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**Defence Mechanisms in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) and Agatha Christie's *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920)**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a  
**Master's degree in English Literature and Civilisation**

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## **Abstract**

The present work explores defence mechanisms as shown by the four main characters in both Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) and Agatha Christie's *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920). The novels are studied through the lens of psychoanalysis emphasising on defence mechanisms as discussed in Anna Freud's *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence* 1936 and Norman Holland's *The Dynamics of Literary Response* 1968. In the light of these two books, the two novels are analysed by highlighting concepts of denial, sublimation defence mechanisms as shown by Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot, then, repression and reaction formation as shown by John Watson and Arthur Hastings.

**Key Words:** Psychoanalysis, Defence Mechanisms, *A Study in Scarlet*, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*

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I dedicate this research to:

Myself for never giving up despite everything;

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I dedicate this work to:

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My special friends Sirena and Ania with whom I shared every experience;

My wonderful and supporting father to whom I promised to dedicate this work before he left this world. Even though you are gone forever from our loving eyes, I will make sure your memory lives on as long as I shall live. I love you and I miss you beyond the words. May Allah grant you Paradise.

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## **General Introduction**

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Detective fiction is a literary genre in which a crime is introduced and investigated. It deals usually with murder where detectives are involved to seek out justice for the victims. In the story, the detective works to solve the crime through gathering clues in order to reveal the identity of the murderer eventually. What makes the detective fiction attractive to readers is the fact that it gives them an opportunity to try to figure out the solution along with the detective. Upon reading, the story provides excitement to the reader because all suspects of the crime are introduced early. Investigation in detective fiction is based on intuition, observation and rationality. The detectives are often characterised with high intelligence, with some eccentric analytical skills, and ability to reason differently from the rest of the characters.

Two of the most famous detective fiction pioneers are Sir Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie. Doyle is founder of the modern form of detective stories, and he is acknowledged for the creation of Sherlock Holmes; he was influenced by his university teacher Joseph Bell to invent Sherlock Holmes. Similar to Doyle, Christie who wrote two decades after Doyle participated in this genre with her creation of Hercule Poirot. She is one of the world's bestselling authors, and she is known as the queen of crime. Her career in nursing in the First World War influenced some of her works.

Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot are the main characters in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie's stories respectively, and two of the most known and loved detectives in the world.. Their stories have been translated into many languages and adapted to movies and TV series. They are known for their wittiness and detecting skills and crime solving. However, dealing with Holmes needs referring to Watson, and talking about Poirot needs mentioning Hastings. Watson and Hastings are the narrators of Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* and Christie's *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* respectively. They are competent and intelligent enough to be the companions of the two detectives in all their thrilling stories.

Like all fictional characters, Holmes, Poirot, Watson, and Hastings share with their authors the same psychological features. They have feelings, emotions and innate desires that they prefer to hide and never reveal. The unconscious is where all these unwanted desires and ideas are found; there lays the instinctual id, the objective ego, and the ethical superego. The act of balancing between them is preventing one's self from being impulsive and irrational, thus building defence around it. This shows up by a certain system called defence mechanism.

### **Thesis Statement**

The process of detection as well as daily life events expose the detectives and their companions to tough situations that create a conflict between their id and their superego, and this threatens their ego and pushes it to adopt a defensive manner called defence mechanism. This study will explore and analyse these defence mechanisms shown by these characters and compare between them.

### **Review of Literature**

Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot are two of the world's most famous detectives. Their stories have achieved a great success since the first time they were published. Therefore, they have been a subject of study for many critics.

From our review of some of critical point of view about Sir Conan Arthur Doyle's detective Sherlock Holmes, we have noticed that he received a considerable amount of criticism. Sherlock Holmes has proven to be not only a great detective but also a great scientist. Regarding this, the crime historian E.J.Wagner, in her book, *The Science of Sherlock Holmes (2006)*, seeks to explore the scientific features of Sherlock Holmes through his investigations. Wagner demonstrates that the birth of forensic sciences is credited to Holmes series. Through a detailed analysis of all Sherlock Holmes stories, she observes that real world's stories have inspired Conan Doyle to write and create Holmes series. Moreover, Wagner states that

Holmes way of observing the crime scene is similar to that of Hans Gross, a brilliant professor of criminology. Wagner asserts that Conan Doyle was writing one of Holmes stories at the same time Gross was composing *Criminal Investigation (1907)*, a book that provides an analysis of crime scenes in which he was composing the standards for investigation.

In the same way, André Didierjean and Fernand Gobet claim that there is a relationship between psychology and the world of fiction aimed in their article: *Can Sherlock Holmes help cognitive psychology?(2008)*, offer some thoughts on the different ways in which literary citations, can be used to illustrate psychology, and especially to which extent the study of Sherlock Holmes can help make progress in the understanding of cognitive mechanisms. They claim that cognitive psychology studies the human behaviour, and literary characters can describe with precision a cognitive mechanism. They claim that Cognitive psychology aims to understand the mechanisms underpinning general human behaviours, and a literary character can describe with precision, although possibly with a different vocabulary, a cognitive mechanism. Therefore, the use of citations taken from Conan Doyle's works can provide some advances in the field of cognitive expertise;

Alongside Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot, the brilliant detective of perfect puzzles, has thrilled readers all around the world for his wittiness and cleverness. He was as popular as Holmes, and thus he was criticized. Anne Heart, a librarian in the Memorial University of Newfoundland, wrote a fictionalized biography entitled *Agatha Christie's Poirot: The Life and Times of Hercule Poirot (2013)* where she examines the origins, tastes, relationship and peculiarities of the incomparable Christie's Poirot. Through this book, she accompanies Hercule Poirot since his first appearance in 1920 to his last one in 1975 and analyses his puzzles, stories, films, and TV appearances. She compares him to Sherlock and says: "Like

Holmes, Poirot was vain, brilliant and bachelor; like Holmes he possessed, in Arthur Hastings, a faithful Watson" (Hart 9).

Psychological approaches are dealing with human behaviour which is closely related to human struggle. Literary psychology generally aims also to understand the psychological aspects contained in literary works. The literary work arises from the expression of different experiences which have long existed in the soul and have undergone profound soul treatment through the process of the imagination. There has been a great deal of resistance among critics about the use of modern psychoanalytic theories to analyze the literary characters, because they are imagined human beings. Bernard J. Paris, argues in his article: *Imagined Human Beings: A Psychological Approach to Character and Conflict in Literature (1997)*, that the rejection of psychological analysis has been a major critical error. One reason why he believes it is possible to analyse literary characters psychologically is because he employs the theories of Karen Horney, which explain behaviour in terms of its function within the present structure of the psyche rather than in terms of infantile origins. He tried to show that Karen Horney's mature theory has an important contribution to make to the study of literature.

### **Significance of the Study**

Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot are remarkable detectives that are known worldwide. They have been studied by many scholars and researchers, and they have been compared several times. However, this research will study them from a psychoanalytical perspective focusing on defence mechanisms, and it will analyse and compare not only the two detectives but also the narrators in the two novels.

### **Aims of the Study**

The main concern of the study is to analyse Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot, John Watson, and Arthur Hastings to show what defence mechanism they use under different

circumstances, and depict the factors that create these mechanisms, and then compare between them to see whether they are the same or they differ.

