

ADAPTING
MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS
FOR A MODERN AUDIENCE



Bachelor Thesis English Language and Culture
Noah Swildens
S4604881
15 June 2018
Supervisor: Dr C. Louttit
Radboud University

ENGELSE TAAL EN CULTUUR

Teacher who will receive this document: Dr C. Louttit

Title of document: Adapting *Murder on the Orient Express* for a Modern Audience

Name of course: Bachelors Thesis English Literature

Date of submission: 15 June 2018

The work submitted here is the sole responsibility of the undersigned, who has neither committed plagiarism nor colluded in its production.

Signed

Name of student: Noah Swildens

Student number: s4604881

Abstract

In this thesis, Kenneth Branagh's film adaptation *Murder on the Orient Express* (2017) will be analysed to see how it deviates from Agatha Christie's novel. This thesis aims to provide an answer to the question of how Kenneth Branagh adapted *Murder on the Orient Express* for a modern audience. It will argue that Branagh has stayed reasonably close to the source text while at the same time updating the story and its characters in order for the modern audience to connect better with the story. The thesis will do so by looking at the characterisation of the story's protagonist Hercule Poirot, Branagh's inclusion of the modern themes of race and racism, and the use of action and violence.

Key words: Agatha Christie, Kenneth Branagh, *Murder on the Orient Express* (2017), adaptation.

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Background.....	4
Theoretical Framework.....	6
Chapter I, The Characterisation of Hercule Poirot.....	8
Humanising Poirot.....	9
Poirot’s Characteristics.....	10
Chapter II, Race and Racism.....	14
Background.....	14
Changing the Characters.....	16
Stereotypical Characters	17
Chapter III, Increasing the Level of Action	20
Media Violence.....	20
Violence in Christie’s Work and Christie Adaptations	21
Updating the 2017 Version.....	22
Conclusion.....	25
Works Cited.....	28

Introduction

Best-selling novelist Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934) has become one of the best-known detective stories whose famous ending can rightfully be called "one of the most iconic whodunits reveals in all of mystery writing" (Grady). The detective novel tells the story of Belgian detective Hercule Poirot on board the Orient Express. When a man is killed, he takes it upon him to find the murderer amongst the other passengers on the train. Audiences were and are still being thrilled by the surprising ending of Christie's story, claiming that it "might just be her crown jewel" (Martinelli).

In 2017, Sir Kenneth Branagh both directed and starred in his adaptation of Christie's story. He plays the part of Hercule Poirot alongside a star-studded cast, including Dame Judi Dench, Johnny Depp, and Michelle Pfeiffer. It was not an odd decision for Branagh to choose precisely this story from the multitude of Christie's work. Director Sidney Lumet had also made an adaptation of the story in 1974, which was for a long time seen, both critically and popularly, as "the centre of Agatha Christie's screen universe" (Aldridge 122). Branagh paired up with screenwriter Michael Green in order to make the film happen. Green remarked that both Branagh and he "had the same goal: we wanted to bring it into the modern world without changing what's essential to it, without altering its soul, so that a contemporary audience can experience it, believe it and be thrilled by it" (Twentieth Century Fox 5).

Background

Christie's fame started to rise ever since the great success of her first novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920). This is also the story in which the audiences met Hercule Poirot. Christie eventually wrote 33 original novels and over 50 short stories about the Belgian detective with his characteristic moustache ("Hercule Poirot"). Audiences cherished him and his stories, even to the extent that, when he died in *Curtain* (1975), the New York Times published an obituary of him on their frontpage, which is something that had never been done for a fictional character before ("Poirot's Obituary").

Since Poirot's stories were and are so loved, it is not surprising to see that many of his stories were soon adapted for television and film. It was actor Austin Trevor who was the first to bring him to the silver screen ("Past Poirot Portrayals"). Even though this film did not cause that much enthusiasm, it did show that audiences were interested in seeing more of the detective on screen (Aldridge 22). This enthusiasm did come eventually, and when it did it was there to

stay, for countless adaptations of Christie's sleuth have been produced and, most importantly, are still being produced nowadays.

Kenneth Branagh's *Murder on the Orient Express* (2017) shows that Christie's stories are still being used for new films. Apparently, there was something in her story that made Branagh feel like the story needed to be told again. Branagh is an actor, director and writer who is best known for his film adaptations of Shakespearean plays ("Kenneth Branagh"). Through his wealth of experience in adapting classical stories, Branagh knows how important it is to change a classic story for it to appeal to a more modern audience. The actor and director explained that he was eager to introduce "another generation of moviegoers to an enthralling new interpretation of one of the most beloved mysteries of all time" (Twentieth Century Fox 4).

Viewers of Christie's adaptations and Christie herself have always been quite critical of the adaptations, most likely because there are so many stories about Poirot, thereby making him someone of whom the audience feels like they truly know him. *Murder on the Orient Express* (2017) and all the other adaptations are thereby embedded in the debate about the fidelity of adaptations. Many makers of Christie adaptations were unsure about whether they should "overhaul the stories for modern audiences or present them as heritage pieces" (Aldridge 7). In his book *Agatha Christie on Screen*, Mark Aldridge claims that "the best Christie adaptations are often those that leave her original stories largely untouched but add their own charm to it" (252). Especially this notion of adding an own charm to it, is in my opinion quite interesting, for it indicates that with every adaptation, makers of the film/series have the opportunity to add something to it which is characteristic of the time they are making it in. Considering that film and series makers want their work to be seen by a contemporary audience, it is crucial for them to present the story they are telling in a way which appeals to that audience.

The 2017 film adaptation of *Murder on the Orient Express* has thus tried to stay close to Christie's novel while at the same time also making the story more appealing to a modern audience. These 'updates' that Branagh made to the story will be analysed and discussed in this thesis with the use of the following research question: how did Kenneth Branagh adapt Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* for a modern audience?

In order to answer this research question, this thesis will discuss three major updates in the film. The first chapter will discuss the portrayal of Hercule Poirot, for Branagh had to be very thoughtful in picking the right aspects of this well-established character from a multitude of material on Poirot. He had also had to present these aspects in such a way that would give the audience the right image of the detective. The second chapter will explore how Branagh highlighted the themes of race and racism explicit in his film, thereby responding to the interests

of the modern audience. Lastly, the third chapter will focus on how Branagh added more action scenes and why he did so.

This discussion is embedded in the broader debate of adaptation studies and specifically in the debate of how novels are updated for the silver screen. This thesis is also, and more specifically, embedded in the debate of Agatha Christie adaptations and it specifically discusses the changes that are made to her stories which made it possible for them to still be interesting for different audiences at different times. Since Branagh's film was only released in November 2017, the discussion around the adaptation and its relation to the original story has not been going on for a very long time. Therefore, a lot of new things can still be explored. Christie and her work, on the other hand, have been discussed in great detail in the academic field. These sources can give a proper overview of what Christie's time was like and how this can account for the choices that she made in her novel. Twentieth Century Foxed also published the production information for *Murder on the Orient Express*, which will be used in this thesis for explaining why Branagh made the 'updates' to the story.

