

## POE AND THE TRIO OF COLLINS, DOYLE AND CHRISTIE IN THE INTERTEXTUAL VORTEX

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**Avijit Kar**

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of English, Mewar University, Rajasthan, India

**Dr. Poonam Sharma, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.**

Associate Professor, Department of English, GDMG PG College, Modinagar, CCS University, Meerut, India

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### Abstract

The coinage 'Intertextuality' has attained much currency in critical and literary theorization ever since it came into purview during the sixties and the seventies of the last century though this term dates back to the inception of human civilization. Meaning does not gravitate to any particular linguistic identity, and therefore, anything literary or non-literary cannot have a totally independent existence in its meaningfulness. The intertextual occupation of a text is not genre-specific, and because of that, it is hardly close-textured in its manifestation. Following the precise form of a genre or a sub-genre is one sort of intertextual occupation, and it gains more momentum in the sub-genre like crime fiction which has a clear-cut *syuzhet*. The popularity and success of a crime story rest on distinctly planned plot and intricately contrived *fabula*. The famous authors of this sub-genre have, therefore, endeavoured to create unmatched plots and more and more sensational elements through mystery. But exceptions are also there, and they are all the more surprising when renowned authors like Wilkie Collins, A. C. Doyle and Agatha Christie are involved in unmistakable intertextual entanglement unconventionally emulating *fabula* as well, following their literary enkindler, Edgar Allan Poe.

**Keywords:** Intertextuality, Crime Fiction, *Fabula*, *Syuzhet*, Adaptation.

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Ever since Julia Kristeva coined the term 'Intertextuality' in her study of Bakhtin's work on 'dialogue' and 'carnival', literary critics and theorists, in an unabated fashion, began to fathom its innermost recesses with myriad newer evaluations and interpretations. The result is a horde of new-found prospects and further intricacies added to the realm of meaning and meaningfulness; both modifying and magnifying Russian Formalism, the reader-response theory, structuralist and poststructuralist approaches and some other tenets

that deal with interpersonal dimensions of texts and textuality. Due to the incredible intellectual expansiveness of the term 'Intertextuality', it has become an academic misnomer, 'one of the most commonly used and misused terms in contemporary critical vocabulary' (Allen 2). Today, the most general concept about the theory of intertextuality implies that any text is nothing but an array of compositely structured referents or contexts culled from other texts. Kristeva's original 'Problèmes de la structuration du texte' (1969) soundly avers that a text is, by no means, a closed system, and therefore, not to be adjudged as having its identity totally independent and uninvolved in a dialogue with other texts. Harold Bloom's 'Anxiety of Influence' rings the same note. But it can still be noted and affirmed that the idea of textual or ideational sameness is not new and has not sprung up in the twentieth century. Its roots may be found even in Plato's mimetic views of poetic creations and art. This antiquity of intertextual ideation has been made clear by M. Worton and J. Still in their *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*. Both Worton and Still are of the opinion that no author can show an independent wholeness so far his or her creative faculty, constructiveness and diction or choice of words are concerned. 'Neither Platonic nor Aristotelian imitation is to be understood as imitation of nature. In case of Platonic imitation, the "poet" always copies an earlier act of creation, which is itself already a copy' (3). We are here apt to get the idea that intertextuality is 'an historically informing term' (Allen 59) and it does 'open the text to history' (59), or so to say, historical textuality. The various types or forms of social knowledge, when amassed according to their own nature or features and categorized accordingly do form disciplines. Discerningly, Worton and Still remind us:

Different disciplines have different bodies of vocabulary, which have an undeniable use-value in that they can serve as a precise shorthand in which the member of the discipline can communicate with each other about the objects of their study. Value may, moreover, be added through the very business of exchanging ideas in a special language which creates a community of insiders faithful to their disciplines— impenetrable to the uninitiated. (A Note on Vocabulary viii)

Crime fiction, as a sub-genre, is no exception to this rule. The narrative structure of crime fiction, or to be more specific for the purpose of the present article, the structure of detective stories has a steady and almost well-outlined fixity. In close communion with this structural pattern, the crime story writers incorporate the homogenous style of expression and distinctive vocabulary. According to TsevetanTodorov's widely-read essay *The Typology of Detective Fiction*, it is genre that creates literature. Detective fiction falls under 'popular literature' (121) and there is a 'penalizing tendency' (121) which surfaces in it if a story does not conform to the rules of its genre. That way, the 'articulation of genres within detective fiction' (122) be 'relatively easy' (122). At the base of the detective story or the whodunit, there remains a duality that contains 'not one but two stories; the story of the crime and the story of the investigation' (122). In short,