### **Research Questions**

Throughout our study, we will try to answer the following questions:

1. What defence mechanisms do Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot show?
2. What defence mechanisms do Watson and Hastings show?
3. Under what circumstances do the detectives and the narrators use defence mechanisms?
4. Are Sherlock Holmes defences similar to that of Hercule Poirot's?
5. Do Watson and Hastings show the same defence mechanisms?

### **Methodology**

In order to conduct this study, we will rely on a main concept in psychoanalysis which is defence mechanism as presented in Anna Freud's *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence* (1936) and Norman Holland's *The Dynamics of Literary Response* (1968). The use of this approach will help to depict different defence mechanisms as shown by characters in Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* and Christie's *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*.

### **Structure of the Work**

Along with the general introduction and conclusion, this work is divided into two chapters. The first chapter deals with the literary, historical, and theoretical background of the research. The second chapter examines four different defence mechanisms shown by Holmes, Poirot, Watson, and Hastings.

## Chapter I

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*A Study in Scarlet and The Mysterious Affair at Styles in*  
**context: Literary, Historical, and Theoretical**  
**Background**

## **Introduction**

This chapter provides a general framework of the research. It will be divided into three sections that will introduce the literary, historical, and theoretical backgrounds of Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* and Christie's *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*. In the first section, an introduction to the detective fiction will be provided. The literary profile of the two authors will be presented in addition to the plot summary of the two novels. The second section will be devoted to the historical overview of Great Britain through two different periods. We will represent the major events of the nineteenth and twentieth century. The third section will define psychoanalysis in general and introduce defence mechanisms as defined by Anna Freud and Norman Holland.

### **1. Literary Background**

#### **An Introduction to Detective Fiction**

Detective fiction is one of the most popular literary genres that can be traced back to the 1800s, around the time of the Industrial Revolution. During that time many people leaving in rural towns moved to the cities seeking for industrial jobs. With the rise of numbers of people in urban cities, numbers of crime rose with it. It was around this time that the criminal investigation department was established, what served the flourishing of the detective genre. Regarding that matter Judith Flanders claims in her article: "To satisfy this desire to explore how a crime is solved dozens of stories with detective heroes began to appear. What is often called the first detective novel"."

American author Edgar Allan Poe is considered to be the first to write in detective fiction genre. When he published the short story *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841), he introduced his character Auguste Dupin, a wealthy Frenchman who investigates a crime for fun. Poe established the key features of the genre, such as how the main goal in the plot is to

search for the truth by using logic and observation. Poe's work and the rapidly increasing presence of police detectives in real life opened the field for more detective fiction. After Poe, many European writers started creating detective stories. The first full-length detective novel was *L'Affaire Lerouge* (1866) by French author Émile Gaboriau.

Sir Conan Doyle's character Sherlock Holmes is probably the detective who really shaped the way literary detectives are seen nowadays. Holmes was introduced in Doyle's first novel *A Study in Scarlet* published in 1887, a brilliant eccentric man with extraordinary analytical skills. Doyle continued to write Sherlock Holmes novels and short stories until around 1927. When *A Study in Scarlet* was first published, it was not that popular; however, it gained more popularity when Doyle published several Sherlock Holmes short stories in the *Strand Magazine* in 1891.

The period from 1920 to 1939 came to be known as the Golden Age of detective Fiction, which witnessed the rising of several detective authors as Agatha Christie and John Dickson Carr. Christie, the queen of detective fiction, and other Golden Age of the authors, have created a legacy of detective novels based on gathering clues and solving crimes as if they were puzzles the reader can solve with the detective. They succeeded to give the stories a degree of realism. This style has evolved into what we call in contemporary literature, cosy mystery.

## **1.2 Literary Profile of the Authors**

### **1.2.1 Sir Arthur Conan Doyle**

Arthur Conan Doyle was born on May 22, 1859 in Edinburgh, Scotland, of an Irish Catholic family. Although under minor revenues, his mother Mary wanted to fully educate her child. She sent him to study at the age of 18, and he chose to study medicine at the University of Edinburgh.



Professor Dr. Joseph Bell, his mentor, inspired him to develop the famous fictional detective character Sherlock Holmes as Wagner states: "Joseph Bell, the physician who was Conan Doyle's teacher, mentor, and model for the character of Sherlock Holmes" (54). Doyle tried his hand at writing for the first time with a short story titled *The Mystery of Sasassa Valley* (1879). A second story with the title of *The American Tale* (1880) was published after that. In 1886, Doyle began writing *A Tangled Skein*, a mystery book that he later renamed *A Study in Scarlet* which was released two years later. The first appearance of the immensely popular characters, detective Sherlock Holmes and his assistant Watson were in that book. Detective Sherlock Holmes and Watson appear in a total of 60 stories. Some of his most successful Sherlock Holmes books include: *The Sign of Four* (1890), *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1892), *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (1894), and *The Hound of Baskerville* (1901). He also wrote some science fiction books, historical novels, plays, poetry and historical works.

Conan Doyle died in Windlesham, England on July 7, 1930 leaving behind him several great works, and a Character known all over the globe.

### **1.2.2 Agatha Christie**

Agatha Marry Clarissa Miller was born on September 15, 1890, in Torquay, Devon, in the southwest part of England. She was educated at home by her mother who encouraged her daughter to write. At the age of 16, Christie moved to Paris to study singing and the piano. In 1914, she got married to Colonel Archibald Christie, a Royal Flying Corps pilot, and took up nursing during the First World War.

In 1920, she published her first novel *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, the story of the murder of a rich heiress. The novel introduced readers to her famous character, Hercule Poirot, a Belgian detective; "he was the one and the only, the unique Hercule Poirot" (Hart 9).

Later, Christie released *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926), which is considered as a classic and one of the author's all-time favourites.

1926 proved to be a difficult year for Christie. She was traumatised by her mother's death and her husband's betrayal, and then she has disappeared for a period of time until she was discovered by the authorities in a hotel in which she registered under the name of her husband's mistress. After her divorce in 1928, she got married again in 1930 to Maw Mallowan, an archaeology professor, with whom she travelled on several expeditions. She recounted her trips in the 1946 memoir *Come, Tell Me How You Live*. In the same year, Christie released *Murder at the Vicarage* (1930) which became another classic and introduced readers to Miss Marple, an enquiring village lady.

Christie wrote more than 70 detective novels and short fiction. Her success as an author of sleuth stories has earned her the title of the queen of crime and the queen of mystery. Several of her works have been translated into different languages, and she has sold more than two billion copies worldwide. Famous works of her became popular movies including *Murder on the Orient Express* (1974) and *Death on the Nile* (1978).

Christie also wrote romance novels like *Unfinished Portrays* (1934) and *A Daughter's a Daughter* (1952) under the name of Mary Westmacott. She was a renowned playwright as well, with works like the *Hollow* (1952) and *Verdict* (1958). Her play the *Mousetrap* opened in 1952 at the Ambassador Theatre and held the record for the longest unbroken run in a London theatre.

In 1974, Christie made her last public appearance for the play version of *Murder on the Orient Express*. She died on January 12, 1976.

## **1.3 Plot Overview of the Two Novels**

### ***1.3.1 A Study in Scarlet***

*A Study in Scarlet* is the story of the investigation Holmes conducted to solve the murder of Joseph Stangerson and Enoch Drebber. The story was told in two parts from the perspective of Watson, a retired war Doctor and Holmes's companion in his adventures.