Theoretical Framework

This thesis mainly draws on the theory from the field of adaptation studies. Adaptations have become a part of modern everyday life and its popular culture, thereby replacing the role of novels and short stories in the past Western society (Albrecht-Crane and Cutchins 11). If a certain text is popular among the audience, for example, the *Harry Potter* series or the Marvel comics, then there is a good chance that an adaptation of it will also be popular and thus also lucrative. The popularity of film adaptations could also be explained by the fact that people might feel like it is easier to watch a classic adaptation, for reading the actual novel might take up too much of their time. It could also be the case that there is a particular kind of nostalgia for the past which makes people interested in seeing the classic works being re-interpreted by each generation of filmmakers.

Even though the "critical literature on adaptations is not extensive" (Whelehan 4), there is a recurring theme in the field of adaptation studies, namely the issue of fidelity or 'fidelity criticism'. Scholars of adaptation studies have continued to focus on fidelity "to a precursor text as means to understand an adaptation's scope of worth. (Albrecht-Crane and Cutchins 11-2). This concern about fidelity could be because of the audience's emotional investment in the books on which the adaptation is based, which causes them to only look at the adaptation as an inferior version of the book. There is thus this sort of idea that a book will always be richer and more complex than a film, just because a film does not have enough time to include all the

things that are included in the book. Some people also think that certain texts, such as the ones from Agatha Christie, demand a particular kind of respect and that filmmakers should not try to update it in order to make it fit to the twenty-first century.

It is, however, problematic and limiting to solely judge films based on their fidelity to the original text. To begin with, there is not an absolute ruler along which it is possible to measure a film's fidelity. It is also limiting because the "stubborn insistence on fidelity certainly has kept adaptation theory from maturing" (Albrecht-Crane and Cutchins 12). It should be made clear that literature and cinema are two completely different fields and that both fields have different qualities which can be used to tell a story. By stopping to look at adaptations as a lesser version of the original story and by studying them in their own right, the real discussion about the adaptation can be opened. Adaptations should thus be seen as "a derivation that is not derivate – a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic." (Hutcheon and O'Flynn 9).

The field of adaptation studies is also concerned with whether the film and its source are "subject to cultural and historical contextualization" (Leitch 66). As can be seen from *Murder on the Orient Express*, this was truly something that Branagh was very thoughtful about. In the film it can clearly be seen how Branagh had to "interpret, re-working the precursor text and choosing the various meanings and sensations they find most compelling (or most effective), then imagine scenes, characters, plot elements, etc., that match their interpretation" (Albrecht-Crane and Cutchins 16). Branagh thus really tried to take the classic story and change it so it would fit in the modern time, thereby highlighting certain themes in Christie's original story (e.g. the themes of race and racism) that Christie did not give that much attention to. He did have to be careful not to change too much of her story for *Murder on the Orient Express* is an example of a story that is so widely known and loved that it demands a certain degree of respect from the audience and the people who try to adapt it. Branagh worked very closely with the Christie Estate to ensure that his film would not dishonour Christie's legacy and he said that "this very particular connection was very important to me" (Twentieth Century Fox 7).

Chapter I, The Characterisation of Hercule Poirot

Agatha Christie was dared by her sister Madge to write a full-fledged detective story in which it would be impossible to guess who the murderer was. As a result, Agatha wrote *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920), which featured the Belgian detective Hercule Poirot. She was convinced that the appearance of Poirot would just be a one-off (“The Creation of Hercule Poirot”). Little did she know that the detective would eventually star in 33 original books and over 50 short stories. Christie had thus plenty of time to define his character and all his little quirks in great detail. He would grow out to be one of her most famous and beloved characters, which makes it no surprise that he would soon find his way to the silver screen. His first on-screen appearance was in the 1931 film *Alibi*, which is believed to be lost (Aldridge 20). Even though this film did not turn out to be a great success, it did show that there was interest among the audience in “the potential of seeing the sleuth on screen” (Aldridge 22). This film was also the first to attempt to solve one of the toughest problems of bringing Poirot to life: how does one cast a proper Poirot? (Aldridge 19) This turned out to be a rather difficult task to perform, judging from the numerous attempts in the past adaptations and the critique the characterisation of Poirot has always received. Especially Albert Finney’s performance in the 1974 film version of *Murder on the Orient Express* and David Suchet’s performance in the 1989 series *Agatha Christie’s Poirot* stand out, for their “critical response was positive” (Aldridge 248). Poirot was thus notorious for being difficult to portray on screen, and this is something the makers of the 2017 version of *Murder on the Orient Express* were well aware of. They knew that “Poirot was key to ensuring the film worked” (Twentieth Century Fox 10). It was up to them to create a Poirot that would do the well-established icon justice and would also be liked by a modern audience. To find out how Branagh and Green tried to achieve this effect, this chapter will first explore what kind of image of Poirot they wanted to create. Subsequently, the chapter will discuss what techniques they implored to establish this image.

In the 2017 version of *Murder on the Orient Express*, established actor and director Kenneth Branagh takes up the part of Hercule Poirot. Branagh directed and acted in multiple Shakespearean and other classic adaptations, which made the staff from Twentieth Century Fox call him “a perfect fit from the start” (10). It was thus up to Branagh, producer Ridley Scott and screenwriter Michael Green to decide what they would and what they would not take from the abundance of material that Christie had provided in order to create the best and most telling image of Poirot. Naturally, his moustache and fastidiousness had to be incorporated in the film,

for they are his most defining characteristics, but from there on it was really up to them to decide what parts of Poirot they wanted to highlight the most. In order for the film to appeal to a modern audience, it is essential that it contains themes that the contemporary audience can connect with (i.e. that have meaning for them), even though the story was written in 1934 with themes that connected to the audience then.

Humanising Poirot

Michael Green explained that they wanted to “make him quirky and strange and odd and loveable in all those ways that he is, that make him so memorable and beloved. But also, how to make him feel like somebody who could really exist in this world.” (Twentieth Century Fox 10) It was thus very important to Green that Poirot would become somewhat less of an icon and more of an actual person; they wanted to humanise him more. It has been proven that “identification with characters [is] associated with spectators’ degree of enjoyment of feature films of different genres” (Igartua 347). Branagh highlighted and added some of Poirot’s characteristics in order for him to be more human.

One of the most noticeable changes that Branagh made in order to give Poirot “a new sense of depth other adaptations seemingly lacked” (Voldase), is that in this version, Poirot has a lost love, whom he calls “Ma chère Katherine”. He carries a picture of her with him and expresses his deepest and darkest fears to it at night. This might seem a little strange to Christie-readers, for Poirot was known for “his apparent lack of interest in women” (Aldridge 251). By adding this love interest to the story, Poirot becomes more human, for it shows that he is ‘humanly capable’ of love and also that he is not afraid to express those feelings.

In most TV series and films, characters are portrayed quite superficially, for “deeper, more realistic, more ambiguous characterizations make it hard for viewers who to root for” (Osborn). As a result, good characters in films are usually presented as being completely good, without any flaws of character. Branagh did give Poirot more depth by making him a bit more hot-headed than Christie’s Poirot had initially been. For example, when Bouc (Tom Bateman) insults him and his methodology, he becomes infuriated with Bouc. By making Poirot more hot-headed, he no longer is a ‘perfect’ character with only good characteristics, and he thus becomes more of an actual human being. It also makes him a more interesting character for the audience to watch, for his sudden bursts of anger create an interesting contrast with his usually gentlemanly demeanour. It keeps the audience at the edge of their seat for they are constantly wondering how Poirot will react to the people around him.

