation and gaslighting.

Beginning with a plot summary, a gang member dressed as a born lady had paid a visit to Hercule Poirot, offering him a case he could not refuse. She, as a damsel in distress and a future duchess, was being blackmailed, for she sent an indiscrete letter to a soldier during the Great War. However, this letter had got into the hands of Mr Lavington, who demanded twenty, later eighteen thousand pounds for not sharing the letter with the lady's future husband. Poirot agreed to solve this crime and tried to bargain with the blackmailer but ended up only lowering the sum by two thousand pounds. Yet, Mr Lavington mentioned his few days' leave as a deadline for paying the ransom. This brought Poirot to the idea of breaking into Lavington's house. While the blackmailer was out of the city, Poirot and Hastings in disguise managed to burgle a puzzle box with not only the letter within. After obtaining the box and unlocking its content, an unexpected plot twist occurred. There seemed to be an exact number of jewels that were hidden and therefore missing after a robbery in Boston, where Mr Lavington and his gang took part.

There are three villains in total in this story. The first one is Mr Lavington who was murdered after betraying his fellow gangsters. The reason for his betrayal could be the motive of financial gain and profit labelled in the structure as a logically driven motive, however, another perception of the context could show his betrayal as a form of greediness for wealth distinguished as an emotionally driven motive. As greed is associated with materialism, it certainly proves the statement by Seuntjens of being an endangerment of society. Yet, this dilemma will not be solved since Mr Lavington was murdered by his fellow criminals shortly after the robbery.

The second and most essential villain of this story is Gertie, known as the impersonator of Lady Millicent Castle Vanaugh, who seems to be driven by greed and gain as well.

“Now, this Lady Millicent had smart, expensive clothes ... and this girl had a certain superficial resemblance which would pass well enough.” (Christie, 2008, p. 172)

Her commitment to playing the aristocratic lady seemed perfect. Her motive must have been strong, so apparently greed with its magnetic power for acquisitiveness can drive a person to lose moral boundaries and therefore use identity theft or even murder someone as stated by Robertson. The same structure can be used on the third villain, which is the impersonator of Mr Lavington, previously debating and negotiating with Hercule Poirot.

Mr. Lavington duly called upon us that afternoon. Lady Millicent had spoken truly when she described him as an odious man. ... He was blustering and overbearing in manner,

laughed Poirot's gentle suggestions to scorn, and generally showed himself as master of the situation. (Christie, 2008, p. 168)

His performance and behaviour seemed indeed detailed and poignant for the figure of a blackmailer, leaving Poirot speechless. But the novel motive, which might be attributed to the psychologically driven motives, is the motive of manipulation conducted by the gang of criminals.

“You had two fellows looking for them, and then you tackled Monsieur Poirot here, and by a piece of amazing luck he found them.” (Christie, 2008, p. 172)

To overleap the techniques and allusions mentioned in the story, this particular sentence, told by Inspector Japp, best characterises the success of manipulating Monsieur Poirot to burgle the Chinese puzzle box hiding not only the incriminating letter. The motive of manipulation can be proven here thanks to a definition by Williams, and Mace in *Dark Psychology*, where Poirot's abilities were exploited by the criminals for their own interest and advantage, leaving no traits of empathy but some aspects of Machiavellian behaviour.

To conclude, the story features several villains. Their motives are depicted as manipulation and greed for wealth or logically structured gain or profit by selling out one's mates in crime. Thanks to Monsieur Poirot as a quarry, the reader can further understand the background of manipulation and its perpetrators to recognise them as individual and complex characters necessary for detective fiction. Agatha Christie not only leads Poirot to solve mysteries and crimes but delves into the depths of villains' emotions and desires like greed for wealth.

Conclusion

This thesis aimed to provide a comprehensive analysis of the motives that drive villains in Hercule Poirot short stories to commit crimes. Exemplified on the two short stories, *The Chocolate Box* and *The Veiled Lady* by the pen of Agatha Christie, a famous detective fiction female writer, this structure was proven useful and sufficient for the course of this thesis; as it brought more clarity in analysing a villain and their motive, it led to a better understanding of the plot development and distinguished the villain as an individual and complex role in the story. Correspondingly, the structure might be of possible use in further research in future in similar fields of study and/or to enhance its credibility and effectiveness.

The initial chapter shed light on and explained the key terms essential for this thesis to maintain clarity for the analysis of a selection of short stories with Hercule Poirot. Terms such as “motive” or the difference between “antagonist” and “villain” were thoroughly explained for the reader’s knowledge and understanding.

The following chapter arranged the motives occurring in Hercule Poirot short stories into three sections – the psychologically, emotionally, and logically driven motives. Each branch contains its peculiarities but also motives of similar origin and/or appearance.

The analytical chapter contained two narratives of the collection of Hercule Poirot short stories. The analysis conducted a possible perception of the villains and their motives in the short stories *The Chocolate Box* and *The Veiled Lady*. Some motives were relatively straightforward and therefore simple to classify into psychological, emotional, or logical motives and their subsections. However, a few of them were somewhat overlapping, so the major motive was chosen as the main one based on the contextual evidence.

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Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá motivy (pohnutkami) padouchů v povídkách Agathy Christie s Herculem Poirot, jejich analýzou a klasifikací do tří podtypů. Čtenář může rozlišit motivy psychologicky, emocionálně anebo logicky řízené. První kapitola vysvětluje význam klíčových slov, která se hojně vyskytují ve zbytku práce a zejména v kapitole následující, kde jsou rozebírány nejčastěji se vyskytující motivy v povídkách s Herculem Poirot. Závěrečná kapitola aplikuje rozřazené dílčí motivy k analýze povídek *Bonboniéra* a *Dáma se závojem* a rozebírá, jak motivy mohou ovlivňovat dějový spád a komplexnost postavy padoucha.