In the first part of the novel, Doctor Watson comes back from war to London after being injured. On meeting Holmes through an old friend, Watson is surprised with his brilliant observation skills and they agree to split rent for an apartment on 221B Baker Street. The police force asks Holmes to investigate the murder of Enoch Drebber and later Joseph Stangerson. Upon the investigation Holmes finds a container of pills and a wedding ring, and the writing of the German word RACHE in blood on the wall. He tried to puzzle up all the evidence by asking witnesses and placing an advertisement in the newspaper for the wedding ring which they found at the crime scene, but it was only a dead end. The part ends with the capture of the murderer Jefferson Hope, and Holmes gives no explanation about how he identified him.

In the second part of the novel, the scene is set in North America, in the Alkali Plains. It consists of flashbacks that give an account of the victim, the murderer and the motive of the crime that are previously presented in the first part. John Ferrier and Lucy Ferrier were lost, wandering in the desert for days without food or water. But Mormon emigrants heading to Utah found the two and brought them to live with them as long as they converted to Mormonism. The two moved into the Mormon community and John Ferrier became a wealthy man and Lucy blossomed into a beautiful young woman and they lived happily as father and daughter.

The Prophet, who was the leader of the Mormon community, said that Lucy must choose to marry either Joseph Stangerson or Enoch Drebbler. However Lucy was already engaged to a non-Mormon silver explorer named Jefferson Hope. Ferrier knew that he could not disobey the Prophet, so he wrote a note to Jefferson Hope, who was away on a hunting trip, asking him to come back and help him and Lucy run away and start a new life. He helped them later to flee the Mormon community. Unfortunately Ferrier gets murdered by Joseph, and Lucy died of a broken heart after being forced to marry Drebbler.

Jefferson Hope spent his entire life plotting revenge against the two men. When Drebbler and Stangerson realized that their lives were in danger so they ran to London. In the end Jefferson Hope followed them and fulfils his desire of revenge.

### *1.3.2 The Mysterious Affair at Styles*

The novel is "Poirot's first case as a private detective in England" (Hart 15). It tells the story of the murder of an old rich woman, Mrs. Inglethrop, and it introduces readers to Christie's famous detective Hercule Poirot.

The story begins when Arthur Hastings is sent back to England from the First World War due to an injury, and is invited to Styles by his old friend John Cavendish. Hastings learns that John's stepmother got married again. Her new husband Alfred Inglethrop is 20 years younger than her. One morning, the residents of Styles including John, his brother Laurence, his wife Mary, Cynthia and Mrs. Howard who are both family friends wake to find Emily Inglethrop dying of poison. Hastings calls his friend Hercule Poirot to investigate her death. Poirot investigates and gathers clues to find the murderer.

Mr. Inglethrop is the prime suspect, and the family members see him as a fortune hunter. He was accused of buying strychnine, the poison that killed Mrs. Inglethrop, but Poirot interferes and proves it was wrong. The police arrest Emily's older stepson John because they

found a bottle of poison in his closet, and the police suspect that he used it to kill his stepmother, but Poirot clears John Cavendish's name by declaring that it was Alfred Inglethrop who committed the crime helped by his cousin Mrs. Howard.

Mr. Inglethrop and Mrs. Howard added bromide, a substance found in Mrs. Inglethrop's sleeping powder, to her regular evening medicine. The interaction between bromide and the chemical substances of the medicine forms strychnine, which sinks to the bottom of the bottle of the medicine consumed in one dose by Emily. Their plan had been for Alfred Inglethrop to incriminate himself with wrong evidence which will be refuted in the court. In the British law, double jeopardy is a procedural defence that prevents an accused person from being arrested twice for the same charges. Alfred Inglethrop wants to be arrested so that the police cannot arrest him again. Poirot was aware of Alfred's machiavellian plan, so he did his best to keep him out of prison because he knows his intentions.

## **2. Historical Background**

### **2.1 The Victorian Era**

Britain was under the rule of Queen Victoria for over 60 years. Her reign saw one of Britain's greatest eras, it was the time of the first industrial revolution, political reform, and social change. During this long reign, the country acquired enormous power and wealth. The country has grown thanks to its political stability, science advancement and also imperialism.

#### **2.1.1 Science**

The Victorian era is regarded as a period of prosperity and knowledge with remarkable scientific achievements. Victorian Britain saw an extraordinary intellectual progress in technology, medicine, science, arts, physics and many other fields. Developments took place in almost all areas like transportation, communication, and trade.

One of the remarkable theories Victorians made during that era is Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. Carolyn Burdett states in her article: Occasionally ideas change history. Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection falls into this category, making Darwin one of the most important thinkers of modern times. The world became aware of the fact that all living creatures evolved over time, which has changed peoples' vision of life. Basically, Darwin provided a powerful insight into the idea of natural selection, where nature chooses which traits would be needed for survival.

Many of the emerging ideas came clearly in contrast with the divine laws, and people challenged religion with science. Regarding that matter, Charlotte Barrett argues: "It was not until Charles Darwin's publication of *On the Origin of Species* in 1859 that the use of nature as evidence shifted from supporting Genesis to supporting evolutionary theory". This shows the important impact of science on the Victorian society. During the same period the public enthusiasm for science began to grow and realistic ideas became dominant in the social life of the Victorian people.

With the advancement of the industrial revolution and the fact that the concept of evolution was embraced in the society, Victorians emphasised on the idea of progress. As a matter of fact, several scientific concepts and inventions were put into movement that are still adopted and used until this day.

### **2.1.2 British Imperialism and the Second Afghan War**

During the Victorian era imperialism contributed to the emergence of Great Britain as one of the most powerful nations in the world. Upon the ongoing competition for resources, the British Empire conquered the world and set up trading companies in Turkey, Russia, and the East Indies, explored the coast of North America, and established colonies there.

Throughout the 19th century, the British government was convinced that the extension of Russian influence over Central Asia constituted a real threat to its Indian domains. The British government had been worried since 1830s about Russian influence in Afghanistan. In this regard, McDowall Longman states: “after about 1850 Britain was driven more by fear of growing European competition than by commercial need. This led to taking of land, the reaction of colonies, fear that Russia would advance southwards towards India resulted in a disastrous war in Afghanistan” (159).

Britain wanted to extend its control over Afghanistan as a continuation of its imperialist expansion and to oppose Russian control. Emir of Afghanistan was replaced by British India because he refused to accept a British representative while he received the Russian diplomatic mission. British-Indian forces fought a war to ensure that Afghanistan remained free from Russian interference. The war is known as Second Afghan War, or as the Second Anglo-Afghan War, and that took place in 1878-80.

Later on the Emir of Afghanistan was succeeded by his son who accepted the presence of a British envoy and British control of Afghan foreign affairs. who agreed to conduct his foreign policy through the Government of India. The last British and Indian soldiers left the country in April 1881.

## **2.2 Twentieth Century Britain**

The twentieth century witnessed two World Wars that led to many significant events and enormous changes in the world. Social, political, and economic reforms took place in the system of Britain. *The Mysterious Affair at Styles (1920)* set during the First World War and was written by a woman, that's why both of First World War's events and the status of women during the twentieth century should be taken in consideration.