Another thing that keeps the audience at the edge of their seats is Poirot's methodology that he uses to solve the case. This is known as his "order and method", in which heightened perceptual ability is an important factor, for it allows him to observe "small and seemingly insignificant details which are overlooked by others" (Kellogg 47). Poirot also explicitly explains this in the film when he says that he "can only see the world as it should be. And when it is not, the imperfection stands out like the nose in the middle of a face". By explaining his method, the audience has a better understanding of Poirot and what makes him tick.

A last detail that Branagh added to the story in order to humanise Poirot more is the inclusion of his character arc. He does not really have a character arc in Christie's novel, in which he acts as a kind of platform on which she builds her stories. He is thus mainly there in her stories in order for her to tell the story and it is not the case that the story is there in order for her to discuss Poirot. Branagh did make the story a bit more about Poirot by giving him a reasonably obvious character arc. At the beginning of the film, he says that "There is right. There is wrong. There is nothing in between." At the end of the film, Poirot discovers that Ratchett's (Johnny Depp) real name is actually 'Cassetti' and that he is a wanted for the murder of the child Daisy Armstrong. He also finds out that all the passengers on the train, except himself and Bouc, are connected to the Armstrong family and that they are all responsible for the murder of Ratchett. Poirot thus has to choose between reporting them to the police or not. He finds this very difficult and says that "There was right. There was wrong. Now there is you.", thereby indicating that he has let go of his strict rules of how things ought to be. This added character arc thus transforms Poirot from being a narrative device to an actual human being who is fascinating to watch.

Poirot's Characteristics

The film mostly employs two main techniques to establish Poirot's character, which can be summed up as *exaggeration* and *repetition*. Features of Poirot are often reasonably exaggerated in the film to make sure that the audience does not miss this one particular trait or feature (e.g. his moustache or fastidiousness) as something belonging truly to Poirot – it is not arbitrary that he has it, but it is an actual part of him. Other traits, for example, his fastidiousness or politeness, are repeated numerous times, thus creating the same effect: the audience cannot miss this trait and will attribute it to Poirot's being. The exaggeration can also be repeated to create an even more extreme effect. Another function of the exaggeration is humour. For example, Poirot often asks other characters in the film to straighten their ties just a little bit, because the 'imbalance' of it irritates him. The creators of the film did have to be careful not to

exaggerate Poirot's characteristics too much, for if they would take it too far, it might look more like they were ridiculing him. Anthony Horowitz, director of several TV and film adaptations of works by Christie, states that "there's a narrow line between turning him into a cartoon Belgian who can't quite manage the English language, and really remembering that he is a real human being" ("Extras: Let's Talk about Hercule Poirot").

Perhaps Poirot's most distinct feature is his moustache. In Christie's book it is described as being "luxurious, magnificent, immense, and dedicatedly groomed" ("The Creation of Hercule Poirot"). Branagh knew that it was the most important feature of Poirot and that it needed to make a big impression. He gathered all descriptions of his moustache by Christie and began "the nine-month process of research and development for the requisite face furniture that would live up to what Miss Christie described as "the most significant moustaches in all England". (Twentieth Century Fox 10) Branagh and hair and make-up designer Carol Hemming knew that Christie had meant 'moustaches' in the old sense of the word, but they decided that there should almost be this "double-moustache effect" (Twentieth Century Fox 11). When the audience sees Poirot for the first time in the film, they only see his back and another man grooming his moustache. Thus, there is already more attention to the moustache than to Poirot himself, and when the audience finally sees Poirot's face for the time, they are not disappointed by his moustache. It is an enormous moustache that takes up most of the space on Poirot's face. It is safe to say that exaggeration was used in the process of creating the moustache. The moustache might look a bit silly at the beginning, but it is not distracting throughout the film. The big moustache is also used to create humorous scenes. For example, when Poirot is reading in his bed, he wears a sort of protector over his face that is supposed to keep his moustache in order during the night. The greatness and uniqueness of the moustache are emphasised even more by creating a binary opposition with the moustaches of, for example, Ratchett and MacQueen (Josh Gad) since those are all very small and not prominent at all. Thus, by continually putting so much attention on the moustache, the audience knows that it is Poirot's most important feature. It tells the audience that he is extremely worried about its grooming, which also emphasises his fastidiousness.

Poirot's fastidiousness is another of his most significant characteristics, and it is often used by Green and Branagh to create humorous scenes throughout the film. Christie's characters, and Poirot in particular, are described as "comic in both presentation and conversation" (Bargainnier 11). Green and Branagh really highlighted this comic side of Poirot in the film and used his fastidiousness to do so. Green said that Poirot is "an incredibly fun man to frustrate, because he is so perfect and particular, that when he is off balance, he becomes

incredibly interesting” (Twentieth Century Fox 11). In one of the first scenes in the film, Poirot asks for two eggs of the exact same size for breakfast and even goes to the extent of measuring them with a ruler. He says that he cannot understand why hens lay eggs of different sizes (something that Branagh cleverly took from Christie’s *The Disappearance of Mr Davenheim*). By putting this scene at the beginning of the film, the audience immediately understands that Poirot is an extreme perfectionist. This first judgement is only confirmed further in the next scene, in which he steps in a pile of horse droppings with his right shoe. He then places his left shoe in it as well in order to get rid of the “imbalance”. These two comic scenes are cleverly placed at the beginning of the film, for they immediately set the tone for the film and let the audience know that this will not be a dark and grim adaptation of Christie’s beloved story. Besides the humorous effect, these scenes also exaggerate Poirot’s fastidiousness. Christie-readers know that Poirot is extremely fastidious, but some people found that Branagh took it a bit too far, calling Branagh’s Poirot a “pernickety Belgian [who is] extremely OCD and in aggressive need of balance” (Truitt). Regardless of whether one thinks that Branagh took it too far or not, it does establish Poirot’s fastidiousness very clearly. Branagh incorporates many of these similar kinds of scenes – thus also repeating the exaggeration – to let his audience know that Poirot does not do all these silly things to be funny, but simply because he cannot live with the imbalance of things.

Another technique that Branagh uses to convey Poirot’s characteristic to the audience, is the explicitly naming of them. This can be said by another character *about* Poirot. For example, when countess Andrenyi (Lucy Boynton) says: “You are a funny-looking man, Mr Poirot. Are all detectives so funny-looking?” Having another character say something like this is a clever way of confirming the audience’s opinion that they might have of Poirot. Likewise, Poirot can also say something about himself. He does this, for example, to inform the audience about his background, when he tries to make a joke and nobody laughs. He then says: “forgive me I am Belgian”. This scene is another of the film’s attempt to establish Poirot as a comic character, but it also tells the audience that Poirot is from Belgium, which then accounts for his strong accent. Poirot’s friendliness is also established with the use of another character. Bouc is the manager on board the Orient Express and a close friend of Poirot. When he meets Poirot in a kitchen in Istanbul, he explains to a prostitute that Poirot “never judges me for being a terrible person.” Bouc’s statement thus tells the audience about what kind of a person Poirot is. Bouc also functions as Poirot’s right-hand man throughout the film. Bateman explained that Bouc is “supposed to be the same age [as Poirot], French, and [that] they are these two older men talking and laughing about the world” (Twentieth Century Fox 22). Branagh decided to

change this in order to create an “interesting dynamic where an older Belgian man and a younger Englishman have this sweet fondness for each other” (Twentieth Century Fox 22). By incorporating this close friendship with Bouc and other characters (e.g. Mohammed the baker whom Poirot also meets in Istanbul) Poirot is presented as a much more friendly and likeable character, thereby also humanising him more by giving him actual friendships.