Todorov's stand about the structure of detective stories involves a crime and a victim, the appearance of the detective, detection or investigation, and lastly, capturing the culprit (120-27). The like tone can be well-ascertained in the opinion of Lewis D. Moore:

Beginning with Poe, four principal parts of the plot, not always presented in chronological order are the investigation, the solution and the revelation of the culprit. Each writer employs different ways to use the parts and fulfill its ends. Action is a hallmark of the detective novel whether in physical or mental terms. Intense movement is often followed by intense thought to arrive at a solution. (Introduction 4)

The same vein again can be discovered in Haliburton's *The Ethical Detective*:

Detective fiction is a genre that is paradoxical. On one hand, it embraces a rigid form— there must be a crime, usually murder, it must be investigated by a detective to follow the traces left by the villain and social harmony must be temporarily restored— if not in *this* book, then in a later volume in the series. (182)

It is, therefore, reasonable to confirm that crime fiction as a sub-genre is mostly genre-specific, constrained by bounds of well-defined structured patterns where *syuzhet* is pre-organized and condition-oriented. The *fabula* tells it all, i.e., it is the prime distinguishing factor that creates the electrifying interest in the reader's mind and helps tell one story from another, ushers in variety and variation by inventing diversely chiselled intricate plots. The plots in detective stories refer to the sequence of events where each event affects the next through the principle of causality. Adherence to the form in detective stories, therefore, does not hold any big intertextual deal. Adaptation of form and structure of one story from its preceding creations is not a cardinal intertextual issue in crime fiction as Graham Allen in his seminal work *Intertextuality* mentions: 'Works of literature, after all, are built from systems, codes, and traditions established by previous works of literature' (1). On the other hand, the present article endeavours to pinpoint some remarkable specimens of intertextuality involving three doyens of crime fiction apart from Edgar Allan Poe—Wilkie Collins, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie. The initial one be the trend-setter, and the following three writers have shown, in later periods, striking semblances; borrowing from Poe and consequently creating an unusual intertextual vortex.

The four stories under close scrutiny by the aforementioned four writers are Edgar Allan Poe's *The Purloined Letter* (1844), Wilkie Collins' *A Stolen Letter* (1854), Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Scandal in Bohemia* (1891), and Agatha Christie's *The Veiled Lady* (1923). The *syuzhet* of these three stories are of the same fibre, not to mention the identical problems, their solutions and the matter-of-fact conversational patterns.

The father of modern detective fiction, Edgar Allan Poe, during the span between 1841 and 1845, published five detective stories. These five stories set Poe as the avant-courier of detective fiction as these stories proved themselves to be the sources of much that is characteristic of later crime fiction. One of these stories is *The Purloined Letter*.

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Strangely enough, the crime is not murder but the theft of an important letter of singular value, with a view to blackmailing an unnamed woman. So we can scent the two crimes committed: purloining a private and significant letter, and blackmailing the rightful addressee of the same for gaining something substantial. The story begins in C. Auguste Dupin's, i.e., the avant-garde detective's 'little back library, or book-closet' (Poe 182) where the unnamed narrator, a friend of Dupin's, discovers himself in 'meditation and a meerschaum' (182) in company with Dupin himself. 'Monsieur G—, the Prefect of the Parisian police' (182) gains admittance, with a purpose to consult Dupin on a simple but tricky case. A letter got stolen from the royal apartments, and the man who has committed that is known beyond a doubt: Minister D—, an important government official. The letter which has been addressed to a young lady contains information capable of harming an individual of substantial political power as well as wielding 'its holder a certain power in a certain quarter where such power is immensely valuable' (183). That fact is that, Minister D— still possesses the letter, and consequently exercises power and control over the lady. The letter remains hidden somewhere at Minister D—'s apartment. The lady in question has committed the matter to the Prefect upon absolute secrecy and having failed to retrieve the letter, despite trying many standard policial methods; such as, combing the Minister's entire residence for more than once and waylaying him twice, the Prefect has come to Dupin for help. Upon Dupin's curiosity about the minute description of the letter, Prefect G— reads him aloud a detailed physical description and goes out having been suggested to search again. After one month when Dupin and his narrator friend are again sitting together, the Prefect pays a visit. He admits that he has been a failure, even if the reward for finding the purloined letter has been considerably increased. G— says that he is ready to pay anybody fifty thousand francs who would obtain the letter for him. Dupin rather coolly asks him to write a cheque of that amount on the spot to catch hold of the said letter from him. The Prefect becomes completely flabbergasted and remains so for quite a few moments. However, he then writes Dupin a cheque and taking the letter from him hurries up to give it back to its addressee. Dupin now begins to explain how he could manage to retrieve the letter. The explanation and step-by-step analysis of Dupin's deductive logic still remains a milestone of crime fiction— a thing to be emulated by latter-day crime fiction writers.