### **2.2.1 The First World War**

Longman argues that: “at the start of the twentieth century, Britain was still the world's greatest power” (159). Britain was still standing as an empire under the reign of King George VII. In 1914, Great Britain declared war on Germany as a response to the invasion of Belgium. The war was marked by the triumphs that Germany had achieved against the Alliance of France and Britain. German forces were better trained and had better equipments, while the British army was composed of volunteers and was not ready for such destructive power of modern weapons that the German army possessed. Later on, in August of the same year, Britain's army took a successful counterattack which thwarted Germany.

For Britain, the outbreak of the war was very damaging, and it exhausted the British army. The war cost Britain a lot of population; a huge number of men died in the war and others were dangerously wounded. Britain needed to reinforce its military service, so it introduced conscription where men were obliged to join the army after it was optional for them; as a result, this led to the rise of a sense of hatred that the media helped to create among people. During that period, Britain hospitalised refugees from other European countries, mainly Belgium because of the German occupation of Belgium. British families received and took care of Belgian refugees because their homeland was attacked by Germany.

The war took another dimension and shifted from the land to the sea. German submarines attacked merchants' ships bringing supplies to Britain. As a result, the British people suffered for six months of starvation. By sinking the British ships, Germany hoped not only to starve Britain, but also for the British submission, but they failed. Germany attacked some of the American ships, and this involved America which declared war on Germany in July 1917.



American forces arrived to France as reinforcement to the Alliance; the fight continued until November. Germany resisted for a long year but it was unable to face three major forces such as Britain, America, and France. Eventually Britain broke through the German defence. The war ended with Germany surrendering and signing an armistice in November 1918. By the end of the war, the public opinion demanded the destruction of Germany. The Alliance members including France and Britain met to discuss peace and decide about the punishment of Germany.

### **2.2.2 The Status of Women**

The struggle for women to have their rights and prove their social status was one of the most important issues that characterised Britain of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The experiences of war influenced the British society particularly its women. In 1918, after a long struggle, women over the age of thirty had been given the right to vote, and by 1928, this had been extended to all women over the age of twenty one. During the war, the great majority of men joined the British army to fight, and Britain was unable to continue without women. Women had to take men's places, working in factories to compensate men's absence. This helped in giving them a certain degree of freedom. This new independence gave women confidence which reflected in fashion and living style. Women started to dress differently, wearing short dresses and skirts, drinking and smoking openly. A number of women started to study and attend college. Working women wanted smaller families; as a result, the number of family members was reduced. The field of literature also has witnessed significant changes. Feminine writings expanded hugely in Britain. Women could write more freely and publish under their real names, and they gained their place in literature as respected authors.

### **3. Theoretical Background**

Leonard Jackson claims that "most of the analyses and interpretations of literature put forward in the twentieth century have been informed by Freudian Insights" (60). Sigmund Freud is the founder of modern psychology or what we refer to as psychoanalysis. In his *An Introduction to Psychoanalysis (1916)*, Freud says: "Psychoanalysis is a procedure for the medical treatment of neurotic patients" (39). "Psychoanalysis could be defined as the best science of mind" (Jackson 12); it offers explanatory principles of the unconscious part of the mind. For Freud, as a therapist, the fundamental point of psychoanalysis is to bring material from the unconscious, which is causing a neurotic or compulsive behaviour, into consciousness (261).

The origin of psychoanalysis is traced back to the accidental treatment of a young hysterical girl in 1880 in Vienna (Freud 9). Freud created the idea of free association in which patients are encouraged to speak in non-direct manner about their problems in an attempt to reveal the unconscious part of the problem. This kind of self-exploration has become one of the fundamental bases of psychoanalysis. Later on, Freud continued his research on the mind and the unconscious. In a set of published books, he outlined his ideas about the construction of the mind and human personality that he believes consists of three parts or agents that characterise human behaviour: the id, the ego, and the superego. The id contains infantile libidinal and sexual feelings and infantile aggressive or destructive ones. The ego is a component which recognizes that instant gratification of the urges is not always possible, and it mediates between the desires emanating from the id and the demands of reality. The superego consists of social standards; it issues blind commands and produces feelings of guilt when its commands are disobeyed. It is thus, "the internal punisher" (Jackson 72).

Psychoanalysis shifts to become a fundamental theory of psychotherapy, a comprehensive system of psychology, a philosophy of living, and in all areas one of the

major intellectual forces of the twentieth century. It has been adopted even in the literary field. In this concern Freud says: "psychoanalytic criticism is a form of a literary criticism which uses some of the techniques of psychoanalysis is the interpretation of literature" (92); in other words, psychoanalysis is a theory that can be treated as a science applicable to literature; it offers literary interpretation, a theory of reader-response, and theory of individual characters which can be applied to authors, readers, and characters in literary works. Leonard Jackson states that much of psychoanalysis actually came in the first place from literature or literary works, and that the interpretation process in psychoanalysis is done in a literary and narrative method; literature gives not only the basic concept, but also a lot of subtle details of the theory of the unconscious mind (60).

Freud claims that the dreams we analyse usually hit us by the unusual form in which they are expressed, and that they are not enveloped in the usually employed language, but instead presented in an implied form as similes, metaphors, and images of poetic speech (26). Psychoanalysis suggests that literary creations are like dreams, manifest the psychic pattern and expresses the unconscious desires of authors. Psychoanalytic criticism, like psychoanalysis itself, adopts Freud's method of reading to interpret texts. It is concerned not with what the author intended to say but what the author never intended.

Psychoanalysis as a literary theory suggests that the ego struggles to satisfy the demands, and the mediation between instinctual drives of the id and social codes of the superego requires dealing with conflicts. As a result, psychoanalytic theory suggests that the human mind constructs three forms of mechanisms: dreams which are the manifestation of the repressed urges, neurotic symptoms as symbolic acts representing the repressed longings of the id, and finally defence mechanisms, a process through which the ego protects one's self from anxiety or guilt. The latter is a fundamental

concept of psychoanalysis theory that is used to interpret literary texts through characters' paroles, actions, and reactions (Jackson 64).

Defence mechanisms have been dealt with by several scholars, theorists, and psychoanalysts. The psychoanalyst Anna Freud, Sigmund Freud's daughter, is one of them. She is one of the most important contributors to psychoanalysis. She wrote many books that had a huge impact in this field. Her book: *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence* (1936) became a founding work of the ego psychology and established a standing point of reference for all researchers. In her book, Anna Freud identifies different types of defence mechanisms and defines them saying: "the term defence which I have used so freely in the three last chapters, is the earliest representative of the dynamic standpoint in psychoanalytic theory" (42), and describes it as "the protection of the ego against the instinctual demands" (43).

Indeed, defence mechanisms are a medium that the ego uses to confront different impulses, painful ideas, anxiety, and unwanted thoughts. In this concern, Holland Norman, an American scholar who focused on psychoanalytic criticism, says: "a defence is an unconscious process of the ego which the ego puts into action automatically at a signal of danger from the external world, the id, or the superego" (57). In his book *The Dynamics of Literary Response* (1968), Holland approaches literature from a psychoanalytic point of view and develops a comprehensive theory of the psychology of literature

For the sake of this study, we will use Anna Freud's *The Ego and the Mechanisms of* (1936) *Defence* and Norman Holland's *The Dynamics of Literary Response*(1968) in order to interpret as well as to explore denial, sublimation, repression and reaction formation defence mechanisms as shown by the main characters as well as the narrators of the two novels.