Chapter II, Race and Racism

The themes of race and racism play an important role in Kenneth Branagh's *Murder on the Orient Express*. He presents racism as something absolutely negative and as something that people should be aware of. This is entirely different from Christie's stories, of which new readers "should be warned of the casual racism of the era" (Cawthorne 1). By highlighting the themes of race and racism in his film, Branagh "brought a new perspective and relevance to Christie's classic novel" (Voldase). Since different generations adjust "the stories of the past to the present time and to its modern needs" (Dean), it could be argued that presentations of race and racism have become more important to the modern society. In order to understand both Christie's and Branagh's motivation for presenting race and racism in the way that they did, the chapter will first compare the ways in which Christie's and Branagh's societies thought about race and racism. The chapter will then analyse and explain the changes that Branagh made to the original story to find out how he tried to raise awareness of race and racism among his audience.

Background

During the 1930s, the British population was struck by poverty and unemployment due to the effects of the Great Depression ("The Great Depression: 1929-1932"). In these years of hardship, British industrialists and politicians took it upon them to assert a 'Britannic' identity that was shaped by national interests and priorities (Thackeray). As a result, British nationalism became increasingly more important and peaked in the "fascist period of 1930s Europe" (Miles 9). Even though Britain did not have a fascist government, it was influenced by the rise of fascism in Europe. In the run-up to the Second World War, many countries were to some extent characterised by "high levels of public racism and xenophobia" (Mason). Although the situation in Britain was not as extreme as it was in Germany, the Brits did take their time before they started to oppose to the normalised racism in their country. An example of this is the Race Relations Act, which was the first document of legislation in the United Kingdom that addresses the prohibition of racial discrimination and was only signed in 1965 ("Race Relations Act 1965"). Nonetheless, not everyone was racist at the time, and it was due to the humanitarians and the liberals who were among the first to show a greater awareness of the offensiveness of the racism, which made it possible for the Race Relations Act to be drawn up (Barkan 24).

Since Christie's society did not see racism as something negative, it is not surprising to see that Agatha Christie also did not see it as something negative and as a result her stories

sometimes contain a fair amount of racism. Her characters are often xenophobic or stereotypical. For example, she often used a foreign character as a red herring, because she was aware of her audience's negative perspective on foreigners, and thus knew that they would falsely suspect the foreign character in her stories (Aldridge 254). This shows that she knew how to adapt her stories to her audience and the time they were living in to create exciting whodunits, which means that she did not use the racism to insult foreigners, but that it actually served as a sort of technique to mislead her audience. Christie's racism was thus more of "the stupidly unthinking rather than the deliberately vicious kind" (Gill 89). Another example of her unthoughtful use of racism can be found in some of the titles of her stories. The most famous example is *Ten Little Niggers* (1939). This novel tells the story of ten people who are trapped on an island and are murdered one by one. The inspiration for her story was Frank J. Green's nursery rhyme, which he wrote in 1869 and which became a "standard of the blackface minstrel shows in England and America" (Jacobs). The title was changed into *And Then There Were None* (1964) in America and into *Ten Little Indians* (1964) in Britain. These changes in the title show that Christie and her readers were not "deliberately racist", for they did not mind the loss of the offensive word (Aldridge 117). It does show that times were changing in the 1960s and that Christie's stories and her audience changed with it.

When Barack Obama became the first African-American president, he "proved possible what people from minority communities could previously only imagine – never attain – as the barriers of white supremacy were still well intact" (Garcia). This, however, did not mean that the United States was absolved of its racist history (Garcia). Even though the racist history remained, Obama's presidency did encourage minority communities to unite and revolt against the authorities that oppressed them. In the same years of his presidency, the internet and social media became more popular to the extent that they are now "an integral part of our everyday lives" (Wyden). It is thus not surprising to see that the revolting minority communities and other like-minded chose the internet to express their opinions. This led to the enormous increase of online subcultures, and "youth political subcultures that had created them and emerged out of them" (Nagle 69). In her book *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from 4chan and Tumblr to Trump and the Alt-right*, Angela Nagle calls this new culture "Tumblr-liberalism" (69). She explains that the "Tumblr-liberals" show a great interest in and try to raise awareness of concerns such as mental-ill health, physical disability, race, cultural identity and 'intersectionality'" (69). Intersectionality is what happens when different forms of discrimination (i.e. based on race, sexuality, etc.) combine, overlap, and intersect and although the word has been around since the late 1980s, it nowadays seems to be popping up everywhere

(“Word We’re Watching: Intersectionality”). The fact that this word has become more popular nowadays indicates a concern about discrimination among the people of the contemporary society. This concern has manifested itself in the media. Although there is some progress in the way that ethnic minorities are presented in the media, there is a general feeling that they are not depicted enough or in a stereotypical way (Grant).

Kenneth Branagh modernises Agatha Christie’s *Murder on the Orient Express* by giving more attention to the instances of race and racism than she originally did in her novel. Previous adaptations of *Murder on the Orient Express* have often stayed fairly faithful to the (sometimes racist) source text, causing it to be also somewhat racist as an immediate result. It is true that the cast of Branagh’s version is also made up of primarily white actors and actresses (though it does have more ethnically different actors than the 1974 version), but the film does address and question the racism that was seen as “part of the story” in Christie’s original novel. The film discusses both racism on the basis of nationality and ethnicity in several different ways. It is surprising to see that the film does not only highlight these issues but also criticises them. He thus shows that he is aware of the importance of the themes of race and racism to the modern audience and also that he tries to raise awareness of these themes among the people who do not yet see it as an issue.

Changing the Characters

In order to highlight and criticise the racism in Christie’s novel, Branagh changed the characters of the Cuban Biniamino Marquez (Manuel Garcia-Rulfo) and the British Dr Arbuthnot (Leslie Odom Jr). Marquez was an Italian man called Antonio Foscarelli in Christie’s novel, but Branagh decided to change this in order to bring the story “more to this day” (“Tom Bateman & Manuel Garcia Rulfo: Murder on the Orient Express Exclusive Interview”). Branagh could have decided to make this change because his audience might not be aware of the negative attitude towards Italians in the 1930s. This negative attitude towards Italians in the 1920s and 1930s is mainly the result from Italy’s leader at the time, Benito Mussolini, to ally with Germany in the Second World War (“The Story of the Italians in Britain WW2”). Branagh’s modern audience might not have been aware of this attitude towards Italians in Christie’s time, but they probably were aware of the current stereotypes of Latinos. They are often stereotypically portrayed as criminals or gang members in TV series and films (Reny and Manzano 200). Branagh highlights the racism of Christie’s characters, for example, when MacQueen asks Poirot if the latter has thought of Marquez as being the potential killer, because

Marquez' "kind does not have the same distaste for murder". Branagh criticizes the racism in this scene by having Poirot react disapprovingly to MacQueen's remark.