Dupin admits of Parisian police's efficiency that follows a set pattern. But they, in this case, have not applied their acumen in fishing out what the man in concern, i.e., Minister D— has thought out. Thinking like a doer of a crime and sometimes imposing his/her very psyche or mental make-up upon the self can elicit fruitful result. Prefect G— and his department have failed miserably in this regard. Paris police have not employed this technique strategically; and so could not find the letter. They merely have looked in those nooks and corners where they themselves might hide it. Minister D— has been intelligent enough to avoid those places where the police would look for spontaneously. Armed with such ken on tricky human psyche, Dupin pays a visit to the Minister's

apartment, the Minister being personally known to him afore. Dupin's eyes caught a few visiting cards hanging from the mantelpiece, along with a letter. The letter's exterior was different from the significant letter in question. He also observes that the letter has been folded back on itself. He gets more sure of the imposed camouflage on the letter by Minister D—, and after conversing with the Minister for some time, leaves behind his gold snuff box over there. When the next morning, Dupin calls for the Minister to take his snuff box back, he prearranges a man to play a 'pretended lunatic' (194) to create a boisterous scene outside the window of Minister D— while Dupin himself is at the apartment. Following the commotion, the Minister rushes to the window, throws it open and looks out. In the meantime, Dupin replaces the original letter with a fake one similar in exterior. Being a political supporter of the lady, i.e., the rightful owner of the letter and himself being an old foe of the Minister who did him an evil turn in Vienna, Dupin postulates that D— will try to use the power he no longer has and that will cause his political effacement. Inside the fake letter, Dupin leaves a message: '— Undesseinsifuneste, / S'iln'estdigné'Atrée, estdigne de Thyeste' (194) meaning 'If such a sinister design is not worthy of Atreus, it is worthy of Thyestes' (Wikipedia *The Purloined Letter*).

Poe was read, followed and emulated by various mystery writers and *The Purloined Letter*, rather surprisingly has foreshadowed three other detective stories penned down by three eminent authors— both in *fabula* and *syuzhet*, in more than one intertextual aspect. The first specimen is Wilkie Collins' *A Stolen Letter* (1854), as has been said earlier. Notwithstanding the narrative structure or the *syuzhet*, which is more or less constant, the *fabula* as well as the title run parallel with Poe's prototypal *The Purloined Letter*. Originally appeared as 'The Fourth Poor Traveller' in *The Seven Poor Travellers*, the Extra Christmas Number of *Household Words* in 1854, many critics have 'often pointed out that many features of the story parallel those in Poe's "The Purloined Letter" (Julian Symons has called it "almost a crib").'(Collins 131). Mr. Boxsious who tells the story while sitting for his portrait reminds us of Dupin, who, with equal aplomb tells us his plans and ploys. The young man Mr. Frank Gatliffe in the story whose father objects to his marrying a governess, must retrieve a letter which implicates her father in a forgery. The severely significant letter is in the hands of one Mr. Alfred Davager, who 'had been in the confidential employment of the writer of it' (137). Just a few days before the marriage, Mr. Davager appears to blackmail Mr. Frank and his would-be wife with the letter in lieu of a five hundred pound note upon whose refusal the letter would be sent to the local paper. Mr. Frank's overbearing father, in that case would be too obliged to put off the marriage. Mr. Frank is so ridiculously in love with the governess that he is hardly to suffer such a loss. He rushes to Mr. Boxsious, a contriving country attorney and his friend, for the retrieval of the letter. Mr. Boxsious takes the responsibility in exchange of a five hundred pound note, the same amount demanded by Davager as the selling price of the same.