## Conclusion

In this chapter we have established the background of this research. First we have represented the literary context of the study. The focus has been laid on detective fiction as a literary genre with a special attention to the major authors who helped in its development. Then we have explored the biographies of Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie by highlighting their famous works and accomplishments. After that, we have introduced the summary of *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* to provide a general overview of the texts. Second, we have shed light on the historical context of the two novels to give the reader a glimpse of the environment and settings of the study. We have given an overall view of two important historical periods, and we have explored significant events in the Victorian era with a reference to science, and the second Afghan war. We have depicted 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain including the First World War and the women's Status during that era. At last, we have examined psychoanalyses as a science and as a literary theory and examined defence mechanisms as defined by Anna Freud and Norman Holland. As for the second chapter, it will be devoted to the analysis of defence mechanisms as shown by the main character Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot, and by the narrators John Watson and Arthur Hastings.

## **Chapter II**

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**Defence Mechanisms in Agatha Christie's *The Mysterious***

***Affair at Styles* and Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet***

## **Introduction**

The present chapter will provide a detailed analysis of how defence mechanisms are shown in both Christie's *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* and Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* through Anna Freud's and Norman Holland's approach of defence mechanisms, by analysing in pairs both of the detectives and the narrators. The first section will focus on demonstrating the relationship between the id, ego, superego and defence mechanisms. The second section will analyse denial and sublimation defence mechanisms as shown by Hercule Poirot and Sherlock Holmes. In the third section, the emphasis will be laid on how repression and reaction formation are shown by Hastings and Watson.

### **1) The Relationship between Id, Ego, Superego, and Defence Mechanisms**

The human Psyche is characterised by three agents: id, superego, and ego. The id represents the instincts and natural urges and desires of the human being while the superego represents the morals of a person that he develops from his parents since his childhood, and the social code. The ego is the lens through which we perceive the id and the superego in a distorted form. That is to say that the ego's reaction is either a derived instinct of the id or a less perfect version of the superego. The ego mediates between the id's instincts and the superego's morals to create balance in one's psyche.

These agents become so demanding, and the ego finds it hard to satisfy both instincts and values. On the one hand, doing what the id's urge exposes the ego to the feelings of guilt caused by the superego. On the other hand, submitting to the superego's demands leads to the feelings of displeasure coming from not satisfying the id. As a result, the ego uses a process through which it alters the form of the instinctual demand in order to fit the values and the morals of a person; it may repress it, deny it, turn it to the opposite form, or convert it into something more valuable and accepted. We call it defence mechanism.

Anna Freud says: “The instinctual dangers against which the ego defends itself are always the same, but its reasons for feeling a particular irruption of instinct to be dangerous may vary” (54). In other words, the factors that threaten the ego and lead it to use a defence mechanism differ each time. According to Anna these factors may be the superego anxiety, the objective anxiety, or the instinctual anxiety.

The defence mechanism is motivated by the superego anxiety when the ego enters in a struggle against the instinct and submits to the superego which forbids the gratification. In this case, the ego refrains on the demands of the id as a reaction to the fear caused by the superego considering personal values. That is to say that a person wards off his instinctual urges in order not to confront their superego. In addition, an indispensable factor of defence mechanism is objective anxiety. The ego here defends against the anxiety comes from the dread of the outside world. A person’s ego fears the outside world and how other people will look at him. The last factor is instinctual anxiety. The ego defends against the id’s instinctual demands and desires. When the id is too demanding and the impulses become excessive the ego uses defence mechanisms to protect itself from these demands.

## **2) Defence Mechanisms Shown by Hercule Poirot and Sherlock Holmes**

### **2.1 Denial**

Encountering some tough situations may harm the psyche of a person, and probably makes him unable of dealing with them and face reality. As a result, the person reacts in a defensive manner through which he tries to deny reality, ignore it or admit some things but minimize their importance. This is referred to as denial. Anna Freud claims that: “denial is employed in situation in which it is impossible to escape some painful external impression”. (73). In short, denial is a mechanism used to defend the ego against the danger coming from the outside.

#### **1.1.1 Denial as Shown by Sherlock Holmes**



In the novel, Sherlock Holmes is described as a man with a high intellect and a certain grandiose self-worth. However, Watson figures out that Holmes does not know what the Copernican Theory is and of the composition of the Solar System. Holmes gets agitated and uncomfortable with Watson's astonishment. The following passage illustrates Holmes' reaction:

My surprise reached a climax, however, when I found incidentally that he was ignorant of the Copernican Theory and of the composition of the Solar System. That any civilized human being in this nineteenth century should not be aware that the earth travelled round the sun appeared to be to me such an extraordinary fact that I could hardly realize it. "You appear to be astonished," he said, smiling at my expression of surprise. "Now that I do know it I shall do my best to forget it." "To forget it!" (Doyle 11)

Watson is astonished because he does not imagine that someone would be unaware of the fact that the earth travels around the sun especially a scientific man like Sherlock Holmes, who shows a unique intelligence. Holmes explains that this information is useless; he legitimizes ignoring this fact by arguing that the human brain is like an attic and whenever something new is learned, something else is forgotten, so he would better learn about something that serves his career as a detective:

"You see," he explained, "I consider that a man's brain originally is like a little empty attic, and you have to stock it with such furniture as you choose. A fool takes in all the lumber of every sort that he comes across, so that the knowledge which might be useful to him gets crowded out, or at best is jumbled up with a lot of other things so that he has a difficulty in laying his hands upon it. Now the skilful workman is very careful indeed as to what he takes into his brain-attic. He will have nothing but the tools which may help him in doing his work, but of these he has a large assortment, and all in the most perfect order. It is a mistake to think that that little room has elastic walls and can distend to any extent.

Depend upon it there comes a time when for every addition of knowledge you forget something that you knew before. It is of the highest importance, therefore, not to have useless facts elbowing out the useful ones."(16)

Anna Freud explains that a person's ego acts in a certain way towards shock and threatening ideas, and says: "the ego denies the facts and substitutes for unbearable reality some agreeable delusions" (60). One can argue then that Holmes tries to make a fact seem

better because the truth was unbearable to him. He chooses to ignore and forget about Watson's reaction and about the whole fact as a form of denial. Holmes' displeasure about Watson's reaction stimulates his ego to act in a defensive way to protect itself, and his attempt to forget what Watson says can be interpreted as a denial defence mechanism

### **2.1.2 Denial as Shown by Hercule Poirot**

Poirot is, as stated in the novel, "wonderfully clever" (8). For a detective of high qualification as his, solving a murder case and finding the murderer is not that difficult, but it is only a matter of time, and any delay would make him anxious, which can be hard to deal with in some cases.