Branagh also changed the character of Dr Arbuthnot. He is a combination of Christie's Colonel Arbuthnot (a stereotypical white Brit) and Dr Constantine (the white coroner on the train). Branagh creates an interesting character with Dr Arbuthnot and by having a black actor play the part, for it did not happen very often that someone with a darker skin was able to have become a doctor in the 1930s. Branagh also has Poirot explicitly mention this when he says to Arbuthnot that he "must have worked very hard to become a doctor. Not many of your race are allowed the opportunity". Branagh explained that Arbuthnot's "ethnicity at that time is something that the story explores, and Arbuthnot has to display the courage to be different in a difficult situation" (Twentieth Century Fox 21), thus showing that he made this change deliberately. This change also shows how Branagh really tries to make his audience think about what the 1930s were like for ethnic minorities. It is as if he wants the audience to think about whether it would still be strange today to have a "coloured doctor", while at the same time providing a telling impression of what life was like for people of colour in the 1930s. This is something that Branagh did not *need* to include in order to tell the story, but because he does include it, he shows that he is aware of the modern-day society's demand for equal representation of ethnic minorities in the media.

Stereotypical Characters

Branagh uses stereotypes to establish his characters in much the same way as Christie did. Christie's use of stereotypes was apparently so excessive that literary critics did not study her work for quite some time because they were unable to find "any literary depth or cultural value in her stable of stereotypical characters" (Lassner 31). Branagh most likely used stereotypes to establish his characters because "in most TV programs and movies, viewers' emotions have to be enlisted very quickly. Starkly contrasting good and bad characters help accomplish this" (Osborn). Branagh goes one step further by combining the stereotypes with binary oppositions to create an even stronger effect.

In *Murder on the Orient Express*, there is a very clear division between the American and the English passengers. The division stressed by the characters who often say things like "Don't forget to say nice things about us Americans" or "The American lady, Mrs Hubbard, ...". Branagh also establishes the division with the use of binary oppositions and stereotypes. An example of this can already be found at the beginning of the film when the passengers are boarding the train, and the audience sees a meeting between Edward Masterman (Derek Jacobi)

and Hector MacQueen. Masterman is a reserved and elderly British gentleman who serves as a sort of butler to Ratchett, whereas MacQueen is Ratchett's big, clumsy, alcoholic, American secretary. In the meeting scene on the platform, their already quite stereotypical characteristics are highlighted even more because they are contrasted to the other person's characteristics, thus because of the binary opposition that is created. For example, because Masterman is calm and reserved, MacQueen's loudness seems even louder. It could be argued, though, that Branagh uses these stereotypes to confront his audience with their views on stereotypes. Aside from using this as a way to establish his characters, Branagh also seems to use these stereotypes to play with the audience's views on stereotypes. For if someone recognises Masterman as being "typically British", that could indicate an unconscious stereotype that he or she might have. Branagh thus follows in Christie's footsteps by playing with the audience's knowledge, in this case of contemporary stereotypes, to recreate Christie's intriguing story.

The stereotypical characters in the film are also used by Branagh to convey the message that racism is something truly awful and that it should be abhorred. An obvious example of this is Mr Ratchett (Johnny Depp). He is presented as the villain of the story, and Johnny Depp described him as "the ultimate borderline personality, disordered gangster, opportunist" ("Murder On The Orient Express (20th Century Fox) Johnny Depp"). His highlight unlikeable character is established through the way he treats his personnel and Poirot, but also by his racist attitude. This attitude is established by his racist remarks, for example, when he tells Poirot that he thinks "the Italians" are coming for him because "a guinea's a guinea" (a 'guinea' being a pejorative slang term for Italian-Americans). The audience will most likely take offence at this strong oppression and will start to see Ratchett in a different, more negative, light. This is confirmed by Poirot who also loathes Ratchett and also expresses this by simply telling him "I do not like your face". A clever line that confirms both the audience's hatred for Ratchett while at the same time putting Poirot in a more positive light for he apparently also wants nothing to do with racists. Thus, by giving the villain a racist attitude, Branagh presents racism as something that only belongs to 'bad people' and as something that other people should oppose to.

Another character with racist traits is Professor Hardman (Willem Dafoe). He pretends to be a xenophobic professor of engineering and could best be described as "a man that expresses opinions that are often offensive to some of the other passengers, because he's very aware of place, hierarchy and race" (Twentieth Century Fox 17). One of the very first things he says in the film is that he would like to "not be sat with that man", indicating Dr Arbuthnot, for Hardman proclaims that "like should be seated with like and we are not alike". Mary Debenham

(Daisy Ridley) immediately goes against him by saying that “not all of us are so concerned with the separateness of races, professor”. Hardman then tells her that he prefers to keep them separate out of respect for both races. For “if you were to mix your red wine with the white, you were to ruin them both”. Debenham reacts to this by pouring her red wine into her white wine, taking a sip, and saying “I like a good rosé” before she walks away and leaves Hardman baffled. In this scene, a binary opposition is created between Hardman and Debenham, for Hardman’s racist attitude is starkly contrasted with Debenham’s anti-racist attitude. This scene puts Debenham in a good light, for she stood up against Hardman and she showed that she shares Poirot’s anti-racist attitude. Anti-racism is thus presented as a good thing, for Branagh attributes it to the ‘good guys’ of his film. This scene also makes Hardman look a lot more suspicious, for Ratchett was also quite racist, and he was eventually guilty of kidnapping and murdering a child. In this sense, Branagh uses Christie’s techniques of making characters more or less likeable in order to play with the audience’s expectations of whom might be Ratchett’s murderer.

Chapter III, Increasing the Level of Action

Action films have gained a great deal of popularity over the past few years. Whereas they only made up just 4% of the top films in the 1930s, they now encompass over 24% of the films thus far in the 2010s (Kopf). There has been speculation as to what could explain this considerable rise in popularity of the genre. Some suggest that action films “translate better to a global audience” (Kopf), which would explain why new films try to include at least a bit of action to ensure that the film is viewed and liked by a broader audience. When looking at Kenneth Branagh’s *Murder on the Orient Express*, it can be concluded that Branagh tried to follow this trend of putting more action in the film, especially when it is compared to its source, Christie’s novel from 1934, and other Christie adaptations. It is true that “violence is the foundation of many films, TV movies, and action series” (Osborn), for the simple reason that without a murder, it would be quite difficult to write a story about a detective who solves a murder case. There are, however, also moments of action in the film (e.g. the occasional appearance of guns, fistfights and a chasing scene) that could make the audience wonder whether those moments were truly necessary for the plot of the film, or whether they were simply there to boost the film’s level of action to appeal to a more modern audience.

To find out if there is another reason behind these moments of action, this chapter will firstly have a brief look at media violence, with the use of Barbara’s Osborn “violence formula”, to gain a better understanding of how Branagh might have used that for his film. Subsequently, the chapter will look at the use of action/violence* in the original text by Christie and in other Christie adaptations, to see whether Branagh did something surprisingly new, or whether he followed the examples given by Christie and the film/series-makers before him. After these two sections, the chapter will discuss a few scenes of the film in which Branagh increased the level of violence and argue that he did that he did so for several reasons.

Media Violence

Author Barbara Osborn explains that “there is a basic formula to the portrayal of violence in TV, movies and videos”, which helps the audience understand why violent moments are included in TV, films and videos. She argues that there are three “basics” to the formula, meaning three ways of how violence is used. These basics are violence drives the storyline,

* There are different terms to talk about action and violence in films, such as “media aggression” and “media violence”, and even though there is a subtle distinction (Kirsh 10), this thesis will use the term “media violence” for convenience sake.

violence has no consequences, and a world of good and bad. The last basic explains how violence is used by evil characters to make them appear even worse, whereas good characters are considered to be even better because they have a distaste for violence unless it is their last resort. The first basic of violence drives the storyline is employed the most in the story of Branagh's film. For example, because Cassetti/Ratchett kidnapped and murdered Daisy Armstrong, her family and friends have decided that they are going to kill him, which is why they are all on the Orient Express. Subsequently, because the passengers kill Ratchett, Poirot needs to find the murderer, which creates the story of *Murder on the Orient Express*.