The rest of the story consists of the country attorney's narrative about the course of actions with regard to retrieving the letter, from under the carpet of the hotel room where

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the blackmailer has stayed, after subjecting him to trail by his page Tom and other necessary services by the chambermaid of the hotel. And after a thorough search that Mr. Boxsious undertakes in the hotel room of Davager in his absence, when he rescues the letter, he keeps at the hiding place his own hand-written note stating 'Change for a five hundred pound note'(142), giving Mr. Davager hint enough that he has 'been done by the innocent country attorney after all.' (142).

Wilkie Collins' story *A Stolen Letter* (1854) shows remarkable intertextual elements with respect to Poe's *The Purloined Letter* (1844) in quite a few aspects. Both tales deal with theft of letters with a view to blackmail the person/s of moneyed class; the thieves are known by the victims and the sleuths; the task is nothing but to retrieve the letters, thereby rendering the blackmailers powerless; thorough searching is done in both the stories; the sleuths have demonstrated keen effort to grasp the mental leanings of the perpetrators; and the keeping of notes at the hiding places both by Dupin and Mr. Boxious—to relish the victory in full awareness of their opponents in so tricky mind games.

*A Scandal in Bohemia* (1891) is the first short story of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle featuring the super-sleuth Sherlock Holmes. Doyle wrote fifty six short stories and this story, chronologically speaking, posits itself initially. *A Scandal in Bohemia* was first published in the July issue of *The Strand Magazine* in 1891 and in the following year, it was collected in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. This story, like Poe's *The Purloined Letter* tells of the detective's interaction with royalty and his looking into the possible prospect of blackmail. The story begins with Dr. Watson's paying a visit to his old co-boarder and friend Sherlock Holmes at 221B, Baker Street. Having married Mary Morstan, Watson has moved out of their old lodging and is leading a perfect family life. Watson discovers that Holmes has kept himself busy with a number of cases, and a letter written on 'a sheet of thick, pink-tinted note-paper' (Doyle 163) portends another to be followed soon. The giant of a client, upon arrival, introduces himself as the Count Von Kramm. Holmes easily identifies him to be the hereditary King of Bohemia, King Ormstein himself. The King has come incognito from Prague for consulting Holmes as the matter demands utmost secrecy. The King is engaged to be married with the second daughter of the King of Scandinavia; but some five years ago, he entered into a relationship with an American opera singer, Irene Adler by name. She possesses a photograph of herself and the King together, and some compromising letters which she is going to use unfavourably for the King by threatening to send, especially the photograph, to the family of the King's would-be bride on the day of the public proclamation of the betrothal. Previous attempts to recover the photo and other materials by burglary have failed. Twice she has been waylaid and once her luggage was diverted when she was travelling. The ineffectuality of these steps has rendered the King to take help from Sherlock Holmes to retrieve the photograph, and other materials. The King pays Holmes a

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fee of one thousand pounds, 'three hundred pounds in gold and seven hundred in notes' (167).

Without wasting any more time, Holmes sets to work. He visits Briony Lodge, the residence of Irene Adler in the guise of a groom on the next day and discovers that the singer is in a serious relationship with one Godfrey Norton, a lawyer of the Inner Temple. Holmes witnesses the marriage of the pair at the church of Saint Monica. Irene Adler's sudden and unexpected marriage has not lessened the problem for King Ormstein and therefore, it is still there for Holmes to locate the photograph and the letters from Adler's home. Watson being a willing hand, a sham fight among the loafers outside Briony Lodge and alarms of fire raised by the people outside impel Adler rush to the hiding place of her photograph. Holmes watches with intent eyes that the photograph lies 'in a recess behind a sliding panel just above the right bell-pull' (173). But at that time, he cannot catch hold of the photograph. Watson slips through the shouting crowd and waits for Holmes at the corner of the street where Holmes joins him after ten minutes. Both of them start for the Baker Street and at Baker Street, when Holmes is still searching for the key, someone passing by greets him: 'Good-night, Mister Sherlock Holmes' (173). Holmes thinks he recognizes the voice but cannot specify it. On the next day, Holmes, Watson and King Ormstein of Bohemia reaches Briony Lodge but find that the lady has already departed for somewhere in the continent. Holmes rushes to the hiding place, tears back a small sliding shutter and pulls out a photograph and a letter. It is a different photo, not the one they are after, just of Adler herself; and a letter addressed to Holmes. In that letter Irene Adler explains how it was she who, in disguise, wished Holmes 'good night' the last evening. She had realized that on the spur of the moment, she unknowingly showed Holmes the cache, and then followed him to ascertain the thing in its entirety. She also reveals that she has chosen to keep the photo with herself for protection from the King's agents and does not have any plan to use it that may prove detrimental for the King any further. The King feels relieved to learn it as he considers Irene Adler to be a woman of her words. Holmes refuses to have any further retainer for the job and asks the King for the photo Irene Adler has left behind. From then onwards, Holmes refers to Irene Adler 'under the honourable title of the woman' (175), an acknowledgement of respect and admiration.