When Poirot investigates with the maid, Dorcas, she mentions that the cups in which the family members drunk their coffee that night are still unclean because she had to go outside for some affairs. Poirot checks the coffee cups and examines them; he guesses something about the case, but he figures out that he is mistaken:

"Bien!" he said at last. "It is evident! I had an idea\_\_ but clearly I was mistaken. Yes, altogether I was mistaken. Yet it is strange, but no matter!"  
And, with a characteristic shrug, he dismissed whatever it was that was worrying him from his mind." (Christie 45)

The passage above shows that Poirot is bothered by the idea that he was mistaken in his suggestions, but he decides not to face the reality. He instead ignores this fact and denies it immediately. Norman Holland argues that the defence termed denial is a mechanism used against the dangers from without (53). In this case, the stimulus that threatens Poirot's ego comes from the outside and induces fear and anxiety in his psyche. That is to say, the wrong deduction that Poirot realised makes him anxious; he faces some unwanted feelings and even doubts his competence; as a result, Poirot adopts denial defence mechanism as a medium to protect his ego against perceptions of the outer world.

Poirot, once again, gets introduced to the same feelings and faces the same anxiety but in a different situation:

“Ah!” cried Poirot, with a gesture of anger. “That I do not know! A document of some kind, without doubt, a scrap of paper that Dorcas saw in her hand yesterday afternoon. And I\_\_\_” his anger burst forth freely\_\_\_ “miserable animal that I am! I guessed nothing! I have behaved like an imbecile! I should never have left the case here. I should have carried it away with me. Ah, triple pig! And now it is destroyed\_\_\_ but is it destroyed? Is there not yet a chance\_\_\_ we must leave no stone turned\_\_\_” He rushed like a madman from the room, and I followed him as soon as I had sufficiently recovered my wits. But by the time I had reached the top of the stairs, he was out of the sight. (Christie 52)

When Poirot realizes that the only document leading to the murderer has been destroyed, he cannot handle it; he rages and expresses his anger about the situation and blames himself for not being more careful. The impulses are so strong to a point where Poirot tries to ignore and forget about them. The denial defence mechanism shows up when Poirot keeps repeating the same question as a fool, a proof that he is unable to believe or accept the fact that the only clue is gone, and by denying it, he reduces the danger received from the world outside to secure his psyche. In this regard, Anna Freud explains that: “denial is sustained against overthrow from without” (127).

## **2.2 Sublimation**

Anna Freud identifies sublimation as: “the displacement of the instinctual aim in conformity with higher social values, presupposes the acceptance or at least the knowledge of such values” (44). Holland adds: “[it is] the normal defence mechanism in which the subject’s ego alters the aim of a drive to make it acceptable to the ego” (365). In short, sublimation is displacing unacceptable feelings through converting behaviours into more acceptable forms.

### **2.2.1 Sublimation as Shown by Sherlock Holmes**

Sherlock Holmes is a hyperactive person, who works on his cases with enthusiasm. His intelligence and curiosity makes of him a workaholic. His remarkable cleverness gives him

the ability to understand things effortlessly and learn quickly; subsequently, he gets bored of everyday life easily. For that, whenever there is a lack of activity, he sinks in depression; he spends days on his sofa doing nothing, and he resorts to smoking and taking drugs. However, Watson mentions that Holmes likes music, and he sometimes plays violin very well. This is described in the following passage:

When left to himself, however, he would seldom produce any music or attempt any recognized air. Leaning back in his arm-chair of an evening, he would close his eyes and scrape carelessly at the fiddle which was thrown across his knee. Sometimes the chords were sonorous and melancholy. Occasionally they were fantastic and cheerful. Clearly they reflected the thoughts which possessed him (Doyle 14)

Holmes has the tendency to consuming drugs often, but he sometimes plays violin instead of submitting to his desires. Norman Holland argues: “it is a cliché as old as Aristotle that literature and music and painting enable men to gather meaning of thing” (308). In this respect, Sherlock Holmes chooses music as a means of distraction. He usually plays music when he feels lost in order to get rid of the thoughts that flood his mind and to find a meaning to his life far from work. Unlike drugs, music is socially well valued. Sherlock consumes drugs as a response to his id’s desires. However, he converts these desires into playing music to run from his instinctual impulses. Holmes’s impulses that come from his id are slightly modified by his ego to suit more his superego. In this concern, Anna Freud declares: “no longer do we see an undistorted id impulse but an id impulse modified by some defensive measures on the part of the ego” (15). This is what could be interpreted as Holmes’ sublimation defence mechanism. His ego channels those unacceptable feelings and urges of consuming drugs into something harmless and possibly productive and beneficial, and he displaces them in playing music. In this context, Anna Freud says: “[sublimation is] the displacement of instinctual aims” (39).

### 2.2.2 Sublimation as Shown By Hercule Poirot

When Hercule Poirot is called to investigate Mrs. Inglethrop's case, he goes with Hastings in a hurry to Styles' House. As soon as Poirot gets there, he begins to explore Mrs. Inglethrop's room. He gathers some clues and he tries to relate them to each other. The process of investigation takes Poirot's complete focus and energy, yet he cannot find a logical explanation for all the fragments he finds on the scene. The following passage describes the situation:

“Well,” I said wearily, “I suppose someone must have stepped on it.”  
“Exactly,” said Poirot, in an odd voice. “Someone stepped on it”.  
He rose from his knees, and walked slowly across to the mantelpiece, where he stood abstractedly fingering the ornaments and straightening them\_\_ a trick of his when he was agitated.’(Christie 32)

The misleading clues drag the investigation process, and this gets Hercule Poirot agitated and plays on his nerves. Hercule Poirot's hands are shaking, a proof of anger. He wants to express his anger and to destroy everything on the mantelpiece, but he resists his urges. Poirot controls his anger and unwanted feelings, and he converts them into an appropriate behaviour. He displaces those unwanted ideas into a more acceptable form through arranging the elements upon the mantelpiece in Mrs. Inglethrop's room. Poirot then shows sublimation as a result of confronting, defeating, and displacing these instinctual desires. In other words, Poirot is aware of his id's inner impulses and anger, but he decides not to let them take control over him, and he chooses to not satisfy his desires but to submit to the superego's demands which are characterised by morals. In this regard Holland states that sublimation is: “the changing of a forbidden impulse or idea into something socially or morally acceptable” (57). It might be claimed, therefore, that Poirot reacts according to the social codes that the superego imposes on him. Hercule Poirot converts to putting in order the objects on the mantelpiece which seems quite enjoyable to him. Poirot not only defeats his desires and refuses to submit to anxiety, but he also protects his ego from the guilt that the superego would cause in case he

chooses to satisfy his instinctual desires. By using sublimation as a defence, Hercule Poirot converts a pure instinctual idea to a socially and morally acceptable behaviour. He proves that sublimation is a means by which the ego refuses the influence of the instinctual id and shows the presence of the wise superego.

### **3) Defence Mechanisms Shown by Watson and Hastings**

#### **3.1 Repression**

When a person feels danger due to internal anxiety and impulses, and tries to bury these stimuli and prevent them from appearing to the outside environment, we say he is suppressing these unwanted feelings and ideas, and thus, he shows repression defence mechanism. Concerning this, Norman Holland argues that: “repression is a defence mechanism which excludes from consciousness inner realities\_\_ wishes, fantasies, memories, or affects” (364).