Violence in Christie's Work and Christie Adaptations

Agatha Christie did not only write detective stories about murder. For example, her stories about detective Parker Pyne usually do not contain murder, and Pyne mostly helps his clients to find happiness again. However, "as with the majority of the Golden Age detective fiction, the crime involved in most of Agatha Christie's detective fiction is that of murder" (Makinen 135). Apparently, the audience was most interested in the detective stories that revolved around a murder case. Nonetheless, these murders do seem to be the only violent element in most of Christie's stories. They also do not happen "on stage", "there is no description of graphic death scenes" (Hastings) in Christie's novels. The majority of her characters are also not very violent (except for the killer that is). Her stories follow the tradition of detective fiction which is "ultra-Aristotelian in placing action above character, it consists not of characters who determine the action, but action which determines the characters" (Bargainnier 38). As a result, Christie's characters are often not portrayed with a lot of depth to them, for they only exist in order for the story to be able to continue. Her characters usually do not have negative traits (unless they are the villain in her story), or if they do, then they are used to make them more suspicious, simply because such details are not necessary for the storyline.

Something that could also explain why earlier adaptations of Christie did not contain as much violence as modern adaptations is the fact that for decades people have been afraid that media violence had a bad influence on the viewers, and especially on youth (Kirsh 9). For example, the 1974 version of *Murder on the Orient Express* by Sidney Lumet barely contains any violent scenes and was called a "light-hearted approach" (Voldase) to Christie's novel. Nowadays, some studies claim that "media violence does not affect youth" (Kirsh 15). This could have contributed to the increase of action films over the last couple of years. With this increase of media violence, it has also become more "normal" to see violence in the media, to the extent that people might not even see it as something special anymore.

Audiences were shocked when this ‘update of violence’ was applied to Christie’s *And Then There Were None* in the BBC’s TV mini-series from 2015. They were surprised by the “controversial new adaptation featuring drugs, gruesome violence and the F-word” (Hastings). Hastings explains that even though the basic plot is the same as in Christie’s novel, graphic and explicit details have been added “to appeal to younger audiences”. Even though audiences were shocked, the majority did seem to have enjoyed this newer kind of version of Christie’s story, since the three episodes scored an average of 8.5 on IMDB (“And Then There Were None: Episode List”). This could explain why Branagh and screenwriter Michael Green decided to “enhance the ideas of the book, whilst still honouring them” (Twentieth Century Fox 27) in the 2017 film version of *Murder on the Orient Express*. The “enhancing of the ideas of the books” may have resulted in the enlargement of the violent scenes in the film, in much the same way as had been done with the BBC mini-series. As a result, Branagh’s version “was presented in a much more contemporary and dramatic fashion [as he] incorporated a dramatic score, dark character beats and a variety of action sequences” (Voldase).

Updating the 2017 Version

Branagh’s version of *Murder on The Orient Express* does stick to the basic plot of Christie’s story, but he includes more violent scenes, probably because “producers believe that they have to include extraordinary violence in order to keep viewers interested” (Osborn). This would have been considerably more difficult if Branagh had decided to solely use the material that Christie provided. The very first obstacle would have been Poirot’s age. Even though this is not often explicitly stated in Christie’s novels, Poirot must have been in his mid-seventies when he boarded the Orient Express (“Poirot’s Age”). Branagh would have been limited in his use of action scenes if Poirot was “too old” for certain action scenes. It does look like Branagh wanted to include the fact that Poirot was actually an older man by making his hair and moustache completely grey and by including Poirot’s characteristic cane. He is, however, not portrayed as being held back by his age. Branagh explained that he wanted to give Poirot “a touch more brawn and agility” (Twentieth Century Fox 12). By making him agiler, Branagh was able to include all kinds of action scenes in the film, that would have been more entertaining to watch for a modern audience than scenes where he just sits back and thinks might have been. This change in his character was not loved by everyone, maybe because it was so different from previous incarnations of Poirot. Canadian author and political commentator Mark Steyn comments that Poirot “walks along the roof of the train, for no particular reason except to raise the possibility that he’s about to go full Tom Cruise in *Mission: Impossible*” (Steyn). There are,

however, other reasons for why Branagh incorporated the action scenes other than to appeal to the modern audience.

The violence begins quite early in the film, in a scene in which count Andrenyi (Sergei Polunin) is seen waiting at a bar. When someone takes a picture of him, he starts a fistfight with the photographer. The sudden burst of chaos is ended when countess Andrenyi walks towards the count. Violence is used for several different purposes in this scene. Firstly, the tone of the film is set by putting this scene fairly at the beginning of the film. People whom might have thought that the film was not going to contain a lot of action because its source does not, will probably be surprised by the sudden outburst of violence that Branagh added. Secondly, the scene helps to establish the count' and countess' characters. The count is a hot-headed character with violence in his character that "makes him very distinct" (Twentieth Century Fox 18). Lastly, this scene also helps to establish the relationship between the count and the countess. For some reason still unknown to the audience at that point, the countess has a calming effect on the count, and he desperately wants to keep her out of harm's way. He thus uses violence to protect her. Branagh thus incorporates violence in his film by attributing it as a character trait to the count.

Branagh incorporated quite a few scenes in the film in which a gun is shown, while they do not appear in Christie's original text at all. Someone's aggression is increased by merely seeing a gun (Carlson et al. 632), so it could be the case that Branagh included the appearances of the guns in order to stimulate those emotions. The appearances, however, also have other functions. Professor Gerard Hardman holds a gun when he comes to rescue Poirot from an attack by the count. He then confesses that he is not a professor, but an undercover Pinkerton detective who was hired by Ratchett as a bodyguard. Poirot knows that he is lying, for he recognises the gun as a Colt Police Positive made for the police in 1927, thereby uncovering Hardman as a former policeman. The gun thus serves as a clue in this scene. The scene also shows off Poirot's genius and observability, for he recognised the gun and could then deduct that Hardman was lying, thereby making Hardman more suspicious.

Near the end of the film, another gun is shown. In this scene, Poirot accuses Debenham of the murder, and when she does not deny this, it looks like the killer has been found. When Poirot stands up to leave he is shot in his arm by Dr Arbuthnot, who is one of the first who actually *uses* the gun in the film. Interestingly, Poirot does not get shot at all in Christie's book, making it look like Branagh only added this scene to make the film more dramatic. This scene emphasises the relationship between Debenham and Arbuthnot, for Arbuthnot claims that he alone is the one who killed Ratchett, thereby wanting to rid Debenham of all blame. The gun

thus helps to establish Dr Arbuthnot's character, for it shows the audience what he is willing to do to protect Debenham.