If one chooses to pick out intertextual elements in A. C. Doyle's *A Scandal in Bohemia* with respect to its forerunning American counterpart *The Purloined Letter*, one cannot help finding out quite a veritable amount of the same. For both tales do not deal with murder, as the common sort of perpetration in crime stories. Doyle must have read Poe's works minutely, as is evident from his reference to Dupin, in *A Study in Scarlet*, Chapter 2:

"It is simple enough as you explain it," I said, smiling. "You remind me of Edgar Allan Poe's Dupin. I had no idea that such individuals did exist outside of stories."

Sherlock Holmes rose and lit his pipe. “No doubt you think that you are complimenting me in comparing me to Dupin,” he observed. (24)

As has been stated earlier, both these stories deal with blackmail and the retrieval of the material/s used for the purpose. In Doyle's *A Scandal in Bohemia*, a photograph serves as an appendage, apart from the letters from the King and the subsequent failure to recover them by Holmes. Both the stories tell us of the troubled persons attached to the royalty. In Poe's tale, it is a lady ‘in the royal boudoir’ (Poe 183) who receives the letter which gets stolen by Minister D—, and in Doyle's *Bohemia*, the personage is his Majesty ‘Wilhelm Gottsreich Sigismund von Ormstein, Grand Duke of Cassel-Felstein, and hereditary King of Bohemia’ (Doyle 165). The *syuzhets* of these two stories are more or less the same. If Todorov's form of detective fiction is taken into account, in both cases, the first part or the story of the crime is theft (in Poe's tale) and blackmail (both in Poe's and Doyle's tales). Dupin receives Prefect G— and his problem with nonchalance. Quite the same way, Sherlock Holmes receives King Ormstein, no matter how agitated the King might appear. The second part of Doyle's *Bohemia*, in some definitive manner shows adaptation from Poe. The pattern of Dupin's investigation casts a lingering shadow on Holmes'. In *The Purloined Letter*, it is inferred that due to the need of ‘instant availability of the document’ (Poe 185) on the part of Minister D—, and as he ‘has been twice waylaid, as if by footpads and his person rigorously searched’ (185) with no effect, ‘the paper is clearly upon the premises’ (185). In *Bohemia*, Holmes asserts:

“It is most unlikely that she carries it about with her. It is cabinet size. Too large for easy concealment about a woman's dress. She knows that the King is capable of having her waylaid and searched. Two attempts of the sort have already been made. We may take it, then, that she does not carry it about with her.” (Doyle 171)

Poe's Dupin catches the right chord of the Minister's psyche. The Minister could foresee that ‘the invariable principle of policial action’ (Poe 191) would search ‘the most intricate and remote recess’ (191) of his residence and therefore he has driven to simplicity itself—to hide the letter under the nose of everybody. Doyle's Holmes also tries to fathom the feminine psyche and hits upon a plan to induce Adler show the cache herself. Dupin goes to the scene of operation a day before the actual retrieval of the letter; to gather necessary clues so as to determine and locate the document. Doyle also sends Holmes a day earlier to Briony Lodge to do the same, in the guise of an old clergyman. In both tales, we find both Dupin and Holmes employ other people to stage some fake action so as to create commotion with a view to distracting the offender. And in the end, Dupin leaves an insinuating message for D— so as to inform him about his own hand in the retrieval. Doyle plays it in the opposite way and makes Irene Adler leave a letter for Holmes setting an explanation that proves her matching intelligence with the sleuth.

Lastly, in the same vein as it has been written, comes Agatha Christie's *The Veiled Lady*. Christie was a voracious reader and must have read Poe, Collins and Doyle. With a bit of modification of the actual *syuzhet*, her tale of Poirot can be taken for

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presenting almost the same *fabula*, save a twist in the ending. It is a short story and was first published in *The Sketch* in October, 1923 in the U.K. In the U.S., the story was first published in *The Blue Book Magazine* in 1925.