##### **2.1.1 Repression as Shown by Watson**

When Watson gets to know Sherlock Holmes, he tells him about his two favourite detectives: Dupin and Lecoq. Knowing that Sherlock Holmes is also a detective, Watson says that he resembles them, but Sherlock Holmes objects to this and says that he is way better than them. Sherlock criticises these two detectives’ way of investigating and he belittled them and says that Dupin is an inferior, showy, and superficial fellow, and reading about Lecoq makes him ill. Moreover, Holmes starts to praise himself, his detecting skills, and his achievements so far. Sherlock Holmes’ opinion about the two detectives annoys Watson and offends him. The coming passage describes the thread of the events:

I felt rather indignant at having two characters whom I had admired treated in this cavalier style. I walked over to the window, and stood looking out into the busy street. “This fellow may be very clever,” I said to myself, “but he is certainly very conceited.”

“There are no crimes and no criminals in these days,” he said, querulously.

“What is the use of having brains in our profession. I know well that I have it in me to make my name famous. No man lives or has ever lived who has brought the same amount of study and of natural talent to the detection of

crime which I have done. And what is the result? There is no crime to detect, or, at most, some bungling villainy with a motive so transparent that even a Scotland Yard official can see through it.”

I was still annoyed at his bumptious style of conversation. I thought it best to change the topic. (Doyle 21)

Watson thought that he is praising Sherlock Holmes by comparing him to Dupin and Lecoq, but Holmes’s reaction surprises him and awakens some unwanted thoughts in Watson’s psyche. Watson’s ego is provoked and threatened by the stimulating thoughts and feelings of anger which come from the id. Watson begins to think that Holmes is too proud and cocky although he is a clever man. He does not want to show his reaction to what Holmes says and thinks about his favourite detectives. He avoids these unwanted feelings and thoughts by repressing them. Watson chooses to hide and forget about the things that Sherlock Holmes says in order not to deal with disagreeable thoughts to avoid the anxiety caused, and thus he prevents those feeling and ideas from revealing. Regarding this, Holland argues that: “the most basic of defences is repression which we can define as keeping an idea or a feeling from revealing to consciousness” (53). Watson uses repression in order to defend himself from the anxiety provoked by these feelings by placing them in the oblivion. In other words, Watson adopts a defensive method which is repression to protect his ego from the instinctual impulses and stimuli.

### **3.1.2 Repression as Shown by Hastings**

Earlier in the novel, Hastings admits that he has a secret interest to be a detective, and he expresses his love for Sherlock Holmes. He also mentions he knows a clever fellow, Hercule Poirot, who is a detective as well, and who inspires him. For Hastings, Poirot is the ideal example of a detective, and his method of investigation fascinates him.

Later, when Hastings gets in a direct touch with Poirot because he called him to investigate Mrs. Inglethrop’s death, he begins to have some doubts about Poirot’s method in dealing with

the events and clues. This creates tension and provokes anxiety in Hastings' psyche, and brings him face to face with ideas that he does not want to deal with. This is better detailed in the following:

I shrugged my shoulders. If he was to take the matter that way, it was no good arguing him. The idea crossed my mind, not for the first time. That poor old Poirot was growing old. Privately I thought it lucky that he had associated with him someone of a more receptive type of mind. Poirot was surveying me with quietly twinkling eyes.  
"You are not pleased with me, Mon Amie?"

"My dear Poirot," I said coldly, it is not for me to dictate to you. You have a right to your own opinion, just as I have to mine."(Christie 43)

As revealed in the passage above, the flow of the thoughts that Hastings has about Poirot in that moment makes him anxious and insecure; he feels he is in danger being stimulated with unbearable thoughts and provoked by unwanted feelings. Hastings attempts to keep the inner ideas from revealing and tries to protect his ego from the harmful impulses associated with those unwanted feelings by means of repression defence mechanism. According to Holland: "repression defends against the danger from within" (53); in this case it serves as the protection of the ego against instinctual demands of the id. For Hastings, there is no way through which he can uphold the instinctual urges from revealing to the consciousness. That is to say that he avoids the tension provoked by his inner thoughts and keeps them repressed. Holland suggests that: "repression, in effect, buries alive an impulse of fear or feeling or fantasy" (53). The point is that Hastings not only tries to hide those unbearable feelings and thoughts, but he also buries them in his unconsciousness. In other words, Hastings chooses not to deal with the unbearable thoughts nor question Poirot's competence again; therefore, he throws them in the thoughts graveyard which is unconsciousness.



## **3.2 Reaction formation**

An attempt to adopt the opposite feeling towards a person or a situation is referred to as reaction formation. According to Holland, reaction formation is: “a defence mechanism that usually becomes a permanent alternation of character in which the ego turns the aim of a drive into its opposite” (362). It is a process through which a person changes the instinct’s purpose into the opposite form. Moreover, Anna Freud argues that: “reaction formation is one of the most important measures adopted by the ego as a permanent protection against the id” (15). It could be said that when the id of a person demands something that the ego finds inappropriate, this latter uses reaction formation defence to protect itself from the id and acts oppositely. In other words, When the ego struggles to manage a rejected impulse that persists, the reaction formation takes place and contains the threat directly through an exaggerated opposite reaction. Here the ego unconsciously prevents the threatening anxiety from reaching the shallow of the conscious by showing a reaction completely different of what the person is actually thinking.

### **3.2.1 Reaction Formation as Shown by Watson:**

In the beginning of the relationship between Watson and Holmes, Watson knows that Holmes is a scientist, but he is surprised by the fact that Holmes is unaware of the Copernican theory and the solar system. Holmes’ denial and indifference puzzles Watson and makes him insist to convince Holmes that it is important to know about these things, but Holmes continues to say that he would not care even if the earth goes around the moon. Watson wants to ask more questions, but he keeps them for himself:

“But the Solar System!” I protested.

“What the deuce is it to me?” he interrupted impatiently; “you say that we go round the sun. If we went round the moon it would not make a pennyworth of difference to me or to my work.”

I was on the point of asking him what that work might be, but something in his manner showed me that the question would be an unwelcome one. I pondered over our short conversation, however, and endeavoured to draw my deductions from it". (17)

In the passage above, Watson adopts an attitude different to what he really wants to do. As a matter of fact, Watson was so curious about the work of Holmes, and he wants to ask and know more about him, but he decides to keep his questions to himself because they may bother his fellow. Watson represses his strong desire and reacts differently. Moreover, Watson is afraid of what Holmes will think of him if he keeps being nosy, so he tries to alter an id's demand into the opposite form. The anxiety caused by fear here pushes Watson to have an opposite attitude. Contrary to what Watson wants, he acts like he got enough information about Holmes, and he is not curious to know more. Here the ego unconsciously prevents the threatening anxiety from reaching the shallow of the conscious by showing a reaction completely different to what Watson is actually thinking. Watson, thus, uses reaction formation defence mechanism to protect his ego from the instinctual id. By showing the opposite form of an impulse, Watson frees his ego from the obsession of an instinct which is curiosity in this case. Anna Freud argues that: "By means of reaction formation the ego avails itself of the instinct's capacity" (128). In this respect, Watson represses his instinctual desire and shows its opposite form.

### **3.2.1 Reaction Formation as Shown by Hastings:**

Hastings is invited to the house of Styles by his friend John. He gets to know new family members; Mr. Inglethorp is one of them. Hastings knows that he is the husband of John's stepmother, and that he is 20 years younger than her. Hastings gets a bad impression about Mr. Inglethorp, and he forms negative opinions about him, but he reveals nothing and keeps treating him in what the etiquette requires. Hastings, as a result, uses reaction formation as a

mechanism of defence when he meets Mr. Inglethrop on his way to summon Hercule Poirot to investigate the case of Styles. The following passage describes well what happened:

“How did you hear the news?” I asked.