Branagh also decided to make Christie's famous ending a bit more violent in his film. Viewers who know the story from Christie's book might be surprised most by the ending, for it has a remarkable twist to it. In the book and the 1974 version, the story ends with Poirot having solved the mystery and then simply letting the passengers on the train go free. Branagh decided to change this ending by having Poirot walk towards the passengers with a gun in his hand. Bouc stands behind the passengers, also with a gun in his hand, giving the impression that there is no escape for the killer, whomever it might be. Branagh's Poirot explains to the passengers that he has found out that they were all responsible for Ratchett's murder, but unlike Christie's Poirot, the Poirot in the film cannot simply let the passengers go. He thus puts the gun on the table and asks the passengers to shoot him, for he cannot live, knowing that these people murdered someone and were not punished for it. The gun is thus used here to show how extreme Poirot's need for everything to be balanced and right is. Branagh explained that "the change was absolutely the only way a contemporary audience would accept a story like this today" (Inverse). He could probably imagine that it would be difficult for his audience to accept a story about an extremely fastidiousness detective who just walks away from a group of killers without giving it a second thought.

Conclusion

By using the theory from the field of adaptation studies, this thesis has attempted to find out how Branagh adapted Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* for a modern audience.

Although Christie's famous story has been adapted numerous times and in different forms as well, Branagh decided to make another film about it, thereby giving the audience another interpretation of the story. Merely the fact that the story has been adapted numerous times already shows that the same story can be retold as many times as one wants, for with every adaptation different aspects can be highlighted or changed. Since Christie and her story are so famous, Branagh's film was immediately the subject to intense scrutiny by Christie's fans. Branagh did want to make the story fit for the modern audience, which made it inevitable that he had to make some changes to the original story, thereby possibly risking the discontent of Christie's fans. In the end, Branagh managed to create a film that was both close to Christie's original and one that highlighted utterly different aspects of that story than had been done before in previous adaptations.

As is the case with any (Christie) adaptation, *Murder on the Orient Express* soon became part of the debate about fidelity. It is undesirable to take fidelity as the criterium to measure a film's value, but in this case, it is also impossible to exclude fidelity from the discussion entirely. Fidelity is necessary in this specific case, for if Branagh's film deviates from Christie's original story at a certain point, it becomes clear that this is a point in which Branagh felt the need to change something. Looking at fidelity thus makes it possible to analyse the changes that Branagh made, thereby opening the discussion as to why he decided to make those changes. Fidelity should thus not be used to judge the film's value but as a tool for looking at the film's updates and why Branagh decided to make these updates.

Branagh has managed to create a story about a group of people in the 1930s and their morals and values that also fits within the cultural context of his own time. He decided to take Christie's stories and highlight the points which he thought would connect with his modern audience. To do so, he also criticised some points of Christie's society and how these points are reflected in her book. In this way, *Murder on the Orient Express* could be adapted every once in a while, for people's morals and values are constantly, though slowly, changing. It is thus entirely possible that other generations will highlight completely different facets of the story.

Other film adaptations featuring a well-known character will be familiar with the troubles of how to portray a character that is very well-defined in the many stories that are written about him or her. Poirot is an example of such a character and Branagh had to be very careful to

establish his character, which could explain why he decided to portray Poirot himself. In a time in which films and series with remarkable protagonists (e.g. Sherlock in the BBC's series *Sherlock* or Dr Shaun Murphy from ABC's *The Good Doctor*) have become relatively popular, Poirot had to stand out of the crowd. In order to do this, Branagh decided to present Poirot more as a realistic character and by emphasising his humorous character. He thus presented Poirot as someone whom the audience would love to know in real life and of whom the audience would want to see more, thereby creating the opportunity for Branagh to make more films which features Poirot as the protagonist.

Branagh criticises Christie's use of racism in her book by making it more explicit in his film and by subsequently decrying it. Whereas racism was seen as normal in Christie's era, Branagh opposes it, thereby showing that he is aware of the modern audience's mindset in which racism in any form is finally being recognised as something that should be abhorred. For a long time, racism was not given that much attention in films and series, but it looks like Branagh's film is among the few films that have started to show a greater awareness of the sometimes-unconscious racism in the media. Racism incorporated in the film in several ways, but the most noticeable one is the racism in some of the characters. Branagh emphasises racism's negativity by attributing it as a character trait to the villains of the story. He thus does not merely highlight the racism, but genuinely wants to convince his audience that they too should abhor the racism in his characters and racism in general as well.

Murder on the Orient Express also fits in with the modern trend of action movies. The film's use of violence is highlighted even more when the film is compared to its original text or the 1974 film version, thus showing again how fidelity should not be renounced altogether. The action and violence in the film are sometimes essential, for they form the basis of the storyline. Branagh, however, did add other moments of action and violence which may not have been completely necessary. He did manage to work the more violent moments in his story in such a way that they do not seem completely pointless, but in a way that it looks like they have a function that drives the storyline. Branagh thus shows that he is willing to listen to his audience's demands, while at the same time remaining respectful to the original story by not bluntly adding the violence to the story.

Whereas much of the debate of the film has been about whether it is a faithful adaptation of Christie's story or not, very few sources treat the film in its own right. Since Branagh's film was only released in November 2017, it has not been discussed yet by many academic texts, making this thesis one of the first that does discuss it. This thesis is part of adaptation studies' debate on how (Christie's) stories are updated for the silver screen. Though unintentionally,

this thesis has also looked at the techniques that can be used by directors to establish characters in films. In the end, the fidelity criticism did not limit the thesis, for it recognised that it could also be used for the benefit of the research. The thesis thus also argues that fidelity should not be used to measure a film's worth but as a tool for finding the differences between the original text and its adaptation. Further research could include other Christie adaptations and studies of the time in which they were made in order to see whether they also contain changes from the original text that could be explained in the light of their contemporaneous culture.

Works Cited

- Albrecht-Crane, Christa and Dennis Cutchins. "Introduction: New Beginnings for Adaptation Studies." *Adaptation Studies: New Theories*, edited by Christa Albrecht-Crane and Dennis Cutchins, Madison: Fareligh Dickson University Press, 2010, pp. 11-22.
- Aldridge, Mark. *Agatha Christie on Screen*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. Print.
- "And Then There Were None: Episode List." *IMDB*, n.d.,
www.imdb.com/title/tt3581932/episodes?ref_=tt_ov_epl. Accessed 2 June 2018.
- Bargainnier, Earl. *The Gentle Art of Murder: The Detective Fiction of Agatha Christie*. Wisconsin: Popular Press, 1980. Print.
- Barkan, Elazar. *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States Between the World Wars*. Cambridge University Press, 1992. Print.
- Branagh, Kenneth, director. *Murder on the Orient Express*. Twentieth Century Fox, 2017.
- Carlson, Michael, et al. "Effects of Situational Aggression Cues: A Quantitative Review." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 58, no. 4, 1990, pp. 622-633.
- Cawthorne, Nigel. *A Brief Guide to Agatha Christie*. London: Hachette, 2014. Print.
- Dean, John. "Adapting History and Literature into Movies." *American Studies Journal*, no. 53, 2009, www.asjournal.org/53-2009/adapting-history-and-literature-into-movies/. Accessed 10 June 2018.
- "Extras: Let's Talk about Hercule Poirot." *Murder on the Orient Express*, produced by Kenneth Branagh and Ridley Scott, Twentieth Century Fox, 2017. DVD.
- Garcia, Feliks. "Electing Barack Obama, the First Black President, Did Not Absolve the US of Its Racist History." *Independent*, 17 Jan. 2017, www.independent.co.uk/voices/barack-obama-first-black-president-us-racism-white-supremacy-donald-trump-a7532206.html. Accessed 2 June 2018.
- Gill, Gillian. *Agatha Christie: The Woman and Her Mysteries*. New York: Free Press, 1991. Print.
- Grady, Constance. "What Makes Murder on the Orient Express's Iconic Ending Work So Well." *Vox*, 22 Nov. 2017, www.vox.com/culture/2017/11/22/16671198/murder-on-the-orient-express-ending-spoilers. Accessed 9 June 2018.
- Grant, Parthenia. "Cultural Racism in Hollywood and the Media." *Doctor Parthenia*, 25 Apr. 2018, doctorparthenia.com/cultural-racism-in-hollywood-and-the-media/. Accessed 9

June 2018.