Poirot grows too much dissatisfied due to the lack of interesting cases within the ambit of his deductive powers. The narrator friend Capt. Hastings, when told by Poirot that the criminals in England are afraid of him to a great extent, alludes to him of a recent jewel theft in Bond Street where the thief who has been caught red-handed has managed to pass the jewels onto an accomplice. Poirot hardly shows any interest regarding this case. At this point, a heavily veiled lady pays him a visit. She introduces herself as Lady Millicent Castle Vaughan whose engagement to the young Duke of Southshire had been made public a few days before. One Mr. Lavington seems to have procured a letter of her addressed to a young soldier who was subsequently killed in war. The letter contains some phrases that show Lady Millicent's intense fondness of him which can be differently interpreted. Lavington has put the letter into the use of blackmailing Lady Millicent and 'threatens to pay him an enormous sum of money' (Christie 15) failing which he will send the letter to the Duke. The Duke, being of a jealous nature may form the worst ideas and that may break off the engagement altogether. Lavington's demand of a whopping twenty thousand pounds is unaffordable for Lady Millicent. She is sure of Lavington's possession of the letter as he has showed it to her following a clandestine appointment. He has kept the letter in a Chinese puzzle box and has told her that he would keep it in a secret place impossible to be found out by her. Upon Poirot's invitation to settle the matter over, Lavington pays him a visit and sneeringly adds that he can lessen the amount by two thousand pounds, making it eighteen thousand and Lady Millicent has time until Tuesday evening. Otherwise, the letter will be sent to the Duke. Lavington will be off to Paris and will find the sum by the coming Tuesday. Being insulted by such jeer of Lavington, Poirot decides to give a combing operation into Lavington's house. He reaches there in the morning, shows the housekeeper a fictitious card and introduces himself to be a man recommended by the Scotland Yard who has come to fix some burglarproof fastenings on the windows. Poirot then leaves one window unfastened through which he and Hastings sneak into the house that very night. After a patient and systematic search, they move to the kitchen, a place least likely to contain the Chinese box. They find the Chinese box there hidden within a joined wood log in the coal-bin. On the day following, Lady Millicent calls for the letter. Seeing the compromising letter, she appears to be glad and asks for the puzzle box as a souvenir but Poirot restrains her. The box has another compartment containing the six jewels stolen from the Bond Street jewellery shop. Inspector Japp comes out of another room, recognizes the 'Lady' as 'Gertie', an accomplice of Lavington. Lavington alias Reed alias Corker has attempted to double-cross his fellow gang members by keeping the puzzle box at his own house at a secret place. Lavington has been killed in Holland as he has been suspected to have the goods with him. The gang members, failing to locate the puzzle box with the jewels and the letter have used

Poirot to retrieve it. Japp arrests Gertie and takes her away. Poirot then tells the stupefied Hastings that it was the cheap shoes that Gertie was wearing made him suspicious. Poirot asserts that a woman of Lady Millicent's stature would never wear cheap shoes. In the end, Poirot feels perfectly satisfied to declare that not only he is known to the criminals of England, but they also use him when they themselves fail.

But for the final twist in *The Veiled Lady*, Agatha Christie's short narrative shows itself to be definitely indebted to those of Poe's, Collins' and Doyle's. In Collins' story, the blackmailer sees the woman and shows her the letter. He then also meets Mr. Boxsious and insults him just as Poirot is insulted. 'Tuesday' is also significant in both the stories as the ultimate day. Apparently at the outset, it is again a story of blackmail and the detective's retrieval of the letter from a secret place at the perpetrator's own house. Both the form and the content almost be the same. Entering into the criminal mind, intelligent guess work, prior survey of the spot by the detective, the villain's being waylaid and finally the retrieval— all pointedly demonstrate Christie's indebtedness to Poe's *The Purloined Letter*, Collins' *A Stolen Letter* and Doyle's *A Scandal in Bohemia*.

Crime fiction appeals to us because of its ingenuity. The structure, innately peculiar and well-defined, does not vary much from story to story. It is because of the varying *fabulas* that the readers feel glued to such kind of narrative. The fictional crimes are mostly murders, sometimes they are of some other sort; and the puzzles they entail are of various colours and creeds. The investigative procedures and solutions are also of myriad types. The ideas of rational inquiry drifting to the containment of crime be the essence of crime stories. The authors of this sub-genre, therefore, are seen to vie with one another on this point. The remarkably exceptional literary phenomenon that the present article is striving to point out is the indelible intertextual imprint on the creations of three most contriving and renowned authors of all time: Wilkie Collins, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie— trailing Edgar Allan Poe.

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