“Wilkins knocked Denby up to tell him. My poor Emily! She was so self-sacrificing — such a noble character. She over-taxed her strength.”

A wave of revulsion swept over me. What a consummate hypocrite the man was!

“I must hurry on,” I said, thankful he did not ask me whither I was bound.’ (Christie 27)

As a matter of fact, Hastings is not in accord with Mr. Inglethrop, and he dislikes him for many reasons. Hastings goes to call his friend Hercule Poirot to investigate the murder of Mrs. Inglethrop after he gets the permission from John Cavendish. On his way, he meets Alfred Inglethrop leaving his friend’s home. Mr. Inglethrop’s situation is very suspicious to Hastings; he asks him how he knew about Mrs. Inglethrop’s death even though he spent the night outside. This answer does not please Hastings, and he feels it is full of hypocrisy and lies. Hastings feels angry about Mr. Inglethrop, but instead of raging on him and accusing him of things Hastings himself is not sure of, he reacts in the opposite way, and he, according to Anna Freud, “conceals a long standing conflict” (15). In other words, the ego represses the instinctual demands and reverses them to something opposite to what is felt. Regarding this, Hastings’ instinctual impulse takes the opposite form. By means of reaction formation, Hastings protects his ego from the id’s demands, and he remains calm despite his inner feelings and impulses.

## **Conclusion:**

In this chapter, we have examined defence mechanisms in both Christie's *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* and Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet*. First, we have shown that the ego's attempt to solve the conflict between the id and the superego leads to the use of defence mechanisms. Then, we have shown that Holmes, Poirot, Hastings, and Watson get triggered and provoked by different situations that push them to use defence mechanisms to contain their instincts. After that, we have demonstrated that both Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot show the same defence mechanisms which are sublimation and denial. At last, we showed that even Hastings and Watson use the same defence mechanisms which are repression and reaction formation as a reaction to different stimuli.

## **General Conclusion**

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The aim of this dissertation has been to analyse and compare Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* and Agatha Christie's *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* emphasising on the psychoanalysis theory and defence mechanisms as shown by the detectives and the narrators in the two novels. We have come to the conclusion that Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot as well as John Watson and Arthur Hastings adopt defence mechanisms to cope with both their morals and anxieties in order to defend their ego against both internal and external dangers, and they also show the same defence mechanisms as a reaction to different stimuli although they are the creation of two different authors in different settings, but we proved they are comparable to each other.

In the first chapter, we have dealt with literary, historical and theoretical background. The literary background provided a general overview of the detective fiction literary genre, literary profiles of both Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie, a brief plot overview of *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Mysterious Affair at styles* for a better understanding of authors and novels. The historical background presented the important historical events and the context of the two novels. At the end, we dealt with the theoretical background of the research. It represented psychoanalysis literary theory and its origins, discussed the primary resources we used to conduct our study, and introduces four defence mechanisms that were going to explored through Holmes, Poirot, Watson, and Hastings.

In the second chapter, we have represented the relationship between I'd, ego, superego, and defence mechanisms. We showed how the conflict between the id and the superego pushes the ego to interfere and mediate between both of them in order not to expose the id's instincts or to fully submit to the superego's authority. We also analysed four defence mechanisms as shown by the four characters of the two novels.

On the first hand, we have examined two defence mechanisms adopted by the two detectives. We analysed denial as shown by Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot, and we showed that these two detectives adopt this mechanism in situations where people around them start doubting either their wittiness and detecting skills or things they believe in which is considered as threat to their ego, as a result, they don't accept this truth and deny it completely.

Then, we examined sublimation defence. Sherlock Holmes as well as Hercule Poirot use sublimation as a way of orienting their internal anxiety and displacing an instinctual aim into something more appropriate. The only difference is the instinct itself. Sherlock Holmes tries to displace his urge of consuming drugs by playing violi while Hercule Poirot orients his anger and distracts his concentration into things around him like elements in the room or flower fields.

On the other hand, we examined two other defence mechanisms adopted by both John Watson and Arthur Hastings, the narrators of the two novels and the companions of Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot respectively. First, we analysed repression defence mechanism and the reasons that push Watson and Hastings to adopt this mechanism, and we came to realize that show this mechanism for the same reason, and they repressed their internal impulses from Holmes and Poirot. Watson repressed his agitation when Holmes badmouthed his favourite detectives and kept it inside because Holmes was his roommate. In the same way, Hastings repressed the impression he got about Poirot concerning his investigating way because he was his friend and he found it inappropriate to face him.

After that, we explored reaction formation defence mechanism. Although both Watson and Hastings showed reaction formation mechanism, the stimulus was different as well as the reaction they take which is the opposite to what they feel. For Watson, what stimulated him to

use such defence mechanism was Sherlock Holmes who did not like to explain a lot of his thoughts, and thus, Watson repressed curiosity and acted as if he understood everything and got enough information. When it comes to Hastings, the thing that stimulated his ego to defend itself was not Poirot as it was for Watson, but it was another character that was Mr. Inglethorp. The feeling that Hastings was trying to hide was anger, and he took an opposite feeling and stayed calm.

Throughout our examination of Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot, John Watson, and Arthur Hastings, this research discloses that fictional characters can show defence mechanisms. Although they are from different backgrounds, it is shown that they use defence mechanisms and tend to respond to anxiety in the same way to overcome their undesirable feelings in threatening situations and eventually have good adjustments.



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## ملخص

يستكشف هذا العمل آليات الدفاع كما هي موضحة من طرف الشخصيات الرئيسية في كل من

*A Study in Scarlet* (1887) رواية آرثر كونان دويل

*The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920) رواية إجاثا كريستي

الروايتين درستا من وجهة نظر علم النفس التحليلي مع التركيز على آليات الدفاع كما نوقشت في كتاب أنا فرويد

*The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence* 1936

و كذا كتاب نورمان هولاند

*The Dynamics of Literary Response* 1968

في ضوء هذين الكتابين، الروايتين قد تم تحليلهما من خلال تسليط الضوء على مفاهيم الإنكار، التسامي القمع و رد الفعل

العكسي كما وضحت من طرف شارلوك هولمز، هرقل بوارو، جون واطسون و آرثر هايستينغز

الكلمات المفتاحية:

علم النفس التحليلي، آليات الدفاع (*The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920),

*A Study in Scarlet* (1887)

## Resumé

ce travail explore les mécanismes de défense manifesté par les quatre personnages principaux dans *A Study in Scarlet*(1887) de Sir Arthur Conan Doyle et dans *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920) d'Agatha Christie. Les romans sont étudiés à travers du point de vue de la psychanalyse en mettant l'accent sur les mécanismes de défense démontré par *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense* (1936) d'Anna Freud et *The Dynamics of Literary Response* (1968) de Norman Holland. En se basant sur ces deux livres, les deux romans sont analysés en mettant en évidence les concepts de déni, les mécanismes de défense de sublimation comme le montrent Sherlock Holmes et Hercule Poirot, puis, le refoulement et la formation réactionnelle comme le montrent John Watson et Arthur Hastings.