- Hastings, Chris. "What HAS the BBC Done to Agatha Christie? Christmas Viewers Will Be Stunned by Controversial New Adaptation Featuring Drugs, Gruesome Violence and the F-word." *The Daily Mail*, 12 Dec. 2015, www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-3357749/What-BBC-Agatha-Christie.html. Accessed 28 May 2018.
- "Hercule Poirot." *The Home of Agatha Christie*, n.d., www.agathachristie.com/characters/hercule-poirot. Accessed 9 June 2018.
- Hutcheon, Linda and Siobhan O'Flynn. *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York: Routledge, 2013. Print.
- Igartua, Juan-José. "Identification with Characters and Narrative Persuasion through Fictional Feature Films." *The European Journal of Communication Research*, vol. 35, no. 4, 2010, pp. 347-373.
- Jacobs, Alex. "Ten Little Indians: A Genocidal Nursery Rhyme." *Indian Country Today*, 12 Sept. 2017, newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/ten-little-indians-a-genocidal-nursery-rhyme-zdEJZ1XzDE-uez7zs42LEQ/. Accessed 15 June 2018.
- Kellogg, Richard. "The Psychology of Agatha Christie." *Faculty Form*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1983, pp.47-48.
- "Kenneth Branagh." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, n.d., www.britannica.com/biography/Kenneth-Branagh. Accessed 15 June 2018.
- Kirsh, Steven. *Children, Adolescents, and Media Violence: A Critical Look at the Research*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2011. Print.
- Kopf, Dan. "The Rise of the Action Movie." *Priceonomics*, 21 July 2015, priceonomics.com/the-rise-of-the-action-movie/. Accessed 30 May 2018.
- Lassner, Phyllis. "The Mysterious New Empire: Agatha Christie's Colonial Murders." *At Home and Abroad in the Empire: British Women Write the 1930s*, edited by Robin Hackett et al., Rosemont Publishing & Printing Corporation, 2009, pp. 31-50.
- Leitch, Thomas. "Adaptation Studies at a Crossroads." *Adaptation*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2008, pp. 63-77.
- Makinen, Merja. *Agatha Christie: Investigating Femininity*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Print.
- Martinelli, Marissa. "How Faithful Is Murder on the Orient Express to Agatha Christie's Classic Detective Novel? A Breakdown." *Slate*, 10 Nov. 2017, www.slate.com/blogs/browbeat/2017/11/10/murder_on_the_orient_express_movie_vs_book_comparison.html?via=gdpr-consent. Accessed 9 June 2018.

- Mason, Paul. "Are We Living through Another 1930s?" *The Guardian*, 1 Aug. 2016, www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/aug/01/are-we-living-through-another-1930s-paul-mason. Accessed 15 June 2018.
- Miles, Robert. *Racism*. New York: Routledge, 2003. Print.
- Nagle, Angela. *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from 4chan and Tumblr to Trump and the Alt-right*. John Hunt Publishing, 2017. Print.
- Osborn, Barbara. "Violence Formula: Analysing TV, Video and Movies." *Center for Media Literacy*, n.d., www.medialit.org/reading-room/violence-formula-analyzing-tv-video-and-movies. Accessed 30 May 2018.
- "Past Poirot Portrayals." *The Home of Agatha Christie*, n.d., www.agathachristie.com/characters/Hercule-poirot/past-poirot/portrayals. Accessed 9 June 2018.
- "Poirot's Age." *Hercule Poirot Central*, n.d. www.poirot.us/age.php. Accessed 1 June 2018.
- "Poirot's Obituary." *Hercule Poirot Central*, n.d., www.poirot.us/obituary/php. Accessed 1 June 2018.
- "Race Relations Act 1965." *Archive of the British Parliament*, n.d., www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/private-lives/relationships/collections1/race-relations-act-1965/race-relations-act-1965/. Accessed 15 May 2018.
- Reny, Tyler and Sylvia Manzano. "The Negative Effects of Mass Media Stereotypes of Latinos and Immigrants." *Media and Minorities: Questions on Representation from an International Perspective*, edited by Georg Ruhrmann et al., Vandenhoeck Ruprecht, 2016, pp. 195-212.
- Steyn, Mark. "Murder on the Orient Express." *Mark at the Movies*, 25 Nov. 2017, www.steynonline.com/8272/murder-on-the-orient-express. Accessed 1 June 2018.
- Thackeray, David. "The Politics of Buying British: From the Great Depression to Brexit." *Imperial Global Exteter*, 12 Feb. 2018, imperialglobalexeter.com/2018/02/12/the-politics-of-buying-british-from-the-great-depression-to-brexite/. Accessed 9 June 2018.
- "The Creation of Hercule Poirot." *The Home of Agatha Christie*, n.d., www.agathachristie.com/characters/hercule-poirot/the-creation-of-hercule-poirot. Accessed 22 April 2018.
- "The Great Depression: 1929-1932." *The British Library*, n.d., www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item107595.html. Accessed 15 May 2018.

- “The Story of the Italians in Britain WW2.” *BBC*, 24 Oct. 2014, www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/19/a3174419.shtml. Accessed 14 May 2018.
- “Tom Bateman & Manuel Garcia Rulfo: Murder on the Orient Express Exclusive Interview.” *YouTube*, uploaded by HeyUGuys, 3 Nov. 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uqvnuBq-zsw&index=7&list=LLVEl0lh2O-GFr1qXCXDDa6w&t=85s>. Accessed 9 June 2018.
- Truitt, Brian. “Review: All-star Cast Stumbles in Imperfect ‘Murder on the Orient Express’ Remake.” *USA Today*, 9 Nov. 2017, eu.usatoday.com/story/life/movies/2017/11/08/review-kenneth-branagh-star-cast-stumbles-imperfect-murder-orient-express/843074001/. Accessed 9 June 2018.
- Twentieth Century Fox. “Murder on the Orient Express: Production Information.” *In70mm*, 20 Oct. 2017, www.in70mm.com/news/2017/express_info/pdf/notes.pdf. Accessed 16 May 2018.
- Voldase, Chase. “‘Murder on the Orient Express’: 1974 and 2017 Comparison.” *The Montclarion*, 16 Nov. 2017, themontclarion.org/murder-on-the-orient-express-1974-and-2017-comparison/. Accessed 1 June 2018.
- Whelehan, Imelda. “Adaptations: The Contemporary Dilemmas.” *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text*, edited by Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan, London: Routledge, 1999, pp. 3-19.
- “Word We’re Watching: Intersectionality.” *Merriam Webster*, n.d., www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/intersectionality-meaning. Accessed 20 May 2018.
- Wyden, Rob. “We Can’t Take the Internet for Granted.” *Huffpost*, 16 Nov. 2011, www.huffingtonpost.com/sen-ron-wyden/we-cant-take-the-internet_b_1097305.html?guccounter=1. Accessed 1 June 2018.